PREFACE

Development of Information and Communication Technology has had a far reaching impact on the organisation of production, global division of labour and labour markets of the world. Everywhere traditional methods of production are being replaced by new post-Fordist production systems where work is organized under project based teams with a flatter hierarchy and highly individualised wage fixation. The liberation of work from its location has removed spatial and temporal constraints on work and led to the emergence of non-standard forms of working such as mobile working, tele–working, flexi-time working etc: which holds genuine potential for striking a better balance between work and family responsibilities, or work and leisure. The changing labour market also envisages a departure from the prevailing gender employment norms. Unlike traditional manufacturing sector employment that has been dominated by male workers, work in the knowledge based sector is viewed as less physically tough and is expected to bring about greater feminization of jobs and encourage equality of men and women in the workforce.

This thesis titled “Gender Dimensions of Employment in Kerala- A Study With Reference to ICT” examines the workforce in the software and services sector in Kerala with particular emphasis on entry, location, career progression, achievements and problems of women professionals. The study is organized in nine chapters and is based on secondary data compiled from various sources, primary data collected from IT firms as well as professionals and case studies of IT professionals. This researcher has used various statistical techniques such as percentages, averages, analysis of variance, Z-test, Chi-square etc: to analyse the data. Tabular and graphic analysis has been made use of where deemed necessary.

Growth and main features of the software and services sector in Kerala is first analysed against the backdrop of the industry’s profile in India as a prelude to examining gender dimensions of the industry. Profiling of the industry is done in terms of features such as growth in value of software and services exports, geographical location of exports, infrastructure available, nature of software and services activity, size of software firms, destination of exports, employment generation etc:

The main study of software and services workforce in Kerala is organized in two broad parts. In the first instance the issue of gender equality and social and cultural dimensions of the workforce are analysed pertaining to the software segment of the
industry which is considered to be more skill based and technical. The study then moves on to examine these issues in relation to the ITES industry which is perceived to be the lower end and less skilled segment of the IT industry.

Gender equality in IT industry in Kerala is analysed by focusing on different dimensions which include entry of women into the software/ITES workforce, their distribution in the work pyramid, entry gates/entry barriers for women into the industry, career progression of women in the industry, perception of professionals about gender equality in relevant work characteristics, perception of professionals about suitability of software/ITES work for women, actual equality/inequality in remuneration between male and female professionals in the industry etc:

The social and cultural dimensions of IT professionals are then explored so as to understand the social nuances of the industry, the challenges it poses to women professionals and the strategies they adopt to deal with these. Work-life balance in the field, geographical mobility, socialization indicators, impact of the industry on women empowerment, problems faced, existing as well as preferred childcare arrangements etc are analysed in this context.

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of the study, this researcher has suggested a number of policy measures. Gender equality based on the capability framework of Amartya Sen lays the foundation upon which we build the structure of our main policy suggestions for women in IT field namely introduction of a gender sensitive culture into the field and making available different modes of working more suitable to the information age. These, we hope, will widen the choices open to women professionals and serve to enhance their achieved functionings by enabling a better combination of the often competing capabilities of non-market care and paid work./attaining career potential. Suggestions related to different types of flexible working, tele-working, part-time working, introduction of crèche facilities in IT parks, social acceptance of ladies travelling alone at night, introduction of better transport facilities in Infopark, development of a cosmopolitan food culture, integration of training programs in professional as well as general arts and science colleges, setting up of reliable secondary data source on IT labour in the state, social awareness of new modes of working etc. are detailed which we hope will be of help to planners, policy makers and industry heads to take appropriate actions and also initiate further research on the topic.