CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The policy makers and planners now increasingly emphasize the need to invest in women for the overall development of the nation and the society. Educating a woman would help her in acquiring some gainful employment and use her earnings judiciously to promote family welfare as opposed to men who may not do so. She would reduce fertility and take initiative to avail better facilities to her children in areas like health and education. Again, access to education and employment of women would enhance their capability in decision making and in controlling resources within the household. The approach on women development has changed from viewing women as beneficiaries of social services to contributors of social and economic development process in nation building. It would definitely be impossible for a nation to achieve the goal neglecting women constituting half of its population. However, the nature and extent of participation of women in economic activities are entirely different from that of men because of their dual roles within the household. The work participation rate of women is found to be less than that of men in almost all economies in the world due to the various socio-cultural reasons that determine their employment. So the government should take necessary initiative in implementing policies assuring gender equity and economic participation of women for achieving rapid and sustainable growth using the state’s entire potential of human capital. In this study, an earnest attempt is made to find out the key determinants of women employment and to discuss the various dimensions of it with special reference to the service sector in Kerala.

In developed countries, an upsurge in women employment is encountered due to several factors and a major share of such employment is in the service sector. On the demand side, rise in the education of women and a general rise in the demand for labour consequent upon expansion of output are responsible for the increase in women employment. With the expansion of service sector, demand for labour in typical female occupations like clerical, teaching and nursing has been growing very fast. On the supply side, rising wages for women, changes in family composition and inadequate male earnings have also contributed in attracting women towards development. But women employment is stagnant in India for the past four decades and a majority of them are still in
agricultural sector even though the service sector share is more than half in the country’s GDP. During the Nineties, only six percent of the economically active women in India happened to be in the formal sector. Majority of women workers are in the informal sector and any plan to improve women’s economic condition will have to focus in this area. It is also well accepted that poorest families are the most dependent on women’s earnings and they play a crucial role in the survival of country’s sixty million households living below poverty line. Even though the overall literacy rate and educational attainments of Indian women are low compared to those of the other developed nations, substantial improvement in the human capital attainment is observed in the past few years. A large number of women in India are still confined to casual labour or marginal work at home or in the field while majority of their counterparts occupy more decent jobs. Therefore, it is desirable that women in India should acquire necessary education and skills that would enhance their level of employment and earning capacity in the labour market as well as improving their status within the household.

Women’s employment in the state of Kerala differs from most of the other Indian states and from the all India pattern. Kerala’s ethos on social development has attracted global attention for the achievements in the arena of education and health. The role played by women in Kerala for the development of these two sectors is remarkable. The state is well known for its high gender development at par with the developed nations in the world. The development experience of the state got its focus through various movements for women’s emancipation and gender parity. Changes in the sectoral distribution of female workforce in Kerala clearly shows that structural transformation of women’s economic activity has taken place in the state with agriculture sector losing its importance and service sector taking up its place. Since the employment of women in Kerala is heterogeneous in nature, a sector of employment is selected for an in-depth analysis and for obtaining reliable results. The selection of a sector for the present study becomes easy, as the peculiarities of women in Kerala are high literacy, high gender development and high proportion of them in service sector jobs. A study on women employment in Kerala should include the emerging service sector in which majority of women in the state are employed. Accordingly, women employment in the service sector in Kerala is carefully examined at the micro level to address the various issues associated with it.
1.2 Context of the Study

The status of women in a society is an index of its civilization. Women have every right to fuller development as men have and hence emancipation of women is an essential pre-requisite for economic development and social progress. An analysis through the gender lens reveals that over a period of time, women in Kerala were able to break the shackles of conservatism and effectively involved in the development process of the state. The various human development reports indicate that the role of women is much more than that of men in the development of education programs and health activities in the state. This fact is not considered by those who praise the so-called Kerala model. The model would not have been existed if the women in Kerala had not contributed to the development of the state.

As mentioned earlier, the peculiarity of women employment in Kerala is their high proportion in the service sector. The available secondary data on employment and unemployment suggests that the pattern of female employment in Kerala is in line with the developed countries in the West and is significantly different from the all India pattern and that of several other Indian states. A lot of activities are now found as women go out to work which were not in the market earlier. Also, increase in family income because of women’s participation in employment leads to a greater demand for services. This increased participation of women in ‘white-collar’ jobs in the recent years could be partly responsible for the growth of the service sector by providing demand for new services and supplying labour. Increase in women’s participation in workforce could be a factor in the growth of service sector since women are more inclined to jobs in the service sector. According to the various Census reports, the proportion of women in the service sector is increasing in Kerala.

The problems and prospects of employed women in a country or a state can only be identified by conducting a micro level study as the secondary data sources like Census or NSS are not intended for such purposes. The policy measures to improve their position in the labour market could be suggested by analyzing the data collected with a pre-tested schedule. As the population of women employees of any region forms a heterogeneous group, service sector with majority of women employees is selected for the study to get clear output results. The various aspects under the purview of this study are socio-economic profile of women employees, determinants of women
employment, effect of women employment in the family and society, job satisfaction and empowerment of the women employees with reference to the state of Kerala.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Even though women actively participate with men in the productive process, the issues related with women are not often gender neutral and need to be addressed. If women have more productive and decision-making roles, the movement of a nation towards sustainability would be faster in the economic, social and environmental sense. A lot of literature deals with the status of women in Kerala, but only a few studies have concentrated on the various aspects of women employment, especially determinants of women employment, income aspect of women employees, empowerment of women employees, job satisfaction and effect of women employment in family and society. This study is intended to bridge the gap by examining the various aspects of women employment in Kerala at the micro-level and its characteristics. As the topic, women employment in Kerala, is very vast and diverse, this study is however confined to the women employment in the service sector of Kerala, a major component of the women employment of the state. As the service sector women employees constitute a more or less homogenous group, the output results obtained from the study would be more distinct.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the work is to study the following six objectives in connection with the women employment in the service sector in Kerala.

1. To compare the trend and pattern of women employment in India and some major states with special reference to the service sector in Kerala
2. To examine the socio-economic profile of women employees in the service sector
3. To find out the major determinants of women employment in the service sector
4. To investigate the effect of women employment in the family and society
5. To probe in to the level of job-satisfaction among women employees in the service sector
6. To examine the level of empowerment of women employees in the service sector
The first objective of the study is proposed to be realized by the computed data from the secondary sources and the remaining five objectives using the analysis of the collected primary data.

1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses related to some of the objectives of the study are proposed below. These hypotheses can be accepted or rejected based on the findings of the study to establish the relationships among the variables involved in the employment of women within the context of their household.

1. The educational levels of household members of the women employees are equal across different castes.

2. The Respondent’s Total Monthly Income (RTMI) is equal across religion.

3. The percentage allocation of Respondent’s Total Monthly Income (RTMI) for food, non-food and monthly savings are equal across the levels of employment.

4. The level of empowerment of women employees is unaltered irrespective of the levels of household education.

5. The level of empowerment of women employees is unchanged across the levels of employment.

1.6 Methodology

The objectives of the study are realized using primary as well as secondary sources of data. Details of women employees in the working age group of 15 to 59 years in the three sectors of economy were computed from the three Census reports of India from 1981 to 2001. The trends of male-female work participation and their proportion in various sectors of economy were explored at the national and state (Kerala) levels. Trends in some other major states in India were also studied with special reference to service sector. The status of women in Kerala was compared with the national situation in general and also with the situation in other states of India, using the human development reports of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The participation of women in the public and private establishments in Kerala was also examined by processing the data available with the Directorate of Employment and Training, Government of Kerala from 2001 to
2009. Tables or charts representing the computed data as well as the data available from the above secondary sources regarding economic activities of women are reproduced in the work mentioning the sources as and when they appear.

In many works pertaining to employment, workplace survey was preferred for the collection of primary data. However the precise quantification of the base variables of women employment in relation to their households such as region, religion, caste etc. as it appears in a society would be difficult in such a survey. Hence in this study, the micro-level data of women employees in the service sector in Kerala was collected by conducting an elaborate household survey. The empirical data collected in the survey was analyzed using various mathematical and statistical tools such as percentages, averages, chi-square tests, factor analysis, correlation, indexing and analysis of variance tests such as t-test, one-way ANOVA etc. to draw inferences based on the objectives of the study. Detailed descriptions of tools used in each case are given as and when they are dealt with.

1.7 Sources of Data

Data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The main secondary sources used were Census reports of India 1981, 1991 and 2001. The data from 1981 Census onwards was considered due to the similarity in the definition of workers. The data on women employment in the registered establishments in Kerala from 2001 to 2009 was collected from the Directorate of Employment and Training, Thiruvananthapuram. The other secondary data sources were Economic Review of Kerala and publications of the Department of Economics and Statistics, Thiruvananthapuram. Analysis pertaining to the first objective of comparing the trend and pattern of women employment was primarily based on secondary data collected from the above sources.

The primary data was collected by conducting a household survey in urban and rural areas of the selected wards of Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts in Kerala. The scientific methods used for identifying the women employees for the primary data collection is explained in the sample design.

1.8 Sample Design

The level of urbanization in the state influences the structure of the economic activities of its population. The entire state of Kerala was categorized in to two regions, namely rural and urban, for
eliminating regional errors in sampling. As per 2001 Census, the rural-urban population of Kerala was in the ratio of 74:26. When the districts of Kerala were taken in to consideration, the urban population was found to be varying. So it was decided to select two districts randomly, one with urban population less than the state average and another with the same greater than the state average to minimize the errors in sampling. Pathanamthitta district had an urban population of 10 percent, which was less than the state figures of 26 percent, while Alappuzha district had an urban population of 30 percent which was greater than the respective state level figures. As per the 2001 Census, 61 percent of total female main workers in the service sector in Kerala under the age group of 15 to 59 were rural women. Hence the samples were identified in a more or less same manner as they appear in the population keeping the proportion of rural samples to urban samples in the ratio 2:1. An identical pattern of random selection technique was adopted to identify the rural and urban regions within the two selected districts. 300 respondents, 150 each from Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts, were identified using snowball sampling technique. The details of 1263 household members including the respondents were collected in the survey from the 300 households identified.

Pathanamthitta municipality was randomly selected from the municipalities of Pathanamthitta district and ward No.15 was then selected from Pathanamthitta municipality for collecting urban samples. Two taluks, namely Kozhenchery and Adoor, were randomly selected from the taluks of Pathanamthitta district and two panchayaths were selected, one each from the selected taluks. Chenneerkara panchayath was randomly selected from Kozhenchery taluk and ward No.13 of Chenneerkara panchayath was then selected for the collection of rural samples. Also, Erathu Panchayath was randomly selected from Adoor taluk and ward No.2 of Erathu Panchayath was then selected for the collection of rural samples.

Kayamkulam municipality was randomly selected from the municipalities of Alappuzha district and ward No.34 was then selected from Kayamkulam municipality for collecting urban samples. Two taluks namely Mavelikkara and Chengannur were randomly selected from the taluks of Alappuzha district and two panchayaths were selected, one each from the selected taluks. Palamel Panchayath was randomly selected from Mavelikkara taluk and ward No.18 of the Palamel panchayath was then selected for collection of rural samples. Again, Cheriyanad panchayath was
randomly selected from the Chengannur taluk and ward No.3 of Cheriyand panchayth was then selected for collecting rural samples.

The respondents in this study were women employees in the service sector. The employees in the service sector jobs were identified according to the categorization of service sector jobs included in NIC-2008. Snowball sampling technique was adopted in the survey to find out the respondents of the randomly identified regions of the two selected districts. In each of the selected wards from the two districts, around ten households with women employees in the service sector were identified initially with the help of ward members of the concerned local body, ASHA or other social workers. From the ten households, snowball or chain sampling technique was utilized to find the other households in that ward by references. In order to ensure better representation of the region, an attempt was made to select respondents with a household interval of at least two. Even though around 60 households were identified in each ward, a reasonable quota of 50 women employees per ward was fixed, considering practical difficulties. Two rural wards and one urban ward were taken in a proportion of 2:1 in the survey for both Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts. A quota of 50 respondents each was taken for the two urban and four rural wards making the total sample size at 300.

1.9 Data Gathering Instruments

The details of 300 respondents and their household members were collected with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule consisting of 102 questions. A format of the final interview schedule is included in Appendix I. A lot of difficulty was experienced while conducting interviews, as women employees were not available at home during working hours. Since the schedule consists of 102 questions more than one hour was necessary to collect data from a single household. Further, this being a household survey, locating the households and meeting the women employees in the service sector was also a difficulty. Considering all the practical difficulties a reasonable sample size of 300 was adopted.

1.10 Data Management and Analysis

Primary data was collected through a quantitative survey. A pilot study was conducted in 25 households and corrections were made before drafting the final schedule. Both the pilot survey and the final survey were conducted by spending more than one hour with each of the 300 respondents.
Thus the survey was extremely helpful in getting firsthand information regarding various aspects of women employees. The probable answers to each question were coded so as to enter in the SPSS software. The data was entered and careful cleaning was done to correct wrong and missing values during the data entry. As the type and number of variables associated with women employment are numerous, the processing of data for the final analysis was tedious and time consuming.

Chi-square test was conducted for association, correlation test for relationship, independent t-test, one-way ANOVA for mean comparisons, regression analysis for examining causality, factor analysis for identifying the key factors for Principal Components Analysis (PCA) etc. – all these were done in the analysis.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The peculiarities of women employment in an economy depend on various demographic, social and cultural factors. All dimensions of women employment are not always measurable due to their inter-linkages with these social or cultural factors predominant in society. This complicated nature of the research topic makes it inter-disciplinary. However, earnest efforts are made to identify some of the key determinants and to discuss some major dimensions of women employment in the service sector of Kerala. The rural-urban proportion in deciding sample size in the survey is based on proportion of rural-urban female main workers in the service sector of Kerala according to the 2001 Census. The latest data on female workforce from 2011 Census could not be incorporated as the same is not available at the time of preparation of the thesis.

The primary data was collected only from the two districts in Kerala. When the output results are generalized for Kerala, slight sampling errors may occur due to the regional disparity of women employment across the state. For the comparison of women work participation using the Census data, female main workers in the working age group of 15 to 59 alone are considered excluding the marginal workers. Since the women employment consists of some inevitable casual or temporary type of employment, the elimination of female marginal workers may result in displaying less work participation rate than the actual estimate. Only 300 women employees could be interviewed in the household survey because of a lengthy schedule describing all the necessary particulars of the respondent and household members. Further, as the service sector employment itself consists of a wide range of occupations, the nature of samples collected may also be widely
varying. Hence the sample size adopted in the study may not be sufficient in some cases to draw reliable conclusions.

1.12 Chapter Scheme

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The title and brief content of each chapter is given below.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

- Introduces the topic and its significance. Context of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, methodology, sources of data, sample design, data gathering instruments, data management and analysis, limitations of the study and scheme of the study are included.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework and Review of literature

- Examines the applicable theoretical framework and reviews the existing literature related to topic of the study. Review of studies with international focus, Indian scenario and Kerala context are explained separately.

Chapter 3 - Women Employment in Kerala

- Status of women in Kerala, definition of work and employment, industrial classification of employment, international scenario on women employment, employment of women in India and Kerala etc. are narrated.

- The trend and pattern of women employment in Kerala is discussed and compared with that of all India and some major states of India on the basis of 1981, 1991 and 2001 Census reports.

- Trends of male and female employment in the registered public and private establishments in Kerala from 2001 to 2009 are analyzed.

- Brief description of gender budgeting with reference to women employment

Chapter 4 - Profile of the Sample

- Describes the profile of the study area, profile of the respondents and profile of the households based on the data from the household survey.
Chapter 5 - Women in Service Sector: Dimensions and Determinants

- Description on the profile of employment and identification of the key determinants of women employment in the service sector in Kerala are made. The income-expenditure pattern of women employees under economic aspects, family and employment, society and employment and job satisfaction of women employees are also discussed in detail.

Chapter 6 - Empowerment of Women in Service Sector

- Definition and aspects of empowerment, quantification of empowerment by constructing an index, variation of empowerment index from the normal distribution and difference in levels of empowerment across various sub-groups of women employees in the service sector are described.

Chapter 7 - Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

- The work is summarized and testing of hypotheses is performed in the first part of the chapter. Major findings of the study are then presented and some concluding remarks are given. Recommendations based on the findings are suggested which have the potential to influence policy decisions of the government. Finally, some specific channels for further research in this topic are also mentioned.