Chapter 1

Introduction

Internal migration is a mechanism by which demographic redistribution takes place within a country. Female migrants constitute roughly half of all internal migrants in developing countries. Among the four migration streams, rural-urban migration is, by and large, the reason for urbanization. It is a response to economic opportunities across space. Such migration is not only a sign of dynamism, but also a reflection of increasing inequalities, agrarian crisis and inadequate livelihood generation in many parts of the country. The changing urbanization pattern in India is a reflection of this migration. The share of urban population in the total has grown from 11 per cent in 1901 to nearly to 31 per cent in 2011 (Provisional totals, 2011 census).

1.1 Rural-urban migration in India

Millions move within India, either temporarily or permanently to seek livelihoods pushed in many instances by mounting debts and fallow lands. In a rapidly urbanizing country like India rural-urban migration is the faster type of migration as migrants choose to work in non-agricultural related occupations where wages are much higher. Though 69 per cent of India’s population live in rural areas, 2011 census data reveals that for the first time, India’s urban population has grown faster than the rural population since the last census. 31 per cent of India’s population is currently urban compared to 28 per cent as revealed in the 2001 census.

1.2 Feminization of migration

The feminization of migration is one of the most significant recent changes in the pattern of internal population mobility. Recent migration research shows that female migrants constituted roughly half of all internal migrants in developing countries. The large scale migration of women to urban areas is neither recent nor is it a common occurrence. Contemporary female mobility is now open to single as well as married women and offers involvement in new economic roles that help in earning income as well as other less tangible but real benefits in the form of access to
information and introduction networks. Migration streams in India have been dominated by females. Women constituted 66.5 per cent of total migration flows (duration 0-9 years). Women normally migrate over short distances. A look at the rural to urban migration during the last ten years reveals that males and females were almost equal in number. This is mainly attributed to associational migration. Economic causes are considered to be relatively unimportant in India (Bose 1973:142). Since 1980’s however, feminist and gender perspective have been intensively incorporated into migration studies (Fawcett, Khoo and Smith; Chant 1992). It is argued that the male bias and female self perception of their gender role, have led to undervaluation of women’s role as workers (Singh 1984).

1.2.1 Implications of feminization of migration

Rural-urban migration of women is not an isolated phenomenon and needs to be examined in the light of counterbalancing trends and opportunities in rural areas. Feminization of labor migration can be attributed to the increasing demand for female workers. These labor market changes have had impact on rural-urban migration. Many middle and upper class women migrate to cities for improving their educational credentials and to get suitable employment. Earlier the focus of migration research was on males. Male selective migration is gradually being replaced by family migration where both the male and female migrate irrespective of the fact whether female employment opportunity is reckoned or not at the time of making a move. While many women accompany or join family members, increasing number of female migrants migrate alone. They are the principal wage earners for themselves and their families. Female migration can indirectly help alleviate poverty by reducing poverty in the home. Research studies on migration claim to be gender neutral but they end up utilizing models of migration based on men. Women, if considered, are treated as dependents and their contributions ignored. Micro-level case studies, however, indicate high levels of rural-urban migration among females for reasons of employment.

1.3 Research Problem

In India an increasing proportion of women are moving towards urban areas for reasons other than marriage. One important aspect is the domination of young
women in migration streams. Since women are a highly heterogeneous group, their employment should not only be understood as poverty-reducing strategy, but also as a strategy for economic diversification, upward mobility and desire for personal growth and autonomy. In this context a gender perspective on migration tries to examine the gender-specific causes of migration, the push and pull factors that influence migration of women and the consequent gains. An emerging pattern in internal migration over the years is that while male migrants tend to be concentrated in the production and construction sectors, female workers are found working in tertiary sector activities. In the trade and commerce sector, young migrant women are predominantly visible in the mushrooming urban retail units as sales persons, shop assistants and related workers. The retail sector constitutes a significant part of the tertiary sector and has opened up employment opportunities for women. Gender segregation and segmentation and other such exploitative practices are also a feature common to this sector. All these factors are prevalent in Kerala also. It was, therefore, considered necessary to analyze the causes and consequences of female migration and the problems faced by migrant women employees in this sector.

1.4 Research Questions

In the above circumstances certain questions need to be answered.

1. What is the selectivity of the migration process?
2. What are the important push factors in female migration?
3. What are the important pull factors in women migration?
4. Do variables like age, marital status, education, social group affect the income status of women in the post-migration phase?
5. Does migration improve, worsen, or does it have neutral impact on the standard of living of women migrants?
6. Do the employees in the retail trade sector receive wages and other benefits in accordance with minimum labor standards?

An in-depth study is required to answer these questions.
1.5 Research Gap

Based on the review of literature it is found that there are very few sector-specific studies on migration in general and female mobility in particular. Little attention, however, has been given to the causes and nature of female rural-urban migration in Kerala and the economic and social dimensions of the same. The available studies based on macro-level data are severely constrained in explaining the real factors. Only micro-level studies based on individual characteristics would provide a clear understanding of female migration.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

- To study the socio-economic background of women migrants.
- To identify the factors responsible (social as well as economic) for female migration.
- To examine changes in income and standard of living (in terms of family remittances, savings, health status etc) after migration.
- To study the socio-economic problems faced by women employees in the retail trade sector.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theories devised to explain rural-urban migration. Some of them are Lee’s theory of migration, Lewis model, Todaro’s model, Livelihood Strategy Approach etc. In the present study, however a combination of the push-pull theory and human capital theory is used. Migration could therefore be a livelihood option for those who cannot gain their income from agriculture or diversification to off-farm income-earning activities. Socio-economic differences have a major impact on the composition of livelihood portfolios. The choice to migrate is influenced by age, marital status, education, occupation, social group, monthly income and number of family members.

The second objective is analyzed within the framework of Lee’s push-pull theory. Lee developed “a general schema into which a variety of spatial movements can be placed”. He divides forces exerting influence on migration perception into “pluses and minuses”. The former pull individuals towards them, the latter tend to
drive them away. There are “zeros” also, in which the competing forces are more or less, evenly balanced. These forces associated with the area of origin and the area of destination are, in their own way governed by personal factors “which affect individual thresholds and facilitate or retard migration”. The third objective is studied within the broad framework of the human capital theory.

1.8 Methodology

The present investigation was undertaken with the main purpose of analyzing the economic and social dimensions of rural-urban migration of women employees in Trade and Commerce in Kochi city. A general description of the methods followed is given below.

1.8.1 Area of the study

The study is based on a primary survey of migrant women employees in the retail trade sector. Kochi was selected as the area of study because it is the epicenter of retail trade. Kochi is the commercial capital as well as the largest urban agglomeration in Kerala, consisting of the Municipal Corporation of Kochi, adjoining municipalities and Grama Panchayats (Kochi CDP, 2010). Kochi originated as a modest market town but gradually emerged as one of the eleven major ports of India and as the nerve center of commercial and industrial activities. Moreover it is the shopping hub in central Kerala. The major retail ventures in Kochi are in gold, textiles, cosmetics, furniture, home accessories and appliances. This retail boom created a demand for workers especially in the textiles, jewelry, cosmetics and food retail outlets. It is, therefore an attractive destination for migration from nearby villages for trade and employment. The process of migration is considered to be largely the consequence of urbanization. The increased urbanization has attracted a significant proportion of migrant population from time to time. The large-scale projects already in progress and those envisaged in this area will decide whether there will be migration from other areas to the city. The total migration component as a percentage of total population is estimated to be 22.6 per cent (2021) and 29.6 per cent (2026) (Kochi CDP, 2010).
1.8.2 Selection of Sector

Retail Trade was selected as the sector for study because the workforce categorization reveals that 22.3 per cent in Kochi corporation area is engaged in Trade and Commerce (Kochi CDP, 2010). According to the CSO’s NIC classification, retail trade comes under division 47 of section G. The sub sectors of retail trade selected were:

a) Retail Sale of Department Stores  
b) Retail Sale of Readymade garments  
c) Retail Sale of Jewellery and Imitation Jewellery  
d) Retail Sale of Perfumery and Cosmetics  
e) Retail Sale of Footwear  
f) Retail Sale of Medicines

1.8.3 Selection of Sample Shops

The shopping areas were selected after discussions with the concerned officials and authorities. The main areas covered in the sample were M. G. Road, Panampilly Nagar, Convent Junction and Pallimukku. A list of registered shops in the four identified areas was obtained from the District Labor Office. Four per cent of the 6067 shops i.e. 243 shops were selected after discussions and deliberations with the concerned officials. The shops were then divided into three strata, namely, big, medium and small based on the Kerala Shops and Establishments Amendment Act, 2014. According to this act, big shops are those which employ more than twenty people, while medium shops have between six and twenty employees. Small shops employ less than ten people. The number of shops in each of these strata was selected using the non-proportionate random sampling technique. This method was selected because in the course of data collection it was found that big shops employed more women. Stratifying the number of shops in terms of a few retail stores that have a very large proportion of women employees was the reason why 40 per cent, 35 per cent and 25 per cent of respondents were selected from big, medium and small shops respectively.
Table 1.1 Percentage of shops according to size

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Big</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of shops</td>
<td>30(12.3)</td>
<td>118(48.6)</td>
<td>95(39)</td>
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(Figures in brackets indicate percentages)

1.8.4 Selection of Respondents

The study is limited to women employees in the retail sector. Since a separate list of women employees is not available with the District Labor Office, the respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique. Use of this strategy provides a means of accessing vulnerable and impenetrable groups. In the course of data collection, the researcher found that women dominated as salesgirls and billing staff. A few male employees were also interviewed informally for purposes of comparison. Thus 303 respondents constituted the sample of the study. The researcher has included migrant residents and migrant workers in the sample. Migrants are defined as those for whom the last usual place of Residence (UPR) is different from the present place of enumeration. In the present study a migrant has been considered as anyone who has migrated to Kochi within the last twenty years.

Table 1.2 Percentage of respondents according to size of shop

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Big</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>106(40)</td>
<td>122(35)</td>
<td>75(25)</td>
</tr>
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(Figures in brackets indicate percentages)

1.8.5 Period of Study

The primary survey was conducted during the period of June 2014- September 2014.

1.8.6 Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected using a structured interview schedule which was administered to the employees. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect
Data. Data collection was a difficult task because of the suspicious attitude of the shop management. Direct personal interviews were conducted to ensure greater accuracy.

1.8.7 Analysis

1.8.7.1 Causes and consequences of female rural-urban migration

The major driving forces behind migration are better employment opportunities and a better standard of living away from home. In explaining migration across space, income differentials are taken as motivating factors in moving people from low-income areas to relatively high-income areas (Harris & Todaro, 1970). In order to study the social and economic dimensions of female rural-urban migration, the following methods were employed.

1. Data on personal, social and economic characteristics of women migrants working in retail establishments were collected. This data was subject to percentage analysis, regression analysis and scaling methodology.
2. In-depth interviews were held with a number of respondents.

1.8.7.2 Selection of factors to measure the reasons for rural-urban migration

The second objective of the study necessitated the selection of the dependent variable, rural-urban migration, which was analyzed using the factors responsible for migration. Lee’s push-pull theory is applied to analyze the socio-economic factors responsible for migration. The list of factors selected in the study was grouped into two sub headings as

1. Push factors
2. Pull factors

With regard to these factors, a list was prepared based on the review of literature.

**Push factors were identified as:**

1) Lack of adequate income
2) Lack of non-agricultural jobs in the place of origin
3) Large size of household  
4) Small size of landholding  
5) To earn for dowry or marriage purposes

**Pull factors were identified as:**

1) Got a job in the city  
2) Marriage  
3) Promise of better job opportunities  
4) Higher expected income  
5) Existence of family networks  
6) Attraction of city life  
7) Better educational facilities for children.

Empirical studies on rural-urban migration provide evidence that the above push and pull factors are important in the case of female migration also. Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance both sets of factors. Both the push and pull factors were analyzed using the percentage analysis. This was done to understand the relative strength of the various reasons of migration.

**1.9 Impact of migration**

The third objective of the study was to examine the impact of migration on income and standard of living. NSSO data reveals that migrant women are better placed than non-migrant women in terms of employment in India i.e. they receive positive returns from migration. An attempt, is therefore made to test whether migration positively affects women’s income status. The broad theoretical framework utilized in the first part of the analysis is the Mincer’s Human Capital model (1974) of schooling decisions in partial equilibrium. According to this model, log wage earnings are proportional to schooling and experience. The model implies that the opportunity cost of one more year of schooling is foregone earnings. This implies that the benefit has to be commensurate with these foregone earnings, and thus lead to a proportional increase in earnings in the future. Mincer’s model is utilized to understand whether there is any improvement in income after migration. In this model income is taken as the dependent variable while years of schooling and years of experience are taken as
the independent variables. An attempt is made to find out if these variables are significant in influencing income of the migrant women employees in the post-migration phase. For this purpose, regression equations before and after migration were fitted. The model was further extended by including two additional variables viz category of employer and size of shop. These variables were considered since it is possible that they influence the income after migration of women employed in the trade and commerce sector. Regression functions were also fitted for the extended model before and after migration. Education and experience which is human capital was already included in the first model. Socio-economic and gender differences, therefore, affect access to the different forms of capital and consequently influence both the decision to consider migration as a livelihood option as well as the avenues of employment/income after migration.

To understand improvement in standard of living and income after migration, qualitative responses were also collected using the scaling technique. Statements with respect to family remittances, savings, health status, structure, area, facilities in the house, education of children, average food consumption and debt bondage were also asked. A five-point scale was employed and respondents were requested to tick the relevant option. Measurement was done by asking single questions with the following multiple responses: (a) Improved very much (b) Improved marginally (c) Remains the same (d) Affected marginally (e) Affected very much. Scores were given in descending order beginning from five to one. Average scores were computed for each of these factors and a combined average score was also calculated to understand if there was any improvement in living standard in the post-migration period.

1.10 Tools for analysis

The study makes use of statistical tools like percentages, averages, scaling technique and regression analysis.
1.11 Research Design

RURAL – URBAN MIGRATION OF WOMEN – A STUDY OF EMPLOYEES IN TRADE AND COMMERCE OF KOCHI CITY

STUDY IS EXPLANATORY AND ANALYTICAL IN NATURE

NON-PROPORTIONATE RANDOM SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

SELECTION OF SHOPS

STRATIFIED RANDOM SAMPLING

SELECTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES

PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

FACTORS FOR MIGRATION

IMPACT OF MIGRATION

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN MIGRANT

PUSH

PULL

INCOME

STANDARD OF LIVING

PRE-MIGRATION

POST MIGRATION

REMITTANCES, SAVINGS, AVERAGE FOOD CONSUMPTION, HOUSING, DEBTS

COMBINED AVERAGE SCORE

FIVE POINT SCALE
1.12 Scope and Significance of the study

The present study focuses on female migration to Kochi, where Trade and Commerce sector provide better employment prospects. Retail trade is the focus of the present study. Most women are employed as salesgirls in this sector. A number of studies conducted in different regions across the globe revealed that there exists both occupational segregation and wage discrimination in this sector. This is also true to a certain extent in Kerala. Exploitation is acute in this field. Existing labor laws pertaining to social security, welfare and working conditions are being violated. In a situation where unemployment is high and alternative job opportunities are few, any attempts to bargain for better conditions would lead to retrenchment. In this context, it was considered important to study the conditions of women, especially migrants, in the trade and commerce sector. Hence, the findings of the study could be useful for policymakers to frame appropriate strategies aimed at promoting the interests of the women employees in this sector.

1.13 Limitations of the study

This micro-level research is explanatory and analytical in nature. The striking absence of studies on female migration has led to scarcity of literature on migrant women. This has definitely limited the present study in terms of analyzing the specific causes of female migration.

The absence of a single theoretical framework which can include all the hypothetically relevant factors in female migration and can specify the interaction with each other in an empirically testable framework is another limiting factor in this study.

There is no readily available sample framework for the selection of respondents in this study. Data therefore, had to be collected using non-probability sampling methods.

The present study was undertaken as a part of the requirements of the doctoral degree program of the researcher. There were constraints of time, delay and difficulty in
collecting data and therefore, some issues could not be explored in greater depth and in a more comprehensive way as desired and expected.

1.14 Chapter scheme

The first chapter furnishes an introduction and presents the research question and problem, objectives, scope and limitations. Review of literature is presented in the second chapter. Chapter three gives a macro picture of the rural-urban migration in India with special reference to Kerala. The trends and patterns in women migration – a special reference to trade and commerce is dealt with in the fourth chapter. Chapter five deals with the socio-economic background and factors for migration. The working conditions and working environment are dealt with in the third chapter. The impact of migration on income and standard of living and the problems faced by women employees are presented in the seventh chapter. The major findings and conclusions are summarized in chapter eight.

1.15 Glossary

Internal Migration: Permanent or semi-permanent movement of individuals within a particular country.

Rural-urban migration: The movement of people from rural villages, towns and farms to urban centers.

Migrant: A migrant is defined as those for whom the last usual place of residence (UPR) is different from the present place of enumeration.

Pull factors: Attractions that draw migrants to a certain place, such as a pleasant climate and employment or educational opportunities.

Push factors: Incentives for potential migrants to leave a place, such as a harsh climate, economic recession, or political turmoil.

Laborer/Worker/Employee: A person who is actively involved in working in a firm/enterprise for the purpose of earning remuneration.
Working conditions: Terms and conditions of employment which include wages, nature of work, hours of work, welfare, occupational health and safety.

Social security measures: It is a periodical payment offered by the employer to the employee, apart from the wages, to protect a worker from a state of distress due to accidents, illness, old age, medical care etc.