

Lijy Dominic “International male migration and its impact on left behind women in Kerala – A study of Malappuram district.” Thesis. Research and Post Graduate Department of Economics, St. Thomas’ College (Autonomous), Thrissur, University of Calicut, 2021.

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**Design of the study**

# CHAPTER – 1

## DESIGN OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

People used to move from one place to another since human life started. This movement of people from one place to another is simply known as migration. In early period people migrated in search of food and shelter. It is a universal phenomenon for people to move from one place to another corresponding to their needs and wants. Various political, geographical, demographical, climatic and socio-economic conditions induce people to migrate. Among these factors economic factors plays major role in migration. A search for better life and economic opportunities outside a region is the reason behind migration. Migration can be voluntary or compulsory, internal or external, individual or collective, legal or illegal, but in economics mainly internal and international migration only matters. It is a complex phenomenon, which not only includes economic factors, but also social, political, geographical and psychological elements are imbedded in it. In general, it can be said that economic factors are always the major reason for migration. Migration is a demographic phenomenon but it is different from other demographic phenomenon like birth and death. Migration is a process rather than an event ( Rajan and Zachariah, 2018). Migration characterized the evolution, growth and the spread of human race across the world. Migration existed in the past, exists in the present and will continue in the future. Though it is a worldwide phenomenon, the reasons for migration, length of migration, frequency of return to place of origin and ties to home community are different for each and every migrant (Massey1990, Lucas 1997, Goldscheider 1987).

Modern technological development in transport and communication made international migration easier, cheaper and faster. There are 272 million immigrants in the whole world and among them 17.5million are from India which is the largest among different countries of the world (World Migration Report – 2020). United Arab Emirates is the major destination of Indians whereas USA stands first in hosting 53 million international migrants. (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs-2019). In case of the inflow of remittance also India ranks first with 82203 million US\$ (World Bank Report -2019).

India has a long history of labour migration across the world. In the pre independence period, due to the abolition of slavery in Britain, Indian workers migrated to work in plantations and mines in the European colonies and this came to an end soon after the First World War (Thomas Issac, 1997). In the post-independence period, mainly the technically skilled and qualified professionals permanently migrated to industrially developed countries like USA, Canada, UK, Australia etc. which continued till 1970s (Nayyar.D, 1989).

“Migration has provided the single most dynamic factor in the otherwise dismal scenario of Kerala in the last quarter of the 20th century. Kerala has entered the millennium with some cheer in many of its homes, thanks to migration and the economic returns that it brings. In Kerala, migration must have contributed more to poverty alleviation than any other factor including agrarian reforms, trade union activities and social welfare legislation”(Zachariah and Rajan, 2004).The above observation made by the Kerala Migration Study depicts clearly what migration to Kerala is.

Among the different states in India, Kerala with only 1.2 percent of geographical area and 2.7 percent of total population of India stands first in inward remittance. According to the survey of Reserve Bank of India in 2016-17, Kerala accounted with 19 percent with top in inward remittances followed by Maharashtra (16.7 percent), Karnataka (15 percent) and Tamil Nadu (8 percent). Total remittance to the state was Rs.85092 crores in 2017 (RBI-Survey of inward remittances for 2016-17). According to KMS, remittance to Kerala constitutes 19.3 percent of Kerala’s NSDP (Kerala Migration Survey, 2018). Where as in the case of out flow of labour Kerala holds fourth position in 2014. (Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs-Annual report 2019-20).

History of large- scale migration from Kerala starts from 1970s. Due to the rise of oil price and huge investments, Gulf countries required huge unskilled and semi-skilled laborers in their construction sector. Kerala suffering from unemployment and poverty took this opportunity as a blessing and huge unemployed youths of Kerala started migrating to gulf countries. This large scale migration along with flow of remittances paved the way for developmental activities in the state. Thus, it is clear that emigration shapes Kerala’s economy by its remittances.

Among the 14 districts of Kerala Malappuram was one among the backward district with high population. But now according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's survey-2019, Malappuram district is one of the fastest growing cities in the world where Kozhikode and Kollam includes in the top ten list with 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> rank, followed by Trissur with 13<sup>th</sup> rank. No other Indian city is included in the top 15 in the list. Malappuram recorded a 44.1% rise in population in 2015 to 2020. A region considered as urbanized when 75 % of population are engaged in non-farming sector and larger the number of municipalities. The number of municipalities in Malappuram district had increased from 7 in 2001 to 12 in 2011. In migration Malappuram stands first in the number of emigrants and the flow of remittance. Kollam, Kozhikode, and Trissur are the other districts followed by Malappuram in number of migrants and amount of remittance. Thus it is clear that migration and remittance had a major role in the socio economic development and thereby urbanization of the area.

Migration has many socio economic benefits as well as challenges. Male migration leaving families at the origin is a predominant form of migration in many African, Latin American and Asian countries (Population Report, 1998). Little attention was given to the micro level impacts of international migration and remittance on the economic and social behavior of left behind women. They are one of the major hidden vulnerable groups who were deeply affected by international migration, but literature is very scarce on those women who are not migrating themselves but are deeply affected by staying behind to look after the rest of the family (Hugo 2000). International migration is considered as a male phenomenon but women who were not really migrants are fundamentally affected due to the migration of their male counterparts (Gulati.L, 1993). It is a challenge as well as an opportunity for women who are left behind, in the society where women occupy only secondary status compared to males. The enhancement of capabilities of women not only increases her own freedom and well-being but it also positively affects the life of others who are associated with her especially her family members (Sen, 2001). Migration affects the traditional gender roles and can influence the process of women empowerment directly and indirectly. The present study is an attempt to link international migration with empowerment of left behind women through its socio-economic impact at micro-household level.

## **1.2 Link between international migration and women empowerment**

The concept of empowerment has a unique implication when applied to women. This is because women are not just another disadvantaged group, but also a category that cut across every social group. Women empowerment is the process through which women acquire the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them, which establishes the importance of the “process” through which women progress towards an improved condition (Kabeer.N, 1999). Empowerment is the ability to make choices and one is disempowered when they are denied to make choice. The process of empowerment begins at women’s individual consciousness and become externalized through physical mobility, awareness, and acquires increased autonomy in decision making and therefore a strong role in the household matters. Thus they gain a greater self-esteem and a meaningful participation in society. UNDP has clearly stated that; among people who do not move but can be affected by movement are the families of movers at places of origin. By the emigration of the husbands women get an opportunity to become externalized through physical mobility, awareness, decision making power, and a space for household financial management through the inflow of remittances. Thus international migration can be utilized as a potential for many women towards empowerment. Empowerment increases capabilities of people that enable them to access larger opportunities in life. Since independence government of India has been making various efforts to empower women. But still Indian women lag behind in status. State government also took many measures to improve their situation. In Malappuram only 4.90 percent of people are staying with their family abroad and 95.09 percent of working migrant’s lives alone without family with them which is highest compared to other district (Pravasi Malayali Census-2013). Thus for the study Malappuram district is best suited in understanding the link between international migration and women empowerment.

## **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Large scale migration from Kerala to gulf countries started during 1970s. Most of the males are from poor households so they migrated alone, leaving their families at the origin. From 1970s itself many studies about the impact of international migration on Kerala economy were done. One of the few studies was about the socio-economic and

psychological conditions of left behind women done by Leela Gulati during nineties and found that separation from husbands soon after marriage had made them difficult to manage the responsibilities and workloads and this made them psychologically and emotionally weak at their young age. But at the same time many of them gradually become more independent and strong enough to overcome the situation. After 20 years now the socio economical scene in Kerala has drastically changed. The communication facilities have highly improved and the frequency of communication and visits of migrants to their home also increased. The travel and communication cost reduced compared to the earlier period.

The research problem attempted in the present study is to assess at what extent international migration and resulting remittances has affected the empowerment of left behind women in Malappuram district. Thus present study is an attempt to link international migration with empowerment of left behind women through its socio-economic impact at micro-household level. The study examines the struggles and achievements of the women who are left behind due to international migration of their husbands. This study about left behind women is focused in Malappuram district because as stated earlier it is having largest number of male migrants. For better understanding; the study is attempted as a comparison of women in migrant households with women in non-migrant households. Since independence government of India has been making various efforts to empower women. But still Indian women lag behind in status. State government also took many measures to improve their situation.

#### **1.4 The Study Area**

Malappuram district was one of the most back districts in Kerala. But now the socio – economic condition of Malappuram district mainly in the field of social infrastructures like education, health and employment improved a lot. Due to the district’s impressive performance in economic and social infrastructure Malappuram district is now one of the fastest developing regions in the world according to the survey published by EIU (Economists Intelligence Unit – Survey, 2019). Four world’s fastest-growing urban areas are in our state - Kerala and Malappuram is in the top of the list, followed by Kozhikode, Kollam and Thrissur with fourth, tenth and thirteenth positions in the world respectively. It is interesting to notice the fact that

these four districts of Kerala are having largest number of emigrants too. Thus we can acknowledge with definite assurance that migration and remittance has contributed much to the unprecedented socio economic development in Kerala. In spite of a huge male out migration in Kerala, micro level studies on the impact of male migration on the left behind women especially in Malappuram district are very limited. Consumption, saving and investment increased leading to vast changes in poverty and income distribution in the district.

Malappuram district was the origin of the largest number of emigrants in Kerala in 2018; it also had the highest number of emigrants in previous years according to Kerala Migration Survey. It ranks first among the 14 districts of Kerala in the number of emigrants. The intensity and incidence of migration has been higher in Malappuram district as compared to other districts in Kerala (Nair 1986, Prakash 1998, Zachariah et al.1999). Unfortunately no single study was conducted about the left behind women in Malappuram district in this new scenario of social media and communication revolution. This paper attempts to fill this void and tries to explore how women manage in this current period in the absence of their husbands. Thus in this current scenario a study about left behind women in Malappuram district is relevant. The study highlights how international male migration has changed the role of women within the household and in the society leading to her own empowerment.

### **1.5 Scope and significance of the study**

During the 1990s a major shift occurred in migration theory. Thus the focus of migration decisions shifted from individual to the family. Thus family as an important economic unit entered into migration theory. Family is one of the crucial agents behind an individual decision and motivation to migrate. Role and position of women within the family is reflected in their activities and it also affects other family members further it affects the whole society in which she is involved. But unfortunately family and women left behind has been ignored in migration studies. Here is an attempt to analyze the impacts of international male migration on left behind family especially the left behind of migrants.

The socio economic change along with the technological improvements in communication has changed the picture from that of the past. Now land phones are



replaced by smart phones. Social Medias like what's app, face book, etc. became very popular. People got more communication exposure than ever before. This study also enquires whether improvement in communication reduces emotional and psychological stress of the left behind women leading to a better position.

People move from one country to another for better economic opportunity for themselves and for their family. Male head in the family migrates with the hope of a better standard of living for their family left behind. But what is the reality? Do the left behind become well off? Or worse? The aim of the study is to find whether women become empowered or not, being left behind by their husbands.

This study has its own uniqueness as it is an attempt to link international migration with women empowerment. From the available literature on the topic of impacts international migration on the left behind women it is clear that there is no single study conducted exclusively on women in Malappuram district of Kerala. The area selected for the present study is Malappuram district which is having highest number of international male migrants and flow of remittances with a large pool of left behind women. Does this large international male migration and resulting inflow of remittances can be utilized as a potential for women empowerment? To utilize this situation towards a development potential for empowerment of women is the thought of the study.

In order to have a better understanding about the opportunities of the left behind women, women from non-migrant households are also considered. The socio economic and psychological well-being of both categories of women was analyzed. This comparative analysis helps to get a better picture about women in different situations. The findings of the study will help in understanding the positive and negative impacts of male migration on women left behind. This will help in framing new policies for the betterment of migrants and their left behind wives. The study is crucial not only for providing a basis for rational in planning matters relating to women empowerment but also in dealing with the feminine problems and assessing them and making a transition, to a better way of life. Hope the study provides exciting opportunity to advance the knowledge and scope of research in the particular area towards the wellbeing of left behind women.

## **1.6 Objectives**

The main objective of the present study is to examine the impact of international migration and inflow of remittances on the status of left behind women in Malappuram district, with this objective in mind, before examining the impacts of international male migration on left behind women, international male migration in the study area is identified. After that we move on to the left behind women. Following are the specific objectives set for the study;

1. To examine the extent and pattern of international male migration in Kerala.
2. To analyze the socio economic and psychological wellbeing of women in migrant and non-migrant households.
3. To assess the impact of international male migration on the left behind women.
4. To identify the factors affecting women empowerment in the study area.

## **1.7 Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the study is that,

There is a significant association between international male migration and empowerment of left behind women in the study area.

## **1.8 Data source and methodology**

In this section, the sources of data, the procedure for collection of data, the sampling design used in the study are discussed.

### ***1.8.1 Data source***

The study depends on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data mainly used in the study to find the first objective. For this Kerala Migration Studies conducted by Centre for Development Studies- Trivandrum, Pravasi Malayali Census conducted by NORKA in association with Economics and Statistics Department- Kerala, Census Reports, World Bank data, Kerala Economic Reviews, International Migration Reports, Malappuram district hand book, Panchayat level statistics, Panchayat and Municipality development reports etc. were used.

All the other three objectives of the study were analyzed using primary data. The primary data collected by sample survey using pre tested standardized questionnaire is the main source of data for the study. The survey was conducted during 2018. It took six months to complete the data collection.

Malappuram district from 14 districts of Kerala was purposively selected for the study. Because it has the largest number of international male migrants in Kerala, and thus largest in the number of left behind women, so it was selected for the study. The district comprises of 12 Municipalities representing urban population and 94 Grama Panchayats representing rural population.

A multi stage random sampling technique was used for selecting the sample households.

In the first stage 4 Municipalities from 12 Municipalities and 6 Grama Panchayats from 94 Grama Panchayats were selected at random.

In the second stage one ward from each selected municipalities and selected Grama Panchayat were selected at random. Thus we got 10 wards.

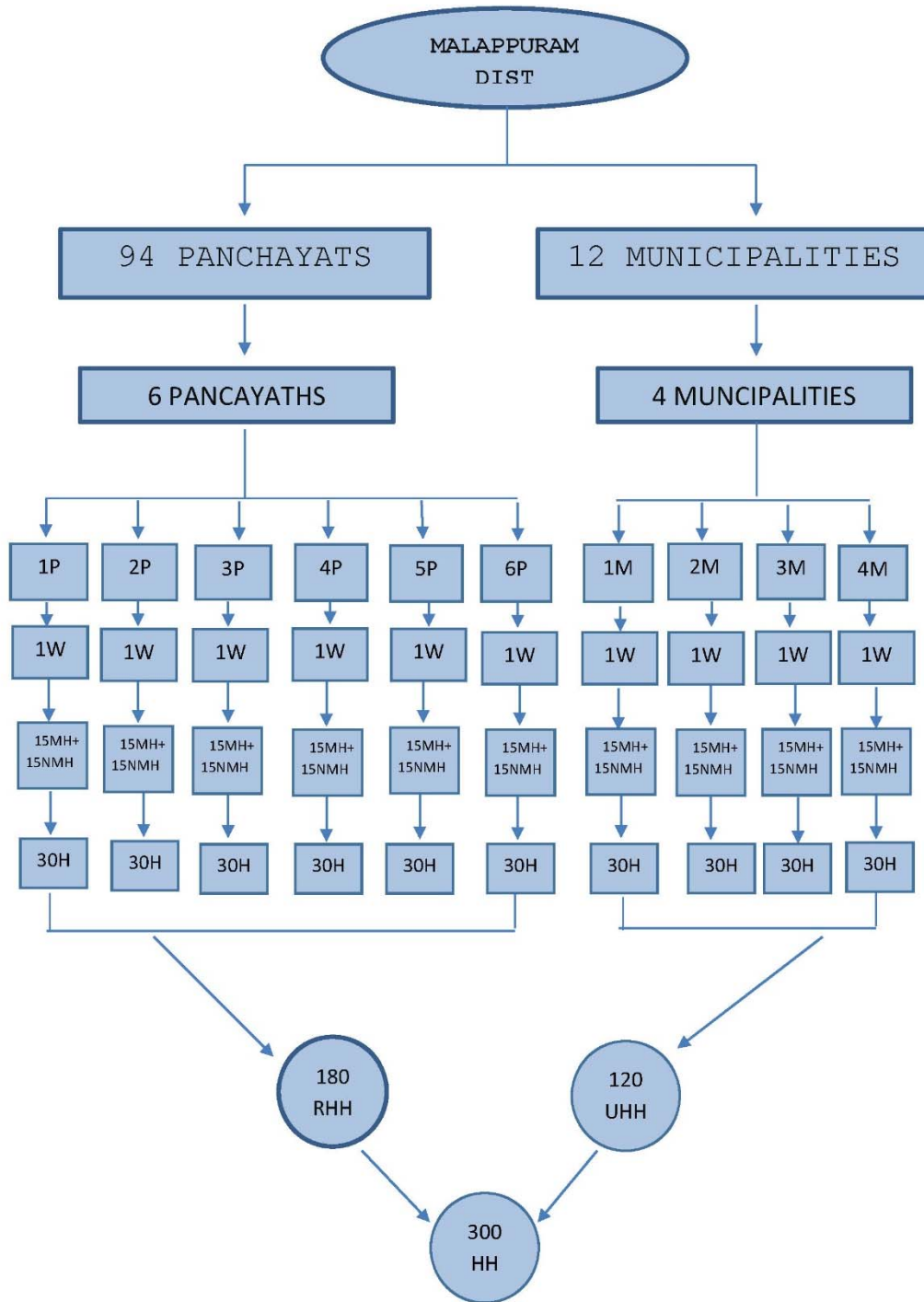
In the third stage after listing out the total households in each selected wards, both migrant households and non-migrant households were separated, then from each category 15 households were selected randomly. Thus from each ward, 15 migrant households and 15 non migrant households were selected. Thus total 30 households from each ward were selected.

Thus a sample of 150 migrant household and 150 non migrant households were taken. And the total number of households covered in the survey is 300. In that there are 180 rural samples and 120 urban samples.

The respondents in this study are women. Two categories of women are taken in the study. Those who live together with their husbands in non-migrant households and the other category are those women who live alone in a migrant household. The latter category women are termed as left behind women; they are left behind by their husband's due to international male migration. Though they are the focus group in the study, but for the proper understanding women who live with husband in non-migrant

households are also considered equally because it will help us to form a clear picture about the different situations and environment of both respondents and it will serve in drawing appropriate conclusions.

**1.8.2 Sample Design**



### ***1.8.3 Methods used***

Quantitative statistical techniques such as comparison of means, frequencies and standard deviation along with descriptive tools such as ***t test***, ***Z test*** and ***Chi-square test*** etc. were used to find the statistical independence in matters between the migrant and non- migrant households.

The data analyzed through simple statistical techniques like averages, ratios, percentages etc. and various other statistical tests like ***Mann-Whitney U test***, ***Wilcoxon Signed Rank test***, ***Karl Pearson's correlation***, ***Spearman's Rank Correlation***, were used to test the statistical significance of the association between variables and to validate the hypothesis. ***Kolmogrov Smirnov Test*** used to test whether the scores follows normal distribution or not. ***Least Significant Difference test*** was used in pair wise comparison. For presenting data, different types of diagrams, tables etc. were used. The broad aim of the study is to examine how far husband's international migration can be a potential source for empowerment of left behind wife. A ***Multiple Linear Regression*** analysis was used to find the association of dependent variable with independent variables. For this an ***Empowerment index*** was prepared by the performance details in decision making, mobility, financial management and spouse consultancy of the wives in the sample households. This Empowerment index is taken as dependent variable in the multiple regression. Migration status of the respondent, Family type, age of respondent, employment status of the respondent, education of respondent's husband, employment status of respondent's mother, along with respondent's psychological wellbeing and social participation are taken as independent variables.

### ***1.8.4 Pilot survey***

A well- structured interview schedule was prepared scientifically and a pilot survey was conducted to test the quality of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was tested on 20 women respondents equally from migrant and non-migrant households. The data was analyzed and verified. Some modification was made by consulting with experts in this area and thus household survey for the collection of primary data was conducted using modified pre-tested questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 3 sections. First section contains the general information about the respondents. Second

section deals with the socio-economic and psychological matters of the respondents. The psychological wellbeing - 18 items is a standardized questionnaire developed by Carol D. Ryff and Keyes has been used in the survey. The third section carries questions related to the investigation of impact of migration on left behind women and for the measurement of empowerment status of the respondents.

### ***1.8.5 Definition of terms used***

#### **International migration:**

International migration is the movement of people from one country to another.

#### **Migrant household:**

A household with minimum one male married member working abroad for five years or more and continuing there at the time of the survey is considered as migrant household. The wife of the emigrant is left alone at the origin.

#### **Non-migrant household:**

A household from where no one had ever gone abroad for employment at the time of the survey is regarded as non-migrant household. Here the husband and wife live together.

#### **Family:**

Family is a unit of two persons united by marriage, lives together with their children.

#### **Nuclear family:**

Nuclear family is simply defined as a social unit with a mother, father and children. Ordinary nuclear family consists of parent's couple and their children. In the present study, husband, wife, and the unmarried children living together is a nuclear family.

#### **Joint family/ Extended family:**

The joint family consists of nucleus of blood relatives surrounded by a number of married persons and their children. In this study joint family consist with parents and their married children living together.

**Emigrant:**

Emigrants are defined as persons who are usual members of household in Kerala, but living outside India for job for five years or more and continuing there at the time of the survey is considered as an emigrant or an international migrant.

**Left behind women / women in migrant households:**

Wife's whose husbands have migrated to other countries for employment. (Wives of emigrants). All those women whose husband had migrated for less than 5 years are considered as left behind women in the study. They are represented as women in migrant households.

**Women with husbands / women in non-migrant households:**

Wife's whose husbands are staying along with them. They are represented as women in non-migrant households.

**Return Emigrants:**

Return emigrants are defined as persons who have lived outside India for at least six months for work or some other purpose.

**Non-resident Keralites:**

Non-resident Keralite is the addition of both emigrants and return emigrants.

**Origin:**

The area from which a move is made by the migrant is referred to as the area of origin. This is the home place of emigrant.

**Destination:**

The area in which a move terminates by the migrant is called the area of destination.

**Immigration:** Immigration is the movement of people into one country from another for temporary or permanent settlement.

**Emigration:**

Emigration is the act of leaving a country to another for temporary or permanent settlement.

**Out-migration:**

Out migration is the act of leaving an area to another for temporary or permanent settlement, but it is within the same country.

**In-migration:**

In-migration is the movement of people into an area from another for temporary or permanent settlement, but it is within the same country.

**Gross migration:**

Sum of in-migration and out-migration is gross migration.

**Net migration:**

Net migration is the difference between in-migration and out-migration.

**Remittance:**

Remittances are the share of foreign based earnings sent by emigrants to their relatives in the home country in the form of cash.

**Well-being:**

A contented state of being happy, healthy and prosperous is well-being.

**Women empowerment:**

Women empowerment is the process through which women acquire the ability to make strategic life choices in the context where this ability was previously denied to them.

**1.9 Plan of the study**

The study presented in seven chapters.

The first chapter, the introductory chapter, gives the research problem, significance and scope and justification for selecting the area of the study is given. A link between male international migration and women empowerment is established. It also states



the objectives, data source and methodology. The plan of the study as well as the definitions of terms used in the study is also mentioned in this chapter.

The second chapter deals with the theoretical background the review of literature leading towards research gap.

The third chapter deals with the extent and pattern of international migration with an over view of the whole world then coming to India and then Kerala lastly Malappuram district.

The fourth chapter gives a picture about the sample area and the socio, economic and psychological profile of the sample respondents.

Fifth chapter is devoted to the analysis of the impact of international male migration on the left behind women. The analysis is based entirely on the primary data collected from 300 samples.

The sixth chapter deals with the various determinants of women empowerment which is analyzed using various statistical methods. A dependent variable - an empowerment index, is constructed by considering the details of decision making, mobility, financial management and inter-spouse consultation of the respondents. Finally an association between dependent and independent variables are established using a multiple linear regression.

The seventh, the last chapter gives the summary and conclusions emerging from the whole study.

