GENDER TRANSFORMATION AND FEMALE MIGRATION

Sri Lankan domestic workers negotiate transnational household relations

A thesis submitted by

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(Sri Lanka)

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In my research, I found a world in which the migration of women leads to both triumphs and tribulations. Even the triumphs are achieved through immense sacrifices by many: mothers, husbands and children. It certainly enabled me to put my sufferings and heartbreaks into perspective and made my task little easier as I felt that, compared to them, I was lucky. Yet it did not reduce the number of sleepless nights with tears spent here in a room alone longing to be with my children. Though it was not the subject of my inquiry, what can compare to the anguish of those mothers who suffer for their children and family? Here I was, suffering myself and making my children suffer for my own sake. I sometimes feel guilty, but I hope that one day, when my children are adults, they will understand better. I don't know

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Dedication

To my daughter Malshi, son Nishith and husband Sisira

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Abstract

Today women are an important group in the transnational migrant work force. They migrate independently and join new gender-based niches in the global labour markets. At present about two-thirds of all part-time and temporary workers are women who provide services such as care-giving and certain services in the leisure industry.

This study examines the social reconstruction of gender and power in the process of migration, with a focus on intra-household relations among a selected group of Sri Lankan migrants who have returned from working in the Middle East as domestic workers. The women come from households belonging to disadvantaged/fringed communities. Many of them were formally part of the productive labour force prior to migration. They are averagely educated, the majority having completed their secondary education, and largely unskilled.

The study explores gender as a construct in government policy, the social organisation of migration and the management of household relations. Particular attention is paid to the transformation of gender identities through the experience of migration and how this in turn can impact on gendered power relations in the household. Although household gender relations are the focus of this study they cannot be understood in isolation or solely within the boundaries of the household, since the household is only one component of a larger system of relationships. The linkages that connect the household with its external systemic environment are many and there are extra-household forces (including transnational links) that operate on each other as well as on the household. Their influence on the household is important to the understanding of household operations. Thus there is an interlinked and interdependent relationship among these different actors.

Migration was found to have an impact on the household primarily in three areas: the organisation of household tasks and relationships, operational forms of the household, and the household power structure. One of the most significant impacts of migration on women in the study area is their enhanced position in the household. This is reflected in their increased involvement in decision-making. The study found that this enhanced position of power in the household is not directly related to resource ownership and control, as is commonly believed. It also showed that migration-led changes in the household have resulted in novel and quite innovative strategies for household operations. Kinship and community networks have been found to play an important role in the migration of these women, resulting in a redefinition of the role of kin group and the value of kinship networks.

Transnational linkages play a major role in the household operations of the migrant women. During the period the migrant is away she maintains close links with the household and family. Migration makes her the provider, in the majority of situations the principal provider, of the household. This leads to some important qualitative changes in her involvement in the household affairs especially in the decision making process. The households adopt new (and innovative) strategies to make her a *working partner* in the family though she is not physically present. Thus migration redefines the household by reformulating its operational relationships and process during the migrant woman is away.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This study contributes to the debate on the international migration of female workers by examining the social reconstruction of gender in the households of migrant women. The field study was carried out in three source communities with a focus on the household of returned migrants who have worked as domestic workers in the Middle East.[1] The three field locations are representative of the disadvantaged communities that traditionally supply migrant women from Sri Lanka to overseas labour markets. The migrant women who were studied were not formally part of the productive labour force prior to migration.[2] They were averagely educated, the majority having completed their secondary education, and largely unskilled. These socioeconomic characteristics are most prevalent among women migrants from Sri Lanka to the Middle East and other locations (see Pinnawala 1997).

Studies on female migrants from Sri Lanka have traditionally focused mainly on two areas. First, there are studies of the economic impact of women's migration, on both the national economy and the household economy (Attanayake 1996). The main concerns of studies in this category are the impact on poverty and unemployment (Attanayake 1996) and on the balance of payment/GDP (Laxman 1993). The second group of studies focus on the social pathology of female migration, namely its negative consequences it on society, on the organisation of the family and on the migrant herself. Studies in this category view both the migrant and society as inevitable 'victims' of migration and uncover problems such as broken marriages, alcoholic husbands and neglected children (Dias 1983, Gunatilake 1986) on the domestic front, as well as abuse and ill-treatment of migrant women in

the host countries. *Gender in migration*[3], i.e. gendered forces of migration such as gendered power and inequality, has only recently started to feature in studies of migration in the Sri Lankan context. This development is associated with women contract worker migrants (see for example Gamburd 2002, Thangarajah 2004).

Women are an important component of the transnational migrant work force. Today, more and more women are migrating as independent migrants. According to various studies, the transnational migrant work force makes up approximately 50 per cent of the total migrant work force (IOM 2003, Zlotnik 2003). However, it is not this numerical increase that is important, but the qualitative transformation of migration, where independent women migrants have become the major players. These qualitative changes are often seen in the gendered labour market dynamics, such as niche job markets for women migrants created by gender-selective demand for labour, especially migrant foreign labour (Castles and Miller 2003). For example, women migrant workers provide services that are not or cannot be provided by their male counterparts. These include services such as care-giving (Kurian 2006, Kurian 2004, Hochschild 2000, Cheng 2003, Anderson 2001a, Demers 2001) and certain services in the leisure industry (Truong 2003a, Truong 2003b). The work available to women migrants is mainly in the hidden and secondary labour market (Anthias 2000). Furthermore, mainly as a result of the above, women migrants are overwhelmingly concentrated in low paid and low status occupations (Anderson 2000b, Dannecker 2005). These women are generally, but not necessarily, less educated,[4] and come mainly from poor and disadvantaged social segments in the source countries. The theoretical and analytical implications of such factors are fundamental in explaining the migration of women.

Apart from independent women migrants becoming major players, other developments have fundamentally affected modern migration. They are important in understanding migration in general, but also in understanding the migration of women in particular. First, modern international migration has been transformed from the straightforward flow of people across national boundaries in the early days to a complex phenomenon of interdependent processes and networks. Migration today is more than just movement of people across physical space. It consists of a series of linkages

connecting different physical spaces (destination and receiving countries) and social relationships (at micro/household and meso/community level) to agencies, structures and forces (economies, political systems) at national level and beyond. Supranational linkages were not included in early studies of international migration. The second development is that the economic factors which used to be the main determinants of migration have now been joined by a list of other complex issues relating to political, moral and legal issues and controls. Thirdly, in recent decades, migration also has lost its European/West/industry-centeredness with the addition of new receiving countries all over the globe (Massey *et al.* 2006). Given these trends, migration can be seen as a global phenomenon with significant regional flows with certain unique characteristics. It is in this context that one needs to understand women's migration and its repercussions on society and theory.

The broad common denominator that unites feminist scholars who study migration is their general agreement on the analytical value of gender in migration. They all accept that the entire migration process is gendered, though they differ in the emphasis they attribute to the gender component as a determinant of migration. This is in turn their recognition of the analytical power of gender in explaining migration. There is therefore variation among migration studies that attempt to explain migration from a gendered perspective (Adler 2004, Grassmuck and Pessar 1991, Mahler and Pessar 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Goldring 2003). Social anthropologists active in the field of migration (Adler 2004) focus on migration experiences and identities, while those who address the political economy of migration are concerned with the various aspects of power dynamics at household level (Mahler and Pessar 2001) or in transnational space (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Others such as Truong (1998) focus on social reproduction as a process and how female migration in reproductive work may be seen as a transfer of reproductive labour from one class, region and country to another. Gender is seen as a dynamic process by all, but the analytical role attributed to it varies from the examination of changes in statuses and roles (George 2000) to gendered migration flows and networks, such as the different aspects of the *care-giving chain* (Hochschild 2000, Chang and Ling 2000, Salazar Parrenás 2000, Lutz 2002, Kurian 2004).

Within the overall discourse on gender and migration, gendered power relations have become an important area of research interest. However, in the literature there is tendency to approach gender power relations from a traditional point of view, with the cause and effect relationship as the main focus, i.e. establishing what causes changes in gendered power relations in a given context (George 2000, Goldring 2003, Lan 2003, Zentgraf 2002). As a result these studies do not attempt to examine how household power relations are negotiated and women's identities are built in migration and post-migration household settings. These aspects are important in understanding the dynamics that shape the core of the power structure in migrant households. In this study these dynamics are not examined as mere changes, but as important processes that contribute to building a new gender order in the migrant household.

1.2 Migration and Gender: Framework of Analysis

Feminist scholarship made a significant contribution to incorporating gender issues into migration studies in the 1970s (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2000) sees this as a three-stage development[5] that started with early attempts to bring women into focus in early androcentric theories and explanations that viewed women migrants only as a group that accompanied migrant males. The rectifications, however, were characterised by somewhat demographic approaches to women's role in migration and failed to understand that gender as a system Contextualises migration for all, not only for women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000). The realisation of the broader role of gender in migration and the importance of the intersectionality of race, class and gender led to more gender-focused analyses in the 1980s and 1990s. This brought in core issues of gender and migration intersect, such as structural positions and power inequalities. The focus in these studies was often class and gender intersect, gender differentiated migration opportunities (Boyd 1989) and differential power relationships (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994) and class and gender intersect (Truong 1998). The latest development, which emerged in the 1990s, sees gender as a constitutive element of migration. It takes gender beyond being a mere determinant of migration at different levels to having a broader influence in all social relationships and forces, and tries to understand how

gender permeates into a wide variety of practices, including daily activities and political and economic structures, and how they in turn affect migration. The above views are broadly shared by others who examine the theoretical development of the gender analysis of migration (Koffman 2004, Santillán 2004) and provide a very good basis for understanding recent developments in the field.

This study is built on the premise that migration involves continuous interactions between human agency, structure (Santillán 2004) and other forces in the external environment. This interaction influences the ways in which a gender order may emerge at community and household levels (Adler 2004). In such environments migrants do not just submit to external forces but are proactive participants in processes that bring together actors and forces at macro, meso and micro levels. In this sense, migration needs to be viewed as series of strategies and responses to developments at these levels. In this sense, migration should not to be understood as a mere *product*, external to individuals and a process beyond their control.

Though there are variations in emphasis and theoretical focus, feminist scholarship mainly focuses on the gender features of political economy and gender ideology structures constructed in the labour market. Young (2004) and Lutz (2002) look at the discursive structures of labour markets with an emphasis on female migrants. Furthermore, different theorists place the emphasis of analysis at different levels: macro level (Truong 1996), micro level forces (Santilán 2004, George 2000) and meso level operations (Lutz 2002, Goldring 2003). The latter group attempts to explain issues within the general areas of migration experience (Shape 2001) and strategies (Kottegoda 2004b). Their major area of focus is understanding changing gender power relations and the empowerment of women (George 2000, Zentgraf 2002).

Though empowerment of women has been a focus of studies of migration (George 2000, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), there is one important issue that has not received adequate attention in previous studies: the linkages between human agency and social structure which are central to any explanation on empowerment. The dialectical relationship between social structure and human agency and how social relationships are adjusted in certain situations is crucial to understanding empowerment. This relationship is linked to the dynamic aspects of empowerment, namely, its variability and

changing nature. Although questions of variability of empowerment in different contexts – either of changes in empowerment over time or of women becoming disempowered as a result of migration – have been addressed (Mahler and Pessar 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000, Safa 1990) these dimensions have not been adequately incorporated in studies on gender in migration.

Though there is empirical evidence to suggest that empowerment is a processual manifestation of power that has more than one facet (i.e. it is not just the elevation of one's position and an increase in power in one direction), these findings have not explained the phenomenon in a thorough manner. In studies of empowerment power is generally divided into four: as *power over, power to, power with* and *power within* (Oxaal and Baden 1997: 1). Empowerment – as the process that leads to power – can also correctly understood on the basis of these categories (Kabeer 1999). This is a good point of departure to understand both the contextual and processual nature of empowerment. Exercise of power can change with the object that it is directed to or connected with (Oxaal and Baden 1997) and empowerment also changes on the same basis (Kabeer 2000). Therefore, these dynamics of empowerment needs to be investigated as part of any study that attempts to understand the empowerment of women migrants.

Many studies tend to view changes in power relations in the household as a factor that leads to empowerment of women, particularly as a result of the increased economic value of women, i.e. their newly acquired access to resources. In general, although researchers generally agree that there are intervening variables and processes and economic positions alone do not always lead to the empowerment of women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Pessar 2003, Hugo 2000), these aspects have not received adequate attention. One issue that limits our understanding of these aspects is a lack of insight into the differential nature of power and its impact on empowerment. As a result, terms like empowerment are too general and are poorly theorised in migration studies.

The concept of empowerment was initially used to analyse social relations and understand the lack of participation in development. The tendency of analysts to apply only a behaviourist approach to power, has seriously affected the study of migration-related empowerment, which is a

complex phenomenon in the household context. Empowerment is not just acquiring power to i.e. control power (Weber 1978). Power, by nature, has multiple dimensions, notably overt and covert power, and latent power (Lukes 2005). In the study of empowerment of women in the household context, attention has focused on the first dimension, which is known as *power to*. To understand empowerment, we also need to consider the latter two dimensions, as manipulation, resistance and most importantly the realisation (true consciousness) of not having power (Lukes 2005) are part of the empowerment process. Lack of attention to these aspects of power and empowerment has resulted in the failure to explain major aspects of household power relations and the empowerment of women, namely the role of/place of human agency in migration studies.

As a result of the above, migration studies have only been partially successful in explaining the empowerment of women. There are two reasons for this. First, they view empowerment as the product of a cause-effect relationship. The cause is invariably the economic worth of women. This argument claims that a better economic position leads to empowerment (George 2000, Lan 2003) while reduced economic worth has opposite results, i.e. disempowerment (Pessar 1994, Mahler and Pessar 2001, Hugo 2000, Eelens and Schampers 1990). Secondly, the conceptualisation of power is too narrow. It looks only at overt expressions of power, in terms of controlling acts. These limitations lead to a failure to explain various expressions of empowerment in the household context, including how women become decision-makers, as well as situations in which women realise that they have no power and need to do something about it. It is therefore necessary to go beyond these theoretical and conceptual limitations and view empowerment as a series of strategies connecting human agency and structure.

1.3 Research Problem

The research problem addressed by this study is the emergence of a new regime in the households of returned migrants which leads to women often enjoying greater recognition and getting better access to decision-making. The study looks at how women strategise their household operations in the new situation to legitimise and maintain their newly acquired power. The study does not therefore attempt to examine a causal connection between

migration and the empowerment of women, based on the assumption migration always results in empowerment. It accepts that migration may also have a negative impact on the status of women. The study is limited to an examination/analysis of how women who have acquired power as the result of migration put that power into practice in the household context. There are therefore two assumptions underlying the study. The first is that empowerment of women is only one aspect of the multifaceted changes in the gender power order in the household as a consequence of migration. The second is that empowerment is not limited to overt manifestations of power, i.e. power to control, and therefore needs to be understood as a complex set of strategies and operations that includes hidden (covert) manifestations of power (Lukes 2005).

The study sees women migrants as proactive operators constantly strategising their actions and relationships in their interactions with their families, both during migration and in the post-migration context. This situation is part of a whole process connected with emerging identities, changing attitudes and family/social practices, leading to the emergence of new/transformed women. Migration and empowerment should therefore not be seen as a mere cause and effect relationship, where migration gives rise to powerful women with access to resources. Having access to resources makes a woman the provider for the family and elevates her position of power in the household. The new role of provider brings new rights, including the right to manage resources. However these new developments do not necessarily reduce the burden of her traditional tasks or empower her. Furthermore, a woman's control over resources normally ends when she ceases to be a migrant. Yet returned migrants display attitudes, behaviour and other characteristics, such as assertiveness, that are indicative of an empowered woman. In the household she employs strategies to acquire better access to decision-making, which leads to a new gender order in the household.

Migration is a therefore a catalyst of change in gender relations and transforms gender power positions. It requires adjustments to the status and roles (duties and responsibilities) of the members of the household and structure of authority in the household. The changes themselves are gendered, as migration of men and women affect the operations and organisation of the household differently. When men migrate, women have to take

their place as head of the household. This may be seen as a considerable change in the position of the wife, but in practice the husband remains the provider and in full and effective control of making household decisions. In this situation the husband does not relinquish his position, he only delegates his authority voluntarily. In this sense the wife only becomes head of household as a proxy or agent for her husband. This can be viewed as an arrangement of convenience, for mere practical reasons. It does not necessarily lead to any fundamental changes in the household authority structure. The changes are more fundamental when women themselves become migrants, affecting the whole matrix of gender relationships.

When women migrate and become providers they do not always become the head of household as well. Yet, as the provider, they acquire an elevated position with better access to resources. This gives them the opportunity to become the real power in the household, displacing the husband from the traditional role of sole decision-maker. As a result, the husband's position is downgraded. Many studies have shown that this can result in the husband taking on the domestic role of the wife as the performer of daily chores like cooking and washing (George 2000). Some authors have seen these changes in the household as leading to the emergence of a new phenomenon, described as *huswife* or *houseband* (Lan 2006). These changes have a deep impact and challenge the fundamental basis of the traditional household i.e. its male focused authority structure. They require adjustments and coping strategies in the household, especially by the husband. The repercussions may be felt beyond the boundaries of the household. For example in the US, Mexican Home Town Associations are providing downgraded husbands an alternative space for the power they have lost in the household (Goldring 2003). A study conducted in Greece among returned women contract workers from Germany found that task sharing in the families of migrant returnees is more gender equal than among families without migrants (Sakka *et al.* 1999). The study concludes that, in addition to financial independence, the acculturation process in the host country also influences this situation. Other studies (e.g. Hirsch 2000) also reach this conclusion.

Migration gives women the opportunity to make their own strategic life choices in contexts where such opportunities were denied to them, previously (Kabeer 2000). Migration can therefore be seen as a factor that em-

powers women migrants, expanding their opportunities and choices. Yet, as mentioned earlier, these changes in gender roles and activities may not always indicate improvements in power (Zentgraf 2002). The newly acquired status of provider may not be enough to allow migrant women to counter all the ideological constraints in the household and in society in general. This is illustrated by the situation of Yucatans in Los Angeles (Adler 2004) and Puerto Ricans in Chicago (Toro-Morn 1997). It does not mean that there is zero empowerment in these situations, but that women have not succeeded in achieving full control of their lives. They fall short in meeting required levels in the empowerment indicators, such as opportunities for making decisions and strategic life choices.

The impact of the migration of women on the household can therefore be examined in relation to two main developments. First, migration has an impact on the control systems within the household, for instance leading to changes in the household authority and power structure. This in turn affects the roles and statuses of individual members, especially the husband. Second, households have to find alternative strategies to fulfil the traditional roles and responsibilities of women who migrate. These alternatives often mean bringing new actors into the household to substitute for the woman who is absent. These can empower women in the household in general and migrant women in particular.

1.4 Relevance and Justification

Sri Lankan women migrants in the Middle East are from disadvantaged social groups, mainly from poor urban and semi-urban backgrounds. A very high proportion of them are domestic workers (housemaids). Paid domestic work carries a very high social stigma in Sri Lankan society. Yet these women migrants play a very important role in the economic survival of the country by bringing in considerable amounts of foreign currency (SLBFE 2006, Luxman 1993). As a result, at national level, politicians and policy makers recognise them as a valuable segment of society and are sensitive to the problems they face. At household level, too, migrant domestic workers are highly valued for their economic i.e. contribution. At community level, however, attitudes towards them are ambiguous, sometimes negative and sometimes positive.

Sri Lanka's gender order[6] at the household level gives men priority in making major economic and social decisions. In the majority of Sri Lankan households where there are women migrants in the Middle East, the woman is the most important, if not the only, source of income.

This study examines the transformation of gender relations and the empowerment of women who predominantly represent a niche occupational activity, namely, domestic work. Although these migrants technically work in the care giving sector, they are different from those who migrate to the West to work in the care giving sector, for two main reasons. First, those who migrate to work in the care giving sector in the West go with the intention of also acquiring citizenship. The women studied here have neither the intention nor the opportunity to permanently settle in their host country. Second, unlike open and liberal societies of the West, the countries in which these women work have a rigid social organisation that is extremely repressive and hostile towards women migrants. This study therefore provides a different angle on the experience of migrants.

1.5 Research Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to provide a new perspective on gender in migration by examining how gendered power relations are being reconfigured in the households of women migrants and how this process affects the operations of the household in general and existing gender practices, power structures and ideologies, in particular. The examination goes beyond a mere description of quantitative changes, i.e. changes in tasks, and focuses on the changes in gendered power and their repercussion on household operations. In light of above context, the study addresses three major objectives.

To understand gendered power relations in the household in the pre-migration stage: This entailed examining the differential access to resources and male and female decision-making with regard to migration. The examination/analysis contributes to understanding of the levels of empowerment of women before migration, which is essential in understanding the impact on power relations in the post-migration stage.

To analyse the nature and patterns of the transformation of gendered operations in the household during migration: Here the concern is to under-

stand household operations in the transnational context and how gender power is projected and promoted in and across transnational space.

To explain the emerging domestic regimes and associated gender order in post-migration households with a focus on resource ownership and access and on contextual variables.

1.6 Research Approach and Methodology

The study approaches migration as a process consisting of three interlinked and interdependent stages – pre-migration, during-migration and post-migration – which operate in a hierarchically layered systemic environment extending from household to the supranational level (Oishi 2005). Understanding the dynamics of migration in their relevant socio-historical and socio-spatial contexts is important in explaining the forces affecting the way migration systems operate and their impact on the experiences of women migrant workers. The major challenge for the study was therefore to combine different methods to address both of these analytical issues. As the study is about actor-focused processes, acquiring the perspective of the actor was the major focus in data collection. The data required for the study was therefore to large extent qualitative. Quantitative data was used only for descriptive purposes and to supplement the qualitative analysis. Collecting qualitative data on present experiences was a more or less straightforward exercise, using standard tools and techniques such as observations, interviews and other ethnographic field data techniques. Past experiences are, however, not accessible in the same manner. The only way the past can be understood is to re-create it by mapping out operational contexts and situations. This is heavily dependent on people's memories. Verifiability and reliability, already more difficult with qualitative than with quantitative data become even more problematic when qualitative data are based on memories. To minimise the risk of error, the interpretations of the experiences of women migrant workers and their interactions with other actors involved in the migration process are thus cross-checked with the findings of other researchers.

1.6.1 The research context and research sample

Research context

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean, lying just 22 miles south of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent (see map in appendix 1) The country has a surface area of 25,332 square miles and a population about 19 million, according to the latest census. The economy used to be dependent mainly on agriculture and was centrally controlled, but started moving towards a market economy in the late 1970s. Today the most important sector of the economy is the service sector, which accounts for over 50 per cent of gross domestic product (Central Bank 2007). The largest source of foreign exchange is the clothing industry, with overseas women workers occupying a close second. Both of these sources and the plantation sector which is the third highest contributor to the national economy are dominated by women labour.

Table 1.1
The three communities covered in the survey

Type of Community	Abbreviation
Traditional village	TV
Labour colony	LC
Urban low-income settlement	ULIS

The study was conducted in three locations in the district of Kandy in the central region (hill country) of Sri Lanka (see appendix 2): a typical rural area, a new settlement with rural and urban characteristics, and an urban low-income area. The capital of the district of Kandy is also called Kandy and is also the regional capital[7]. The district has a population 1,279,028, according to 2001 census. The main reason for selecting Kandy district for the study is that it is one of the major sources in the country for female migrants working abroad as domestic workers. Studies show that women migrants from Sri Lanka who work abroad as contract workers come mainly from poor disadvantaged communities in both rural and urban fringe areas (Kottegoda 2004b, SLBFE 2006). The three communities were mainly se-

lected for their representativeness of source communities of migrant women in the country. All three belong to one administrative sub-region called *Ganga Wata Korale*, which is administered by a public official known as the Divisional Secretary (See table 1.1).

The economy of the traditional village was based on agriculture with paddy farming and vegetable cultivation being the major activities. The majority of the people had a piece of land either of their own or belonging to their ancestral family i.e. they use the land but do not own it. The economy of the labour colony was fully dependent on selling labour. There was virtually no agricultural land and the members of the community lived in houses constructed by the now abandoned NGO sponsored project for growing orchid for export, popularly known as the Orchid Project, which was originally funded by a German sponsor in 1970s to support the landless poor in the area. The project later ran into problems and the sponsor left the country. The government took the project over and the occupants were given permission to live in the houses. Now there are no longer orchid plantations and the area is under government control. The urban low-income settlement originally provided accommodation for sanitary workers employed by Kandy Municipal Council. Today however many of the settlers do not work for the Council and the main source of income is informal sector activities. The majority of the residents are Tamil people of recent Indian origin[8]. This community has very poor facilities, particularly sanitation. Approximately 95 per cent of the residents of the traditional village and the labour colony are Sinhala Buddhists, and about 70 per cent of the urban low-income settlement is Hindus, the rest being Christians. There is a small minority of Muslims in the labour colony and the urban low-income settlement.

The sample for the field research

The sample was drawn from migrants who have returned since the 1980s. The sample was purposive so that due weight could be given to relevant categories among the returnees, and also to enable cases to be selected which provided a wealth of information on the contextual experience.

The Village Administrator (*Grama Niladari*) helped in selecting the sample. The *Grama Niladari* introduced the researcher to some key members of the three communities. From these, the researcher selected three women (returned migrants), one from each community, who functioned as

the link between the community and the researcher. These three women work closely with village officials and provide leadership in the community. Their knowledge of the members of community and the additional information they provided about the respondents and households were very useful both in seeking clarification and in cross-checking the data collected. A snowballing technique, i.e. asking respondents themselves to introduce other respondents, was employed to select the sample for the questionnaire survey. Snowballing techniques are sometimes criticised for producing a biased view by generating respondents with the same characteristics. This bias was reduced by selecting only people from different socio-demographic subgroups from those introduced to the researcher by the respondents.

The majority of the respondents in the sample were married women with children. This reflects the general composition of women migrants in the Middle East (Pinnawala 1997, see also Ruhunage 1996). A few unmarried women were selected to obtain alternative experiences and perspectives (for the demographic details of the participants, see appendix 3; for the gender of the participants, see appendix 4).

1.6.2 Designing the research and methods of data collection

The methodology used in the study consisted of anthropological field work (household and individual case studies, in-depth interviews, discussions and observations to collect qualitative data) and sociological data collection techniques (a household survey and a time-use diary of selected households to collect quantitative socio-demographic information). The secondary data for the study was obtained from existing literature and reports and the databases of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) and the Sri Lanka branch of International Migration Organisation (IMO).

One of the major methodological problems of the study was to collect information on the during-migration and pre-migration situations in the households of returned migrants. This required extensive in-depth interviews with the family members of during-migration households and collecting information relevant to past operations through another series of interviews with post-migration family members. The information was triangulated and verified by in-depth discussions with members of households with migrant members currently abroad.

Household survey

The household survey was used to collect basic socio-demographic information including data on household decision-making processes and migration experiences. It also was an important source of information on the organisation of gender roles and tasks in the household. Principal participants in the survey were migrant returnees (150 from the three communities). The main tool of the household survey was a semi-structural questionnaire (see appendix 7) conducted by the researcher herself, except in the urban low-income settlement. As the respondents in the low-income settlement were Tamil speaking, an interpreter-cum-research assistant was used to administer the household survey questionnaire to Tamil speakers. The questionnaire was pre-tested in the labour colony.

Though the primary objective of the household survey was to obtain socio-demographic information, which was mainly of a quantitative nature, the survey provided an opportunity to collect contextual information as well as building a rapport with the respondents. During the survey interviews, all those present in the household participated, creating the atmosphere of a group interview. This often enabled the researcher to turn the interview into a small-group, in-depth discussion. Though this has a number of disadvantages, some hampering the collection of sensitive information and those of private nature (for an example, see Pratt & Loizos 1992) they are outweighed by the advantages. Furthermore, the researcher employed alternative methods, such as individual interviews, and conducted case studies to gather sensitive information separately.

Case studies

Though the household survey covered more individuals and areas of operation, the information collected was descriptive and therefore of limited use for the present study, which is an examination of the dynamics of real life contexts and operations. Case studies were considered more suitable and were therefore adopted as the core tool for information gathering and analysis (Yin 2003, Miller *et al.* 2003:22-23). Two types of case studies were conducted for this study; one that focused on the common experience of household operations (household case studies) and the other aimed at collecting information on individual experiences of migration (individual case

studies). The latter used in-depth interviews in narrative form which allowed the researcher to approach the interviewee's experience and obtain a more comprehensive view (Flick 2002). This interview technique helped to generate data by interacting with people i.e. talking and listening to them. This gave migrants, family members and others who helped in the transnational family (the during-migration household) the opportunity to recall their experiences. The case studies were, however, used mainly to collect information on the operational strategies of the households during all stages of migration (for the basic guidelines for the case study, see appendix 6 i).

Household case studies: The purpose of the household case studies was to understand the migration process in relation to three main areas: gender specific migration strategies; household decision-making and gender relations; and resource sharing patterns and networks of kinsmen and friends. The case studies were both exploratory and explanatory. The unit of information of the case study was the household, i.e. all those who were either supported by the household's resources or made a contribution to the household's resource pool. In the process of gathering information about the during-migration household those who provided numerous services (managing remittances and looking after children, etc.) were interviewed, often together with the members of the household[9]. The discussions and interviews used to collect data for the household case studies were conducted in a group environment to create an opportunity to observe the male-female power dynamics in the household situations. Particular attention was paid to collecting information on past experiences to map out the organisation of relationships and operational strategies of the during-migration households. This was carried out in two distinct stages during the interviews. In the first stage, the respondents were asked to describe a set of situations in the presence of the interviewer (author). The researcher carefully processed the information obtained during these discussions and drew up a picture of household operations. These were then presented to the respondents for further clarification. During this process the respondents added more information, providing a final picture of household operations in the during-migration household.

Individual case studies (narratives): The individual case studies were also designed to collect information on the experiences and operations of mi-

grant women during the three stages of migration. They were used to validate and supplement the information collected from the household case studies. The respondents selected for the individual case studies came from the same households used for the household case studies. The discussions took the form of free flow narratives supplemented by probing interviews enabling the respondents to re-construct their pre- and during-migration environments and experiences. The individual case studies were particularly useful in obtaining information in two areas. First, they helped understand the operations of the household while the migrant was abroad. Second, they provided information on the pre-migration experience from the point of view of non-migrants. Particular attention was given to reconstructing the household decision-making dynamics in relation to daily activities and asset management. They also provided information on experiences in the host country and the role of kinship and other support networks. The main participants were migrant returnees and their husbands (see appendix 3).

Time use diary

A Time Use Diary was used to collect information on the gender division of activities and the household division of labour in the post-migration stage. This was divided into a sub-sample of respondents from the household survey sample. It consisted of 30 respondents (10 from each of the three communities). They were asked to fill in the Time Use Diary for a given period, about five diary days, which included at least one weekend and a holiday, over a period of two weeks.

The Time Use Diary provided an account of an individual's daily activities during the effective working hours of a typical day (for example from around 4 a.m. to about 9 p.m. (see appendix 8). As this exercise required a very high level of cooperation it was necessary to build a good rapport with the respondent prior to this exercise. The Time Use Diary was therefore introduced at the end of field activities i.e. the household survey and case studies. This technique provided very valuable data and helped to triangulate the information received from other methods.

Other interviews and discussions[10]

The interview technique was seen as an important method for data collection in this research and it produced rich information outside as well as in-

side the migrant household. Interviews enabled the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of operations and the perspectives of different individuals involved in them. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), the major benefit of collecting data through interviews is the potential to capture a person's perspective of the event (see also Denizen & Lincolin 2003). The field work consisted of two types of interviews and discussions. One entailed formal fact-finding interviews with key informants, including government officials, the Statistical Official of the Kandy Divisional Secretariat, the Village Administrators (*Grama Niladari*), selected community leaders, five owners and two representatives of labour recruitment agencies[11]. The main purpose of these interviews was fact-finding at formal and in-depth level. In addition, five interviews were conducted with officials of the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau to obtain official information and also to learn about their views (for the basic guidelines for the discussions and interviews, see appendix 6 ii, iii, iv). The second type of interviews were intended for informal fact-finding and were held in neighbouring villages in the three communities, with non-migrant neighbours of migrants, and with scholars with knowledge related to migrants. These formal and informal fact-finding methods helped the researcher to cross check many data acquired through other techniques.

Other data collection tools

A selective content analysis of media, especially print media, was also carried out to acquire an understanding of how migrant women are presented to the public. The projection of women migrants in the media was a focus of the study, as it influences the attitudes of the public. In addition relevant data were also collected from the official Social and Economic reports and publications of the IIMO, SLBFE and Department of Census and Statistics, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the District Secretariat (for a summary of research methods see appendix 5).

1.6.3 Data analysis and synthesis

The use of quantitative data is kept to a minimum purposely as the study does not attempt to make generalisations or establish cause and effect relationships. Quantitative data were used either in support of qualitative inter-

pretations, in other words to strengthen contextual explanations, or to provide general socioeconomic accounts where relevant. However, the extensive use of qualitative data has its downside as, unlike with quantitative data, there are no standardised methods of analysis (Punch 2005) and much depends on purpose of the research.

The focus on an actor perspective and the resulting extensive use of qualitative information/data meant the data analysis of the study became intrinsically linked with data collection. The qualitative data on actors' perspectives and experience also meant that the study was dependent on information already interpreted by the actor/subject. The bulk of the data was about opinions and views and experience. The researcher took this into account when analysing the data. It is unavoidable and has both weaknesses (it makes analysis less objective) and merits (it makes the analysis more insightful). Furthermore, the qualitative data collection process itself is a process of interpretation, as the researcher-respondent interaction creates a dialectical exchange of views resulting in a synthesis of interpretations (see Fontana and Frey 2003, Rubin 2005 for discussion of this weakness of interview data). It is therefore not possible to make a clear distinction between data analysis and the collection of data in this study. In the text the researcher has extensively used the voices of the people, reproducing their statements verbatim, and has avoided generalisations as much as possible. The researcher's voice is brought in only to discuss salient points and establish linkages[12].

1.6.4 Ethical considerations

In this study it was necessary to collect a lot of information of a highly personal nature. Therefore anonymity was of vital importance to protect the identity of the individuals. Necessary precautions were taken to protect the anonymity of the participants/respondents. The respondents were informed prior to the interviews and discussions of the purpose of the research and were assured that the information they provided would be treated in confidence. The researcher avoided even taking notes as much as possible to avoid being too formal (see Iosifides 2003:441p) and only wrote the information down at the end of the interview or the day. All respondents were assured that all records of the questionnaires would be destroyed once they had been coded and nobody other than the researcher and the assistants who

helped her in coding data would have access to the information. All the names of individuals have been changed and the three communities are identified not by their actual names but the settlement type. Once confidentiality was established there was no difficulty in getting the information needed.

In this study ethical considerations arose mainly from the extensive use of personal experience and opinions of migrant individuals. The collected data included statements about their experiences, some of which are very personal in nature. They included accounts of personal matters, such as family disputes and attempted sexual advances by employers (molestation attempts). Personal communications, i.e. letters between migrants and their households, were discussed when migrants voluntarily offered to provide such information. The researcher has strong views about using any information of personal nature and would like to emphasise that the information reproduced here was provided voluntarily.

Another area of concern is the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of the research. It has been argued by feminist researchers that doing research on women's issues can pose special ethical problems for those who are part of the feminist tradition (Wolf 1996). Though the researcher does not see herself as a feminist she would like to stress that some of these concerns such as power differentials are valid even in this research study. At times both the researcher and the respondents were conscious of the social distances that affected effective communication and rapport. The solutions adopted to address these meant the researcher trying to be what she is not i.e., downplaying her social position and even not being open about her social and institutional background, could be called deception (see Wolf 1996 and Katz 1996). Though this could be criticized from a strictly moral point of view as unethical it certainly helped minimize power differentials and hierarchies that could otherwise have affected data collection.

1.6.5 Issues of trustworthiness

The issues of validity and reliability of data are two issues central to any scientific research, as scientific knowledge is required to be objective and free of bias and value judgments. In the social sciences these are controversial issues, as the degree of scientific objectivity that is achievable in the natural

sciences is not possible in the social sciences[13]. Subjective interpretations at the actor level (qualitative data) and the subjectivity that creeps in at researcher level (values and world views) stand in the way of reliability and validity. This does not however mean that reliability is a non-issue in social sciences, only that the problem needs to be approached from a different direction. This is argued by Guba & Lincoh (1998), who propose the terms dependability, credibility, conformability and transferability as indicators of the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

In this study several procedures were adopted to ensure the reliability and validity of the data and the analysis. All data sources in the study were subject to problems of reliability and validity, some more than others. For example, much of the data on transnational households and during-migration experience were memory-dependent reconstructions. In these cases data triangulation and methodological triangulation were used to compare and cross check. For example transnational household operations were reconstructed through information gathered from interviews and case studies, as well as from the questionnaire (methodological triangulation). Information on the same operations were collected from both returned migrants and from the households of migrants who are currently abroad (data triangulation). The final reconstruction of the situation was based on the researcher's comparisons and cross checking of the information gathered from different sources and by using different methods.

1.6.6 Limitations of the study

Limitations are part of any research and may be divided broadly into two as data limitations and methodological limitations. What is important is to be aware these limitations and work within them rather than trying to eliminate them altogether, which is practically impossible. The methodological richness of the study is primarily dependent on the way the limitations are handled by the researcher. The present study had limitations related to data and the approach, which in turn had implications for both methodology and data.

One of the limitations of the study is related to conceptualisation of migration. This in turn has implications for the scope of the study. In the study, migration is conceptualised as a process consisting of three distinct

but interdependent stages. Due to the lengthy time factor involved it is not practically possible for the study to follow its subjects through all three stages. A migrant cannot, for example, be a during-migration migrant and returned migrant at the same time. Yet one stage cannot be understood without the other. The only option available is to situate the study in one stage and construct/create the operations in the other stages on the basis of the experiences of migrants, using narratives, secondary sources, etc. This study places its research in the post-migration stage and re-creates the connected contexts, for example transnational households, on the basis of the experiences of the returnees. This is, of course, only an approximation, a constructed reality and not the reality itself.

The other limitation is data related and is more of a practical problem created by external constraints. Ideally this study should have paid more attention to the during-migration situation and transnational links and experience from the perspective of the migrants in the host country. This was originally planned in the form of field visits to some selected receiving/host countries but had to be abandoned due to foreseen practical difficulties. Migrants are employed in restricted work situations where there is little or no access to outsiders. Therefore it was felt that a field study in the host country would not be of any real benefit, given the expense and the time it would involve. The study instead relied on secondary sources and memory recall methods to re-create the host country experience and transnational linkages. The researcher believed this to be the best possible and most practical option available.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter one offers a brief discussion of the theoretical context, the justification/rationale for the study, the research problem, and the methodology of the study. Chapter two is a detailed survey of the literature, focusing on theories, explanations and main analytical concepts relevant to this area of study. Chapter three examines transnationalism in the migration of Sri Lankan women workers with a focus on these migrants in the Middle East and their migration experiences. Chapter four is an analysis of the pre-migration household. It discusses the operations in the pre-migration household in the context of the status of women in Sri

Lanka focusing on the socioeconomic and ideological conditions affecting them and also how contextual factors intervene in real life situation. Chapter five examines the organisation and operations in during-migration (transnational) households. The main focus of this chapter is the transnational management of household affairs and structures that are part of these operations. In addition it examines the social networks and other support systems linked to these operations. Chapter six addresses the post-migration household. It attempts to understand the impact of the migration experience on the long-term gendered power changes in the household context. Chapter seven presents the conclusions of the study.

Notes

[1] The Middle East, West Asian and Gulf States are often used as interchangeable terms, while some researchers limit the usage to cover only the six oil producing countries in the Gulf Region (see for example Gamburd 2002). In this study the term is used to cover the labour importing countries of West Asia, including not only oil-producing countries but others such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and even Israel.

[2] Women's contribution to household income is a complex one, particularly in the households of the poor. Though only a few of the women studied were formally part of the regular work force prior to migration, they often had made a significant contribution to household income as undocumented workers, like domestic aids and daily paid workers in other informal sector activities.

[3] See Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000 for discussion of women and migration to gender and migration

[4] Women migrants who work as domestic workers are not always unskilled and less educated, as is commonly believed. Qualified nurses from the Philippines, for example, work as domestic care-givers overseas (Atcheson n.d., Demers 2001). Raghavan, quoting an ILO report, says that 36 per cent of Filipino women who migrate as domestic workers are either college graduates or undergraduates (Raghavan, n.d.). The situation is similar among migrant women who go to the United States as care workers (nurses) (George 2000).

[5] This is not to say that there is a strict compartmentalisation of studies on the basis of the time at which they appeared. Traditions continued and study types that were characteristic of one stage often appeared in other periods. For exam-

ple Boyd's (1997) study on migration policy and female dependency could well be placed in the analytical tradition of the 1980-90 period, though it appeared in 1997.

[6] Gender order is defined by Connel as the diversity of ways the difference between men and women is patterned into and manifest in society (Connel 2002:3). Hannan (2006) also has similar views and defines gender order as the way society is organised around the roles, responsibilities, activities and contributions of women and men, in other words, what is expected, allowed and encouraged in relation to what women and men do in different contexts

[7] Kandy is the Anglicised form of the Sinhala name *Kande Uda Rata* meaning Hill Country in Sinhalese. Sinhalese speakers who are the majority in the region call both the city and district *Maha Nuwara* (Great City). Tamil speakers, including Muslims and Tamils, mainly use the Anglicised name.

[8] Tamils of recent Indian origin is the term used to refer to Indian *coolie* labourers brought to Sri Lanka by the British to work as manual labour, especially in the plantation sector. They are the most disadvantaged community in the country.

[9] These individuals were important in gathering information on what happened in the during-migration household because they were part of household operations during the migrant's absence.

[10] In this study discussions were not used as separate data collection technique; they always followed interviews, depending on the situation.

[11] Labour recruitment agencies, commonly known as brokers, play an important role here. As opposed to the government-sponsored Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), these are private businesses. According to studies (Eelens and Schampers 1990) almost all female migrants find employment through brokers, while 24.9% rely on friends or relatives abroad. The brokers charge a high fee which migrants often pay with funds borrowed from local money lenders at very high interest or from friends and relations, in which case there is often no interest charged but there are other obligations.

[12] It needs to be mentioned that the voices of the respondents are mediated by translations. The researcher however tried to keep the translations and voices as close as possible.

[13] The two main reasons for this are the special relationship between the subject and the researcher/observer, and the interpretive understanding this gives

rise to. See Weber (1978) for a detailed discussion on the actor's point of view in social science understanding (meaning of action) and 'interpretive understanding', the related 'scientific' procedure which he proposes to supplement causal explanation.

2 Migration, Gender and Empowerment: Changing Practices and Shifting Discourses

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the development of migration explanations in the context of contemporary changes in migration, particularly the increasing importance of independent women migrants, and explains the role of transnational linkages. The focus is on theoretical shifts and analytical reorientations to accommodate gender in migration, and on the emerging disciplinary inclusiveness[1] in migration explanations that has resulted in integrative approaches and interdisciplinary interpretations. The point of departure is the acknowledgement that theories and explanations of social phenomena are embedded in the social and institutional context and this accounts for their temporal and changing nature. Theories of migration may thus be treated as emergent structures of knowledge seeking to understand a rapidly changing reality, rather than definite pronouncements of causes and effects. The chapter therefore situates migration theories as a body of social knowledge in their socio-historical context and disciplinary orientations. The main objective of the chapter is to discern the explanatory potential of emerging explanations of migration regarding the intersections between gender and human movement at different levels.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section examines the historical development of migration analysis, culminating in attempts by feminist scholarship to mainstream gender aspects of migration. The second section deals with attempts by migration analysis to incorporate the transnationalisation of migration and its repercussions on the migrant and the family/household. In the third section there is a review of existing explanations of the internal dynamics of the household in general and the

migrant household in particular. The fourth section is a critical examination of conceptualisations of power and their adequacy to explain gendered power relations and the migration-related power position of migrant women in the household.

2.2 Contextualising Migration Theories with a Focus on Gender

Classical studies of migration often place on overwhelming focus on macro level social forces. Moreover, they emphasise the economic interpretation of causes/forces of migration. Their main concern was mainly to explain patterns of migration and discover laws of migratory movements (Kopanian 2005). Qualitative and quantitative transformations of migration as a result of industrialisation and Globalisation (Massey *et al.* 2006), later changed the way in which migration is explained. First, in the 1970s, the classical explanations were replaced by neo-classical economic theories of migration. In the late 1980s, they in turn gave way to more inclusive and interdisciplinary explanations. This not only brought in new questions but also introduced new conceptualisations and methods of analysis. For example, ethnography came in with anthropology, and sociology focused on networks and socio-political analysis. Another important development during this period was a move away from grand theories towards a greater focus on micro and meso level aspects and ethnographic investigation. Part of this development was the increasing prominence of feminist scholarship, largely shaped by Marxist-influenced historical structural explanation.

Figure 2.1
Stages of migration (modified from Massey et al. 2006)

Period	*Direction*	*Nature*
Mercantile	Out of Europe	Forced/invasion
Early Industrial era	Within Europe	Demand-driven
Late Industrial	Into Europe	Demand-driven yet regulated
Post industrial	Multi-directional	Transnational links

Historically speaking, organised international migration started in the mercantile era with the advent of European colonisation of regions outside of Europe (Massey *et al.* 2006). Since these early beginnings, when migration was considered a part of invasion, it has changed fundamentally both in form and content (see figure 2.1).

Figure 2.2
Development of migration explanations

Paradigm	Foundation	Principle Assumptions	Sources of Data	Migration & Gender Interrelation
Classical Explanation	Migration is a demographic phenomenon	Migration is subject to laws	Recorded quantitative data (population census)	No human dimension, therefore no gender by definition
Neo-classical Economics				
1. Macro	Labour market	Wage differentials labour market free flow (laissez-fair)	Recorded quantitative data (social surveys)	Gender neutral
2. Micro	Rational Choice	Migration is cost-benefit determined		
Neo-liberal Economics	Production and consumption unit	Migration as risk diversification	Quantitative data	Household gender relations
Marxist Economics	Segmented labour market	Structural needs of the receiving economy	Quantitative macro economic data	Niche job markets and exploitation of women
Feminist explanations				
1. Meso level explanations (mainly social anthropological)	Social Networks	Social capital base of migration	Social surveys and anthropological data	Migration is gendered
2. Neo-Marxist and Post modern	Class and gender intersect	Social process is gendered		

The composition of migrant populations, the determinants and causes of migration and the direction of the flow are some of the changes in migration during this period. Another change was migration becoming a demand-driven and largely voluntary phenomenon[2]. New control structures (regulations restricting migration) and new norms also emerged as part of these developments. Figure 2.2 gives an outline of theoretical developments that roughly correspond with these social changes.

Those who discuss the historical development of migration research broadly agree on the distinction between classical and neo-classical explanations of migration (Heisler 1992). The classical period, which is roughly identified pre-1970s, was characterised by explanations that focused on the macro level determinants, mainly economic, of migration. They consisted mainly of attempts to understand the demographics of spatial movements of people with the aim of discovering the laws governing such movements. In the post-1970 period this emphasis on laws and macro forces changed and migration research shifted towards individuals, households, and their decisions. However, the economic bias remained (figure 2.1) with studies of migration still focusing mainly on rational economic decision-making (Harris and Todaro 1970, Dustdar-Sinclair 2002:1). However, women and gender were still absent from migration studies, with migration being considered on the whole a male phenomenon. This situation only changed in the 1980s, when migration studies started to focus on women as part of migration, but again not necessarily women migrants and gender issues of migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000). Attention was not paid to the latter until the 1990s. In 1990, migration studies went through a fundamental paradigm shift, not only by incorporating gender as a core area of investigation but also by becoming holistic and integrative in approach. Meso and micro level explanations and feminist scholarship came to be part of migration research during this period (figure. 2.2). One of the major influences that led to this paradigm shift came from the emerging feminist scholarship of the time (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000).

2.2.1 Gender-neutral theories of migration

During the pre-1970 period (Heisler 1992), migration was viewed as the geographical mobility of people who were making a rational response to im-

balances in the spatial distribution of resources. Classical push and pull theories explained migration as an outcome of resource use by the population in a given circumstance (Brettell 2003). The post-1970 period brought in economically rational decision-making by individuals to maximise returns and focused on such issues as wage differentials (Harris and Todaro 1970) and imperfect credit and risk markets as determinants of migration (Dustdar-Sinclair 2002:1). These developments however, did not make any qualitative change to the explanatory paradigm other than to further strengthen its economic bias. However, the shift of attention to imperfect competition and credit and risk markets brought the household into focus by making it the primary decision-making unit of migration (Dustdar-Sinclair 2002:1).

The social scientific tradition of the 1970s was challenged by Marxist social interpretations that emphasised the need to accommodate conflict and change and to explain social change from a socio-political conflict paradigm. As a result of this there emerged another set of explanations that led to a redefining of the substantial issues that were discussed under migration. These explanations viewed migration as a structural process operating outside the individual that has to be explained by wider structural forces. The foundation of the structural analysis of migration is the organisation of production. This perspective is explicitly political-economic. For the proponents of this explanation migration is a macro level phenomenon (Selier 1986) and a means of mobilizing cheap labour for capital that results in the exploitation of the poor.

The gender neutrality that characterised migration studies in the early period can be attributed to the practical situation on the ground. Under the prevailing ideology men were considered the providers and hence active migrants. There was very little independent migration by women and the majority of women who migrated did so as family members. Migration theories came to be dominated by approaches that treated migrants as a homogenous group, ignoring how attributes such as ethnicity, gender and class worked in migration flows and labour markets (Lee 1996). This situation continued and, as pointed out above, the lack of gender sensitivity was even reinforced by the structural explanation which totally eliminated the relevance of human agency in the workings of migration.

2.2.2 Bringing gender into migration research

These explanations of purely structural concentration came to be questioned in the 1990s by scholars of various disciplinary backgrounds from anthropology (Santillán 2004) to feminist scholarship (Piper 2004, Mahler and Pessar 2001, Glenn 1999; see also Chant and Radcliff 1992, Grieco and Boyd 1998). Of these the social anthropologists criticised the structural explanation for its failure to recognise the diversity and complexity of relationships that operate at micro and meso level in migration process. The major concern of the anthropological tradition was the failure of the structural explanation to focus on contextual factors i.e. cultural and ideological dynamics. In addition, feminist scholarship was making inroads into the anthropological interpretation, demanding more concerned analysis of gender-related issues. By this time independent women migrants were becoming major players, making the already complex dynamics of migration even more complicated. That brought in the feminist scholarship into the discourse, questioning the analytical effectiveness of both the neo-classical explanation and the structural explanation. The former was criticised for its lack of attention to gender differentiated decision-making and the latter for its overemphasis on structural forces in the form of production relations that failed to recognise gender (Piper 2004, Mahler and Pessar 2001, Glenn 1999).

These criticisms of the existing explanations were not about the questions they were trying to answer but on the way they posed them i.e. from a gender-neutral point of view. The argument was that both the neo-classical economic explanations and structuralist perspectives of migration failed to incorporate the complex dynamics that included the socio-cultural contexts and gendered process within which migration occurs (Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996; see also Massey 1990, Massey and Espinosa 1997, Brettell 2003, Adler 2004). The structural model had only limited space for social context-related factors and decisions, because of its focus on macro-aggregates. Neo-classical economic models also gave no place to a contextual understanding of migration decisions, because they saw them purely as an economic rational act[3]. They had no place for plurality of rationality, i.e. gender rationality etc. Both Marxist explanations and classical and neo-classical economic explanations implicitly promoted a gender-neutral view of migration which is often accused of gender insensitivity or gender blind-

ness by critics (Chant and Radcliffe 1992, Grieco and Boyd 1998). The result of these criticisms was attempts to develop an integrated approach/paradigm that could adequately explain the diverse forms and expressions.

Unlike earlier theories, the explanations that come under the integrated approach give social context greater theoretical importance and a major role in explaining the establishment and continuation of migration flows. There are also conscious attempts to overcome the micro/macro and agency/structure dualisms present in earlier migration theory with varying degrees of success. The theories and other mid-level explanations (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992) that focus on the household as the unit of analysis, have often been criticised for substituting the rational, calculating individual of classical theories with a rational, calculating household (Folbre, 1986; Gos and Lindquist, 1995). What the critics note is that family/household decisions and actions do not represent unified and equally beneficial outcomes for all members (Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996; Gos and Lindquist, 1995; Pedraza, 1991, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000). Therefore there is a need to view the household and family, which are very important components in placing the process of migration in its right context, as a dynamic group/unit consisting of a membership that is in a constant process of bargaining and compromise to either avoid or minimise competition and even conflict.

The situation changed somewhat during the 1980s with some explanations starting to pay attention to low level gender-differentiating factors, such as marriage partnerships, as issues shaping migration. These however cannot be described as proper gender-focused analyses of migration but as attempts to explain the extra influences acting on women who take part in what is predominantly a male affair (Chant and Radcliffe 1992). This interest on women migrants is reflected in the arrival of a number of highly visible and respected publications devoted to women migrants during the period. As Mahler and Pessar (2001) point out the Special Issues of *Anthropological Quarterly* in 1976 (Brettell and DeBerjeois 1992) and *International Migration Review* 1984, and Simon and Brettell's *International Migration: Female Experience* 1986 (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000) and numerous other publications that documented the predominance of women in migratory flows are examples of this new interest in women migrants. There was still no attempt however, to focus on gender relations as the central theme of

analysis and women were still seen as a variable in migration and women migrants as a deviation from the norm. These explanations therefore treated women as a special group whose participation in migration flows needs to be explained in conjunction with male migration, which is seen as relatively unproblematic (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). These explanations can be described as attempts to be women-aware yet failing to be gender-aware.

2.2.3 The explanatory potential of gender in migration patterns

According to critics of migration research, the explanation becoming women-aware did make gender the core theme of migration explanation (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000). Even as recently as the 1990s, feminist scholars were criticizing mainstream migration studies for being either gender-neutral or gender-blind (Mahler and Pessar 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003). Gender explanation in migration studies is therefore a post-1990 development. What the proponents of this new line of analysis argued was that gender is not just another variable but a reality that permeates a variety of practices, identities and institutions in the entire process of migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 2000, Mahler and Pessar 2001) that includes both men and women. Studies of migration that combined gendered power relations and their interaction with the migration process also began to emerge during the period.

The incorporation of gender into migration explanation can be attributed to two parallel developments. One is the mainstreaming of feminist scholarship in the social scientific analysis. The other is the emergence of independent women migrants, particularly those who cater to a niche labour market, namely, domestic service.

Gender in a broad sense refers to the conceptualisation of all forms of social relationships and knowledge about sexual differences (Scott 1988:2) between the two sexes. However, Scott also argues it is more important to ask how gender operates than what gender is (Scott 2000) and says that gender operates at three levels. Of these the first, i.e. gender as a way of bringing sexual differences into perspective, is the focus of this study. Though there are differences of opinion on the analytical value of the concept there is general agreement on how and on what basis these relationships are configured. Therefore gender is relative to space (both social and geo-

graphical) and time (see Fouron and Schiller 2001 for an explanation of gender dynamics that takes this view further into the transnational domain). This description, though very broad, agrees with the general view held by feminist scholarship that gender is a social construct (Mahler and Pessar 2001). Gender discourse in the feminist tradition sees social relationships in society as gendered in every aspect. Integral to this view is the assumption that the relationship between the sexes is one of power. Hence, gender can only be understood as part of the power relations in society. Not only social activities, i.e. the sexual division of labour in society, but also space and time are gendered (Glenn 1999:5). On the basis of the division of social space into gender domains, a system of classification has emerged in the form of labelling which in turn provides the basis of collective and individual identities in society. In this wider classificatory sense gender is not only an identity but also an organisational principle of society.

2.3 Globalisation and Migration of Domestic Labour

With its impact on global communication and economic relationships, particularly those of the labour market, Globalisation has become one of the most important factors shaping the migration process in the modern world. The impact of Globalisation on migration can be seen in relation to number of areas. Trade liberalisation has placed developing countries under immense economic pressure, increasing unemployment (Boswell and Crisp 2004, see also Chimanikire 2002) and thus creating a very important push factor. It also has resulted in increased competition and demand for cheap labour, which is a pull factor. Trade liberalisation has also resulted in the increase of sweat shops that employ cheap labour, mainly women, in the West and other developed countries (Boswell and Crisp 2004). These changes in economic relations and the structure of the labour market have resulted in other developments influencing the migration flow.

While the economic impact of Globalisation has produced novel occupational structures and has made changes in class and labour relations in many economies (Young 2004, Anderson 2001a) the social impacts of Globalisation have been closer cross-border linkages and relationships as part of the social reality of modern day migrants. As Pries (2007) argues, modern transport and communication infrastructures available to broad population

groups today increase awareness of the experiences of others even across great geo-spatial distances. Thus in modern migration social environments span several locations pluri-locally and transnationally (Pries 2007). The resulting transnational links resulted in closer and immediate links characterised by real time communication between cross-border social spaces (Pries 2007)[4]. Transnational migrants and transnational migrations are the product of this development. Globalisation not only led to the transnationalisation of migration but also to an increase in independent women migrants, creating new opportunities for women by diversifying the occupational structure of the labour importing countries. This in turn has created demand for low-cost service labour (Young 2004) which the women in advanced economies cannot find in their own countries. This has led to buying of the services of another category of women[5], and has consequently created a new category of differences between women and a return of domestic service in these countries[6].

For feminist scholarship migration is the transnational movement of reproductive labour. The view that the global expansion of capitalism is causing the transfer of labour between developed and less developed nations (Cohen 1987) is also shared by feminist scholars who argue that women migrant workers in the international migration flow are part of the global transfer of reproductive labour (Cheng 2003, Anderson 2001). The flow of reproductive labour as domestic workers, care-givers and many other similar workers (Cheng 2003, Kurian 2006, Kurian 2004, Demers 2001) is the main feature of modern international migration from the developing to the developed countries.

Reproductive labour in its basic form can be taken to mean the reproduction and maintenance of workers (Anderson, 2001). Feminists argue that women are central to the capitalist mode of production because, through their unpaid household labour, they produce labour power itself. The raising of children, on the one hand, and the maintenance of workers on the other are the work of women and not formally recognised as mainstream productive labour. The socioeconomic transformation of the advanced economies has resulted in the rise of demand for domestic workers with the decline of housewife as a result of the emerging trend of two-income families (Anderson 2001a:3). Studies argue that international migra-

tion is creating inequitable distribution of reproductive labour between countries with unequal development (Cheng 2003) bringing women from the poor countries to the rich as cheap labour. Thus the capitalist transformation in the West has created a niche market for women's labour resulting in an increase in independent women migrants in the international migration flow (see Koser and Lutz, 1998; Phizacklea, 1998).

It is argued that Globalisation of domestic service simultaneously manifests and reproduces the prescribed gender division of labour both within and across national borders (Cheng 2003:167). The domestic labour market in the contemporary transnational context is therefore studied as a means of transfer of social reproduction within the international division of labour (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Salazar Parreñas 2000, 2001; Truong 1996). However, it must be noted that female migration as domestic workers is not a phenomenon unique in Europe. It became a feature of the oil rich Middle East economies in the late 1970s and in recent years has also become a widespread phenomenon in emerging economies in Asia. It is assumed that, nowadays, nearly 50 per cent of the continent's migrants are women (Shape 2001). Such developments are seen in countries such as South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia (Piper 2003, Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003, Cheng 2003). New migration patterns, new gendered labour markets and disputes over gender relations result from this trend.

The close association between Globalisation and the movement of reproductive labour across national boundaries has also been examined as a series of interconnected links extending from the industrialised North to the developing South. This explanation, first introduced by Hochschild (2000), talks about a global care chain which links women across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring (Hochschild 2000: 131). Addressed variously elsewhere, using such concepts as labour intimacy (Chang and Ling 2000), Globalisation of mothering (Salazar Parrenás 2000) or transnational motherhood (Lutz 2002) the global care chain sees the migration of independent women and the emergence of globalised domestic and care-giver services as closely linked phenomena (see also Kurian 2006, Kurian 2004, Song 2004, Yeates 2004). It claims that the increased demand for care-givers in the developed countries, as a result of housewives moving into productive labour, created opportunities for women migrants from the poor developing

countries not only outside their countries i.e. Europe and elsewhere, but also in their own countries. Those who came to the North to perform domestic service created a vacuum in their households in the poor developing countries. This vacuum is filled by either a female relation who often works for free (Hochschild 2000)[7] or hired labour (Lan 2002). This gives rise to a chain of employer-employee relationships extending from the peripheral developing countries to the core in the developed world creating a unique structure of labour relationships catering to and catered by women[8]. Global care chains thus capture 'the global links between the children of service-providers and those of service-recipients' (Hochschild, 2000: 132). The transnational links that operate in these and similar contexts are a feature of modern migration.

2.3.1 Transnational communities: linking multiple spatial and social scales

The concept of transnationalism[9], which is part of post-modernist social discourse, is becoming increasingly relevant in the analysis of international migration of labour (Vertovec 2002). In migration it refers to the attachments migrants have and links they maintain with actors, traditions and practices beyond the boundaries of the nation-state to which they have moved (Vertovec 2002). Migrants usually enter into transnational space through networks they create once they are in the host country (Anthias 2000) but such network connections becoming part of the pre-migration process is also common, as is evident from the migration networks (Shah and Mennon 1999). Linkages with the home country are not a new phenomenon among migrants, as studies of new ethnicity and multiculturalism amply demonstrate (see Glaser and Moynihan 1975 for a discussion on migration, ethnicity and the revival of home country linkages). Though one can recognise the similarities to long-standing forms of migrant connection to homelands, today's linkages are different and more intense than the homeland-host country connections of migrants in earlier periods (Forner 2000, Portes *et al.* 1999, Grillo *et al.* 2000). Transnational links are not just contacts across political boundaries and social fields but sustained links characterised by high density ties on formal or informal levels created by immigrants, providing the foundation for the multiplicity of involvements

in both home and in host societies (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994:6, Faist 2000:2).

Among the pioneers of gender-specific examination of transnational migration are Mahler and Pessar (2001), who developed a conceptual model called gendered geographies of power to describe the spatial nature of the reality and the power dynamics involved in gender-based interaction. They argued that gender operates simultaneously on multiple spatial and social scales (e.g., the body, the family, the state) across transnational terrains. A good example of how gender operates simultaneously on different geographical scales is found in a recent article by Fouron and Schiller (2001). They find that when Haitian migrant women strive to renegotiate their status transnationally they often buy into and thus reinforce the status system operative in Haiti. This gendered status system is intimately linked to national identity even as it subordinates women. The important point in this case is that transnational existence affects women migrants in a negative manner. The liberation or empowerment expected by their exposure to modern culture, in this case the US, does not happen due to the transnational life they live in the host country.

Studies of the transnational nature of migration generally focus their attention on two areas. One sees transnationalism in migration from a wide socioeconomic perspective, i.e. capitalist market dynamics, such as emerging global domestic and care-giving markets and the trafficking of women and national economies (Cheng 2003, Lan 2003, Chin 1998, Truong 1996, 2003a). According to some analysts transnationalism operates through economic linkages created by expanding capitalism. In the case of women this results in them being situated on unequal points along social, economic and national hierarchies (Cheng 2003), making them victims of transnational development. Portes (1998) makes a similar point to the above when he argues that the emergence of transnational communities is tied to the logic of capitalism itself and they are brought into play by the interests and needs of investors and employers in the advanced countries. This is because the phenomenon is fuelled by the dynamics of Globalisation itself, it has greater growth potential and offers a broader field for autonomous popular initiatives than alternative ways to deal with the depredations of world-roaming capital. The theme is often exploitation and dependency. The other ap-

proach examines meso and micro level manifestations of transnationalism (community and household-level impact) through economic networks and small-scale market activities. The organisations that emerge to facilitate community-level interactions, such as Home Town Associations (Goldring 2003, George 2000) and transnational economic linkages connecting diasporas and home countries (Portes 1998, Esman 1986), are examples of this.

The impacts of transnationalism on migrants are manifested in different areas of activity. Transnational economic linkages can range from flows of funds to maintain the household (Vertovec 2000; see Laxman 1993 for the role of migrant remittances in Sri Lanka) to providing funds for transnational enterprises (Portes 1998: 9-10, Esman 1986). Another area of transnational impact is the political mobilisation of diasporas. The ethnic diaspora is a major source of funds for the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka (HRW 2007) and in the past there have been other examples, such as the Irish diaspora having links with the IRA. Criminal gangs and their transnational activities also have been part of migrant communities from the early years of international migration as evident from the activities of the mafia, and Jamaican and Chinese gangs.

Goldring (2003) adopts the idea of reactive compensation to examine a situation in the real transnational space among Mexican migrant males in Los Angeles. The study shows that Mexican male migrants who have lost their position and power due to the fact that their wives are the main breadwinners find an alternative space to recreate their dominance by controlling Mexican Home Town Associations (HTAs), which connect the host country with the home country. Some other analysts use the diaspora argument to examine the way migrants' connect to their place of origin and new home and their struggle in defining their identities (Klimt and Lubkkeman 2002). Others see migrants as transnational villagers who struggle to negotiate and reconcile the divergent cultural norms they find in their original and new places of residence (Levitt 2001). What really happens in all these situations is a reformulation of gender relations as a consequence of migration and transnational existence.

Another area where transnational space plays an important role in gendered migration is the occupational structure. One important study in this connection is by Cheng (2003) who examines the relationship between the

household and the nation. She argues that, through the relationship between the nation and the household, the tension between the state and the Globalisation process becomes intensified and affects the lives of foreign domestics, who are exclusively women. It results in making foreign domestics undesirables in the eyes of the public, justifying their exclusion from social justice. In a similar study in Malaysia Chin (1998) examines the transnationalisation of domestic service and the political economy of development. Her focus is on the paid reproductive service and institution of governance in Malaysia. Domestic service in Malaysia is an integral part of state policies that focus on the growing consumption base that will sustain Malaysia's economic development. Domestic service in Malaysia, according to this study, is a central component of the country's political project of modernisation. State regulation and control domestic service is determined by this objective. Though similar studies have not been done in the context of the Middle East, which is the main destination for Sri Lankan women migrants, it is valid to assume certain similarities. Like Malaysia the countries of the Middle East also are consciously trying to modernise. It is justified to expect that the employment dynamics of the domestic worker labour market will share some similarities as a result.

The growth of transnational migration has repercussions on migration recruitment. The state, which has had total and exclusive control of migration under inter-state rules and protocols, has lost some of its control with the transnationalisation of migration. Non-governmental actors, like human rights and religious organisations, are increasingly becoming active. For example, the Catholic Church is considered one of the major agents in the global recruitment of migrants (Lutz 2002).The Internet is another means of recruiting migrants in Europe. Until these actors started recruiting migrants, the only non governmental mechanism recruiting domestic help in Europe was perhaps the *au pair* system. There are claims that transnationalism has penetrated the *au pair* system, and that it is being misused to enable the backdoor recruitment of domestic servants contrary to the objectives of the international au pair organisation.

Transnational space also becomes relevant in understanding migrant's cultural and social adaptation. In this connection migrants' lifestyles and actions are seen to be influenced by transnational connections. This is dif-

ferent from mere social and cultural change due to exposure to alien cultures. Exposure to alien cultures is possible even without migration under Globalisation, through television and other visual media and also through other forms of contact, such as constant interaction with tourists. The popularisation of ethnic food and clothing in the West is evidence of the transnationalist impact of migration. Migrants bring their customs, lifestyles and food with them and these practices gradually become part of the host country, making general life of the host country a transnational space. In the Middle East there is a very good example of the transnational impact on lifestyle in the popularisation of cricket. Cricket reached the Middle East as a means of catering to the recreational needs of South Asian contract workers and with the aim of exploiting their presence for capitalist profit-making. Today cricket is established in the region to the extent that even the International Cricket Council (ICC) has decided to move there, leaving behind the very symbol of its British heritage. The reverse transnational impact of migration also can be found in the sending countries. Arab music and movies, language schools and other establishments that cater to potential migrants are examples of gradual changes of practices due to transnational connections made through migration.

2.3.2 Transnational households and families: power at multiple sites

Transnational living arrangements (families and households) are a feature among not only among transnational migrants but also among their employers (Zontini 2007). It is however in the context of migrant workers, the largest and least privileged group of transnational subjects, that the transnational household/family has become a central feature, mainly for its economic importance. Transnational households today are an important livelihood arrangement among the poor not only from the Third World but also among racial minority groups in countries such as the UK and US (Glenn, 1994; Reynolds, 2005) and a number of less developed countries in Europe. The economic importance of transnational migration has affected the management and operations of the household resource base but also the normative base of the family on which cultural practices and social and emotional relationships rest. The conventional definition of a household is ‘a group of

people who share the same residence and participate collectively, if not always co-operatively, in the basic tasks of reproduction and consumption' (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995: 4). In transnational households, however, some members may be producing income abroad while other family members carry out the functions of reproduction, socialisation, and consumption in the country of origin (Parreñas, 2005). Thus, transnational migration forces us to reconsider our understanding of households and families based on the idea of co-residency and physical unity.

Transnational migrants by definition operate in multiple spaces simultaneously. Yet they still maintain a sense of collective welfare and unity (Bryceson & Vorela, 2002). Their networks cross at 'residential nodes' in two or several countries (Bjeren 1997: 237). One such node is the household back home because transnational connections/linkages of the migrants with the family at home make him/her an operating member of the household even though there is no physical presence. This is because, in today's context, migrants are becoming increasingly involved in activities in their households back home and active partners in social interaction even if they are not physically present. When transnational household connections are maintained (often by financial contributions) the migrant member can influence resource management activities of the household from long distance. Migrant households therefore have become spaces for transnational households with their own unique organisational and operational forms (Asis, Huang and Yeoh 2004 Salazar Parreńas 2002, Bryson and Vuorela 2002) significantly affecting the power relations. Although there are no studies of transnational families among women migrants in Sri Lanka, there are some occasional references to such arrangements (Kottegoda 2004b, Gamburd 2002).

This study argues that co-residence in the physical sense is too limiting in conceptualizing migrant households today as a unit of co-residence, as this cannot accommodate transnational households. Most importantly, the main income-earner being away and living in a different household makes us question the assumptions about its economic role, i.e. the household as a physical unit for policy and administration that is concerned with how resources are pooled and distributed. The convergence between household and family in the traditional setup is therefore disturbed by transnational migration. The migrant worker who is working as a domestic help overseas

thus lives in a new household but keeps her membership in the household back home through her operational relations, i.e. remittances (Parreñas 2005). Then, membership of household becomes not necessarily physical occupation of the household but meaningful involvement in it. What is important in migrant households is not co-residence but meaningful operational involvement in the form of a financial contribution to the maintenance of the household (remittance) and involvement in decision-making. Migrants who maintain transnational economic linkages are then qualified to be considered members of migrant households.

Unlike resource-sharing and management, which makes the household an economic concept, the main feature of the family is its normative base, consisting of cultural practices, social relationships and emotional bonds. Membership of a family does not always require co-residence, though it normally is associated with it. These resource-sharing activities are founded on the survival needs of the family and are *performed through strong bonds of collective welfare and emotional bonds based on unity*. Migration and the resultant physical removal of a member therefore cannot have the same analytical implications for the family as it is not traditionally defined as a dwelling unit but as a social unit. The principal impact of transnational migration on the family is therefore on re-creation of the emotional and social bonds caused by physical separation (Parreñas, 2005, Erel 2002, Suarez-Orozco *et al*. 2001, Asis, Huang and Yeoh 2004). Kinship bonds play the major role here, as they are responsible for institutionalizing interpersonal relationships in the household, creating a strong and meaningful sense of belonging.

The effects of transnational migration are manifested differently in household and the family. The difference between family and household operations becomes blurred in a transnational migration context. It is common to find researchers conceptualizing the household and the family as transnational units and using them interchangeably in transnational migrant context (Parreñas 2005, Asis, Huang, and Yeoh, 2004). But in this study we are careful to maintain the distinction. We use transnational family to describe the socio-cultural situation, while transnational households refer to the resource management aspects of the corporate unit of family members. Power then becomes mainly an issue of household relations: hence the use of the concept of transnational household in this study.

2.4 Understanding Gendered Power Operations in the Household

As both migration and gender have a strong link with the household, gender relations in the household have become a principal concern of emerging migration feminist scholarship (see Boyd 1989, Hugo 1995, Carling 2005). In these analyses the household is generally conceptualised as an organisational whole consisting of different yet interconnected, gendered domains (Chhachhi, 2004). Yet household operations do not exist in isolation. The household is connected to the external environment through a series of hierarchically ordered linkages. Through these linkages the influences of macro level forces permeate down to household operations. For example, labour market fluctuations have a decisive impact on household decisions on migration as an alternative livelihood strategy, and household decisions on migration are subject to community level dynamics such as network support. In a systemic sense therefore the household responds to macro level conditions set by global forces, national contexts and existing ideologies. The core operations of the household are still determined by the internal dynamics of household organisation, namely, authority structure, norms and values and other similar micro level relationships/determinants, thus preserving the identity and systemic unity of the household. The internal operations of the household are shaped by dynamics that include resource ownership and control, ideologies and the division of labour, all of which are gendered.

2.4.1 Explaining household power structures

Explanations of intra-household relationships have roots in two different conceptualisations of the household: the unitary household and the household as a unit of bargaining. This conceptualisation is founded mainly on how household decisions are made, by an altruistic head (unitary model) or through a process of interest-based bargaining to maximise benefits (bargaining model).

The unitary model of the household (Becker 1965, 1981) assumes it is a single unit of production and consumption controlled by an altruistic household head who represents the household's tastes and preferences and seeks to maximise household utility (Agarwal 1997: 2). This model is often criticised for not being able to accommodate asymmetries, such as gender

differences (O, Laughlin 1998). It neglects gender-based inequality and the male priority position within households.

The bargaining model of household argues that decision-making is a process aimed at maximizing the efficiency of operations. A bargaining situation is one where two or more players have a common interest in cooperating but have conflicting interests over exactly how to do that (Muthoo 2000). It is a process of negotiation and compromise leading to agreement. In a bargaining situation each player wants to reach an agreement that is in their favours but is also mindful of the fact that not reaching an agreement can be more harmful. The bargaining power depends on the resources a person has access to and other available fallback options (Muthoo 2000, Chhachhi 2004).

The general weakness of the model is that it starts with the premise that parties begin bargaining with predefined power positions. Therefore the model assumes that those who get into bargaining know that they are in a power game and their strengths and weaknesses in the bargaining process. By this the model implicitly accepts that power is either power to control (overt power) or power to manipulate (covert power). Thus the model is confined within the two-dimensional power paradigm. It does not allow for situations of latent power (see Lukes 2005), i.e. where the powerless are not aware of their lack of power (they are conditioned to accept that the situation is part of the natural order of things). This aspect of power is however important in understanding household operations, as some gender relations and their associated behaviour are shaped not by external forces or control, but the acceptance of certain universal givens. In other words people are conditioned into certain relationships and unconsciously accept them as the way things are. Some gender relations, for example women doing domestic chores, fall into this category. Doxa (Bourdieu 1977), i.e. portions of social order that are considered natural, may prevent women using their new resource-based power to influence certain areas of intra-house relations in their favour (Agarwal 1997, Kabeer 1999).

The bargaining model of the household is useful in understanding gendered power in household operations and how resources are connected to gender and power. This however is valid only to the extent that power is overt power or power to control and also in situations where contextual

variables do not mediate. It is important to recognise the contextuality of gendered power, as Moore (1994) argues, but it is also important to recognise the existence of covert power and how it shapes household operations. Covert power situations give stability to the household by making the power game irrelevant and thus eliminating the possibility of conflicts in the household. When people accept things as they are and part of the natural order of things then there is no need for them to be in conflict and that ensures stability. Though this should not be the only feature of household operations, it is an important one. Correct understanding of the household needs to take account of this aspect, not only conflicts of interests and their contextualities. In the following section we shall attempt to bring these aspects together in an inclusive explanation of the household.

The cooperative conflict model takes household decision-making out of the confines of the internal dynamics of the household. The model still, however, views economic determinants (wage labour) as the basis for transforming gender relations (Sen 1991). The feminist reformulation of Sen's model brings in context-specific factors such as culture and ideology and argues for the need to understand covert strategies used by women in household decision-making (Moore 1994, Chhachhi 2004). Thus the household decision-making model as it stands today accommodates extra-household economic dynamics (Sen 1991) and intra-household contextual factors as determinants of household operations. Yet it still has not been able to satisfactorily bring in extra-household non-economic factors as part of the household bargaining process and thus into power operations in the household. This hampers the understanding of gendered power relations in the household as there are non-economic factors, such as kinship networks, which operate outside the household yet influence the bargaining power of its members.

Bargaining models of household operations including the cooperative conflict model of Sen (1991) and its feminist modifications are therefore of limited value in understanding the transnational dynamics of migration. They see the household as a self-contained unit in power operation, i.e. a closed system, with the exception of Sen, who considers economic factors, i.e. wage work, within the larger economy (Sen 1991). Though feminist reconceptualisation brought in contextuality it is also is limited to contextual

factors within households (See Moore 1994). The operations of the transnational household are based on a wider set of variables that includes economic factors, for example migrant remittances, and non-economic factors, such as kinship relations and other extra-household support networks. Therefore the transnational household is defined not by within-household forces alone. The multi-locality and associated dynamics that are part of transnationalism are therefore important in understanding the operations of the during-migration household. Therefore, we need to situate the household in its proper transnational context and identify different actors at different levels and their transnational connections with the household.

2.4.2 Pluri-local identities and multi-layered power: embedding the migrant household in transnational space

Transnational linkages create a supranational system of social relationships by bringing together social spaces situated in different physical locations. The system thus created is hierarchically ordered with the individual and the household at the bottom and connected upward through a series of layered relationships extending beyond national to supranational[10]. Transnational links, which have become a feature of modern migration, have made migrants and their households part of this supranational system. Migrants today exist in multiple social spaces simultaneously and their operations need to take account of this multi-local nature existence (Mahler and Pessar 2001, Pries 2007, Fouron and Schiller 2001).

The argument that modern migration needs to be understood from this plural locality context is a result of migrant studies adopting a transnational perspective in their explanations. Mahler and Pessar (2001) bring out a conceptual model they call gender geographies of power in which they argue that gendered power in migration operates in different social spaces/geographical scales which are essentially linked. Similarly in a study of Haitian migrants in the United States Fouron and Schiller (2001) highlight this inseparability of home and host countries in explaining migrant action. Their study maintained this view throughout. There are other attempts to analyse this interconnected spaces in terms of identities. They argue that in transnational migrant contexts there are pluri-local identities which are the product of migrants being members of more than one location at the same time

(Pries 2007). This multi-locality-based identity and the simultaneous nature of interaction based on multiple identities are important in understanding migrant behaviour and locating the household of the migrant in its operating transnational context.

Diagram 2.1
Migrant household in transnational space

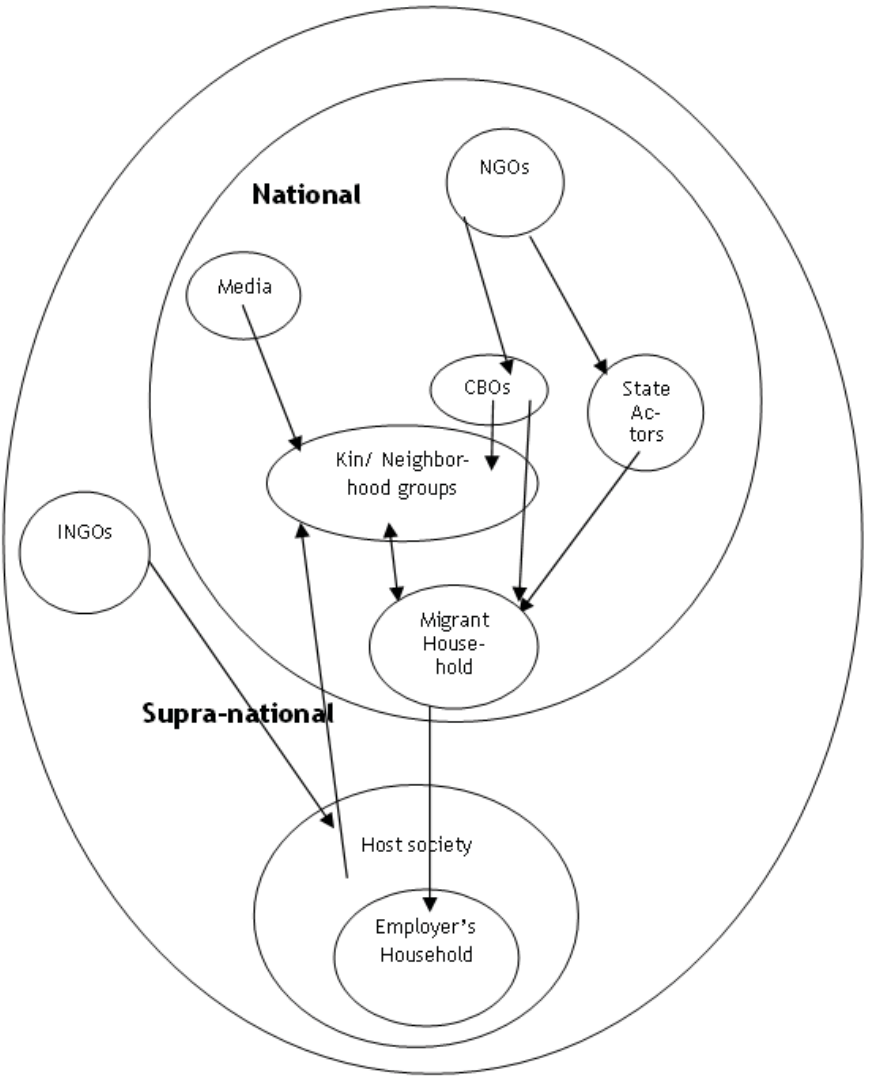


Diagram 2.1 shows that the social spaces that transnational migrants belong to can be identified as hierarchically organised levels with migrants at the household level consisting of micro-level social relationships. The household is connected to the extra-household environment, consisting of meso level relationships, i.e. community relations and networks. Above that is the macro level structure of the state and global relationships with supra-state organisations of which the host society is a part. Each location within this interconnected multi-local system, to which the migrant is connected by transnational linkages, has its own actors, relationships, ideologies and contextual variables (diagram 2.1).

This pluri-locality[11] and the connections that bring them together are important in understanding the migrant household and its gendered power relations. It brings into focus different sources and locations of power affecting migrants and migrant households in one systemic context. First it shows that the migrant exercises her power in the household context, which she has as provider of the household. But the source of that power is located in the employer's household (host society) where she has no power or status. Once she severs her links with the employer's household (host society), which happens when she returns, she also loses her role as provider which in turn affect her power position (based on employment) in the host society. The kinship and neighbourhood networks at community level in which she has a major role as provider of information, sponsorships and even financial help are also sources of power. National level image-making involving the media and other actors also plays a role here, as the public image of the migrant is also a factor influencing her power position. What all these reveal is that migration and power are part of a process linking different actors in transnational space.

Migrant households and their power relations therefore are not determined by within-household forces alone. They are part of a system of relationships in which the household and the migrant are connected by transnational links in multiple spaces (pluri-locality). Gendered power relations in migrant households can therefore be understood only by identifying the linkages that connect the various spaces and actors in them with migrant household and locating them in the transnational space. That reveals how migrant women negotiate or re-negotiate (Fouron and Schiller 2001) their

power in a transnational context. Embedding the households of migrant domestic workers in this 'transnational space' can shed new light on how local and global forces can reconfigure gender norms in the household, the lines of authority, the modality of intra-household bargaining and extra-household support.

2.5 Understanding Power and Empowerment in a Transnational Context

Social organisation is characterised by unequal distribution of power, which is the inevitable result of the differential distribution of resources as well as the existence of norms, standards and other forms that attribute power to individuals. These normative standards are selective and contextual in application and mediate between power and access to resources. None of these determinants of power are static. Resource ownership, access to and control of resources of individuals vary from society to society and also change over time. Migration has a direct impact on enhancing power, as it increases income and thereby the economic worth of the migrant. The migration process also has an indirect impact on power, for example by changing attitudes and values, so that they can have a positive impact on power relations in a given context[12].

2.5.1 The nature of power

The early debate on power viewed it as a single-mode (one-dimensional) operation and was concerned with the controlling aspect of power. The classic example of this conceptualisation is Weber's definition of power, which sees powers as the probability that one actor in a social relationship, *will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance regardless of the basis on which the probability rests* (Weber 1978:53). Today the debate on power has moved out of these narrow confines and incorporated several other aspects and relationships. Weber's single dimension of the control aspect of power was later joined by a second – manipulation (covert power; Dahl (1989) – and a third, latent power (Lukes 2005). Today power is conceived as having many expressions ranging from *power to, power over* (both variations of traditional the control aspect of power) to *power with* and *power within (the realisation of hidden power)*, These later refinements help us to grasp the sub-

tle expressions of power and are useful in understanding many situations where direct control is not present. *Power within* refers to confidence-related assertive power and *power with* is collective-action-based power; both are part of the development dialogue (Oxaal and Baden 1977). Furthermore, they also brought out to the fore the need to rethink the commonly assumed direct relationship between power and resources. These are important in understanding power dynamics in the household.

One of the points Lukes (2005) argues is that power is not always overt and manifest. Latent power (the third dimension of power) is present in situations where individuals are powerless but do not realise that they have no power. In such situations, ideologies create a situation of false consciousness, making people believe that there is no control or suppression involved and the order of things is natural. This is the situation described by Bourdieu (1977) as *doxa*. It is very relevant to power relations in the household, as women are led to believe by the ideologies, norms and standards governing household operations that the way the things are is natural. This differential expression of power complicates the relationship between power and empowerment. When empowerment is viewed as a process leading to power it should not be taken to mean that women's empowerment leads to a new *power over* situation; a situation in which women replace men in the power structure and thereby create a new super-ordination/subordination relationship. It is only the enabling and creative aspects of power and inwardly directed power that is associated with empowerment. Therefore a better analytical position would be to understand empowerment not only as a process but also as a result of that process. Empowerment leads to a transformation of power relations but does not necessarily lead to the creation of new controlling structures and ideologies[13]. It is an expansion of power relations where all those who are involved, men and women, benefit. The gain of one is not the loss of the other. The weakness of the behaviourist view is that it fails to recognise some important dimensions of power (Lukes 2005).

2.5.2 Migration and the empowerment of women: critical reflections

Empowerment is a term that was made popular by the contemporary discourse of development, especially in the context of disadvantaged groups in

developing countries. Many writers have complained about the vagueness and slipperiness of the use of the term in contemporary development discourse (Schapiro 1995:31). There have been many attempts at conceptual clarification and even at devising indicators and scales of empowerment, but the more one delves into them, the more one comes to feel that these efforts miss the point (Fiedrich and Jellema 2003). However, it is generally agreed that the central theme of empowerment is power (Kabeer 1994) as represented in actions and structures (Chambers 1997) or as manifested in individual and psychological experience (Zentgraf 2002). Those who see it as power related to actual action or as represented in structural relations see empowerment as enhanced capabilities, skills and access to resources (Chambers 1997). It starts with the premises that the above properties of power are resources and there are certain groups in society who either lack or have limited access to them. Those who see power as a more individual and psychological state of affairs consider empowerment to be part of both individual experience, such as self assertion, or psychological experience, such as feeling of more self confidence and autonomy (Zentgraf 2002). One of the principal objectives of empowerment activities in development is to enhance the access of the poor and the disadvantaged to power in formal and informal institutions. Empowerment dialogue sees women as among one of the most important groups who need to be empowered as, in spite being half of world's population, they are still living under the domination of patriarchal authority.

Feminist scholarship is another discourse where empowerment is a central theme. Feminists have always emphasised the association between women and empowerment and conceptualised it within a paradigm of power in which women are powerless and in need of empowerment, namely, acquiring self confidence, developing self awareness and assertiveness as fundamental to empowerment (Oxaal and Baden 1997, Zentgraf 2002, Morgen and Bookman 1988). In this sense empowerment makes a person, in this case a woman, a whole being (Aktar 1992 quoted in Oxaal and Baden 1997) who has realised her full potential and can act on that basis. However, there is an alternative conceptualisation of empowerment which, while not rejecting the power dimension, tries to explain it from the point of view of choices, alternatives and agency (Kabeer 1994, Kabeer 2000)[14]. As choices and alter-

natives are situation dependent the latter view makes empowerment a phenomenon that is contextual and open to manipulation.

Conceptualised in this manner empowerment becomes a process leading to changes in power relations and power structures in a given context. The change can be seen as taking place in two ways. The first is women taking steps to correct imbalances of power they are already aware of. The other is them becoming aware that their acceptance of the natural order of things is wrong and that there actual is control in the form of latent power. In this case empowerment means realizing that they are in a power game and need to gain power. In the first situation empowerment leads individuals to access and take control of relevant resources. In the other, women who have realised their true situation do not acquire control but create situations in which they can challenge the established order (this is escaping false consciousness). Women's empowerment is therefore a complex process that ranges from realisations of lack of power to challenging the existing order or taking control of the situation. Both situations lead to transformation of the structures, institutions and ideologies that perpetuate gender inequalities in society. Therefore, it needs to be recognised that the relationship between power and empowerment is a complex one. To understand this complex relationship we need to situate empowerment in the three-dimensional model of power (Lukes 2005) and examine how power works not only as control but as manipulation and latent power.

Women's empowerment is often viewed as a process whereby women, individually and collectively, become aware of how power structures, processes and relationships operate in their lives and gain the self confidence and strength to challenge the resulting gender inequalities (Hannan 2003:2, Chambers 1997). In this sense empowerment is elimination of the feeling of powerlessness in women. As powerlessness creates dependency and makes people have decisions taken for them by others, empowerment can be seen as a process leading to the liberation of women from situations of dependency. In this sense the empowerment of women means women taking control themselves and of the situations they are in. This makes empowerment intrinsically connected to social structure and individual agency.

Power operates in multiple domains and in multiple dimensions (Malhotra and Mather 1997: 604, see also Isvan 1991). Empowerment cannot

(and should not) be seen as relating to all these domains and dimensions at all times. Empowerment in a family or household domain does not necessarily lead to a similar development in the political domain[15]. Similarly a women's control over a given dimension, economic activity for example, does not necessarily mean she has control in other dimensions such as non-economic decision-making (Bradley and Khor 1993, MacDonald 1980). The fact that empowerment in one particular dimension or domain does not lead to similar levels of empowerment in another is explained by variables that mediate between the resource determinants of empowerment.

Empowerment, according to conventional resource theory (Blood & Wolfe, 1960), is a function of access to resources. The connection was later modified by others who argue that control of resources not mere access to them is the determinant of empowerment (Bradley and Khor 1993, Safilios-Rothschild 1990, Pahl 1989). The premise of the resource theory of empowerment is that the resource base is fundamental in determining empowerment. The argument that resources alone do not provide sufficient conditions for empowerment states that mediating variables operate as buffer determining the level of empowerment that resource access and control can lead to. Wages, for example, do not reflect domestic power because familial ideologies intervene. They may also include other ideological and normative factors such as the altruism of women, or the need to avoid conflict (Komter 1989). So empowerment in one area of activity resulting from control of resources, such as wages, may not be translated into empowerment in another area where ideological and normative factors have a stronger influence. The argument for a micro level understanding of empowerment, which is the focus of this study, is further supported by the above complex relationship between empowerment and power on the one hand and the empowerment resource base on the other.

The discourse on the empowerment of women migrants follows the generally held view that labour market participation, however exploitative it may be, is a liberating experience. The argument here is that wage labour gives women access to material resources independently of men, increases their bargaining power in family decision-making, and makes gender roles more equitable. But research shows that there is no simple linear relationship between women's work, economic autonomy and household authority

(Zentgraf 2002). There are intervening variables such as women's family status, stage in the life cycle, social class and culture, between employment and empowerment. For example, old married women may experience greater participation in household decision-making than younger women (Safa 1990), and middle-class women are likely to attain more egalitarian household relationships than working-class women (Safilios-Rothschild 1990). Women's dual role in production and reproduction may even weaken the effects of paid employment on their status (Zentgraf 2002).

However the empowering effects of the role-enhanced economic value of migrant women cannot be rejected. As shown by many studies, the increased economic worth of women is manifested in increased participation of women in decision-making (George 2000) and by a reversal of gender roles (Lan 2003). These are all indirect indicators of empowerment of women. However how many of these changes have led to real empowerment is a good question, as empowerment is more a qualitative phenomenon than a quantitative one. A Filipino migrant woman who works as domestic servant in Taiwan refusing to consider marriage (Lan 2003) may be called a radical who acquired her radical ideology through exposure and experience, but one can hardly argue that her refusal to marry is empowerment. Studies also show that, by gaining an income as a migrant, for example, a woman can negotiate gender roles sometimes, but not always. Some believe that employment does not always lead to empowerment (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). It is one thing to earn an income but it is entirely a different thing to have control over what is earned. Hugo (2000) says women migrants in some situations may not have the control of the income they earn. Furthermore, as we have already indicated, employment itself can make women less powerful than they already are. As Pessar says, migrant women who work in sweatshops in New York do that because they have no other alternative. They do not feel empowered in most cases (Pessar 1994). The work of domestic servants is no different to this. They work in difficult and isolated situations and, though some may find it empowering in a different context, for example once they return home, they may also mentally feel that they are being treated as second-class members of society. But there may be indirect empowerment, as Hugo (2000) says, as these workers may leave their employers to seek better positions.

The question of empowerment and the migration for women then boils down to one crucial issue. The issue is the capability of individual women to translate their labour market experience and their exposure to different cultural contexts into (a) increased self worth as persons with better economic value, (b) access to more material resources (c) the ability to change the ideologies and practices that are constraining them (Menjívar 2003) and (d) the ability to use their newly gained power.

Labour force participation studies demonstrate that there are enough examples of the enhanced value of women as a result of becoming income earners, and studies among migrants amply show that there are many situations where women migrants have become more and more involved in decision-making and where families have redefined gender roles. Women may attempt to get their husbands to help them more in the house as a result but the context and extent to which the men comply is again a question. If women are not able to make men comply then there is no empowerment. As shown in many situations, as in the case of Yucatecans in Dallas (Adler 2004) and Puerto Ricans in Chicago (Toro-Morn 1997), women very often fail to get men to comply with their demands.

One important area where women migrants have shown empowerment is their active role as change agents. This is seen in relation to both regular socioeconomic activities and in the development process in their home country. These migrants are pioneers who cross borders and take risks to connect the sending and receiving countries (Morokvasic 1993). By deciding to migrate they break one traditional barrier women face in many social setups, i.e. being independent and managing their own affairs. There is risk-taking and investment spirit that goes with this pioneering mentality. They in some cases become investors and economically active. Lutz for example discusses Polish immigrants who establish business concerns at home (Lutz 2002). Lan, who studied migrant women who work as domestics in Taiwan, found a category she calls remote madams who are domestics in Taiwan and who employ maids in their home country to look after the family. The new economic situation enabled them to recruit their own domestic servants, which is a clear case of the exploited turning exploiter (Lan 2003).

2.6 Networks and Migration Support at the Community Level

Social networks are a recent addition to social migration explanations. They began to receive attention during the 1980s. Researchers used the concept to explain the cumulative causes of migration (Massey 1988, Massey *et al.* 1987) and to link micro and macro explanations. These theorists claim that the migration process is characterised by ties that link migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community feeling (Massey 1988, Massey *et al.* 1987). In this sense migration networks are a form of social network, but not the only one that plays a role in migration. Other social networks play a role either independently or by being the basis in the formation of migration networks. For example in addition to kinship or friendship bonds, existing kinship networks also can be instrumental in forming new and strengthening already existing migration networks.

The theory of migration networks is viewed by researchers as an explanation that can unite macro-level and micro-level causes of migration that sees migration as either a result of the mechanistic pull of structural forces or cost-benefit decisions of rational individuals. It claims that migration networks reduce the social, economic and emotional costs of migration, thus encouraging people to migrate. In this sense migration networks play the role of facilitator of migration rather than directly being a cause of it. They help prospective migrants to find employment, travel and settle in. In doing so, they make migration more secure and less difficult for the migrant. Once established, migration networks become progressively independent and feed into migration (Massey *et al.* 1987) thus contributing to the increased movement of people. The argument is that migration networks make people migrate who would otherwise not have done.

2.7 Concluding Remarks

The existing literature reveals that there is still considerable disagreement on the impact of migration on intra-household power relations. Though there is some evidence of changes in gender relation in the household as a result of migration, the extent to which this has had a liberating impact on women is still debatable. The studies that have attempted to throw some light on the

question are also limited by the fact that a majority of them examine the situation of women migrants permanently settled in the West. One of the most exploited groups of women migrants, who also come from a very vulnerable background, has by and large been left out of studies of empowerment and migration.

The migration process has undergone significant changes in both content and form. The increasing number of independent women migrants in transnational labour movements is one important area that reflects this change. The number of women migrants has not only increased significantly to make them over 50 per cent of total number of migrants (change of form) but they have also become a special group of migrants with their own niche in the labour market (change in content). These developments have added new dynamics to the migration process. This has made it necessary not only to evaluate research priorities, for example the gendered dimensions of migration, but also to examine the adequacy of existing analytical approaches. The emerging interest in re-conceptualisations and the reformulation of analytical approaches are indicative of this situation. One important development is the attempt to understand migration as a contextual phenomenon. While recognising the importance of overall structural relationships and the relevance of economic and utility-based decision-making (migrants maximizing utility), scholars are turning their attention to context-specific factors in migration analysis. This has led to a critical re-examination of existing analytical paradigms that are highly exclusive and compartmentalised in disciplinary and theoretical lines (Santillán 2004). The result is the emergence of interdisciplinary and integrative approaches to migration that try to grasp context-specific migration dynamics. Analytical synthesis, bringing disciplines and approaches together, is today moving towards an integrated approach to migration. The analytical foundation of this study is this integrated approach that brings different levels and units of analysis, namely micro, meso and macro level analysis, together.

The inadequacy of existing models of decision-making to explain household power operations in the transnational context is an immediate need that needs attention in studies of migration and gender. The existing models view household decisions as taking place within the household and also determined mainly by intra-household factors. This view is not valid in the

context of modern migration where the household is often a transnational entity. When the household becomes transnational its dynamics change with the form and content of household relationships and interactions being fundamentally transformed. To understand the impact of these changes on household decision-making, which in turn has a fundamental impact on gendered power in the household, we need to locate the household in transnational space and identify the linkages and their relevance at a given moment.

Notes

[1] Modern migration analysis is fast abandoning traditional discipline-based compartmentalisation and analytical separatedness as evident from increasing attempts to formulate integrated approaches. This can be seen partly as a result of the changes in the phenomenon of migration, in terms of organisation, composition and practice. It is also partly a result of the emerging prominence of non-traditional actors, for example feminist researchers, in migration research

[2] This does not mean that migration is entirely voluntary. There is a significant proportion of forced migrants, in the form of refugees

[3] It is true that New Economics of Labour Migration explanation (NELM) did consider household decision making in the context of imperfect credit and risk markets (Dustdar-Sinclair 2002). But this is only replacing of rational calculating individual by rational calculating household (Folbre, 1986; Gos and Lindquist, 1995) and not true context based understanding of migration.

[4] Transnational links and relationships are not new and existed even during the time of the first Jewish diaspora. It is the speed and the immediacy of the links that have changed. It also must be noted that not all forms of modern migration are transnational (see Pries 2007)

[5] This new category is *housewives*' in Europe who become employers of women from poor countries to get their housewife work done. Some studies have shown that these housemaids have become employers of housemaids in their own countries (Lan 2003: 187)

[6] The emergence of domestic service is seen by some as the result of two-earner households (Hutton and Giddens, 2000: 5). Feminists however, criticise this claiming that it perpetuates the ideology that domestic work is women's

work. Their argument is that there is no rationale in getting migrant women when husband and wife can share work.

[7] A typical care chain according to Hochschild entails 'an older daughter from a poor family who cares for her siblings while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a migrating nanny who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country' (Hochschild 2000: 131).

[8] This does not mean that care economy is associated only with gender. It is also associated with race, class etc. (Kurian 2004)

[9] Though it is closely associated with globalisation, transnationalisation was not created by it. Transnational actors and activities, for example multinational corporations and international non-governmental organisations and church groups, existed and actively connected nations through extra-state linkages before the onset of globalisation as a major force. Globalisation only increased the importance and the dominant role of transnationalism as a major force.

[10] This does not claim that multi-local existence is product of transnationalism. Transnationalism only brought it into one systemic relationship. Pessar and Mahler (2001: 5) put this succinctly when they say that there are different power hierarchies in existence but transnationalism brought them into one single operating environment/system.

[11] We use pluri-local and multi-local as interchangeable terms here.

[12] This does not mean that the impact on migration is always positive, a fact that was already discussed in chapter one. Migration does not always bring extra income and migrants may be poor in the new context. Furthermore, migration experiences may be negative.

[13] This argument can lead to a theoretical debate of power that is beyond the scope of the thesis by bringing in the conceptualisation of power relations as a zero sum, i.e., an increase in the power of one group results in a corresponding decrease of power in the other. Full realisation of empowerment is not possible if power is conceptualised as a zero sum reality.

[14] The argument that empowerment can be explained in terms of choices and alternatives is not contradictory to the view that empowerment is acquiring of power to make decisions (UN 1995) and becoming powerful (Oxaal and Baden 1997, Zentgraf 2002, Morgen and Bookman 1988). This is because that choices and alternatives can be described as operating within a given configuration of power relations.

[15] For discussion on the multidimensional properties of power and differential manifestations/operations of power in different domains see Isvan (1991) and Malhotra and Mather (1997)

3 Gender and Transnationalism in the Migration of Sri Lankan Women Workers: The Actors and Factors Shaping the Migration Process

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discerns the key features of the migration of Sri Lankan domestic workers to the Middle East, focusing on the main actors and process involved. The discussion in this chapter has two main objectives. The first is to highlight the gendered nature of the entire migration process from the decision to migrate to the return home and re-integration in the community. The focus there is on the manifestation of gender in the three main stages of the migration process: pre-migration, during-migration and post-migration. The second objective is to highlight the transnational elements in the migration of women domestic workers from Sri Lanka. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part excavates the gender characteristics of the transnational migrants from Sri Lanka, with a focus on women domestic workers as revealed in the socioeconomic data. The second section discusses the gender and transnational elements in and affecting the three principal actors in the pre-migration process, namely the state, labour recruitment agents and non-governmental organisations. The third section examines the migration networks and their role in the migration process.

3.2 Out-Migration of Labour from Sri Lanka

Overseas migration of labour is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka. Even as early as the 19th century there has been an outflow of workers, though on a very small scale. There was a small outward movement of Sri Lankan workers during the British colonial period, involving Tamil males migrating

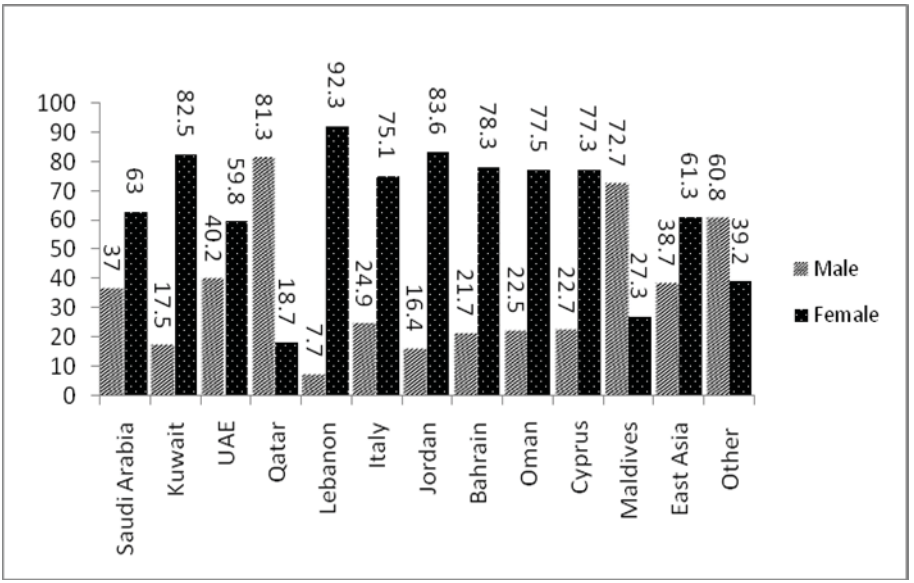
to Malaysia (De Fontgalland 1986). The early post-independence period saw an outward movement of Sri Lankans of mixed European origin as well as westernised Sinhala and the Tamil peoples (Pinnawala 1986). This movement was primarily motivated by the desire to avoid domination by the nationalist resurgence movement favouring the majority Sinhalese community that was gaining ground. The movement consisted mainly of families seeking to settle down in the country of destination rather than labour migration. It was centred on the male head with the women (also children) taking part only as partners in the process.

In the late 1960s out-migration from Sri Lanka took a different turn, drawing mainly professionals (brain drain) who were leaving for better material and professional prospects offered by the West. By the mid-1970s the brain drain had become a major problem, prompting the government to introduce measures restricting the outflow (Pinnawala 1997). The migration of professionals also consisted mainly of men migrating either as individuals or with families for permanent settlement in the West. It was therefore different from the contemporary migration of contract labour, which is migration of individuals for a specific period and mainly to a different destination.

3.2.1 Contract worker migration from Sri Lanka

The migration of contract workers was qualitatively different from these previous movements. They were not Westernised urban middle or upper classes as in the case of early migrants, nor did they possess professional skills. They came primarily from rural and urban poor groups were less educated, and their skills suited them to physical labour (Kottegoda 2004b). Contract worker migration began as an outflow of male workers responding to new employment opportunities in construction and infrastructure development in the Middle East, mainly as a result of the oil price increase in 1973. Women began to migrate later, but dominate the flow of contract workers today. Women contract workers migrate mainly for domestic work, which requires special gendered skills that women can only provide.[1] Sri Lanka is one of the many Asian counties that have benefited from this new opportunity (Gulati 1993).

Figure 3.1
Sri Lankan Contract Workers Aboard



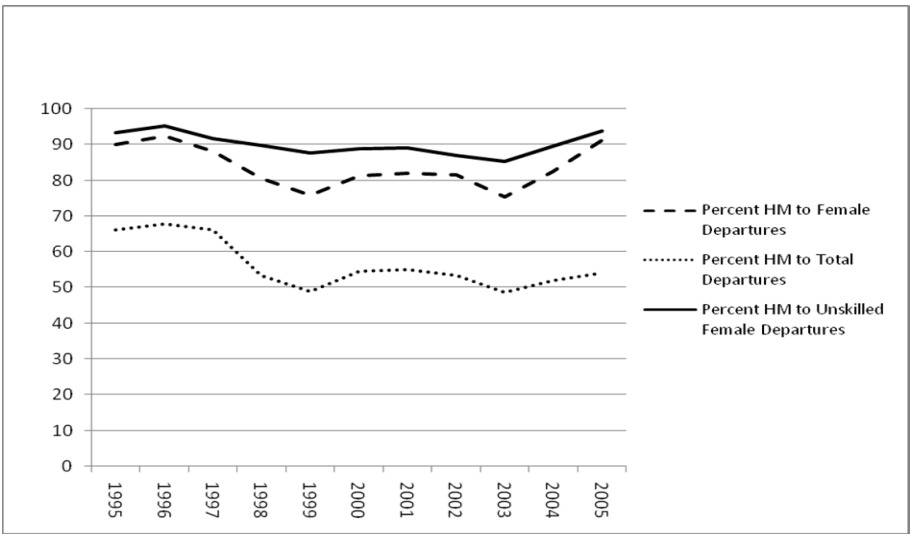
Source: Annual Statistical Report, 2005; Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Colombo

According to some estimates, in the early 1990s the Middle East had around 5 million contract workers coming from only eight major supplying countries (Hugo 1997:164-165). During the 1990s the newly industrialised countries (NICs) in the East Asian region also started attracting an increasing number of workers (Kassim 1997). In the mid-1990s the estimated number of migrant workers in the NICs and in Japan was around 6 million (Hugo 1997:166), pushing the Middle East into second place in terms of migrant intake from the poor countries of Asia. However the Middle East still remains the major employer of migrant workers, especially women workers, from Sri Lanka (figure 3.1).

As of 2005 out of a total of 1.2 million overseas workers from Sri Lanka almost 90 per cent were in the Middle East. Of these, almost 50 per cent is in two countries, namely, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Of the two countries Saudi Arabia which has the biggest concentration of Sri Lankan workers also ac-

counts for 1/3 of all Sri Lankan domestic workers. What is even more interesting is the fact that except for two countries, namely, Qatar and the Maldives, women workers from Sri Lanka out number men workers by very large margins[2]. This combined with the fact that the government is dependent on the foreign exchange these women bring to the country put them in a disadvantaged position in the competitive labour market in the Middle East when it comes to negotiations for better facilities and wages. A recent attempt by the government of Sri Lanka to get Saudi and Kuwaiti governments to agree to a minimum wage of US$200 for domestic workers failed and the government of Sri Lanka had to agree for US$180 instead which was the host were offering (The Sunday Times 2008). Furthermore, the above concentration of workers in a few countries also has made these workers highly vulnerable to adverse forces that affect the labour market, as happened to Sri Lankan domestic workers in 1990 during the war in Kuwait, when around a 100,000 Sri Lankan workers, the majority of them women, had to hurry home.

Figure 3.2
Housemaid departures versus female departures, total departures and unskilled departures



Source: Annual Statistical Reports, 2004 and 2005; Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Colombo

Sri Lankan contract workers in the Middle East are not only predominantly women but as we have stated earlier they are overwhelmingly housemaids. The proportion of housemaids has remained close to 70 per cent of the total migrants to these countries for the last three years.

In terms of numerical strength Sri Lankan women in the care-giving sector in the Middle East are among the top three source countries, the other two being Indonesia and the Philippines. According to available data in Saudi Arabia alone Indonesia currently has over 500,000 women working as domestic workers, while the Philippines and Sri Lanka have approximately half that number each (Migration News 2007). As with Sri Lanka, the economy of the Philippines and Indonesia also depends to a large extent on migrant women. The remittances of Filipino women amount to around US$1 billion a month (Migration News 2007). Indonesia has the advantage of being the only Muslim country among the top three. Filipinos have the reputation of having not only better skills to manage modern households but also better proficiency in the English language. The main attraction of Sri Lankan domestic workers is that their labour is cheaper compared to their competitors, they work hard and are easy to work with (Samath 2008).

Furthermore, being predominantly domestic workers, these women are outside the labour market of the receiving countries, where even the workers in the formal work force have little rights if they are from overseas. This not only results in these migrants facing serious breeches of rights, but they also experience abuse and violence that is neither reported nor compensated for, as we shall see in a later section in this chapter. This situation has an adverse impact on the workers and creates problems for the government having to look after them. It does, however, have its advantages. The fact that Sri Lankan women are mainly concentrated in household work means that they have been less affected by the declining demand for labour in the Middle East (Eelens and Speckman 1990).

The niche labour market for women workers in the Middle East, especially in the domestic sector services, is a by-product of the oil boom of the 1970s. The boom led to an increase in household income and affluence at family level, producing demand for domestic work[3]. These women migrants therefore provide a much needed service, both economic and social, for the households in these societies though their contribution is not recognised at

formal level by the receiving countries. This is because of two factors. Firstly, the contribution of women to domestic activities is not traditionally recognised universally as productive labour. Secondly, there is a misconception even at the level of academic discourse that it is only the sending countries that benefit from labour migration, though this view is gradually being challenged (ILO/ACTRAV, 1996:4).

3.2.2 Gender in state policies and its implications: the changing role of the state from controller to facilitator

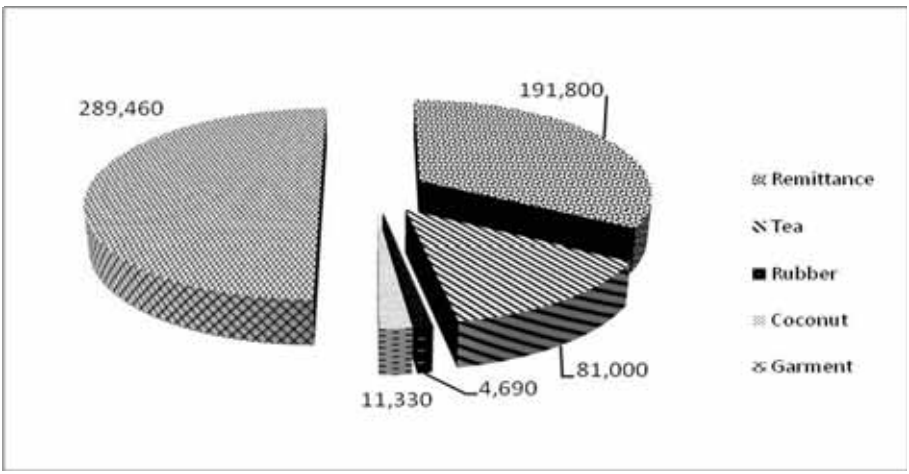
Labour migration from Sri Lanka has always been characterised by very heavy government involvement. In the early days the government worked actively to control the process and, since the early 1980s, to regulate it. The government tried to control the outflow in the early days because the majority of migrants were professionals leaving the country with a view to permanently settling down abroad. This was a source of concern as it resulted in the loss of qualified people to the country. Labour migration abroad during this period fell under the Fee Charging Employment Agencies Act no. 37 of 1956, which aimed at controlling the outflow of labour and required the agencies involved in sending workers abroad to register with the Ministry of Labour. In addition there were other restrictions on migration, in the form of passport controls[4] and requiring those who migrated to sign a surety bond with the government undertaking to return and serve the country for a specific period, as stipulated by the employer. Though there were some administrative changes in later years these restrictive policies were in force up to the late 1970s. After the 1980s there was a shift in government policy due to changing patterns of migration. Since then the country has witnessed a gradual relaxation of strict governmental controls and labour migration opening up. This coincided with the opening up of opportunities for non-skilled and semi-skilled workers in the emerging oil economies in the Middle East.

Sri Lanka's attitudes towards labour migration has changed over time from that of a harmful phenomenon that drained much valued, trained people to one that is beneficial for its positive contribution to the economy. Today labour migration, especially the migration of semi-skilled and unskilled labour for which the state cannot provide employment opportunities,

is seen as an asset to the county for the migrants' direct contribution to the home country national economy and to their households through remittances. The part played by labour migration in alleviating poverty and cushioning the impact of unemployment (Korale 1986, Human Rights Watch 2007), though often debated, are other areas of benefits

The contribution to the national coffers is the direct and most visible benefit of migrant labour. Today remittances have exceeded the country's traditional export earners and are second only to the income from the garment industry (fig 3.3). Migrants have in essence become an exportable commodity for the Sri Lankan state[5]. Further, the contribution is steadilly increasing and at a faster pace than the export of garments. Sri Lanka's mobile labour force today brings over US$2.33 billion in remittances – more than 9 per cent of the gross domestic product and US$526 million more than the country received in foreign aid and foreign direct investment combined (Human Rights Watch 2007).

Figure 3.3
Earnings from Migrant Remittances versus Other Selected Exports



Source: Annual Statistical Reports, 2004 and 2005; Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment

In addition to the contribution to the national economy the value of migrants is directly felt at household level as they bring in income. Though there are divided opinion as to whether overseas employment is a solution to the unemployment problem in the country, analysts generally agree that it has a cushioning effect on the high unemployment rate. In addition, with women becoming a force in migrant labour force there was another development that gave the government new responsibilities. The entry of women, who are a vulnerable and disadvantaged group, into the migration flow has had many repercussions on policies and implementation structures. The change in the role of the government in the migration process from that of controller to facilitator of migration and protector migrants in the recent past, needs to be seen in this new context, where women workers have become the most important component in the outflow of labour from Sri Lanka. All these developments led to changes in the attitudes of the government towards labour migration.

The shift of emphasis of the state from control to facilitation is seen in a formal policy change, through a new Act of Parliament called the Foreign Employment Agencies Act (FEA Act) no. 32 of 1980. This Act however, did not introduce any significant policy measures to improve the social security of the out-going workers, though such measures were expected (Soysa 1988). The Act was mainly aimed at addressing administrative problems, namely, regulating recruitment procedures by employment agents. The Act allowed the government to control labour recruitment agents, who by then had become a major player, with strict guidelines, and to control the outflow of workers in the categories that are needed for the country (FEA Act no. 32, 1980:17.1), only allowing those who are not needed, i.e. the unemployed to leave. So the Act served the dual purpose of control and facilitation. The Act also regulated compensation for labour claims (claims of damage, etc.) of contract workers, as by this time the need for such had become clear to the government.[6] The Act required recruiting agencies to make a deposit of Rs.100,000 when they applied for registration with the government. This money was intended to cover labour claims.

Some very significant changes to the regulations on migrant contract workers were introduced in 1985 by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment Act no. 21 of 1985. Foreign employment was by then officially

recognised as a positive phenomenon and an essential aspect of open economic policies. Furthermore, women workers were established as the most visible component of overseas labour flow. The new Act responded to these new developments and was intended to provide necessary new policy directions. It was brought in with the aim of achieving some broad objectives (Labour Laws Handbook 1987, p. 65), namely promoting overseas employment opportunities and protecting migrants, something that had become a felt need by then.

The 1985 Act established the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) and made it into a regulator within the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of Labour. A licensing fee for the agencies was also introduced by the Act and they were required to sign an agreement with the Bureau undertaking to adhere to the guidelines set by the government under the Act. As stated earlier the primary responsibility of the government up to now had been the promotion and development of overseas employment. With the establishment of SLBFE in 1985, the welfare of workers also became a principal responsibility of the government.

In addition to the attempting to link the labour migration with the new open economic policies by encouraging migration as a means to support economic development, the 1985 Act was the first attempt to address the needs of the work force and their welfare. Therefore the Act also can be seen as first formal recognition of out-migration as a positive phenomenon, while accepting that there are problems for which the government should take the responsibility in finding solutions. The Act also envisaged the establishment of a Workers' Welfare Fund. This was a much needed area of attention in the light of the abuses and rights violations of migrants in the host countries. By this time the abuses of migrant women and violations of their rights in the host country had become a major public concern, increasingly getting the attention of the media. The concern naturally was focused on women, as they are the most vulnerable to these problems. Thus the increasing role of the government in the migration process emanates partly from its strong commitment to protect women migrants and partly from the fact that it was becoming a politically sensitive issue that could be damaging if not correctly handled.

3.2.3 Non-governmental and supra-governmental actors

As pointed out previously, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and inter-state organisations, mainly UN affiliated bodies, play an increasingly important role in modern labour migration. UN agencies and other inter-state bodies are more involved at policy level, developing guidelines and facilitating their implementation. In Sri Lanka there are three UN agencies providing direct support to migrants: the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). NGOs supporting or working with migrants and migrant support services fall into two categories. First, there are international non-governmental organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other agencies like Save the Children, which are involved in these activities as part of their general service to their key beneficiaries. The other group is local NGOs. Overall however, in spite of Sri Lanka having a vibrant NGO sector, work by NGOs among migrants is still limited (Oishi 2005:88).

According to the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), an NGO-cum-policy research group, there were 14 NGOs either working with or working for migrants, especially women, in Sri Lanka in 1999. A quick perusal of this list however shows that of the 14 there is only one NGO, the Migrant Service Centre, which is mainly involved in pre-migration training and has a specialised interest in migrants. Others are either research groups or NGOs with broader interests and focusing on migrants as a sub-group of their main interest. Similar to other countries in South Asia there is virtually no non-governmental activism promoted by migrant themselves in Sri Lanka. The leadership and core activists of the few NGOs working among migrants therefore come from outside of the migrant community (Oishi 2005). This is in contrast to the Philippines, where there is a highly active NGO sector organised by migrant themselves.

This lack of NGO activism promoted by migrants themselves is interesting because it contradicts the public image of migrants as abused women in foreign countries. Newspapers often write about the abuse and violence faced by migrants and the other injustices they go through. These concerns are shared by other stakeholders, such as the academic and research community and politicians. Going by the public discourse, migrants are facing

extreme difficulties yet migrant themselves are not coming forward to organise themselves to protect their interests. One explanation for this is that the highlighted injustices and violations are only what middle-class activists see and do not relate to the real experience of the migrants, i.e. they do not feel the same about the abuses and injustices. For example, women who go abroad as domestic workers come from very poor and disadvantaged families (this may be not so for those young women who often choose South East Asian destinations). Therefore abuse at domestic level is not unusual to them.

Another reason for the lack of mobilisation by migrants themselves may be the personalities of the women migrants themselves. We have already mentioned that Sri Lankan women workers are preferred by some Middle East destinations, such as Kuwait, because they are docile and obedient (Samath 2008). Though Sri Lankan women are often active participants in community work and even take on leadership of these activities, they are not militant. Furthermore, the extensive and vibrant NGO network also may be contributory here. NGOs that are already active in Sri Lanka often provide comprehensive service packages to the community that include many support services required by migrant women, especially in promoting economic activities for re-integration. Therefore migrant-sponsored activism is not necessary in these areas. The government provides training and also there is a fairly effective regulator mechanism supported by government agencies. Finally, the social support system at community and household level is another reason for the migrants to feel secure. Close-knit families and cooperative residential neighbourhoods based on kinship provide most support required by migrants at all stages. Another important foundation of migrant activism in the Philippines, the active involvement of religious organisations, is absent in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, unlike in the Philippines, the church is not active among the migrants. Even if it were active it could make only little impact as only about 6 per cent of the population belongs to the Christian faith. Buddhism, which is the religion of the majority (around 70%), and Hinduism (10%) are traditionally not interested in this type of community and social work.

3.3 The Recruitment Process

The recruitment of migrants for contract work involves several agencies including the SLBFE, formal recruitment agents in the private sector, and informal actors and social networks. As a result of active government intervention in promoting migration and protecting and looking after the welfare of migrants, the numbers of migrants who use formal recruitment channels are high (Pinnawala 1997). In 2004 for example 73 per cent of all workers who migrated did so through formal channels (SLBFE 2006). The active involvement of the state in regulating the migration process, the comparatively better formal communication network the country has and, most importantly, the high rate of literacy may be reasons for the relatively smaller role of informal actors in the recruitment process. The SLBFE sends migrants abroad but its involvement is relatively minor and is confined to sending workers mainly to countries with which it has signed formal bilateral agreements for this purpose. Therefore the bulk of the migrants who leave for work abroad outside the private agent network find their way on their own or using social networks.

3.3.1 Private sector agencies and the recruitment of women workers

Labour recruiting agencies are not a recent phenomenon in Sri Lanka. They first appeared in the 1970s when the government was actively controlling out-migration. At the time there were only a few agencies as there was only a very small outflow of migrants. Today with the state actively supporting out-migration, there is a large outflow and a resulting proliferation of recruitment agencies. There are about 600 private operators/agents recruiting migrant workers for overseas work at present (SLBFE 2006). Some of these are large operators with a national network of offices and a high annual turnover, but the majority are medium-sized, regional actors. There are only 12 agents with an annual turnover of LKR 10,000,000 or more, and 321 with an annual turnover of less than LKR 500,000. According to 2004 data the top 10 labour recruitment agencies in the private sector sent 26,324 workers abroad, 17 per cent of migrants sent out by all registered agencies. 29 agents sent more than 1,000 workers abroad annually, and they sent a total of 52,662 migrants abroad, 34 per cent of the migrant workers going

through agencies. A large majority of agencies are very small operators, sending on average between 100 and 200 migrants abroad annually (SLBFE 2006).

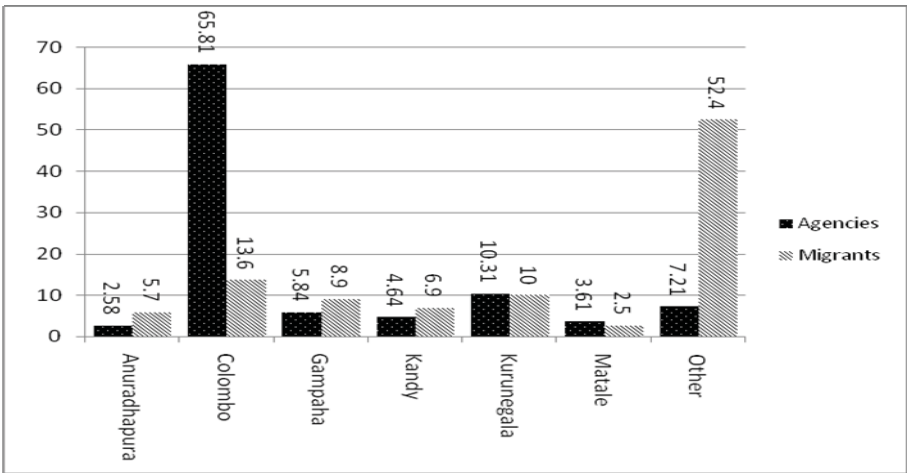
The agencies in the private sector operate under a license issued by the SLBFE, for which they pay an annual registration fee. They are allowed to collect fees approved by the SLBFE from the migrants they send for employment. The fees are set by the Bureau on a formula that takes into account the wages/salary scales of the migrant in the host country, insurance and other mandatory fees as determined by the Bureau from time to time. Under the present fee structure the amount that can be charged by an agency from a migrant ranges from a minimum of LKR 5,200 to a maximum of LKR 10,200. All these charges are subject to an addition of 15 per cent tax. These charges consist of the fees the workers pay as administrative expenses and insurance and other related payments. A part of this money goes to a government fund under the control of the SLBFE. The income of the agencies is mainly the commission they get from employers in the home countries.

While some large labour recruiters have their own island-wide networks covering the regions, with offices in principal towns, the small operators work in a particular region. Even the large operators do not have offices in villages and small urban centres. They are covered by either small operators or sub-agents of the large operators. A popular method of recruitment used by big time operators is to use a network of freelance agents who either travel in rural areas or have their own offices in small towns. An independent agent will often work with many agencies. They also serve as direct recruiters. In addition the regions also have independent agencies. They are given a commission by the agent who finally sends the person abroad, but the freelancer may also collect money on his own, in addition to the standard fees. There are sometimes complaints that some established recruiters collect fees in addition to the prescribed charges set by the SLBFE.

One important feature of the recruitment agents is their heavy concentration in urban areas, particularly in the Colombo region. Of the 600-odd agencies that were operating in 2005, 383 (66%) were in Colombo District. This regional concentration however does not follow the regional distribution of migrants (figure 3.4). Though more than half of the operators are in

Colombo District the majority of the women who migrate are from outside Colombo. Of the domestic workers who departed in 2005 only 10 per cent came from Colombo District. The only possible reason for the heavy concentration of agents in the Colombo region is that it is the economic hub of the country.

Figure 3.4
District distribution of recruitment agencies and migrants



Districts with over 10 agencies are shown separately

Source: Annual Statistical Reports, 2004 and 2005, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Colombo

The concentration of recruitment agents in Colombo and in major cities, together with the fact that migrant women mostly come from the regions outside Colombo, has resulted in operational strategies that adversely affect potential migrants, especially women. There has been a proliferation of sub-agents and freelance recruitment brokers whose responsibility is to bring customers to registered agents for a commission. As one large agent from Colombo said:

> We have the head office of our agency in Colombo and regional branches in Kandy, Gampaha and Kegalle. In addition to these we also have our sub-agents in many migrant source areas/towns. They have the responsibility of contacting prospective migrants, providing information to them, especially women, and bringing them to the agency. We pay him only if the person he brings in goes through our agency. We pay a bonus if they exceed the target. When we get an order from our foreign agent we place paper advertisements and also inform our sub-agents.

One problem with this mode of operation is the increased costs, both hidden and irregular. Another is the difficulties in and a lack of supervision and monitoring of the activities of sub-agents and freelance recruitment brokers. The large agencies, whose main interest is naturally profit, do not consider that it is their responsibility to supervise and monitor the actions of their agents as long as the business side of the operation is satisfactory. Furthermore, such supervision is practically impossible and the result is often misuse and fraud by unscrupulous individuals who take advantage of the situation. For women migrants, this often means they have to depend on intermediaries, such as their husbands or another male member of the family, or to use any recruiter available, whether they are good or bad. When women do not use properly regulated mainstream agents there is even more chance of abuse in the recruitment process. Exorbitant charges outside the set fees of the SLBFE and other misuses often attributed to recruiters are often committed by these middle-level and grassroots operators. As one respondent said about her mother, who was also a migrant and returned because she had problems with her employer, these middle-level operators deceive the worker.

> My mother went abroad through an agency (this in fact is a sub-agent). She did not work there for more than five months. She suffered without food and salary but the agency did not do anything and put the blame on my mother. She came back and I therefore decided go through my relatives, one aunt who is in a good place, when I went (migrated). (Returnee, married 34, LC, two trips, Ref. no. 2.7)

These recruiters, if they are not from a recognised establishment, suddenly disappear leaving the clients stranded. The following is the experience of a migrant:

> I had to return because the place I was working was horrible. Now I know the agent who sent me (it was revealed this person was actually a freelancer) was not being honest with me and others who went through him. When I returned I went to see my agent but he had disappeared and there is no office. I am not the only person to face this problem. I am thinking about going back for I do not know how else to come out of this predicament. But this time I should be very careful about the agency (Returnee, 40, ULIS Ref. no 3.17).

The recruitment network has a visible gender bias in operations. Almost all agencies are managed by men and employees are often men. It is not uncommon to hear stories about these male employees trying to take advantage of women who come to their agencies. There are only a few female operated agencies and even these are new operators and have yet to make an impact. They are however not only aware of the problem but also seem to be doing something about it, as shown by the following views of a female agency owner.

> We take all responsibilities of the migrant and I myself when time permits visit these migrant families and provide information to them and participate in occasions like funerals etc. We maintain a good relationship with them. We take special care to address the needs of women as we know they have their problems. If they need their salaries to be sent to families we do it for them (SLBFE does not favour this practice and advises migrants to send money through the banking system which has a good penetration in the rural areas).

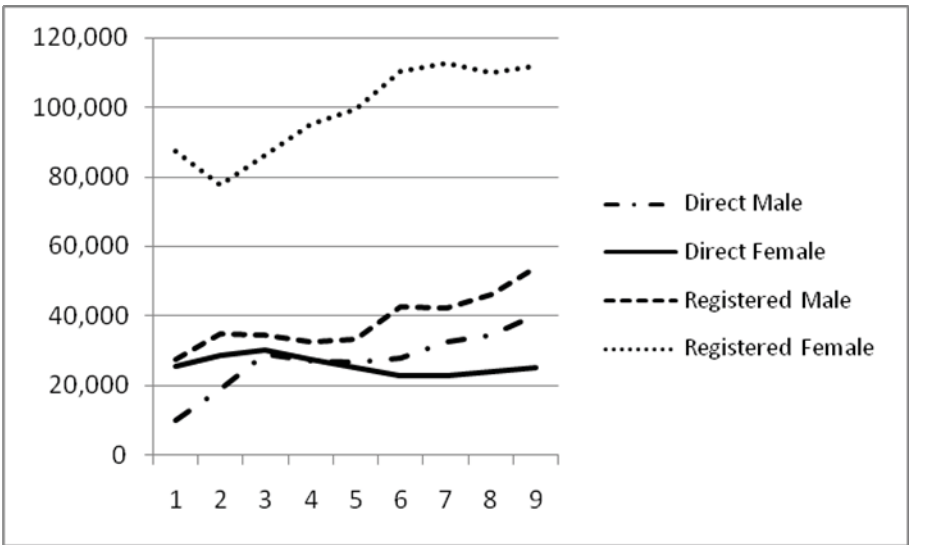
In general however there are adequate regulations in place to regulate the recruitment process. The SLBFE has a mechanism to monitor the activities of the agencies. The problem areas are in the implementation, mainly because some operational mechanisms that are part of the recruitment process, like the freelancers and their relationship with mainstream recruiters, are difficult to monitor. There are also a substantial number of migrants who use non-formal channels, both independent recruiters who are completely outside of the system (they are often returned migrants who use the connections they have established while working) and migration networks.

3.3.2 Informal Migration Networks as Recruiters

In the recruitment process it is not only the formal operators and their network that is important. Figure 3.5 shows workers who do not migrate

through registered agents (direct migrants, as they are called in SLBFE statistics) are increasing both in number and in proportion among males and remain constant in number among women (though in proportionate terms there is a significant drop in the latter case). Some of these migrants go though unregistered employment brokers. Others are sponsored by an employer in the host country, often facilitated by another migrant. This type of migration is common among domestic workers (Gamburd 2002) and is called sponsored migration. These are the ones who migrate through migration chains[7].

Figure 3.5
Departure of males and females workers through direct channels and registered agencies



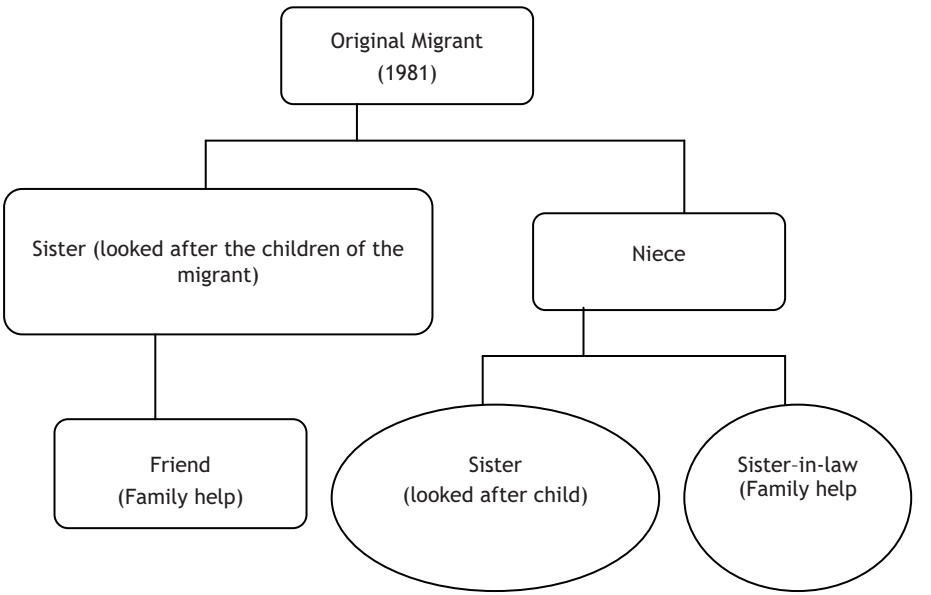
Source: Annual Statistical Report, 2005, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Colombo

According to studies in Sri Lanka (Hettige 1988:88, Thilakasiri and de Silva 1981:10) the kinship connection often leads to chain migration and the creation of migration pockets. The three communities in the study are good examples of migration pockets created by chain migration. The major-

ity of migrant women have migrated through their relations who were already working abroad. This chain migration has created not only migrant pocket communities in the home country as already mentioned (see Hettige 1988:88, Thilakasiri and de Silva 1981:10) but also migrants from the same Sri Lankan community living in the neighbourhoods of the receiving countries.

In the study of the migration communities it was found that networks play an important role in the migration of domestic workers. A mapping of migration networks in the three communities revealed the existence of 15 migration networks linking migration with mainly kinship. The urban low-income area had the highest number of networks (7). These networks were of varying depth. The biggest one was in the labour colony. It had 23 members including the original migrant (diagram 3.2). The other two communities did not have networks of the same depth. The networks there would typically have six to seven members. There are two main reasons for the size, depth and number of networks. Size is determined by the length of overseas stay of the original migrant. The longer the migrant stayed, the greater the opportunity she had to assist her relations, making the network larger. In the village the networks are not deep due to the fact that migration only recently became part of village economic activities. As already mentioned, the villagers still use fee-levying agencies to migrate overseas. They do not have many migrants with established connections to help others to migrate. Second is the density of migration i.e. the actual number of migrants abroad and the size of the kin group in the community of origin. The urban low-income area has been sending migrants out for a long period of time, even longer than the colony. Yet its networks are not extensive and have only a few members. The reason for this is the presence of a large number of migrants who can serve as sponsors. Therefore there is a large number of networks with only a few members. This explanation is supported by the fact that in the urban low-income area the 50 migrants had seven networks while in the village the same number has resulted in only three networks. The following diagrams (diagrams 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) constructed from the case studies show how chain migration and kinship and neighbourhood networks reinforce each other (names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents).

Diagram 3.1
Kinship and migration network in the traditional village (Ref. no. 1.1)



Above is the migration chain of Mrs Margret Nona who went to Saudi Arabia in 1981 through a recruitment agency, when her son was seven years old and her daughter was five. As the children were small she had to get her sister Ms Seelawathi to look after them. Mrs Nona returned after working for six years (three trips) because her husband filed for divorce. He was having an illicit love affair (this illicit affair was one of the reasons that caused her to migrate in the first place). When she returned she found employment for her sister, Ms Seelawathi. She also sent a sponsorship and ticket to Seelawathi's daughter (Mrs Nona's niece) Ms Priyanthi, who was 19 at that time and had a 10 month old baby boy. Ms Priyanthi went for this job after getting her unmarried sister Ms Kanthi to look after her son till she had finished her contract period of two years, promising that she would find employment for her. Ms Priynathi returned after two years and did not want to go back because of the baby. She sent Ms Kanthi to the employer's house in place of her. She also found a sponsorship for her sister-in-law Ms Ranjeni

from her employer's brother and provided money for a ticket. On her return, Ms Seelawathi provided information and the address of an employer for her close friend Ms Karuna, a neighbour who had helped her family. Ms Ranjeni is still in Saudi Arabia.

Diagram 3.2
Kinship and Migration Network in the labour colony (Ref. no.2.2)

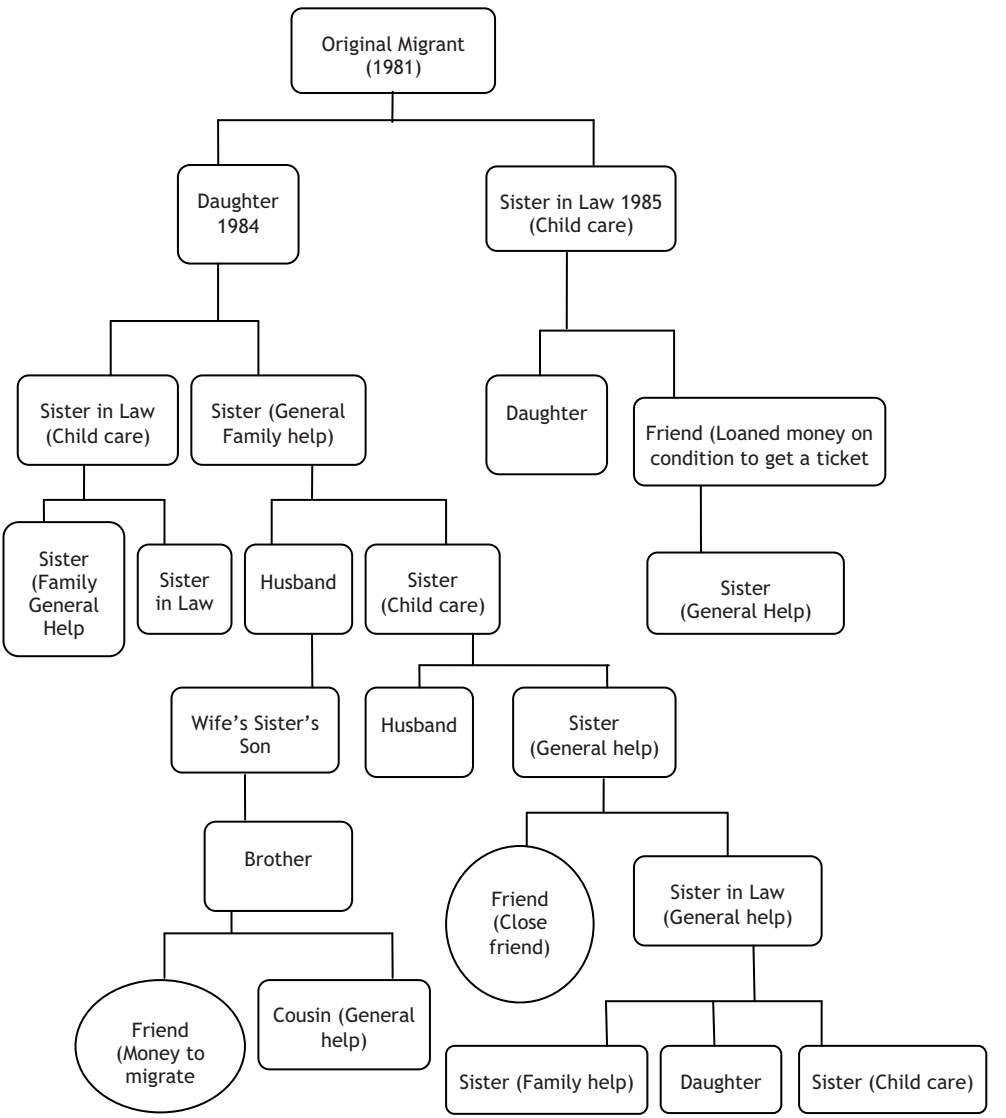
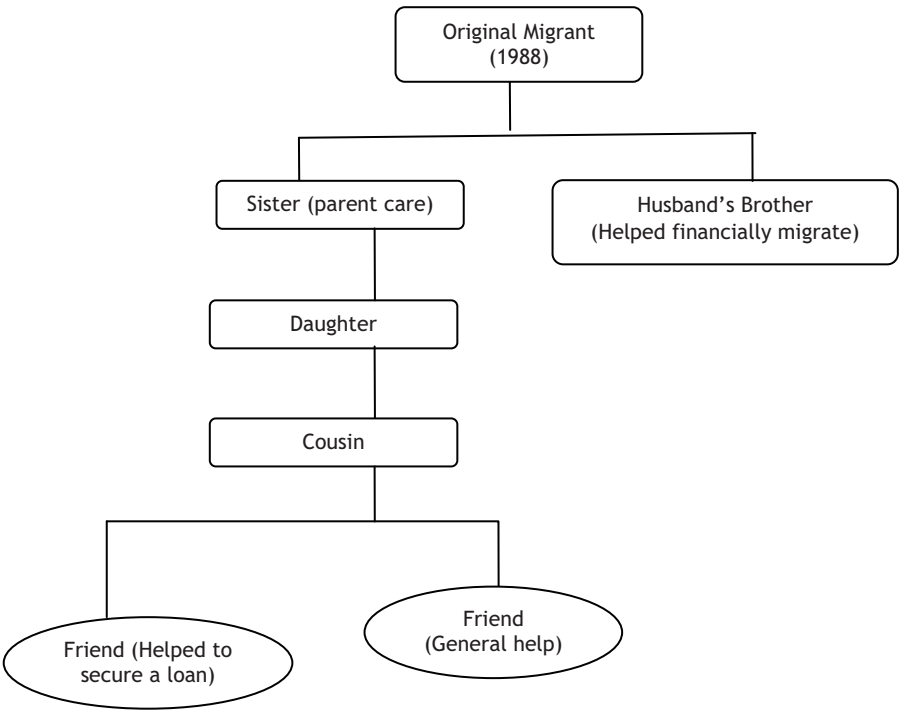


Diagram 3.2 shows one of the most extended networks in the area. Ms Podimenike, who is now 59 years old, went to Dubai in 1981 when she was 24. She is from the labour colony. She sent a ticket and sponsorship from an employer to her own daughter Ms Chandra first and took her there. Ms Podimenike returned after four years and her sister-in-law, who was looking after Ms Podimenike's family, replaced her in the employer's household. Ms Chandra came back after two years because she wanted to be with her children and was replaced by her sister-in-law, Ms Malini, who looked after her children and home. Ms Chandra also brought a sponsorship from her employer's brother to her own sister, Ms Vimala, who was helping the family while she was abroad. Ms Sumana sent a sponsorship to her daughter, Ms Rupika, through her employer, who needed a maid for his parent's home and also brought a ticket and sponsorship for her friend, Ms Amara, who had given a loan to her on an earlier occasion. While Ms Amara was there she sent a sponsorship to her sister, Mrs Susila. Ms Malini (Ms Chandra's sister-in-law) sent a ticket and sponsorship to her sister, Ms Champika, and to her sister–in–law, Ms Sumitra. Ms Vimala sent a sponsorship and a ticket to her husband, Mr Sunil from her employer who needed a gardener and asked her sister, Ms Sriyani, to look after her five-year-old daughter with the help of her mother till she returned. After two years she sent a ticket to Ms Sriyani and she left, giving their aunt, Ms Menike, the responsibility of looking after her sister's daughter's baby, Oshadi. Oshadi's mother sent money to Ms Menike as payment for looking after Oshadi. Mr Sunil then sent a sponsorship letter and ticket to his wife's sister's son, Mr Supun, and after a year Mr Supun sent a sponsorship to his brother, Mr Chamara. Then Mr Chamara sent a sponsorship and ticket to one of his friends, Mr Nimal who helped him financially to migrate, and also to his cousin Mr Nihal. Ms Sriyani also sent a ticket and sponsorship letter to her husband, Mr Shantha, and information to her sister, Ms Kamala. Ms Kamala returned after one year due to illness, and was replaced by her friend, Ms Kusum, in the employer's household. She also gave an address of an employer to her sister-in-law, Ms Sandya. While Ms Sandya was abroad, she helped three members of her family, two sisters (Ms Malika and Ms Rekha) and her daughter, Ms Pradeepa, to migrate. Ms Pradeepa is still abroad.

Diagram 3.3
Kinship and Migration Network in the ULIS (Ref. no .3.26)



The above network is that of Ms Lecchami, a Tamil woman who went to Saudi Arabia through an agency. After three years she came back to be with her aging parents, and her other sister Ms Selvarani who was doing that, had to accept the job offer Ms Lecchami had sent earlier. On her return Ms Lecchami also brought a sponsorship letter for her husband's brother, Mr Krishna, who had helped her financially for the trip. Her sister, Ms Selvarani, came back after two years and was replaced by her daughter, Ms Luxmi, in the employer's household. While Ms Luxmi was there she sent a sponsorship and a ticket through her employer's friend to her cousin, Ms Jeyrani. Ms Jeyrani sent information to her two friends, Ms Kanaekarani and Ms Selvi, who are still abroad (Ms Selvi's sister is waiting for a ticket from her sister).

The above shows that support of the kin group comes in several different forms. It also shows that the migration process is closely connected with and operated by kinship networks in all stages of migration. Furthermore, contrary to the findings of some studies that claim that Sri Lankans, compared to other South Asian migrants, are less likely to move through friends (Shah and Mennon 1999: p. 368, also Oishi 2005) the above diagrams (3.1-3.3) and the table below (3.1) show that kinship and friendship networking plays a very valuable role in migration. The role of kinship group in the migration process however is context- dependent. As table 3.1 shows, 50 per cent of those who were interviewed in the colony migrated with the assistance of relations while in the urban low-income settlement the percentage is more than a third. In the village the importance of kinship as a provider of migration is less than in the other two communities, with the majority the sample migrants using non-kinship facilitators/providers to migrate.

Table 3.1
Kinship and friendship connections in migration

Type of Assistance	TV		ULIS		LC	
	Relation	Relation	Friend	Friend	Relation	Friend
Information	03	01	6	01	02	06
Sponsorship	04	02	2	00	03	01
Placement	08	02	1	02	10	02
Ticket[8]	10	05	1	01	03	01
Total	25	10	10	04	18	10

Source: Household survey 2006.

As the above information refers to those who have received direct assistance with migration, i.e. a ticket or a job sponsorship through a relation who had been already in a job, it undervalues the role played by relations in facilitating migration.

There is also an indirect role that kinship plays here. The communication that relations back at home receive from migrants who are already

abroad or information they receive when they return was found to be very important for potential women migrants at home to decide to migrate.

The information from those who have already migrated serves as an incentive to those who want to go but cannot make up their mind. Those who are already abroad also provide assurances to family members (especially parents) who are worried about sending their children to unknown lands. It is very often these assurances that finally lead to the decision. The following statement by a migrant from the colony is typical of this information flow and how potential migrants are attracted to go.

> When my elder sister returned from her first trip to the Middle East I myself was eager to go. She was telling us about the food, clothes, houses and many other beautiful things. I think in addition to our financial difficulties what my sister told us about her experience was the other reason that made me go. At the same time my parents did not worry or be afraid about my trip since already my sister came back safely after working there (Returnee, 30, TV Ref. no 1.15)

If we consider this role of encouraging migration, the value of kinship becomes even more. It was found that a substantial majority of those who used job agencies to migrate used them only after they had received information about potential employers, and mainly to attend to formal procedures, i.e. getting visa and travel arrangements and contracts with the SLBFE. (This is truer of migrants who belong to the new generation). The kinship connection thus leads to chain migration, as evident from the case studies in the study areas.

3.3.3 The gendered flow of support and migration networks

Gender is an important criterion that connects the networking kinship groups. Above (diagrams 3.1, 3.2. and 3.3) also show that gender is important in the migration networks in the study areas, where support and linkages flow along female lines. It is only on a very rare occasion that a male is involved. This is because there are certain tasks that can only be performed efficiently by women. So the help link naturally becomes female-biased. This does not mean that there is no male involvement at all. Studies in Sri Lanka show that males play a role in migrant households as service providers in managing domestic affairs (Gamburd 1998). They manage remittances

and sometimes act as proxies for the migrant. But the male in these situations is always from the wife's group, for example a brother or father. This was seen in the study area too. Furthermore, as migrants are women, they have access only to information and job opportunities that are domestic work-related (such as housemaids and other care-givers) and naturally this means that the job opportunities and other facilities that they provide to potential migrants are also suitable to women migrants. This means that the network basically has only female members. But what is important with regard to gender is not this obvious situation. If we examine the network composition closely, we can see that the members, both males and females, come almost exclusively from the kinship group of the female line, i.e. kinsmen/women of the wife's group. So when the networks are formed on the basis of kinship there is an obvious bias towards the wife's group and towards females. It was found during discussions that males in general have few opportunities to get into these networks and the males of the husband's group have even less access

3.4 Women's Migration Experience in the Host Country

Migration experience can be broadly defined as the sum total of conditions that shape the social persona of the migrant. It changes their social position, creates new knowledge, shapes their world view, changes their behaviour and in general therefore changes their identity. On the whole migration experience can be considered one of the catalysts of change in the migrant context.

In the classical migration literature, migration experience was often discussed as part of the social life of migrants in the host country. This was understandable as in the early days of migration, migrant life was determined mainly by host country factors. Though a migrant's links with the home country were important and played a role in their life away, these links were mainly distant and often lost their relevance as time passed. The home country link only came to be a major force/determinant of a migrant's life in the host country in the 1970s, with the emergence of new ethnicity (Glazer and Moynihan 1975). Today with the increasing importance of transnational linkages, home country-host country distinctions are fast losing relevance. Migration studies are responding to this change by incorporating

transnational life into accounts of migrant experience, as evident from the attention to the global care chain and the emergence of the househusbands and maids chain (Sinke 2006, Kurian 2004, Lan 2003). Modern migration is transnational and therefore migration experience is also to large extent influenced by transnational connections. Therefore the following discussion had to be addressed in this light.

3.4.1 The social world of simultaneous engagement: a domestic for others and breadwinner for her own family

Migrant women from Sri Lanka working in the Middle East as domestic workers are employed in one of the sectors of economic activity that is least protected by labour laws. This makes them a vulnerable group who are constantly exposed to ill treatment and abuse. Sri Lankan women domestic workers in these countries not only work long hours under difficult work conditions but also are subjected to violence, including sexual violence. Work conditions are not only abusive but the work is hard and in some cases they have little free time. Some women work long hours, sometimes as long as 18 hours a day. Some do not even get a chance to go out but many do when they get their day off, normally on Fridays. In addition to the work environment, the social life of the majority of the host countries has a negative impact on the migrants.

The general Islamic ideological setting in the majority of host countries, except perhaps for Lebanon, is a negative experience for migrant domestic workers. As soon as they arrive in the host country it is common for these women to be given traditional Islamic dress which they have to wear. In some strict Islamic countries this happens at the airport when the representative of the recruitment agency or someone else meets the migrant. It is not the Islamic dress that offends women, as in Sri Lanka some Islamic dress styles, such as *Shalvars*, are very popular. It is the fundamentalist black dress complete with veil that covers the face and the head, known as *Abaya*, that they do not find acceptable. As one woman from the traditional village put it:

> I used to laugh at women who wear Islamic dress. We used to call them *billas*[9]. See … I had to wear it in Saudi (Returnee, 25, Unmarried, TV, Ref. no 1.22).

Another who was asked to wear Islamic dress at the airport on arrival by the representative of the recruitment agent described her experience as one that is similar to being put in a box (It appeared from her explanation what she meant was that she felt like being a person without a personality or a *non-person*, i.e., no face.

> It was a shock to me. This man came to us with a parcel and asked us all to go to the rest room and change (change into the new dress). It was the same dress that some Muslim women wear in Sri Lanka, the black gown with a veil covering the face. We did not want to wear it, but what could you do? It was like you were in a box (Returnee, married, 30. LC Ref. no.2.17).

Another expressed a similar view but for her it was like being paraded in public like an exhibit.

> I had to wear this horrible dress when going shopping with the madam (employer's wife). It was not only black but also you feel like that you are paraded as an exhibit. I knew it was not the case as many women were wearing this dress and I was not different. But for me it was like I was the only person and I felt funny (Returnee, 28, LC Ref.no.2.23).

Not all women are averse to the new dress code though. Some find it a new experience and others even are happy with the new dress like the migrant from the urban low-income settlement[10].

> I like this Arabian dress, but not the veil because it covers your body well. After I came back from there I often wear this long frock. My madam gave me lot of her old frocks to me. (She is wearing a long frock and show me some dresses with Arabic design (Returnee, 50, Tamil, married, ULIS Ref.no.3.1).

It should be noted that Sri Lankan women, except for those who come from very strict and fundamentalist Islamic backgrounds and women from very traditional middle class families irrespective of their ethnicity (no such respondents were found in the households in the study area), are liberal in their values, including their dress code, which follows modern trends. As we have pointed out previously Sinhalese women are the most progressive in their world view and values in general. They generally found the dress code in the host country to be a demeaning/degrading experience that affected their personality. The dress code is only one manifestation of the problems they had to face. It is part of a whole set of attitudes of a society which

Table 3.2
Complaints by Sex 2002-2004

Nature of Complaint	2002			2003			2004			2005		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Non payment of agreed wages	233	1,859	2,092	270	1,498	1,768	150	1,476	1,626	132	1,575	1,707
Lack of Communication	70	1,756	1,826	93	2,065	2,158	87	2,078	2,165	78	1,677	1,755
Sickness	43	396	439	35	435	470	51	559	610	78	575	653
Harassment (Physical/Sexual)	49	1,411	1,460	56	1,358	1,414	78	1,675	1,753	142	1,807	1,949
Natural death	60	55	115	49	78	127	73	80	153	55	60	115
Accidental death	52	40	92	40	23	63	43	32	75	38	24	62
Homicide	1	5	6	1	3	4	3	5	8	1	3	4
Suicide	5	10	15	4	19	23	3	6	9	5	17	22
Not sent back on completion of contract	104	441	545	11	151	162	15	191	206	44	667	711
Breach of contract	742	255	997	877	425	1,307	695	449	1,144	1,136	657	1,793
Problem at home in Sri Lanka	9	171	180	7	163	170	13	330	343	33	483	516
No employment on arrival	1	1	2	1	7	8		13	13	112	426	
Unspecific domestic sector	13	125	138		185	185	11	120	131	1	22	23
Other	15	12	27	52	64	116	40	92	117	15	60	75
Total	1397	6,537	7,934	1,497	6,474	7,975	1,247	7,106	8,353	1,870	8,053	9,927

Source: Annual Statistical Report, 2005, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Colombo

rejects the female presence, that fundamentally affected the women. The other negative experience in the host country was the working conditions.

The Centre for Women's Research in 2001 estimated that around 10 per cent of the approximately 500,000 female migrant workers from Sri Lanka have been victims of some form of physical, psychological or sexual abuse (CENWOR 2001).[11] As table 3.2 shows, violence and abuse are part of the work environment of these women even with the Sri Lankan government adopting measures to improve the situation through bilateral agreements and diplomatic initiatives, as well as through awareness and training programmes.[12] Complaints from the work force have been increasing steadily through the years.

An important piece of information, though not very surprising, that comes out of the data (table 3.2) is that women workers are the most affected by abuse and violence in the host country. Except for the complaints of breach of contract (i.e. premature termination of the service agreement), where men have made the majority of complaints, in all other areas the majority of the complaints are by women workers. The difference is too great to be explained by the fact that the women are in the majority among contract workers. Women are in the majority by roughly about 2 to 1, whereas the difference between complaints by men and women is much more, sometimes even 25-fold. In three of the four areas where there are high incidents of abuse/complaints, the majority of complaints came from women. They include non-payment of agreed wages, where complaints by women are eight times more common than those of by men, lack of communication[13], and sexual harassment.

The injustices these workers go through in the host country are rarely brought before the courts as the legal systems are still by and large national. The legal systems in many of the receiving countries either do not recognise transnational workers or procedural and other problems prevent these workers getting the benefits of even the limited facilities available (Caron 2007). In some countries transnational workers have some access to the national legal system but then other constraints, such as lack of information and financial resources, prevent them receiving justice as Caron (2007) argues in her examination of temporary workers in the US. The situation of migrant domestics in the Middle East is even worse, as the legal systems in these

countries provide even less protection for workers from overseas. The socio-economic level of these resource-poor workers is another problem that affects them. International safeguards are being proposed but their impact is slow in coming due to protocol (ratification) and practical (implementation) problems. Very often there is lack of interest on the part of the employer countries as the welfare of overseas workers is not a major national political issue. Their presence is a bigger problem politically in some countries. Host countries often wait till the sending countries take the initiative and remind them of the need to do something (Daily News 2008). Therefore what often happens is that the sending country gets directly involved in fighting cases on behalf of the aggrieved migrant. This can happen through formal diplomatic channels: the specialised officials attached to Sri Lankan diplomatic missions in some countries in the Middle East[14] are responsible for the welfare of the migrants and attend to their legal problems on an individual basis. This extends to finding legal aid to fight their cases[15].

3.4.2 Transnationalism during migration in the host country

Although the above problems faced by women workers are often highlighted by the media and are a concern for politicians and the public at large, women workers themselves do not appear to share these concerns. There were respondents who have had bad experiences of harassment to a varying degree, but most of them had not faced serious abuse and violation. The majority of women have returned voluntarily after fulfilling their contract obligations and, if they decided not to return, it was for reasons other than problems at work. Many have gone abroad more than once and have returned only because they have achieved their objectives, for example building a house. There were others who were willing to go back if their domestic circumstances had been different. Only a small minority of the respondents voiced concern and only a very few had faced problems themselves. In the study communities there were only two cases of women who returned because of negative work conditions and abuse. One of them described her experience as follows.

> I stayed only for five months abroad because I could not tolerate the suffering. Oh it was very difficult. I had to face many difficulties. My madam (She called her employer an uncivilised Arab woman) was bad. She was very cruel. She

did not even give me enough food to eat and did not pay a penny. Everyday she used to beat me, shouting I was a no good lazy women. Finally I left this home without their knowing and went to the police. Police called them and they came and brought me back. The situation became worse after that. Then I came to the embassy and for two months I was there in a small room with many migrants like me. It was like a prison and finally my parents and husband through the Member of Parliament for our area managed to get funds for me to return (Returnee, 45 Married, ULIS Ref. No. 3.25)

Of the rest there were some who were happy like the following migrant.

My work place really was good. They gave me my day off on Fridays. That gave me a chance to see my sister and aunt who were working in the same town (This implies they also got their day off on Friday).There was a place normally we meet. Our male friends also used to come there and we shared our food and talked about our families. You know I was there for six yeas and I came back to the wedding of my sister. When I told them about the wedding they gave me some gold jewellery me (She very proudly showed me some gold coloured chains and bangles). I am going back after one month (Returnee, 30, married, TV Ref.no.1.14)

The majority were of the opinion the problems they experienced could be expected in any domestic work situation and shared the views of the following returnee, again from the traditional village.

Of course my employer was not what I would call the best I could have but I was not expecting much. After all I was going for domestic work. I was also going for the sake of my family and children (Returnee, 45, husband unemployed, TV Ref. no 1.47)

If one's expectations are high there is a greater probability of being disappointed, leading to negative experiences. Many migrants, like in the story below, knew what they were going to face and that it would be hard work.

I knew it was not going to be rosy. I was told by my sister who was there. So I was prepared for hardships. And I also had to think about the future of my family. I wanted to bear with everything for the sake of my family (Returnee 40. married, ULIS Ref. no 3.40).

But others, especially young girls were not that realistic and were disappointed.

> I could not bear it. You can do the work and I was willing to do it. But the treatment was not what I expected. I had nothing to read. No radio, no TV. We were promised by the agent that they give all facilities though they warned that the work will be hard (Returnee, unmarried 25, TV Ref .no 1 .22)

These accounts show that migration experience varies between individuals. And for each individual the difference is not black and white. The experience of a migrant woman on the whole is a mixture of both negative and positive and depends on the context as well as the coping abilities and expectations of the individual. Therefore the migration experience needs to be seen in terms of degree and as lying on a continuum.

The following experience puts the situation in an entirely different perspective altogether. She described her experience as one of the worst but she wants to go back if she gets better place.

> My madam was very bad. She made me work all day. I was not allowed even to sleep peacefully. She comes in the middle of the night to wake me up to prepare medicine for her ailing mother. I had to cook for big parties almost every day. I often went to sleep only after 12.00 at night and had to get up at 5.00. The only good thing was she paid the agreed salary and allowed me to communicate with home. So I am happy about that and I spent two years there, as according to my contract (Returnee, 30, married, TV, one trip Ref.no1.35)

The fact that the majority of migrants themselves are not concerned about the negative aspects of their working conditions, so much highlighted in media and by rights groups, is important. This situation however may not be as surprising as it first appears, if we take a closer look at the data. It is true that contract workers in general and women workers in particular face difficult working conditions but, given the fact that there are close to one million contract workers from Sri Lanka in the Middle East, the number of complaints is very small in percentage terms, less than 1 per cent, even in categories where there is a high number of complaints (table 3.8). This in no way condones violence but the probability of a woman experiencing extremely negative work conditions like sexual abuse and violence, or even physical abuse, is statistically less than it is popularly believed. Understandably, a very large majority of returned migrants in the study area did not consider difficult working conditions and violence at the work place a

major issue, because they themselves did not experience such conditions personally. Therefore bad experiences at work in the host country cannot be expected to have a major impact on women workers in general.

There are two other reasons for returned migrants not seeing negative experiences in the host country a major concern. Many of the domestic workers who go overseas as housemaids are from very poor households where drudgery and the abuse of women is a normal occurrence. Some of them have been domestic servants even before migrating and have experienced similar situations, even at home. Furthermore, like the above migrant from the traditional village who accepted the problems as part and parcel of domestic work and did not expect much, they were going for the sake of the family and for that reason they were willing to tolerate some degree of abuse and difficult conditions. The majority who go as domestic workers therefore have a realistic view of the domestic chores they are required to do as a domestic servant in the Middle East and have got their priorities right. The fact that the women do not complain thus does not mean that they do not experience abuses, but they are being realistic about it. All migrants feel, however, that the overseas experience is a come down in social status and that the working conditions are harsh.

What the above tells us is that the migration experience is interpreted in terms of home country conditions by migrants, namely their host country-related priorities and views of domestic work. For the workers, harsh conditions are part and parcel of domestic work because it is the same in their home country. The abuse of women in domestic situations is also not unknown in their home countries. Furthermore, when ordering their priorities, they naturally weigh these negative working conditions against the options available at home if they do not migrate as domestic workers, which could be even worse. Staying at home means suffering from extreme poverty. What this shows is that for these women the migration experience is not only a host country phenomenon, though a large part of it is determined by and shaped in the host country context. They experience conditions in the host society, which are generally socially negative with difficult working conditions, but they are interpreted and internalised by the migrant women in a transnational context. This is because transnational migrants operate in multiple spaces simultaneously[16]. It further demonstrates that no migration

situation can be understood in terms of a single geographical and social space alone but of interconnected transnational space. Migrant women always compare with their own society and their experience becomes meaningful interpreted in this transnational (i.e. home v. host) context. Experiences are relative to their home context and home-related expectations. Situations are evaluated on this basis and abuses are tolerated as a result.

The transnational nature of the migration experience extends beyond comparisons and interpretations linking host and home countries. These women, while they are at work, also maintain strong links with the home country households and live in transnational space. They send money home for the upkeep of their families and share what goes in the home country households. They constantly worry about the families they left behind. Family crises such as children going astray or husbands becoming alcoholics and squandering their earnings are not unusual to them and they are affected by them. The Grama Niladari (Village Headman) gave the following account regarding one migrant's husband (Ref. no 1.32).

> This man did not go to work while his wife was abroad. Her mother was there to look after the family, but she left after sometime because of this man's bad behaviour. He used to drink and gamble with the money his wife sent home. He was always hanging around the place with his friends doing nothing. He was always fighting with his mother-in-law, asking for money.

In this case, after a few months the mother sent a letter asking her daughter not to send her hard-earned money to her husband because he was wasting it, so the migrant started sending the money to her mother instead. This family only survived on the money the wife sent. They haven't saved any and there is no improvement.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

The foregoing examination demonstrated that the gender factor is central to the formation and operation of these linkages. It also revealed that it shapes the manner in which the migration experience, the service and migration support systems are determined.

Migration networks are not only an important feature in the study area but are also organised along gender lines with a female bias. Who migrates and with whose support is often decided by gender and kinship. The role of

kin groups reflects a strong gender bias with migration networks extending along the female line, i.e. connecting female with female.

With macro-level operations there are also many gender concerns. The government, which serves as regulator and promoter of migration, is sensitive to the need to formulate gender-sensitive and family-oriented (again women-friendly) policies. The active promotion of women's migration through support measures by the government has ironically brought an exploitative element into the migration of domestic workers and further expanded the dependency of the Sri Lankan economy of women labour. The benefits of services provided by other actors, namely job recruitment agencies and non-governmental organisations, have gender implications with women either receiving discriminatory treatment (job agencies) or positively benefiting (NGO services).

The host country experience of Sri Lankan contract workers (housemaids) is not only gendered but also influenced by transnational relations. The domestic workers are in a niche labour market that operates outside the international norms and standards governing labour. The work environment of these women places heavy restrictions on them and exposes them to unacceptable working conditions that are not faced by male contract workers in these countries. What is however important is that the workers themselves do not seem to share the same concern that the public and civil society have about their conditions. There is an important transnational dimension in this, as women also interpret their host country experience in relation to their home country context.

Notes

[1] It is traditional to categorise women contract workers as unskilled migrants but that is unclear and even misleading. These women possess a gender specific skill that only women can provide thus making them indispensable in society. The difference is that skill is not a formally recognised skill as it is not a formally learned craft. Further, these women are often given training by the state, for example Sri Lankan domestic workers who are aspiring to be or have been selected to go abroad as domestic workers are given basic training by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment. Indonesian government uses the term *trained baby sitters* (Hugo 1995:30) for those who go for child minding. The

important fact is their work conditions, level of exploitation and abuse do not change whether they are trained or not (Lim and Oishi 1996)

[2] The Maldives is not a major importer of labour from Sri Lanka and majority of Sri Lankans employed there are employed by the hospitality industry where Sri Lankan companies are major operators. The reason that there is a male majority in the countries in the category 'Other' may be explained by the fact that the majority of those who migrate to the industrial countries in the west are professionals and skilled labour who are predominantly male.

[3] Demand for domestic work has a number of causes, of which increasing affluence is only one. In the industrial countries in Europe, Japan and the NICs, this is mainly due to the increasing number of women entering the formal labour market (Anderson 2001a). Domestic servants in addition are a status symbol or indicator of wealth as Oishi (2005:20) says in the Middle East. Therefore it is not only practical necessity that makes households employ housemaids but also social requirements, i.e., status.

[4] During this period professionals, university teachers and high level officials in the public service were issued passports only under very strict conditions. The passports were valid in most cases for one journey only and in some cases there were restrictions imposed on the countries that could be visited.

[5] Labour as a commodity is not always accepted by economists (Wickremasekere 2002) though the term is used in discussions of labour migration by both academics (Stahl 1999) and rights groups (Human Rights Watch 2007). The fact that the governments of sending countries treat them as an exportable commodity by engaging in market promotions, wage negotiations and even setting up export quotas (Oishi 2005: 11) has made migrant labour a commodity for all practical purposes. (see Weerakoon 1998:107, Gamburd 2002).

[6] This was necessary as in many countries in the Middle East there was no protection for those who migrated as contract workers. Most of the countries in the Middle East do not consider contract workers as part of the regular work force and they are not covered by regulations applicable to locals (Soysa 1988).

[7] Some studies claim that networks are not important in labour migration in Sri Lanka (Oishi 2005) but this claim is only partially true. Networks do not play a major role in the migration of domestic workers to countries in East Asia but that is because the women who go to these countries as domestic workers are from a different social category, i.e., better educated and young.

[8] If the ticket is sent with one's own money the amount is recovered in instalments. But very often the ticket is sponsored by the employer and the kinsmen only facilitate the process.

[9] *Billa* is a local term used to describe people who come with their face covered for some mischief or crime. The insiders who were captured and were used by the security forces to point out insurgents in identification parades during the 1989 insurgency and the ethnic war today are also called *billas*. It is also a derogatory term used by the Sinhalese (and Tamils living in Sinhala areas too) to refer to Muslim women who wear the fundamentalist Islamic dress.

[10] Thangaraj (2004) says that adoption of this dress by Muslim women reflects empowerment in the Muslim community. This may be explained by the association between this dress and the religion.

[11] There were no specific cases of sexual abuse among the respondents but many women acknowledged that the situation exists and that they have known cases of sexual abuse and even pregnancies at work. There are also studies conducted among women who have gone through such harrowing experiences. They are often victims of middle aged men who are widowed or living alone (Silva 2001).

[12] As part of improving the situation of workers, especially the women in the domestic sector, in the Middle East, Sri Lankan diplomatic missions in the countries concerned have now been provided with special staff to represent their interests. However, there are complaints that either these staff are not doing their job or they are ineffective because the home governments are not interested in the welfare of these workers. Even the bilateral agreements Sri Lanka has initiated with some Middle East governments have not made the situation better, according to critics.

[13] Lack of communication, according to the SLBFE definition, is a lack of opportunities to communicate with the outside world, mainly restrictions on telephone calls and opportunities to go out. Among the respondents in the study area this was not a major issue. For them the most worrying communication-related problem had been in the work place due to language differences, etc.

[14] Sri Lanka charges a fee that is built into the migrant recruitment charges that is used for incidental expenses, such as legal costs and repatriation costs.

[15] The court case involving Ms Rizana Nafeek a young housemaid who was accused of murdering the infant under her care and sentenced to death in Saudi

Arabia is example here. The case has been going on since 2005 and she received a temporary reprieve in August 2008, as a result of Sri Lanka getting involved at both diplomatic and legal levels (Daily Mirror 2008).

[16] This was the argument promoted by pluri-local identities and multi-layered power which was discussed in chapter 2.

4 Gender Power Relations in the Household Prior to Migration

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the gendered dimensions of the household system among migrant women in the study area. The aim is to distil the key features of gendered household relationships common among migrant women workers. It discusses gender relations in the households as reflected in existing patterns of practices in social relationships and the character of resource distribution, management and control. The premise is that power dynamics are resource-dependent (Sen 1991) but power in any given situation is not determined by resources alone. There are contextual variables that mediate between the power dynamics and resource bases of the household. Therefore, resource ownership/control, or lack of it, is a necessary condition but not the only on determining household power relations. Using survey data obtained from migrant households, the chapter shows the complex and contextually specific ways in which gender power organises household relations. Individual ability to respond to constraints and possibilities is by and large part of broader social processes which affect his/her socially ascribed position.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section examines the general situation of gender relations and status of women in Sri Lankan society. It is intended to serve as the wider context for the analysis of gender relations in the migrant household. In the second section there is a discussion on the gendered nature of the resource base of the household as an organisation, focusing on both economic and non-economic factors. The third section is an examination of the household economy. It examines how the household budget is supported by the kinship and neighbourhood network and the role of the wife in the management of the household, espe-

cially in the management of the household budget. This is an examination of the covert and hidden power of women through manipulation and the use of special skills and competencies.

4.2 The Position of Women in Sri Lankan Society

Given the socio-cultural complexities of Sri Lankan society, it may not be correct to conceptualise women as a distinct and uniform category in the strict sociological sense. It is more appropriate to talk about several socio-cultural categories of women, divided on the basis of their socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, religious affiliation and many other socioeconomic variables (Perera 1991:150). In spite of this diversity there is the common denominator, namely, the existence and operation of gender ideologies (Kurian 1989, Jayaweera 2002, Malhotra and Mather 1997, Risseuew 1988) and broad socioeconomic and demographic conditions (ADB 1999) that promote and maintain the overall disadvantaged position of women in Sri Lankan society[1]. Therefore the discussion in this section is not an attempt to present a generalised picture of Sri Lankan women but an account of the diversity within this complex gender inequality as manifested among women in Sri Lanka. Gender relations in the households in the study area reflect this diversity.

There are not only structural inequalities in gender relations but also gender-based asymmetry in other areas. In the private space of the household there are tasks that are traditionally female, such as cooking, washing, and taking care of children and the sick. Even the household physical space is gendered with the kitchen and other food areas considered female domains while the living room is male. Similarly there are other household-related activities that are gender divided with priority given to male members. Yet these are often contextually determined and limited to ethnic or cultural groups. For example marketing/shopping is men's work in the plantations as it means leaving the boundaries of the estate (Kurian 1989: 183). In the plantation sector Tamil community women do domestic chores but men help to collect firewood. In all communities domestic tasks are not work but duties perceived as natural to women (Kurian 1989:182).

In the household male members generally get priority in the day-to-day conduct of affairs. It is a case of male members, the father/husband is the

cornerstone on which the household is built and operated, rather than a simple case of male domination. The man is the breadwinner and hence is often the leader of the household on the basis of economic clout he carries with it. Domestic power relations favouring women are often enhanced by several other factors internal to families in Sri Lanka, according to analysts. One such situation is the smaller age gap between wife and husband. The average age gap between wife and husband in Sri Lanka is five years, smaller than in India.

Though there is a dowry as part of marriage in Sri Lanka society its control over the marital destiny of women varies with socioeconomic position and ethnicity. Among Sinhalese, the tradition of providing a dowry is not very strictly practiced. Especially among the younger generation it is fast losing its appeal, with the increasing number of marriage taking place as results of individual decisions. In the Tamil community on the other hand there is more social pressure on the family of the bride to provide a dowry. Other practices in marriage that adversely affect women, such as a virginity test, still exist among all ethnic groups, especially among the rural people and in middle-class families. Generally all men and women agree that women are vulnerable, mainly physically, and therefore have less physical mobility (Jayaweera 2002:218). However, according to research (Jayaweera 2002), there is also agreement among both men and women that women should get more involved in decision-making. Studies reveal that working women have improved self esteem, lifestyle, personality and physical mobility (Jayaweera 2002:218). In spite of all these egalitarian developments some negative evaluations still exist. Talking back to husband is considered improper and even an affront. Women are still affected by domestic violence, especially in poor and marginal communities, such as the plantation sector (Kurian 1989). There is no clear evidence that being economically productive always helps improve the situation of women. Some even argue that productive activities increase the burden of women instead of improving their position (Jayaweera 2002:224). The overall disadvantaged position of women in the household is illustrated by Jayaweera when she says that over 70 per cent of women want to be reborn as men. Women as individuals are not subservient but unequal (Jayaweera 2002:219).

The emergence of the present gender order favouring men in Sri Lankan society and its influence is debated. Risseuew (1988) argues that Sri Lankan women lost the power and position they traditionally enjoyed in marriage and, accordingly, in manipulating property as a result of legal changes introduced by the British. Others have dealt this not merely as a legal and institutional issue but a socio-political one. Their argument is that the emergence of capitalism under British colonial rule was instrumental in establishing male control in the household in Sri Lankan society. Grosshotz (1984) for example argues that British colonialism-led capitalist development curtailed the economic independence enjoyed by Sri Lankan women in feudal society. What can be concluded is that emergence of present gender relations, including the male dominated social structure, is a result of the combined forces of capitalist development, institutional re-structuring, legislative reforms and the current political dynamics dominated by ethnonationalist crisis. However, the disadvantaged position of women in Sri Lankan society needs to be understood in relation to ethnic and regional variations. It is generally accepted that Hindu society, which is almost exclusively Tamil, and the Muslim community have strict controls over women and their social position. There are also regionally significant variations in Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) statistics (de Zoysa 2000).

4.3 The Resource bases of the Household Prior to Migration

The household consists of relationships and activities/operations organised on the basis of the ownership and management of resources and held together and maintained by corporate relationships, kinship ties, institutionalised practices and ideologies. It interacts with its environment, consisting of meso level relationships, i.e. the community networks immediately outside the household, national level institutions and more socially distant relationships. Therefore the systemic environment of the household involves a multi-layered, hierarchically organised and interactive set of relationships. The main assumption is that the systemic nature of household relationships needs to be understood both in terms of the internal dynamics of the household i.e. household resource ownership patterns and resource management operations, corporate relationships, kinship ties and the social con-

text in which it is embedded (cultural practices, ideological controls and systemic interactivity).

One of the main features of the households of migrant women is their limited resource base. This makes resource management operations a complex activity that often needs the involvement of both husband and wife to pool whatever few resources and skills they can muster. It therefore requires devising and implementing context-specific strategies that draw on and make use of resources, and skills that different members of the household possess. In this operation it is not only ownership and control of material resources (income and property) that matters but also other resources such as skills, education and social capital, namely network support. Scarcity and limited access to physical resources in some situations aggravate gender-based disadvantages faced by female members of the household but there are also instances where it works in favour of women if they possess certain skills and competencies. We shall examine this aspect of gender relations, which is common in the study area, in detail later.

4.3.1 Gendered ownership and access to economic resources

A large number of migrant households in the study area live below official poverty line of the country and the majority of the households of migrants in the sample are living below a wage of LKR 100 (US$1) a day. For example the proportion of sample households that are living below an income of US$1 a day is around 66 per cent except in the urban low-income settlement. Furthermore, in all communities over 90 per cent of the sample households live under US$2 a day. When one compares these figures with the national data of only 6.6 per cent of families living under US$1 a day and only 45.4 per cent of families below US$2 (1996/97 Consumer Finances and Socio Economic Survey of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka) it is not difficult to understand how marginal and poor the migrant families are.

The income and occupational patterns of the pre-migration households in the three communities show that provider is the male, thus establishing the gendered nature of household resource base. The wife in all three communities is primarily a housewife. Yet wives make a contribution to the household income even in situations where the male is the principal owner. The main reason for this is that many male household heads, except for

those in the urban low-income settlement, are in casual or temporary occupations (table 4.1). The contribution of wife however does not make these households two-income households in the sense that there is a formal and regular contribution from the female. First, the economic contribution of the wife is a supporting and irregular one. Second, her contribution is not formally recognised. The fact that the income-generating work (if it is not some formal wage) is not recognised as work illustrates this ambivalent approach to the wife's contribution to family budget. Interestingly, even women who earn income from their work do not see themselves as having jobs or working (see next section). The paid work they do or income they generate from other productive economic activities range from self-employment activities, casual labour work and working as domestic servants for affluent families in the neighbourhood.

Table 4.1
Employment of head of household of the three migrant communities

Status	TV			LC			U LIS		
	Before	During	After	Before	During	After	Before	During	After
Permanent	03	03	03	00	00	00	23	23	21
Casual	38	30	40	46	32	45	17	05	14
Self-employed	06	04	06	03	02	01	06	05	10
Unemployed	03	13	01	01	16	04	05	17	05
Total	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

Source: Household Survey 2006

The poverty of women migrants in the three source communities is primarily due to the lack of skills (table 4.2) and also the lack of opportunities for productive economic engagement for adult household members. Generally the main sources of productive economic activities are limited; specifically the types and quantity of resources available also varies in the three communities. The result is widespread poverty, as reflected by low-income levels in all migrant households in the three communities. Subsistence agri-

culture and agricultural labour dominate the livelihood of the traditional village. The labour colony is wholly dependent on various types of manual labour. The members of the urban low-income settlement, except for those who work for the Municipal Council of Kandy, depend on informal economic activities.

4.3.2 Education, skills and position of the wife

Skills and competencies are important non-material resources associated with societal power. In our analysis of household power and gender relations we do not subscribe to this narrow economic deterministic view of power. In Sri Lanka the wife is either better or at least equally educated (Malhotra and Mather 1997:616) and this holds true in the study areas. This also works in favour of women in the domestic sphere and contributes to lessening the negative impact of ideologies and cultural practices that favour men. The situation in migrant households showed that education itself is power[2]. This was observed in the migrant households which have given some advantage to women in certain social contexts and operations in the household. Before we go into that it is necessary to examine the gendered nature of skills and competencies in the migrant households, as reflected by educational levels (table 4.3).

Table 4.2
Level of Education of Migrant Women and Husband

Level	TV		LC		ULIS	
	W	H	W	H	W	H
No Schooling	0	02	0	03	0	04
Grade 1-5	14	28	07	38	30	37
Grade 5-10	20	15	27	05	16	07
OL	13	02	15	02	04	00
AL	02	01	01	00	00	00

Source: Household survey 2006

On average the level of education is low among both men and women (table 4.2) in the migrant households in the sample communities. The lowest educational levels are found in the urban low-income community where almost 70 per cent of the sample (both husbands and wives) have received education only up to grade 5, meaning only five years in school. But overall women are comparatively more educated.

Though there are husbands with no schooling in the households of the women migrants, all wives have received some education, i.e. all are literate. In all communities the women outnumber men in the categories of education over grade 5. The majority of men have received only five years of schooling or less while a very clear majority of women have received up to 10 years of education. This situation is connected with gender relations in these households in two important ways and they are important in understanding the empowerment of women in the migrant context. The first is the inability of these better levels of education among women to translate into higher income positions and employment. The second is the unusual position of power it has created to the advantage of the wives.

The comparatively better levels of education of women have not been translated into increased earning capacity for them in the three communities. Therefore, as already discussed, women do engage in paid employment but often not on a regular basis. Furthermore, when they do paid work the wages are low compared to those paid to men for similar work. It is also interesting to note that even women who do paid work (domestic servants for example) do not recognise that as a job.[3] This situation is a reflection of both the general disadvantages women experience in society in engaging in paid employment and other income-generating activities and also their perception of work proper. Lack of opportunities compared to men to get into good positions means that they have only little chance of moving up in the social ladder. The invariable result is that women who are better educated marry down economically and sometimes even socially. In the urban low-income settlement there was a woman university graduate married to a casual worker.[4] Though this is an extreme case women marry down socially due to circumstances beyond their control[5].

'Marrying down' appears to play a role in the migration process as a determinant of migration. It also has implications for the empowerment proc-

ess of these women. The woman who 'marries down' wants to improve her social position and one option is to take the family as a whole up in the social ladder, the other being ending the marriage, which has complex social repercussions. For that the economic status of the family needs to be improved and migration provides that option. She therefore has a strong reason to decide to migrate because it is one way of 'correcting the mistake'. It is also a socially accepted way of doing it. Once she succeeds in getting the family up then she has not only regained her position but also realised her higher aspirations (compared to her husband) that are naturally part of her higher level of education.

4.4 Family and Kinship Organisation among Migrant Women

Poverty and tradition determine household organisation. Low levels of income mean that there are only few facilities available in the households of the migrants and the living conditions of the families are poor. Except for those in the village, only a minority of the households have a house of their own. Those who do not own houses or live in houses provided by the government or from other agency, as in the case of the urban low-income area and the colony, share households with family members. These living arrangements can include not only parents and siblings but sometimes other relations such as cousins.

In Sri Lankan society it is not uncommon for the parents of spouses to live with the family but only a very small minority of the families have fully fledged extended families, if we consider either the corporate characteristics of the extended family i.e. the household members sharing and managing property as a corporate unit, or the generational depth. It is very often only the parents of the spouses who live in the household in addition to the nuclear family. In marginal communities there are households containing extended families, but in typical circumstances multi-family households consist of more than two independently organised family units[6]. So the term extended family is used in a very broad sense to cover all situations that deviate from nuclear family. The situation leads to household organisations that take the form of multi family households. The following description by a migrant from the colony about her household illustrates the nature of this

loose arrangement that does not fit into the conventional definition of extended family or corporate household.

> This house we live in was given to my parents by the Orchid project. When my elder brother got married he brought his wife here because he did not have a place of his own. Then he built a separate section (room) for him and his family and we shared the rest of the house. Then my other brother married and he also first moved with us then built his house next to ours in the same compound. When I married I moved with my husband here again because he did not have a place. My old mother also is living with me and we have three families living here in this house. We all have one living room and we share it. When my elder brother's wife brought a TV on her return from Doha we kept in the living room. We have a fridge I have bought and it is also in the same living room. We share these without a problem. But we cook separately. Sometimes our children get into fights and we also have arguments but these are only temporary. We are one family (Returnee, 45 LC Ref. no. 2.18)

What this description says is that the household is not a corporate property sharing extended family arrangements with a leader. It is only a loose collection of families sharing some assets (the house, fridge and TV) but otherwise independent. They are not created by tradition and controlled by institutionalised rules and practices. They are just practical living arrangements that grow and take their own form as part of a natural process and out of necessity. They are in other words social networks at very micro level, linking families and serving as support systems. The support they provide may extend to many activities and services, of which migration-related support is only one, as the following situation in the urban low-income settlement illustrates.

> In my home (note the use of the term home) there are 14 members. There is my old mother, two married brothers with sisters-in-law with four children, and also one unmarried with us. I have my husband and two children. We have only two bed rooms in the house all share them. Our husbands sometimes sleep in the bed rooms with the family or with other male members in the living room and we women sometimes live in the kitchen. We share many things but cook separately. When I was abroad they looked after my family, especially children and my husband paid them for meals from the money sent him (Returnee, 43, one trip, UL I S Ref.no3.34).

For this woman it is her home (she used the word herself to describe it as such) and also her support unit. This common dwelling arrangement, whether it is a fully extended family or just a multi-family situation with families sharing the same physical space, also has important repercussions on gender relations. The physical proximity created by this arrangement provides social support for either the wife or husband depending on the membership of the extended family arrangement. It is not just the support they receive as a family unit but as a member of a particular kin group. It provides labour power. We can elaborate this by looking at the two types of extended families in the migrant communities. One is the extended family of the female line[7], or wife's parental line (wife's parents and/or brothers and sisters of wife), the other is the extended family of the male line, or husband's parental line (husband's parents and/or brothers and sisters of husband). There may be variations in the composition, with a mixture of both lines or inclusion of other members, in some extreme cases. In the sample communities, the extended family of the male line is the most frequent (table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Gender Divided Family Structure

Community/ Family Structure	Wife's Parents/ Family*	Husband's Parents/ Family*
TV	04	04
LC	04	11
ULIS	06	30

Source: Household Survey 2006

* In some cases, there is a mixture of husband's and wife's family members, for example husband's parents and some members of the wife's family like a sister live in the same household in together. However this is not a common occurrence and was found only in the ULI.

The above two organisational arrangements of families seem to have differential influences on household power relations. When the household consists of a female line extended family, the women have more say in the domestic affairs. This is because they have support, both combined man/wom-

an power and sometimes material support to back them up in situations of confrontation and crises. When the family consists of a male line parental family, the opposite is the case and the wife's say in the family matters may be proportionately reduced[8]. It was often found that it is the in-laws in the urban low-income area who pressurise the wife to migrate in order to support the family (in this case, the son). They can even use intimidating tactics to force the women to migrate. For example one woman migrant from the urban low-income community complained that it was the threats of the mother-in-law that made her migrate.

> … My mother-in-law forced me to go. When pleaded with her that I did not want to go she was angry with me and went to her daughter's house. Even my husband was helpless. After all she was his mother and he has to take her side. Finally I decided to go to keep the family together (Returnee, 39, Tamil, ULIS Ref. no 3.35)

Another commented that it was her husband and sister-in-law who pressurised her to go. She was unmarried and the family was in need of money to give her in marriage.

> 'My husband's sister did everything possible to make me migrate. She was getting my husband to force because she knew part of the money I earn will go to her as dowry'. (Returnee, 32, Tamil ULIS Ref. no 3.49)

The situation turns to the advantage of the woman if the extended living arrangement is matrilineal. Then it is the husband who is on the receiving end and the wife has more say in the household because she has network support (social capital). In this situation, it is not uncommon to find the husband living under the authority of the wife. But matrilineal living arrangements are not common in the households of the migrants.

4.5 Gendered Structures of Management and Control in the Household

Though women in the three communities have no controlling access to resources, except for their comparatively better education, they play an important role in decision-making at household level. This can be seen in relation to both intra-household affairs and meso level extra-household operations. Budget management and community-based work are two areas that make

wife a *powerful* person. Therefore it cannot be claimed that the husband, being the sole provider in the household, has all the controlling power or that women are completely excluded from the decision-making process. The dynamics need to be understood as a combined result of the woman's place being positively supported by a range of factors from ideological to contextual. The skills she either has or is believed to have, and certain extra-household situations (support systems), play an important part in this.

As we have seen on average the wife is the better educated of the spouses and that puts her in a better position to take decisions in some areas of activity. Wives are also believed to be good with figures by a majority of their husbands. Added to this is the belief that women are careful with money and more concerned about the family than men. When the wife is the better educated member of the household it gives her more opportunities to get involved in extra-household (community) activities and more manoeuvrability in household decision-making. She then becomes the one who engages in activities connecting the household with the public space, such as community-based activities, communication with public officials, and other formal business. Community-based organisations play a very important role among the poor and working with them requires educational skills if one wants to benefit from them. It was found that women are very often members of these associations in the three communities. One reason for that is the skills and competencies they possess as a result of their comparatively higher educational level. Husbands also recognise this value of the wife, as the following statement of a husband from the colony shows.

> My wife is better educated. She has passed GCE (OL) while I managed to pass only the 5th grade. I always ask her to do the arithmetic of the household work. She is the one who decides what to buy and when to buy food. She is a member of many societies and I don't know how many. She is treasurer of this and president of the other. Without her I cannot manage with the money I get (wage labourer, 57, wife was two time domestic worker in Bahrain. Ref. no. 2.3).

Wives being the better educated and being at home more than husbands are better placed to attend to the education of the children, for example helping with their homework, and matters of health. The children's health is an important area of concern and the wife (mother) is traditionally consid-

ered the better person to do it because it is believed that women care more than men. Because they are better educated, they can also understand the health record of the child and communicate better with health workers[9]. In addition, they are at home more often than their husbands due to their traditional role as housewives. This was the case in households where the husband was the provider and wife the housewife. All these factors translate into power in household activities, though it may not been seen as overt power. It is power in the sense that you are needed, i.e. the power of being indispensable. Husbands find wives are indispensable, though they may not recognise this openly in the conduct of household affairs. This indispensability was often voiced by men.

> You should thank these women. They somehow or other keep us going. I do not know how they do it. They just do and it is a miracle. (A husband of a returnee, 52, LC Ref. no. 1.26)

We shall examine the budgetary role of wife in the next section in detail, as budget management in the household is the most important activity that gives the wife access to power in intra-household affairs.

4.5.1 Budget management

The management of the household budget in the pre-migration period is one of the most difficult tasks in the households of the migrant women. The fact that the households are poor and live on a meagre and irregular income (the employment of the husband being often casual) means that an average migrant household does not earn enough income to provide for the basic needs of the household. The household budget of the pre-migration households of the three communities is therefore often a deficit budget. The difference between income and expenditure is met by borrowing, which is a standard household financial management strategy, and this leads to indebtedness. The majority of the pre-migration households of the migrants have taken at least one loan and sometimes the total amount ran to about Rs. 10,000. The borrowings of pre-migration households fall into two main categories: long-term borrowing at high interest, mainly from the local money lender, and short-term borrowing from friends and relations for daily needs. This latter form of borrowing was found to be the most crucial in managing the family budget of the pre-migration household and it usually

involves no interest. The debt burden of the household eases only during the period the wife is working as a migrant and households often fall back into debt again some time after the migrant woman returns (table 4.4).

The above situation of indebtedness is not difficult to explain. The conspicuous consumption which is a hallmark of these families and a lack of financial planning and investment of earnings mean that the money earned by the migrants is squandered soon after their return. The families then naturally run out of funds even to manage the family budget and things return to their pre-migration status.

Table 4.4
Family indebtedness
(pre-migration, during-migration and post-migration households)

Status	TV			LC			ULIS		
	Before	During	After	Before	During	After	Before	During	After
Yes	40	02	30	46	08	42	48	10	42
No	10	48	20	04	42	08	04	40	08
Total	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

Source: Household Survey 2006

The indebtedness of the households of the migrants and the deficit budgeting practice which is part of their financial management have some important gender implications favouring women, especially the wife, It has given housewives indirect power, a situation similar to covert power or power to manipulate issues to their advantage (see Lukes 2005 on three-dimensional power) in running the household, subject to certain accepted normative rules and cultural practices. The importance of this aspect of household gender relations and the power positions of women needs to be understood in the context of these households having comparatively better educated women, sources of credit facilities in the community, and reasons for borrowing, as well as the nature of the transactions i.e. how and through whom the borrowing process operated. We have already shown that the

wife, being better educated than her husband, is better suited to attend to work that require skills in working with figures, which is a must for balancing the deficit family budget. The management of the family budget of these pre-migration households requires careful short-term borrowing for consumption. This requires a person who is good with figures and careful with money and wife fits the bill. This has resulted in the wife becoming the *de facto* manager of the household finances though she is not necessarily the provider. This has effectively separated the provider role and manager role, thus reducing the formal control that goes with resource access and ownership. Though resource ownership is with the husband, who is the provider, the meagre income he brings in is not sufficient for survival of the family. This is where the financial management skills of the better educated wife come in, making her take control of household financial decisions concerning the day-to-day running of the household. This situation can be illustrated by examining the following important financial practice in these low-income communities.

Among the households of the migrant women borrowings is predominantly consumption-oriented and the most common reasons for borrowing relate to satisfaction of immediate and short-term family needs (table 4.5). For example, they most commonly borrow from friends, neighbours and relations; as we shall see later, in these communities all three groups are the same in most situations, for buying daily necessities, for family events, settling other loans and for family emergencies. Except for during the period wife is working as a migrant borrowing for day-to-day necessities is the most frequent reason for indebtedness in these households.

Figure 4.5
Reasons for borrowing money

Before Migration	During Migration	After Migration
Day to day necessities	House construction	Day to days necessities
To go abroad	Family event	To settle loan
Other Emergency	For alcohol & gambling	House constructions
Family event	To settle loan	Family event

Source: Household Survey 2006

The borrowings in these families mostly takes the form of informal financial transactions and does not involve large amounts. On average a loan may be as little as LKR 50 (the price of a kilogram of rice) to about LKR 500, which is sufficient to provide two days provisions for the household at today's prices. The loans are also usually short-term transactions and repayment is made in a couple of days, sometimes the same afternoon or the day after, and normally not exceeding a week. Money lenders, who charge interest, provide loans for larger amounts, often exceeding LKR 1000.

Community networks in the budget management

The short-term borrowing mechanism to run the family budget of migrant households (mostly pre-migration, but sometimes even in the post-migration period) has created a loan-taking network which is in effect a support group in the community. It also can be described as a virtual community reserve fund for emergencies.[10] A typical loan-taking network in these communities in all cases consists of women in the neighbourhood who are always in need and are also willing to help each other out of necessity. Credit transactions in the group are not credit in the formal sense, as there is often no interest involved and if interest is involved it is only nominal. The Sinhalese call this form of credit *atha maru* literally meaning 'change of hands' (*atha* means hand and *maru* means change from one place to another). It is this 'emergency fund' that is used by the wives of these poor families to manage the deficit budget, not formal credit from the money lender. This important role of women forming loan networks and its essential role in the economic management of the households give the woman a special place in the household. Though she is not openly and formally in control she is the *de facto* controller, being the manager of financial affairs.

There is another mechanism that supports family budget management in these communities. It is called *seettu,* which is an informal savings scheme usually found in low-income communities and in rural areas. The *seettu* system is a very important source of saving money in these communities and also serves as an emergency fund run by women. It is a collection of community members (membership can include men or they can even have their own *seettu* but usually *seettu* groups gendered and are women) who contribute a fixed amount of money to a fund on a monthly basis. The total monthly collection is given to a selected member by either drawing lots or

allowing the members to bid for the amount. In the latter case the highest bidder gets the money. But there is also a stipulation that a member who has received the fund once is not entitled to bid again though she/he has to continue contributing. *Seettu* is very popular among women in migrant households and an important mechanism is household financial management. Women are able to make valuable contributions to the family budget through *seettu.* The situation however slightly changes when it comes to formal borrowing and long-term borrowing from money lenders. In the rare case of formal borrowing the male members have a major role, as often only they can provide collateral as they are the ones who have either formal employment or property.

Managing the household budget is not just a monetary affair. It involves feeding, clothing and providing other services. In poor communities the supplies are not always bought and all aspects of household management are helped by borrowing in kind. Things that are borrowed often include cooking equipment and even clothing. In other words all kinds of shortages are met through borrowing. If a measure of rice is needed it may be borrowed from next door and this is true of other provisions too. This emergency borrowing happens in all communities and is network-based. Every household has such informal networks mostly comprising of immediate neighbours, often next door or in the same compound, and family members. It creates a loose network, in which someone requiring something from someone else can have access to each other through a third person in the network. These networks also for practical reasons (the things that are transacted are often things that are needed for running the household, namely, cooking) operate through women.

4.5.2 The covert power of the wife

Being the manager of the household budget does not mean that the wife has controlling powers over household affairs, let alone financial matters. The wife has an important role where she can decide on the matters as long as they are for the benefit of the household as a whole and as long as she has the tacit approval of the husband. Her control over the household depends on how much power is delegated to her by the husband openly by agreement or tacitly by not opposing her actions. This is determined by two fac-

tors. The first is the cultural and ideological situation. Across all cultures and socioeconomic groups the male has primacy in household affairs. The approval of the husband is generally expected before a decision is finalised, as he theoretically has the power of veto. But this theoretical veto is not practiced under normal circumstances in families, as there are separate domains of decision-making for males and females. If traditional cultural values are dominant in the household, the wife has little say and functions mainly as an instrument of the husband, dutifully fulfilling her wifely role. We define wifely role broadly to mean any service to the family and husband, and not only cooking and looking after the children. This was the general situation in the urban low-income settlement. In this community the people are mainly Tamils whose cultural values are strongly biased towards male dominance. Even the wife, who manages the budget, has little say, meaning power, in domestic affairs. But in the village, and especially in the colony, which are both Sinhala communities, the wives were in a better position. Furthermore, even cultural restrictions were found to change if circumstances that are favourable to the woman exist in the family[11]. For example in the sample communities it was found that irrespective of ethnic and cultural differences, the wife has improved her social position and power as budget manager when she is a strong personality and when there was extended family support for her, for example when the family is living with wife's parents.

There is a cultural reason for the favourable position of women not being translated into overt power, i.e. power to control (Lukes 2005). It was found that migrant women do not even use the leverage available to them in taking decisions to their advantage and to improve their position. It may be partly due to the above-mentioned overall authority of the husband but there is evidence to argue that the woman herself is responsible for not having power in family matters. It was found that very often that women make sacrifices for the sake of the family.

This duality of power relations in the household where the wife has a bigger than normal role in the management of the family budget, especially the food budget, cannot be adequately explained by a paradigm based on resource-determined power relations. Power, as we saw in the case of migrant households is *not resource determined* only *resource dependent*. It is also

necessary see power outside the narrow behaviourist point of view that recognises only the control aspect of power. If we limit our conceptualisation of power to the above two premises then the situation we have discussed becomes contradictory, for two reasons. First, not being the provider, the wife is not the owner of resources in the pre-migration household. Second, the wife in these households has the ability to exercise her power only in managing the day-to-day budgeting but not overall control in managing the affairs of the household in general. She does not have control over the activities of the husband and his decision is final even in matters relating to the family budget. But at the same time she is the manager of the budget. The situation therefore is not one of overt power where the woman has the ability to decide on her own or asserting herself in household operations, but of a managerial role with the role of a manipulator of the situation. Thus wife has no acquired power of her own. Power in this situation has been either delegated to her by the husband, who feels/knows that he is not capable of managing the budget, or she has received such power by default, i.e. the husband is evading his responsibility because of his inability. In both cases her power is covert and as husband has overall control, i.e. imposing his will if necessary though it may not happen in practice.

There is another aspect to this situation that makes it not a situation of overt power for women. In the previous section we described the household budget of these women migrants as a deficit budget. Another important feature of these households is their limited resource base, which is characterised by a low and irregular income and limited assets. The only income they normally have is the meagre earnings of the husband, sometimes supplemented by the contribution from the wife. These are therefore minimum-resourced households. The resources the household commands are barely sufficient to provide for very basic needs, such as food and essential shelter and clothing. The efficient use of these meagre resources only permits set items of expenditure and budgetary decisions. As there is no surplus income, choices and alternatives which are part of resource use and control, i.e. buying fixed assets/property rarely become part of the household decision-making process. Therefore the bargaining and maximisation of benefits of members and the resource manipulation this involves, which is central to conflict theories of households, do not apply to the operations in these

households. The women of these households are therefore not challenging the authority of the husbands or asserting their authority through resource manipulation when they perform the role of budget manager. Assertion of authority and challenging the domination of the husband in household decisions become part of the household when women start making substantial earnings as domestic workers and acquire control over all aspects of family operations. This happens, as we shall see later, once the wife is a migrant and formally becomes the provider in the during-migration household.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

Power in pre-migration households is not determined by resource ownership and control of resources alone. Therefore lack of ownership and control of resources (not being engaged in an income-generating activity in the context of these households) does not mean that the woman has no power and does not play a role in household decision-making. In the pre-migration households, the man is the owner of resources as he is the provider and principal income earner. Though traditionally the owner of resources normally gets to make decisions, in the pre-migration household too the relationship between ownership of resources, control of resources and decision-making (power) is not that straightforward. In the migrant household the wife, because of her special competencies and skills, and also due to special circumstances under which she operates has access to decision-making in the household through managing the household budget, even though she does not bring income into the family. It is her other resources (education) in combination with traditional perceptions of special qualities of women (being frugal) and her networking role in credit management that work in her favour over and above income and other material resources.

Power in the pre-migration household, especially its gender dimensions, cannot be understood if one views power in narrow behavioural terms. The one-dimensional explanation of power sees power only as overt power or power to impose one's will on others (Weber 1978; see Lukes 2005 for a critique) and neglects covert and latent aspects of power. In the pre-migration households the wife does not have controlling power as her decision-making role is subject to the overall supervision and approval of the husband, as tradition requires, and is exercised through manipulation rather

than imposing her will. This manipulatory power of the wife in the migration household is neither based on resource ownership nor does it operate as overt power of control. Therefore understanding gendered power in the pre-migration household requires moving out of the narrow confines of the one-dimensional and behaviourist views of power to see it in a more inclusive paradigm. Luke's (2005) views on power become important in understanding gendered power in this context.

Notes

[1] The impact of these forces is not uniform across all sectors and groups. The labour force participation and career prospects of women for example are limited and there is still a negative evaluation of women in career situations and that affect their promotional prospects (ADB 1999). Ideologies and values discriminate against women: for example, in the Muslim community there are gender discriminatory values that favour men in education and occupational achievement (see Malhotra and Mather 1997) while Sinhalese women are less affected by gender ideologies and norms and enjoy greater equality with men (Pieris 1956, Risseuew 1988).

[2] This idea is not new. Bourdieu (1977), in his explanations of capital, holds the view that education is a part of cultural of capital. The post-modernist conceptualisation of the information society/knowledge society is further extension of this view.

[3] A woman who is baby sitting would for example not see herself as working probably because such work for her is an extension of housework, which is not work in the traditional conceptualisation of work and women. Similarly a self employed woman preparing food for the local eatery may not see herself as working again because she is not paid a regular wage, which is again a criterion defining work. Both these situations were personally encountered by the researcher. But it is also interesting to note that in the case of males any income-generating activity is considered work. The only possible explanation here is that concept work itself has a gender dimension, namely, work is what men do, so only men work.

[4] This is more interesting due to the fact that the woman is a Sinhalese from a traditional village while the casual worker husband who was less educated is a Tamil of Indian origin born in the slum community. However, this is very rare and we found only one such case in this community.

[5] This is not just a socially downward marriage for a graduate woman who is from a high caste Sinhalese family who is also well educated but also an inter-ethnic marriage with a member of the ethnic community (Tamils of recent Indian origin) considered the lowest in ethnic hierarchy by Sinhalese.

[6] Some of these households cannot be considered extended families of joint families in the strict social anthropological sense of the term. Some households consisting of more than the members of the nuclear family lack the corporate living where they share household finances. They are very often not joint property-owning families/households. They live in a single physical dwelling unit but operate as independent families, even doing their cooking separately. They may therefore be better described as multi-family households. These are common occurrences in the urban low-income settlement.

[7] Though Sri Lanka is technically a patrilineal society there are matrilineal features in many social relationships and residential arrangement is one. It is not uncommon to find children, though technically 'belong' to father's group (share the surname) having closer relationships with the mother's parental family.

[8] It should be noted here that the presence of parents in extended families is due to two reasons. One is that parents cannot support for themselves and the other is the newly married husband and wife need the support of the parents. (The couple for example has no means of livelihood).

[9] At birth all children in Sri Lanka receive a health card that is completed by the clinic (either hospital or community clinic) every time a child is taken for either a health check or for treatment.

[10] This fund is virtual because it does not exist in real terms and there is no fixed amount as such because it is potential money in the hands of the members of the network. The network is also not a fixed group but the community members know who to contact.

[11] The relationship between resource access/management and the power of women is not linear. As cited earlier Zentgraf (2002) and several others (Safa 1990, Safilios–Rothschild 1990) say that there are intervening variables.

5 The Household During Migration: Transnational Management and the Extra-household Support System

5.1 Introduction

The during-migration household of the migrant women is in a stage of transition attempting to adjust to two major changes resulting from the absence of the woman, in most cases the wife, from the household. The first of these is the vacuum created in the household organisation of activities by the removal of a vital functionary, requiring alternative arrangements. In the study areas the households do this not only by making changes to the internal operations of the household but also by mobilizing extra-household support systems, namely, kinship and neighbourhood links. The second is the change in the provider of the household from husband to wife, thus giving her the leadership role in the household decision-making process and shifting the power balance in the household organisation. As the wife is not physically present to exercise her new leadership role, this also requires the household to devise alternative operational strategies. Transnational linkages bringing the household and the migrant into regular interaction become an essential feature of this context. Therefore there is the need to understand the connections between home and abroad as a single arena of social actions and how gender can structure this arena in particular ways in the operations of the during-migration household

We referred to the close connection between the home country and host country in chapter three, when we argued that the host country experience of migrants cannot be separated from the home country. In this chapter we shall take this argument further and examine operations in two main areas of action. The first is the connection between intra-household operations and the immediate extra-household support system, namely, kinship organi-

sation and neighbourhood relations. The second is the transnational linkages and operations that are part of the management of the migrant household.

The discussion in this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines adjustments households make to meet the vacuum created in the household organisation by the migration of the wife. The second part examines the how the migrant is linked to the regular operations of the household, the particularly decision-making process, through transnational linkages thus transforming the during-migration household into a transnational household.

5.2 Adjustments in Household Organisation During the Period of Migration

The household during migration is organisationally different from the household prior to migration. In the during-migration household the wife is not physically present and this creates a vacuum in household operations. This requires the households to find alternative ways to perform the domestic chores of the wife/woman migrant. This results in changes in the social organisation of the household, entailing the reorganisation of duties, tasks and relationships. As we have already mentioned these adjustments in the intra-household organisation of activities and tasks require the mobilisation of extra-household support systems. Most importantly they have gender implications affecting the household gender power structure.

5.2.1 Role substitution and status modification

Migration removes a member or members from both the physical and social spaces of the household. This creates a functional vacuum affecting the operations of the household. The solutions to this are often in the form of adjustments to the roles and status of the existing members of the household or through the infusion of new members from the kinship network. Regardless of the solution, role substitution reorganises the household gender relationships. Some changes, such as husband taking up the domestic chores role, lead to a shift in the accepted gender images, downgrading the social position of the male (Lan 2003, George 2000). It also may result in conflicts, especially when members of the kin group are brought in as substi-

tutes (Kottegoda 2004b, Gamburd 2002). The entire process of role substitution has a gender dimension that has strong reflections on gender power and associated conflicts.

Role substitution in the household of the migrant may be either an internal household arrangement, i.e. substitutes come from the existing members of the household, or involve the extended kin group. Furthermore, it often is not a one-to-one substitution of roles with one member taking over the domestic duties and responsibilities of the migrant, but several family members sharing her roles. In the households of migrant women, the following two types of role substitution were found.

Same-gender role substitution. In this case a female member, either the mother of the migrant, a sister or a grown up female child, takes over the duties of the migrant women. In this type of role substitution there are two forms, namely same-gender, same-generation and same-gender, cross-generation.

Cross-gender role substitution. In this type a male member takes over the role of the woman who has migrated. Here, too, there are also two forms, namely cross-gender, same-generation and cross-gender, cross-generation. The most common type of cross-gender substitution in the study area was the migrant woman's husband. One limitation in cross-gender substitution is that the male members cannot perform certain duties as efficiently as women, or are unwilling to do them.

In substituting a person for the domestic chores of the migrant woman, the mother of the migrant, if available is the preferred choice. She has experience in domestic work and can be trusted to take care of children and with money, which is also equally important. The following illustrates that children and money are the main reasons for selecting mother as substitute.

> While I was away my mother took care of all the responsibilities of my home. She looked after my children and did cooking … everything. I was not worried as mother was there to take care of children. You know I even sent my money to mother not to husband… you know that women are more careful with money. My husband did not have any problem. He just did what he did as I was at home working, eating and sleeping (Returnee, 38, husband casual labourer, TV Ref. no 1.25)

If there is no suitable female available in the household and if the husband is unable to take up the role due to his employment commitments or is unwilling or unsuitable for some reason, the next choice is a woman belonging to the extended family/household. In the households of the study communities the husband generally took over the domestic functions of the migrant woman especially if he was unemployed already and if there was no female member available. This arrangement is not surprising as many of the husbands are either unemployed or work as temporary/casual labourers (except for the men in the urban low-income settlement) (see table 4.1).

The husband's unemployment during the period his wife is away is mainly due to two reasons, one social and one economic. The economic reason is that the husbands do not find it absolutely necessary to work, as there is regular and sufficient income coming from the migrant woman. The social reason is connected with the changes in the household due to the absence of the wife that require the husband to take up extra-household responsibilities. So the situation is partly by choice and partly by necessity. The most important of these is the financial dependency of the husband on the wife in running the domestic front and also the husband taking up some of the wife's traditional domestic duties and responsibilities. The following statements by women illustrate this situation and show that both necessity and husbands' avoiding responsibility are reasons for this situation arising.

> My husband did not have a regular job even before I went abroad. Therefore I did not mind him not going to work as long as he was looking after the family. We could have asked my mother who is next door but this was a better arrangement (Returnee, 34, LC Ref. no 2.15)

In this case the unemployment of the husband during the wife's migration worked out for the better but that is not always the case. It can be a result of husband using the situation to his advantage as well.

> My husband stopped going to work after sometime. Here I was killing myself for the family and he was idling with his friends and spending my money. (Returnee, 45, TV Ref. no 1.44)

This situation of the husband substituting for his wife has important gender repercussions which we shall discuss in the next section. Those who choose to be unemployed are mainly casual workers.

The role substitution, which is an essential operational strategy in the households of migrant women households, was a pre-planned and pre-negotiated arrangement in the study areas. Both the availability and suitability of the substitute are the determining factors in making this arrangement. If there is a choice in selecting a woman from the kin group of the wife, this is preferred. If the substitute comes from outside the family, there is always some form of compensation involved. If the person is a woman and also a potential migrant then the most common form of compensation is assistance in migrating, thus linking this support with chain migration (see diagrams 3.1-3.3).

5.2.2 Husbands and status modification

Role substitution is not without its problems. It lowers the status/social position of the husband in the eyes of the community because he is doing what is traditionally considered to be women's work. It has therefore also led to conflicts in some households, leading not only to the collapse of the whole process but having even far wider repercussions on the family. The person who is given the responsibility may not abide by the agreed arrangement or may have problems with family members if he/she is from outside the family (Gamburd 2002). The following cases from the labour colony illustrate the complexities and potential lowering of social status and conflicts involved in role substitution. The social position of the husband is particularly affected when he is substituting for his wife doing domestic chores and there is another person, proxy and female, managing the funds remitted by wife. The following case illustrates both.

> I did not have a permanent job so while she was abroad I took up her responsibilities. I woke up early morning, prepared breakfast for children ... and washed them and sent them to school … and cleaned home…washed clothes...fetched water, did the shopping. You know, everything you have to do as the lady of the house. Some of my friends used to call me jokingly when they see me "hey... *génu miniha*" (woman man) or just *géni* (woman). It did not bother me (he laughs). So finally what I understood was it is not easy being a housewife…but the funny thing is my wife did not send money to me but to her sister … but it is ok .. I got my share and by the way I am not good

at managing money (Husband of a returnee, 47, wife was abroad for nine years (3 trips), three children. LC, Ref. no 2.24).

There can be resistance from the husbands sometimes and that leads to conflict, as the following illustrates.

Malini was a married woman who wanted to migrate not only because the family had financial problems but also because there was a migrant who was willing to sponsor her.[1] Her husband was employed and did not want to quit his job to be at home looking after the children who were small. She then only had the alternative of inviting a member of the kin group which she did as her parental family was living in the same neighbourhood and her mother was willing to help. The husband did not agree because he had some previous disputes with the wife's family and, also as it was revealed later in a discussion with the person, he did not want to be under the mother-in-law, something he feared would have happened if she came and live in the house. The husband first resisted by refusing to eat anything that was cooked by the mother-in-law but later a compromise was reached out of necessity and the matter was brought under control only to come up again later when the wife started to send money to her mother not the husband (A returnee, 32, LC, Ref. no 2.20).

Not only refusal by the husband to take up domestic responsibilities, but also the wife's insistence that somebody other than husband be responsible for her work during her absence, also can lead to conflicts. The opposition from the wife often comes when she feels that her husband is unsuitable to be taking up household responsibilities because either he drinks alcohol or some other misdemeanour affects his suitability/credibility as a substitute. In the traditional village there was a situation that ultimately resulted in the household being disrupted and the marriage itself coming to an end.

Sumanawathi was an ambitious and hardworking woman in her late 20s who was not in much financial difficulties, but wanted to find some extra money to start a grocery store in the village. She was married to a day-labourer and the couple had a small child. Being a persevering woman she managed to find employment abroad and husband was willing to take the responsibility of looking after the family, but Sumanawathi was reluctant as she suspected him of having an illicit affair and he also used to drink. (There was a rumour in the village that the reason Gunarathne (husband) got into mischievous behaviour

was because of his domineering wife, who was running the household). She wanted to get her sister to do the work and the husband refused to live with the sister at home (A returnee, 35, TV, Ref. no 1.38).

The above problem later developed in to a direct confrontation between the husband and wife's sister. The family failed to settle the problem amicably and it finally ended up in Sumanawathi sending the child to sister's house and going abroad. She started sending money to sister. This not only created unpleasantness and conflict but also affected the very foundation of the family. The couple later got divorced. The migrant has now returned and she is running her grocery business with the sister.

5.3 Social Networks as a Support System in the During Migration Phase

In the following section our concern is mainly on the home country-based networks and linkages that have an operational impact on the household of the migrant. Among the women migrants in the study area a complex arrangement of kinship and community ties (mainly neighbourhood ties) is in operation. They bring the family/household and neighbourhood together in a networking relationship based on kinship thus forming a support system that could be described as *family, kinship and neighbourhood triad.* This triad is gendered in both organisation and operations and is the basis of migration networks in the three communities. Therefore we shall examine the organisation of this triadic relationship, which is an indispensable component in the during-migration phase

5.3.1 The family, kinship and neighbourhood triad: an indispensable player during migration

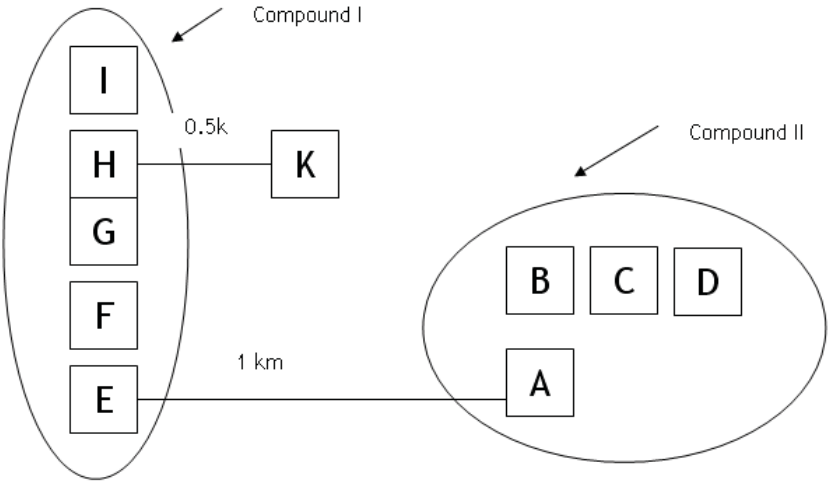
The family, kinship and neighbourhood triad literally makes the entire neighbourhood an extended family and is a very important support system in these communities, particularly in the during-migration phase. Almost all important social relationships in the communities are expressed in kinship idiom. Kinship relationships link people in all spheres of activity and social relationships operate primarily in two organisational contexts, namely the family and the extra-family kin group. Effective social links outside of these two do exist in the form of friends, but even friendship connections become

effective networks/organisational arrangements only when they are expressed in kinship idiom.[2] Not only that all kinsmen are addressed in kinship terms but also whenever possible community members attach kinship connections to friendship relationships by either tracing long lost/forgotten kinship links or even creating fictitious ones. The families/households are not only socially interconnected through kinship but also spatially on the basis of residential location. It is common to find many of the extended kin group living in the same neighbourhood, sometimes in the same compound, as physically separate domestic units (see diagrams 5.1 to 5.3). In the urban low-income settlement this is the most common form of living arrangement as the most dwelling places are connected houses or in the same compound.

The kinship, neighbourhood, family triad therefore is a networking arrangement of families based not only on spatial proximity but also on kinship proximity. The combination of the two has resulted in the emergence of an effective form of social organisation with kinship at the core. This has extended family-like relationships extending out of the household into the neighbourhood thus transforming the neighbourhood into an extended family[3]. This *extended family neighbourhood* is based on both family spirit and kinship obligations. The family spirit as a bond bringing the neighbourhood community together is strong in the labour colony and to lesser extent in the traditional village. In the urban low-income settlement, in spite of closely located residential dwellings, it is not the family spirit but obligations to the kin group, parental family, that bind the neighbourhood together.

This closely knit neighbourhood arrangement has made even nuclear families in the sample location not altogether free of the influence of the extended kin group. The fact that family influence can extend beyond the residential unit through the above social formation is important to understand the gendered nature of extra family/household operations among migrants in the study area. The gendered nature of operations in this connection needs to be seen in terms of the parental and kinship influence this particular residential and neighbourhood arrangement brings in. Depending on the context it allows either the husband's or the wife's family to dominate household operations (diagrams 5.1, 5.2. and 5.3).

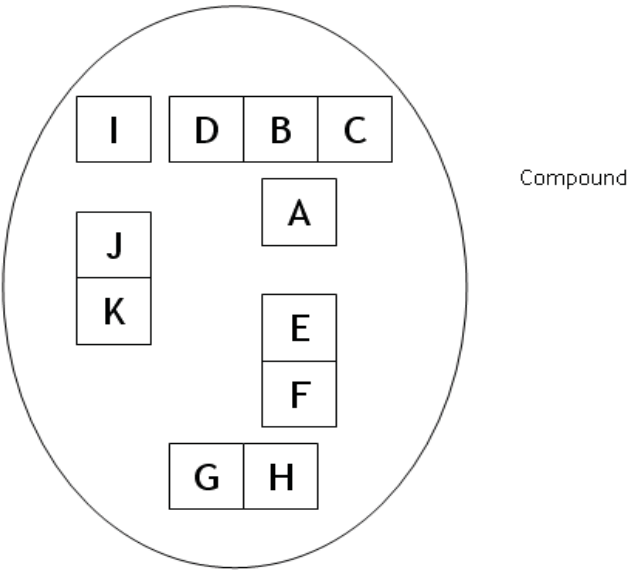
Diagram 5.1
Kinship and Residence (labour colony -Ref .no 2.13)



A =Mangalika's House (migrant)
B = Mangalika's Husband's Parental house
C = Mangalika's Husband's elder brother's house
D = Mangalika's Husband's elder brother's wife's house
E = Mangalika's Parental House
F = Mangalika's Aunt's House
G = Mangalika's 3rd sister's House
H= Mangalika's 3rd sister's husband's parental House
I = Mangalika's 2nd sister's House
K = Mangalika's Younger Sister's House (being constructed)

The above diagram, depicting a typical arrangement of living units in the labour colony shows that it is the family members of the female line (kin group of the migrant woman) who dominate the neighbourhood network. The major determinant of operations such as migration network formation and the provision of support services in the during-migration household is therefore the kin group of the wife.

Diagram 5.2
Kinship and Residence (urban low-income settlement –Ref. no 3.44)

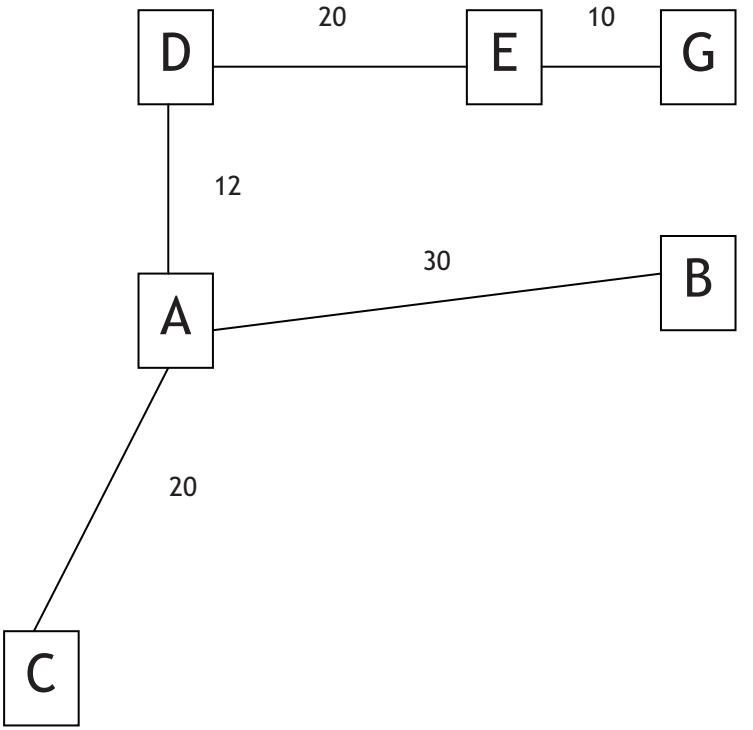


A = Mariamma's House (Migrant-Tamil)
B = Mariamma's Husband's Parental House
C = Husband's brother's house
D = Husband's Father's Brother's House
E = Mariamma's parental House
F = Mariamma's Elder Brother's House
G = Mariamma's 2nd Brother's House
H = Mariamma's Second brother's wife's House

In the case of the urban low-income settlement often the male line and female line both are equally represented in the arrangement of the living units and neighbourhood networks (Diagram 5.2). Here the living units are very closely located and are very often separated only by a brick wall partitioning the same unit into separate houses. In Sri Lanka they are called *line-houses* or simply *lines*, meaning that they stand in a row.

Diagram 5.3

Kinship and Residence (traditional village –Ref.no.1.29)



A = Chandrawathi's (Ref No 1.1) House (Migrant)
B = Chandrawathi's Parental House
C = Chandrawathi's Elder Brother's House
D = Chandrawathi's Husband's Parental House
E = Chandrawathi's Husband's elder Brother's House
G = Chandrawathi's Auntie's Husband's Brother's House

In the traditional village, houses are located comparatively at a distance. Members of the male line still, however, live close and maintain close contact with each other. This means that the kin group on the male line is the main player in support service distribution and networking in this community.

5.3.2 Support delivery during the migration phase

The livelihood strategies of the households of the poor are cooperative efforts that bring the kin group together. As the resource base of the poor households is not adequate to support the membership, their survival strategies invariably require external support. The presence of multi-family households, for example extended and joint families and closely knit kin groups, among the poor is usually a result of this practical need to pool resources as a survival strategy. Rich households on the other hand, whose economic base is strong enough to support the family unit, are able to manage the household without assistance from the kin group. Kin group and neighbourhood-based support is a common and essential feature of the study areas. They also become valuable for the during-migration household. The kinship, family and neighbourhood triad supports during-migration by extending assistance while the migrant is away (see Kottegoda 2004b).

As we have already discussed the kin group plays a major part in role substitution. In many during-migration households the relations either provide or are expected to provide the services the household requires due to the absence of the wife. One major concern here is the welfare of children who are sometimes very small and the worry that they might become delinquent as they will receive the traditional supervision from the mother (Attanayake 1996, Maruja 2003). The kin group is expected to assist in looking after children, helping to do domestic chores and fulfilling other household duties and responsibilities of the woman who migrated. The following is illustrative of the support delivery the kin group is expected to provide to the during-migration household.

> Now I am looking after three of my children's children (This woman's two daughters and her son's wife are abroad). There are eight children and all are under thirteen and my house is like a small poultry farm. I am looking after them only in the day time. In the evening they go to their father. I am living with my elder daughter who is disabled and my children send me money from abroad for my day-to-day necessities since I am looking after their children (A mother, 60, widow, ULIS, Ref. no. 3E).

Thus relations work as care-givers, guardians and domestic help (see Kottegoda 2004 for a discussion of this in the migrant household in Sri Lanka), services that are very valuable to families. When women and their families

make the decision to migrate the assurance of support they get from the kin group often seals the decision, as the following statement by a returned migrant from the labour colony shows.

> My husband told me "Chandra (her name), we never come out from this poverty. I do not have a regular job and we have four children. We can't let our children go hungry. Look at my sister (She is abroad) and their family, they eat good food, dress well, and have things in the house. I think you also should go abroad. I can look after the children with the help of my mother (emphasis mine) so I decided to go abroad (Returnee, 30, LC, two trips, Ref. no. 2.48).

In the above case though it is the husband who insisted the wife should make the move, a careful reading of the statement of the wife shows that in addition to husband's insistence, the confidence they had in the support of the kinsmen was a reason that she agreed make the move. The husband here is clearly telling the wife that he could look after the children with his mother, thus bringing in family and kinship in support of his argument that the wife should migrate for employment. The message is that they have a kin group-based support system that they can count on.

There are many similar cases where migrants deciding to go abroad because there is support from the kin group. The following statement is representative of commonly heard comments from case studies.

> I was not afraid because my mother told me that she could look after my children. I was confident that she would do it and I had nothing to worry about. (Returnee, 46, LC, Ref. no. 2.45)

Another comment echoed the same message but this time the offer was coupled with an understanding that there would be some favour in return. When reciprocity enters into the kinship-based support delivery system it leads to the formation of a migration chain.

> My sister encouraged me to go. She promised to look after my family. She also mortgaged her jewellery for me to buy my ticket. I promised to send her a job sponsorship letter or an air ticket. She was 17 when I first went and on my return after three years I brought her a ticket. Now I am looking after her family and she is abroad (Returnee, 42, TV, Ref. no 1.42).

The kinship-based support delivery system in these communities is therefore fulfilling more than just kinship obligations. They are also service providers operating on the basis of mutual benefits. Though it is generally considered that the kin group should stick together and helping one's relations is a duty and an obligation, the kinsmen who provide support to during-migrant households often know, and even expect, that there is a reward for their work. This was very clearly seen in the migration networks in the study areas. For example, relations who provided assistance to migrant families received support for their migration in return. These support systems, though kinship-based, are not driven by kinship bonds and conjugal obligations alone. They are based on conjugal obligations, emotional bonds and instrumental (means ends) relationship, i.e. the economics of social organisational relationships.

5.4 The Transnational Involvement of the Migrant in the Affairs of the Household

Migrant women were found to be taking part in the during-migration household activities and controlling the management of household affairs while being employed abroad. The migrant woman connects with the household back home through contributions to the upkeep of the household (remittance) and also, when possible, through communication on personal and social matters connected with the household. Except for a very few, these women were found to be making regular contributions to the upkeep of the family and in most cases these contribution were the family's only source of income. Members of the families back home also feel that it is their duty to provide information and seek advice mainly because now the woman is the principal provider. What is particularly important is the qualitative nature of these contacts and their regularity, i.e. density.

Migrants use several different methods to transfer funds to their households, but inter-bank transfers are the most common and popular today. It is common for the women to open a bank account prior to leaving with the sole purpose of sending remittances home. SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) inter-bank transfers are very popular in Sri Lanka and Western Union has a network in most regional towns. In the early days migrants often used bank drafts to send money

home but the system is not popular today as it incurs a surcharge and the transfer takes time to reach the receiver. Financial contributions are always accompanied by instructions on the use of funds, unless there is already agreement about how to spend the money, such as building a house, buying a piece of land, or settling a loan.

The migrants are also socially linked to the household at home through letters, which used to be the only form of communication in the early days, and telephone calls which are the popular medium today. These communication linkages depend on a number of factors including the migrants' work environment and the need and strength of the connection between the migrant and the household. Communication with the household is regular and frequent if the migrant is the wife. The work environment also is a factor in social communications as it determines the opportunities and even facilities available. Telephone calls are possible only if they are allowed by the employer, which is often not the case, or if the migrant has a mobile phone with her, or has access to a phone in some other way. Many migrants contact home on their day off. Mobile phones have facilitated communication between migrant women and their families back home, but social communication is not a common feature due to the constraints mentioned above.

The improved communication facilities have increased both the quality and the quantity of transnational linkages. They are more frequent and real time these days and have enabled the migrant to be part of the family socially and take part in family affairs. However, the lack of physical presence requires different strategies for effective participation. In this section, we shall first examine some of the strategies that migrant households adopt to enable the migrant women to participate in the household from transnational space and how they have affected gender relations in during-migration households.

5.4.1 Migrant domestic workers and transnational bonds with the family back home

Among Sri Lankan domestic workers, transnational connections are almost exclusively in the form of individual links with the household back home, and through that with the kin group and the neighbourhood community. There are no home town associations or similar host country-based organi-

sations among them. This is only to be expected because domestic workers abroad have little opportunity to socialise. Migrant domestic workers maintain regular communication with their homes mainly out of necessity. They are the providers of the household and that requires them to maintain regular links in the transnational space. Furthermore, connections with the household back home, particularly social ones, are made necessary by the fact that they involve family concerns, namely the welfare of family members and personal situations affecting the migrants. In addition links with home provide the women with the emotional support they need to compensate for the social isolation in the host country.

Transnational negotiations and conjugal relations

In addition to sending funds, matters relating to the wellbeing of the members of the family, especially children and the husband, are part of woman's transnational links with the family back home. The problems that concern the woman when she is away are those that can destabilise the family organisation, for example situations that could potentially affect the marriage or children. The problems the households of the migrant women often experience are the misbehaviour of the husband and of adult children who are without the supervision of the mother (Shah 1998, de Silva 2000). Research has shown that there is a close relationship between divorce/separation and overseas migration of the wife/woman (Eelans 1995). The husband's misbehaviour can be anything from squandering the money the wife sends home, sometimes on another woman, to alcohol abuse (which is often there anyway, but the habit may become more harmful when the wife is away). The following are some of the cases reported in the study.

> While I was abroad my husband stopped working as a casual labourer. He was just idling, smoking in the junction. I do not think I can go again even if I want because it is either my family (meaning husband) or money (Returnee, 44, Tamil, one trip, ULIS Ref. no 3.33).

> My husband got addicted to alcohol while I was abroad. He was drinking even before but he went out of control after I left. He could do it because he had money (sarcastic about it because it is her money). This was one reason I returned. I could have stayed longer if I wanted to but you know he died five months before I returned. My neighbours put the fault on me and blamed me

> that it happened because I went. But what else could I have done here? Even at that time he did not have a regular job. If I did not go to Dubai there would not have been money even for his funeral expenses (Returnee, 40, widow, LC Ref. no 2.36).
>
> My husband has found another woman. He spent all the money I sent him on her while I was abroad (Returnee, 35, ULIS Ref. no. 3.4).

The wife of the alcoholic husband, who died, leaving the family of two children with the mother, is planning to go back as there is no other way she can think of supporting the family. Fortunately she has her parents to leave her children with she says. In the third case the husband has left the wife. This woman has no children and therefore has fewer worries. Yet she is also planning to go back.

Concerns about children and their wellbeing is another reason for the woman wanting to maintain regular communication with the household back home. When these women make their decision to migrate, in addition to the matters of immediate survival of the family unit (lack of income) the future of the children, namely their education, is one of the main reasons (see Human Rights Report 2007). Therefore it is a dilemma for these women: either they stay at home and look after children or to go earn money and provide for their future. The following sentiment of a migrant from the traditional village is shared by many women and family members in the study area.

> Children were in horrible situation therefore I had no other option (than to go abroad as domestic worker). I think, though they suffered because I was not there for them, I did the right thing. At least my elder daughter has passed her OL examination (year 11 exam) and she could do it because I sent money to send her to a good school and for her tuition. Don't you think it is big achievement on my part? (Returnee, 43, TV, Ref. no. 1.33)

This is a woman who took a risk for the sake of the family. Naturally she and other women live in constant fear that something may go wrong with their children during their absence from family. Though they make the move giving priority to the future of children, once abroad maternal concerns begin to worry them and the security and wellbeing of the children naturally become the main problem, not their long-term future through a good education. Therefore they want to maintain contacts/links with the

household back home on a regular basis to satisfy themselves that the children are being looked after.

The above does not mean that transnational connections between the migrant woman and the household back home are dominated by worries and negative experiences. Many negative experiences relate to conjugal relations. Even there, however, the migrant woman's experiences are not always negative. There are husbands who are very duty bound and children who do very well in spite of the mother/wife being away. It depends on the husband and the network support that is available. This is what a woman returnee from the traditional village had to say about her experience.

> While I was in Bahrain my husband did everything. I even sent money to him, unlike our neighbours, because I knew my money was safe with him. He used the money carefully, saved some and opened bank accounts for my three children. And he added a new section to my small house and he used to help the children with their homework and the children were happy. My husband never used alcohol (Returnee, 38, TV, Ref. no 1.4).

In these cases the household affairs run smoothly and the migrant has fewer worries. Consequently, there is less need for the woman to be worrying about home. Though this means fewer transnational contacts on matters related to the welfare of the members of the household, there are other important matters she has to deal with, for example how the funds she sends home are spent and how the household finances are managed.

5.4.2 Transnational household management

In the pre-migration households the wife, though she was not the provider, was still the manager of the budget. Her role in the management of household finances was however indirect and she functioned under the overall supervision of the husband. She was not the controller but was able to manipulate decisions to suit her. In that sense her power in the pre-migration household was covert. By migrating she becomes the provider of the household, which theoretically gives her the right to have more voice in the household's financial affairs. The fact that she is no longer physically present in the household makes it impossible to directly control the money she earns. This does not necessarily mean that the wife, as the provider, waits on the side, giving the management of the funds she sends home to those who

are there, namely, the husband or the guardian of the during-migration family. There are alternative arrangements that allow the wife to be part of the decision-making process and exercise more controlling power, as observed in the households in the study area. It is these alternative arrangements that make the during-migration household truly transnational.

These arrangements, which operate through transnational linkages, enable women to take part effectively in the decision-making process in the household. It was found in during-migration households that women give instructions to the family, i.e. the husband or the person who is responsible in managing their funds, on how to manage the money they send. Manipulating transnational linkages, they translate their newly gained position of provider into that of controller as well. The migrant woman no longer works behind the scenes, but is in control. The elevated position of the wife requires her to maintain regular communication with the household back home and an operator on the ground, a proxy, to translate her instructions into action.

The communication process in transnational household management

In the past migrant women used to give instructions to their families through letters. The advancement of communication technology has given both migrants and their households easy access to telephones, especially mobile phones. It is estimated that in Sri Lanka the three mobile operators have now connected over 20 million households, more than one mobile per household. This is in addition to approximately about 2 million wired connections. Discussions with the migrants also revealed that, though letters are not the favourite medium of communication and telephone communications have become more regular, the content remains the same. The replacement of letters by telephone communication has not only speeded up the communication between the migrant and the household back home, but has also brought about qualitative changes in transnational interactions. Now the communication takes place in real time, meaning that there is immediate and two way interaction between the migrant and the household.

The advancement in communications has therefore further strengthened the transnational management of the household by migrants. Table 5.1 shows the degree of involvement of the migrant women in running of the affairs of the during-migration household.

Table 5.1
Instructions on using remittances

Instructions	TV	LC	ULIS
Tell always	45	47	29
Occasionally	04	02	05
No	01	01	15

Source: Household Survey 2006

The above table shows that there is active involvement of women in during-migration household affairs. Except for the urban low-income settlement, in the other two communities the majority of the households regularly receive instructions from the migrant telling them how to spend the money they receive. The reasons for detailed instructions on the use of money is the worry in the mind of the migrant that her hard earned money can be squandered by others who are not under her direct control and physical supervision. This is illustrated from the statement by the following returnee.

> Yes I always used to tell them because this was my money. They must know that I worked hard to earn this money. You know how much sweat in it. In some days especially when there was a party I used go to bed around 1.00 to 1.30 a.m. and got up at 5 in the morning again. But I am not worried about that. I only wanted them to use this money carefully (Returnee, 49, eight years abroad, LC, Ref. no 2.26).

But those who do not send instructions take a different view, like the following returnee who is a Tamil woman from the urban low-income settlement.

> I just sent money to my husband. They must know how to spend it. You know these men, if I tell them what to do they will be annoyed. You know this society lets them enjoy the way they like (Returnee, 40, Tamil, ULIS, Ref. no 3.6).

The above account however does not reflect the general situation among migrant women and was found mainly in the urban low-income settlement, where cultural control over women is rigid (table 5.1).

The instructions that come through transnational space are very detailed and cover almost all matters of household management, enabling the migrants, if they wish, to be fully and productively engaged in household matters. In most cases instructions are very specific, outlining, for example, even the number of pieces of clothing that should be bought for the children. The researcher was able to gain access to some of these communications (in fact migrant women even volunteered to reveal the contents of their personal communication)[4]. The summary translations of the letters the researcher had access to are given below with the permission of the owners. The names and other references that could identify the migrant women have been removed to protect their anonymity.

Translation of a letter written by a migrant in labour colony to her sister who was functioning as her proxy:[5]

My dear *Ukku Nangi* [6] (sweet sister)

I am ok. But I have to do lot of work in this house some days from morning till mid night. I normally get up around 4.30 in the morning. But I do not worry about that because what I am doing is for my children, to give them a better life. Now I think you can understand this not easy money. That is why I send this money to you as I told you earlier. I trust you more than *Punchi Ayya* (her husband)[7]. Please use this money very carefully. Give 500 rupees to *Punchi Ayya*. Do not give more than that to him for any reason. I am sure he will fight you or beg you asking for more money. But do not give more than that. I know from my experience he will spend this money to entertain his friends. Put 100 rupees into Chamar's (her elder son) account and give 1,000 rupees to *Mudalali* (village boutique owner-cum-money lender who loaned money before she migrated for expenses) and tell him that I will give more next time and will try to settle the loan early. And let me know how much balance is left to settle. Do not forget to give 500 rupees to *Karunawathi Akka* (lady who runs the *seettu*) for this month's instalment (see the endnote). Give 500 rupees to mother for her medicine. Keep the rest with you for emergencies. If you need to buy a frock, buy one. By the way make school uniform for my children. I will send money not next month… Please look after my children well and keep an eye on *Punchi Ayya*. I am worried about Pokutu (curly haired) Nimala (A lady who she suspects having an affair with her husband)
May triple gem bless you,

Loving Loku Akka (elder sister) (Ref. no. 2.2.1 and 2H)

The following are extracts from a letter written by a Tamil migrant woman from the urban low-income settlement to her sister-in-law in Tamil. The main points were translated into Sinhala (the researcher's mother tongue) by the migrant herself. The English translation is from this translation.

> Use this money very carefully. When that fool of a brother of yours asks, give some money to him. But always less than what he wants. Give 1,000 rupees to my mother for her and my father's medicine as I did not give any money to her last time. Pay *Mudalali* (Owner of the boutique where they buy provisions). Keep the rest with you and please manage it carefully (Ref. no 3G).

Below are some extracts from a letter written by a migrant from the traditional village to her husband. She was in Dubai at the time. The main points of this letter, as in the previous ones, deal with the management of funds sent. The importance of this letter is that the wife is instructing the husband. Under normal household conditions, namely, in the pre-migration household the instructions come from the husband.

> Please spend this money very carefully as you know that I am not happy about the life here without you and children and the ill treatment of this madam, though her husband is good and kind. First of all give 500 rupees to Charlet (A lady who gave a loan to her to cover migration expenses) and 500 rupees to Chuti Nangi (her younger sister) for shoes for the school uniform. Give 300 to my mother to her pilgrimage. If you can go to town with manike nanda (her aunt, menike) buy curtains for the windows, since our daughter is big now. If the money is not enough I will send some more next time
>
> Keep the rest with you for household expenses. But be careful when you go out of house. Lock the drawer very carefully. I will not send money next month since I get my salary every two months. So manage with this till then (Ref. no 1.18)

The above shows that the women make their presence felt through their instructions, creating a situation of a closely knit transnational family. The instructions are very detailed and specific. The letters, in addition to giving insight into the transnational operations of the wife and how she maintains her controlling role, also show the other family concerns we discussed in a

previous section. For example, their concern for the children and their expectations are also clear in these communications. The use of the word *my* when referring to children, especially when referring to money, is indicative of an emerging new sense of ownership and power on the part of the woman. The contemptuous references to husbands (in her letter the woman from the urban low-income household refers to her husband as *that fool of a brother of yours*) in these letters also show the women's changing attitudes. It is also important that they are writing to their sisters-in-law.

Not only do the migrants send detailed instructions but the householders also follow them very carefully. This is illustrated by the following description by a daughter of a migrant how she used to follow the instructions.

> When every time Amma (mother) called us I used to note down what she said. It was always full of instructions and questions, to do this and to do that and not to do the other. How to use the money for this and that, and to be careful with it. I used to feel Amma was with us at home. Amma was like a primary school teacher (Daughter of migrant returnee who is now 17, Ref. no 2J)

The above also shows the atmosphere created by the mother calling home and giving instructions. As the daughter says it was like mother was at home. They feel the presence of the mother though she is not physically there. This was partly because the instructions came over the telephone (voice) and was real time. This would have been the same earlier when instructions came by letter.

The proxy manager

The instructions on the management funds are sent to the contact point at home (not necessarily the household). This person is the one who functions as the proxy operator and attends to the work as instructed by the migrant. This person becomes a proxy manager of the household. The proxy manager facilitates the transnational household process by working as an intermediary to make sure that the instructions are followed and by attending to matters that would require the physical presence of the migrant, on her behalf. The involvement of the migrant through a proxy is a common feature in the transnational families in the study area and is closely linked to gender and kinship (table 5. 2).

Table 5.2
Money Manager of the Migrant

Receiver		Colony	Village	ULI
Husband's Family	Husband	04	08	15
	Mother in Law	08	02	10
	Father in Law		01	01
Own Family	Own Mother	19	21	09
	Father	01		
	Sister	15	15	07
	Brother	01		
	Sister/Brother in Law	02	02	08

Source: Household Survey 2006

N.B The above figure is based on information on last trip of migrant

The above table shows an interesting phenomenon. In choosing a person to work as her agent back at home the husband is not the preferred choice. The highest proportion of husbands working as the receiver of remittance is found in the urban low-income settlement and even there the proportion is less than 50 per cent. Normally remittances are sent to a woman, which shows that there is gender bias in the selection of the proxy of migrant while she is abroad. This is not surprising considering the records of husbands in general and as financial managers in particular. The following description of the situation is generally shared by women migrants.

> I do not trust my husband with money. He does not know the value. Though I was not home I always used to tell him what to do with the money. When I sent money home I usually wrote a letter to my husband (Returnee, 43, TV, Ref. no 1.18).

Another woman from urban low-income settlement explained her experience in the following complaint which summarises the common sentiment of migrant women in all areas.

> While I was abroad my husband quit his job not because he had to take care of the children and family. I had my mother for that. My husband wanted to loaf around. He was spending his time with his friends smoking and drinking

> all the time finally my mother left since she thought that it is not necessary to stay and he had to look after the children (Returnee, 34, ULIS, Ref. no 3.39)

This man was a labourer temporarily employed by a shop in the town. He quit his job after wife migrated. The mother of the wife who had agreed to look after do left in protest of his behaviour and went to to be with her other daughter's family as she also decided to migrate for work. This also created unpleasantness between the two families but also resulted in the husband quitting the job in desperation to send the wife abroad.

> While I was abroad first I sent my money to my husband. Then my sister sent me a letter after maybe six months advising me not to sent money to him since he was enjoying using this money with friends. Sometimes my mother takes my children to her home and gives them food. Then I sent money to my sister and he started to behave better and use the money which my sister gives to him carefully (Returnee, 42, TV, Ref. no 1.11)

One of the problems is that husbands are not used to being at home after they finish their work, unlike mothers. Cultural and social obligations to friends etc. make them want to be with them, and now this man has more free time since he has not been working. This and the money he was getting from his wife allowed him to be the chief entertainer of his circle and his friends who also to their own advantage encouraged him. The result was a neglected family, squandered earnings and a husband addicted to alcohol. These and other similar experiences make migrant women think twice before they let their husband take responsibility for the family and the funds.

Though several others have had similar experiences, not all husbands fall into the loafing and squandering category. The following is a comment by a migrant from the labour colony.

> My husband did not go to work while I was abroad. He looked after my family. My family fully depended on my money. When I came back he went to work as usual (Returnee, 49, 10 years abroad, 5 trips, LC, Ref. no. 2.1).

The husbands of returnees also often shared the same sentiments, as the following illustrates.

> While my wife was abroad I did everything, even cooking and washing which I had never done before. I did not have a permanent job. I did not bother about that because I only needed to look after my family. The children are

> closer to me now than their mother. She used to send money directly to me and when she came I also got to know that she sent some money to her sister too for saving. I am happy about that since I couldn't save a penny because I am not good in managing money. She knows about that and that is why she sent some money to her sister on our behalf. When my wife was at home she was the one who decided the expenses (Returnee's husband, 46, TV, Ref. no 1.8).

The major problem therefore is the managing of funds the migrant sends home and managing the household budget especially, if the husband is not reliable for some reason. Then a reliable person is brought in who serves as the proxy of the migrant woman. Even if the husband does take over the tasks of the wife there are instances where he is not given full control over the financial matters (we mentioned this earlier in the discussion of cross-gender substitution).

Not only financial management concerns but also conjugal family matters require the migrant to have a person as a link between her and the family back home. We found many families where the migrant maintains a link with the household during her stay abroad through a third party, who is often a close family member, whom she trusts. This person may be the one who is substituting in the family for her, though it is not necessary (see Kottegoda 2004b, Gamburd 2002). If the person is a woman she may play the full role of the woman, doing all her work and even residing in the household. The person the migrant uses to send instructions on managing money that she sends back home often doubles up as her link in dealing with other family issues that concern her. It is this person who reports back to her about confidential family issues, especially problems such as misbehaving husbands. The following is a letter written by a proxy to her sister abroad (again, names have been withheld to protect their identity). This is the younger sister (*Ukku Nangi*) of the woman from the labour colony who showed me letters she sent to her while she was working as proxy in her sister's household. These two sisters are very close to each other and they both have kept the letters, a common practice in many rural households.

> Dear Loku Akka*
>
> I got your letter. Everybody gathered around me when I got a letter to hear what you say. I used your money as you said and don't worry about that. I

kept some money for emergency case as you told me. You know when children are there we need money. I don't know at what time Sureni (migrant's daughter) come of age since now she is about 12. Amma (mother) is ok but she has a pain in her back. I sent her to Veda Mahatthaya (an Ayurvedic physician) and he gave her some oil. Son is ok but he talks about you all the time. Last month kalu nenda's daughter (Daughter of Aunty) went to Dubai. Many of them are now getting ready to go. I also feel like going for a change as I told you earlier. When you come please find a place for me. Don't worry about home I will look after them (family). Punchi ayya* is now somewhat better and listens to me. Last week I met pokutu Nimala (the woman who is rumoured to be having an affair with migrant's husband) and I gave her tight and she did not know what hit her. I am sure she will not come after Ayya (the migrant's husband). You know me when I am angry (much of the gossip in this letter has been removed).
Don't worry about anything, I am here for you.

May triple gem bless you,
Ukku nangi* (see the end note) (Ref. no 2.2.1 and 2H)

The following is a description by a former migrant who is now a proxy of several migrants (relations) how she handles her responsibilities.

In our family we have five girls and one boy and I am the eldest. Except me all my sisters are abroad at present. I also was there and I came back after two years because my husband asked me. Before I returned I helped my elder sisters to go abroad and then she helped the other sisters. They have now even taken some of the children. Even my two sons are now abroad with help of their aunts. I am not worried about that since my sisters are looking after them. Every weekend they meet their aunts. My two sisters are working for British engineers in Saudi Arabia and they need to work only eight hours and after that they are free. In their free time my sisters do part time jobs working three to four hours in the house of an Arab man. They also have a separate unit for living. My second sister is with her husband. Her son and daughter, age 10 and 7, are with us. Son is with my mother and daughter is with my aunt (father's sister). They call them mummy and daddy and do not bother about their parents. Two weeks ago they were here for my father's funeral and stayed for a week. But these children did not go to them or sleep with them. Daughter did not even talk to them. Anyway my sister sent her money to my

mother and my aunt for looking after the children and sent money separately as children's expenses.

The main thing is all my sisters send money to me with instructions on how should I use it. Sometime they do not tell but I know now what they need. Earlier they send money inside letters and through friends. But now they send the money directly to the bank. I have a phone (she in fact has two phones: one land line and another mobile) and when they deposit money in the bank they call me and give the pin number. I have to go to bank with my identity card and give this number and take the money.

Then I divide the money according to their instructions between everybody, including their husbands. All trust me. I am the eldest of my family. They also ask me to take money for me too when I need. I can take more but I never do that. I take something and inform them. Believe me one of my sisters is building a house nearby and everything is done by me even though her husband is here. He always comes to me for money for expenses. But I go and check and then only I give. His mother is also abroad but she also sends money to family through me. I always keep an eye on these people. I am like a manager of my family. All my sisters send money to my parents regularly. Recently my father died and all the expenses were met by them. They even send money for my husband, even though he is employed as a driver. Last month they sent goods to me by ship (she showed them to the researcher. There were even packets of table salt!).

Even my two sons send money to me not, to their father. I do not use this money except for emergencies. I deposit it all in their bank accounts. My eldest son's dream is to buy a bus on his return. When he calls he always talks about that. So I have to save for him carefully.

My sister-in-law is also abroad. She went three months ago with the help of my sister. She has a two-year-old baby boy, who is looked after by my mother and her husband. Believe me she also sends her money to me not to her husband. Sometimes I have to go to town every day to attend to their work, to withdraw money and to buy things they need. I feel that I am doing a fulltime job since I am always occupied with their work. Every morning when my husband and younger son leave home I walk to my sister's family and to see my mother. All are within walking distance, and then I check them and when my sisters call I have to report back to them (Laughs). Then I have to go to town and buy the things they need and come before my son comes

from school around three pm. Don't you think I am doing a real tough job? (laughs)
(Suvimali 43, LC Ref No, 2.38),

The role of the proxy is broad and is dependent on the circumstances and the needs of the migrant. In all cases the proxy is a very confidential person to her and is treated as such by the migrant. Being proxy manager not only involves a wide range of duties and heavy responsibilities but also it also carries considerable power. The person has the absolute faith of the migrant and what she reports back to her is what the migrant accepts. The proxy, having the trust of the migrant, can act without consulting her first, a power that can be misused but the researcher did not come across such situations in her study. It is very common for this person to receive special treatment from the migrant in the form of gifts, etc. Sometimes the compensation for this service is help to find a job or even a ticket to go with it, especially if the person is a female.

If she is a woman and living in the household, the proxy often has two main roles: to manage the funds the migrant sends home and attending to the family affairs, basically substituting for the role of the migrant woman. This does not mean that the proxy is always part of the household, but if her role has other duties as well, she often becomes a member. But when the position becomes more than one of liaison and includes managing the household funds the migrant sends home, she becomes more than a mere link/liaison and eclipses even the authority of the husband. In this latter case it is appropriate to call this position proxy manager. It is not uncommon for the husband to resist this arrangement as it increases the hold of the migrant on the household (Gamburd 2002 Kottegoda 2004b). This can lead to tense situations, creating animosity, with the wrath of the husband directed not only at the person involved but also at the wife. The following is a situation of conflict that resulted from wife changing the money manager from husband to her sister.

While my daughter was abroad I looked after the family for her. I did everything. I had to cook and I had to look after the children. My daughter was sending money to her husband and he was spending them on alcohol and friends. I had to fight with him to get money to feed the family. Then I told my daughter and she started sending money to her sister who is next door.

> Now I have money but it is that no good husband of her that is giving me problems (A mother of a returnee, 60, ULIS, Ref no 3E).

The following is how a sister who was proxy manager for a migrant described her responsibilities and experience. It also shows that the responsibility is not something that is easy to deal with and that proxies take their responsibility very seriously.

> It was not easy to handle my sister's money which she sent me from the Middle East. It was especially difficult with her husband who was always asking for money. But my sister had advised me not to give what he asked for. One day he pulled my hair and hit me on the face because I argued with him. But I did not give money to him. This is my sister's money. He drinks a lot and that is the main reason my sister wants me to manage her money and run the house (Sister of returnee, 26, unmarried, Ref. no. 3F)

The introduction of a proxy manager to help the migrant to take part in the management of household activities, mainly to manage funds, is important in the formation of transnational household. It establishes an active and operational link between the household and the migrant, further strengthening transnational relations linking the household and the migrant. It also has very important repercussions for the gender authority in the household, by helping continue the management role of the wife and in most cases adding to it. It is through this new position of proxy manager that the newly found power of the wife is made operational in the household.

Furthermore, the proxy manager makes the link between the migrant and the household more efficient and effective, in favour of the migrant woman. It is true that even without the proxy manger the migrant can keep constant links with the household. As we have seen, modern communication facilities have transformed migrant households into transnational households, where the migrant keeps a constant communication link with the family. But without the proxy these links are only one way links and there is no guarantee that the instructions of the migrant are carried out. So the transnational household is less effective if there is only long-distance communication linking the migrant and the household through normal telecommunication links. The proxy makes the link a two-way one because he/she reports back. The members of the household also know that their actions and whether they have followed the wife's instructions are reported

back. This increases the chances of compliance, making the transnational connections more effective. Having a proxy is therefore both an innovative and effective way of long distance management of the household and has also become an essential part of the transnational household.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

In the during-migration household of Sri Lankan women contract workers, it is important to understand the gender power dynamics of migration. It is here that migrant women make transition from the covert manipulatory power which they had in the pre-migration household to control power. One of the defining characteristics of the during-migration household is its transnational linkages and operation. This has resulted in some important organisational differences, for example, the introduction of proxy management, which makes this household fundamentally different from the pre-migration household.

It is not the simple and straightforward reorganisation of tasks resulting from the departure of the woman migrant that makes the during-migration household different from the pre-migration household. The most important factor that makes the during-migration household fundamentally different is its location in transnational space. As has been maintained throughout this thesis (see figure 2.3) the during-migration household is connected on a regular basis to a multiplicity of actors in transnational space, of which the migrant is one. Therefore the during-migration household should be viewed as operating in a transnational system of relations rather than just having links with the migrant through transnational linkages.

This discussion shows that the controlling role of the wife starts as part of transnational relations in the migrant household. In addition to the money she earns and the leverage that gives her in influencing family decisions the transnationalist nature of the connection between her and the household itself may also contribute to this controlling role. As a transnational member of the household the wife is no longer controlled immediately by the family organisation and the cultural and other social restrictions that regulate her life.

An important feature in the operation of the during-migration household is the extra-household support system. The triad of the family, kin group and the

residential neighbourhood play an indispensable role in survival strategies. The kinship/friendship networks provide not only material support, such as looking after children and assisting in household affairs, they also provide moral support to migrants and their families. However the support of these groups is not based on pure altruistic concerns or obligations that are part of kinship bond. Those who provide support expect something in return, making these support systems both reciprocal and instrumental.

Transnational management of the household is the most important/salient feature in this connection. Long-distance management becomes necessary for two reasons. First, in these households the wife is the principal provider/earner and that gives her the right to manage household affairs, i.e. play the leadership role in household decision-making. Second, as she is not physically present to take part in the decision-making, the households need to make alternative arrangements. The introduction of the proxy manager is such alternative arrangement and operating through transnational space re-incorporates the wife into the household.

Notes

[1] Sponsoring is a term employed commonly in Sri Lankan context to describe migrants who are already abroad helping a potential migrant to find a job, often in a household known to her own employer, and also in some cases securing a ticket (Gamburd 2002).

[2] It is common to find even those who are not related to be referred to by kinship terms in Sri Lanka. Anyone who is not a relation but has close links with the family is usually given a kinship term and becomes a *de facto* kinsman. This makes the distinction between kinsmen and friends a subtle one.

[3] The term extended family is used here not in the conventional anthropological sense, i.e. family as a corporate group sharing and managing common property. It only refers to situation where family-like relationships become core relationships in a spatial neighbourhood inhabited by members of the close kin group.

[4] Preserving letters for sentimental reason perhaps is common in many Sri Lankan households. This enabled the researcher to gain an insight into the working of the instruction-giving process in the during-migration household.

[5] Some content has been removed to protect identity. They are mainly either personal details or gossip.

[6] This is a term of endearment meaning my sweet sister. *Ukku* is baby talk for milk (associated with milk and honey) and *nangi* is younger sister.

[7] *Punchi Ayya* means little brother, who in fact is migrant's husband. In Sri Lankan society it is not common to call spouses by their names but some third party relationship such as father of children, mother of children or similar. Here the wife is referring to her husband as *Punchi Ayya* because he is little brother to the receiver of this letter.

6 Returned Domestic Workers Negotiate Power in Post-Migration Household: An Emerging Order

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the negotiation of gendered power relations in post-migrant households to show that the changes during migration described in the previous chapters are relevant on the return of the migrants, leading to the possible emergence of a new order in their households. This examination is relevant to understanding the impact of migration on gendered power relations in the households for two reasons. The first is the changes in domestic power relations as a consequence of migration in the post-migration household. Secondly, these changes cannot be seen as being caused by wage work or other economic factors, as in the majority of cases migrant women cease to be the principal provider in the household when they return. Therefore the explanation needs to be found elsewhere, namely in ideologies and context-specific processes.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the reintegration process of the returned migrants. The public perception of the migrants and the images, identities and labels associated with these perceptions and how they affect the social status of returned migrants and their households is one area dealt with in this section. The improvements in the social standing of the migrant household, and the migrant herself, in the community as a result of migration, and their implications for the social mobility of the migrant and her family is the main related issue. The second section examines the main features of the domestic regimes and their gender implications in the households of the returnees. The third section examines the emergence of a new household with new power differentials, normative

understandings and practices more favourable to women than the pre-migration household.

6.2 Return and Reintegration into the Community and Household

Migrant women go abroad for employment with the aim of achieving certain objectives, of which the survival of the household is only one. Though the husband's inability to provide the day-to-day needs of the household may be the immediate reason for migration, long-term objectives such as building a house, educating the children, etc., are always in the background. The migrant's reintegration back home, both into her household and community, is dependent on the extent to which these objectives are achieved. If she fails to achieve the aims she and the family set out that affects her as a member of the household and the community. There is explaining to do and rumours to tolerate. The family may be in debt and she may be blamed for that. Her position in the household then becomes worse than her pre-migration status, seriously weakening her power position. Even if the migrant is able to achieve her objectives and return as a success, often reverts to her previous self as a housewife. Only a few returnees manage to continue as the provider in the post-migration household. Even those who initiate economic activities and continue to support the family continue to play the role of housewife as their primary role in the household.

In addition to the importance of the above two possible scenarios in understanding the power position of returned housemaids, there are two other factors that affect the migrant's reintegration, especially at the level of community relations and the overall position of returned migrant women in society. The first is the public image of the migrant, which needs to be understood as part of the overall working of the media and the state involvement in the migration process. The second is the upward mobility of both the migrant and her household. The income from migration enables the household of the migrant to climb the social ladder.

6.2.1 The public image of returned domestic workers

The image of the returned domestic worker as a housemaid is a broad public label associated with migration of women and is a determinant of her posi-

tion in society. It has therefore overall implications in her status in the household and the community where her position is manifested. There are two main types of public image associated with women domestic workers: negative (housemaids) and positive (provider of the family and contributor to national economy). These images shape the identity of migrant domestic workers and define their overall status in society and, for that reason, they are important in understanding the changes in the gender relations and power structure in the household. The images are created and propagated at different levels from national to community and household by a number of actors. Thus the personal trials and tribulations of these women and the way society views and interprets them have resulted in the creation of migrant housemaids, a social group with its own unique identity and niche location in Sri Lankan society.

As discussed in chapter 3, migrant domestic workers are considered a national asset by the government of Sri Lanka for their contribution to the economy. This image, promoted by various government policies, has naturally permeated down to every level of society and there is public recognition of this image. Furthermore, migrants are recognised as a valuable asset by the members of their households for their role in livelihood strategies. Yet there are also negative stereotypes associated with their image in society which are mainly results of public interpretation of experience of these women in the receiving countries. The host country experience of these women, which is characterised by harsh and abusive work conditions, has a very significant impact on the way the public see them. The result is an image of a woman migrant who suffers constant abuse, including sexual abuse and rights violations, who needs sympathy, understanding and support. This image of *the victim* is however is not the only one that the plight of the migrant domestic workers evokes in society. There is also an opinion that these women are to be blamed for their situation. Instead of inviting sympathy, the sexual dimension of the suffering of these women in the host country can evoke the belief that these abuses are more invited than imposed from outside, thus creating an image of a frivolous and sometimes even immoral woman, who has only herself to blame for the situation she finds herself in.

The other image of the migrant is that of victim, which is promoted mainly by two actors, the media and the Rights Groups (NGOs). As we have already discussed, the migration experience of these women is not very favourable. They go through extreme hardships, working under very difficult conditions that include long hours and with a minimum of facilities. They face physical and sexual abuse. The highlighting of these by the media and Rights Groups has created this image of the migrant as victim. The reporting by the media often carries pictures of faces of battered women, accompanied by graphic descriptions of their plight. The images have a lasting effect in the minds of people, not only for their content but also because of the graphic presentations in both word and pictures. On 20 April 2008, the Sunday Leader, an English paper (Sunday Leader 2008), carried a news item of a migrant who had allegedly murdered the baby she gave birth to while she was in Kuwait. This is a representative example of the way the news media promote the image of the housemaid as victim. According to the story, the body of a newly born infant was discovered by police inside a washing machine, after a complaint by the owner of the house that employed the Sri Lankan domestic worker. The paper published the story with a picture of a dead infant lying on a heap of rags on the floor. The report then quoted comments by a well-known movie actor who is involved in a crusade to protect migrant domestic workers. It also raised question/speculations as to how it could have happened by quoting an official of the SLBFE who claimed that at the medical examination prior to departure the girl was found to be in good health and not pregnant. This insinuated that she must have been made pregnant by her Kuwaiti employer. In these reports the local language newspapers take the lead by invoking more emotions than the English papers. The language is graphic and words like 'cruel employers' (especially referring to women employers), 'inhuman treatment', 'poor helpless woman' (the worker) are common in the reports in the local language papers. Invariably the poor affected family and their plight is also mentioned. The result is an image of a victim who is helpless and left to her fate, and who needs sympathy and understanding.

For the household and the community the migrant as a victim of circumstance is not just an image. For the family or household it is a personal tragedy they share and the impact is personal and long term. For the com-

munity too it is personal, though not a tragedy. They see the victims as part of their everyday life. The information they receive through the grapevine is always exaggerated and that adds to the story. These stories in turn become part of the rumour mill further damaging the reputation of the poor woman. The rumour mill is a normal part of community life and its impact on the image of the woman is particularly important when she is a victim of sexual abuse. She is then viewed by the community as immoral woman who has brought it upon herself. What happened is something to talk about and to be avoided. The woman starts to be referred to as *that woman* in everyday conversations and becomes a major topic in the gossip circles. For the family and the household, the personal tragedy brings sympathy from relations and friends and derogatory and sarcastic reactions from others. In the study, none of the respondents have had experiences of sexual abuse, but there were whispers of a few domestic workers having had illicit love affairs and consensual sexual encounters while abroad.

There are other images of these women that put them in a totally unfavourable light as bad and immoral. These are part of the way the community discourse interprets the behaviour and character of the returned migrant women. In the community their consumption patterns, dress, general behaviour pattern and many other attributes are closely scrutinised and criticised. It is common, while recognising the benefits they bring to the community, to criticise migrant domestic workers for their loose behaviour, lack of taste and respect for tradition, and especially for flaunting their newly acquired material possessions. Their dress is often considered loud, i.e. with flashy colours and unsuitable styles, and they are seen to use too much make-up. This image even leads to the family being made part of an emerging social category derogatorily referred to as 'the Middle East crowd'.

6.2.2 Outcomes of Migration: Upward mobility

The migration of women for domestic work is a livelihood strategy of poor households, but its impacts go beyond the level of survival. Women become migrant domestic workers not only because circumstances, i.e. the household's inability to provide for survival, compel them to do so but also to bring prosperity, in relative terms, to their households (Halabi 2008). The prosperity achieved by the household in turn improves the standing of the

household in the community. As the migrant is solely responsible for this, it also leads to a better social standing for the migrant in the community. The developments are complementary and reinforce each other. Therefore it is correct to argue that the migration of women as housemaids enables social mobility at two levels and in two contexts. The first is the individual mobility that makes the social position of the migrant woman better than what it was prior to migration. She has enhanced social status in the community and in the household. She also displays behavioural and attitudinal changes that make her different from other women who are not migrants. The second is the modernisation of the household, i.e. a better house, modern household goods and other facilities that display material improvement. The material improvement in turn results in a better and elevated standing of the household in the community, as material wealth and how it is projected is a major determinant of social status and mobility.

Indicators of social mobility: Housing and consumer goods

In the all three communities the migrant families generally had better constructed houses than the non-migrants. Those who did not have new and better houses were either building new ones or improving the old ones, except of course the families of those who returned due to problems. What is more important than the migrants having better houses is the relative grandiosity of these houses in the community setting. In these poor communities, where housing conditions are substandard, the migrants' houses generally stood out in their modern appearances with brick walls and cemented floors. There were also several two-storied buildings, which are normally seen in better neighbourhoods. Building a house is an improvement in the standard of living, and building a better house is a status symbol that elevates the household's social position. When building a house, needs like the number of family members, etc. are not the main criteria. The main concern is creating a vehicle to climb the social ladder. The house is characterised by its conspicuousness in the community.

It is not only the appearance of the house and associated symbolic value that bring social status to the migrant household and thus enables it upward mobility. The household items also display similar conspicuousness and serve the same function. Migrant households often have household items that are not found in average households in the community (table 6.1).

Table 6.1
Indicators of social mobility: consumer items

Item	TV		LC		ULIS	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
TV	11	35	03	42	02	35
Refrigerator	01	25	00	48	00	03
Cassette recorder	07	36	01	40	01	05
Gas cooker	00	04	00	04	00	00
Rice cooker	00	02	00	03	00	00
Other elect. kitchenware	00	1	00	03	00	00
Kerosene oil cooker	00	00	00	00	15	30

Source: Household Survey 2006

As the table shows, TVs, refrigerators and cassette recorders are a *must* for returnees. Some households even have microwave ovens, grills and similar appliances that they very rarely use. Many household items they own are the ones that are normally found in middle-class households. These are modern appliances they have bought either from abroad or at the airport duty-free shops. It is not uncommon to find a TV that is too big for the living room and a sound setup that has enough music power for the entire neighbourhood. A telephone, as we said earlier, is a necessity but also an indicator of an improved position. The household items, similar to the house itself, are therefore indicators of upward mobility. This is upward mobility through *social exhibitionism* or flaunting wealth to climb up the social ladder and be recognised. There is also competition among the migrants themselves in their upward movement in the social ladder with one trying to upstage the other by a display of wealth. So it is not a TV a migrant wants, but a better one. If an old migrant in the neighbourhood has a 21-inch TV, the newly returned one wants to buy a 29-inch one. Many appliances are not really needed and can often be found stacked away unused, only to be taken out when visitors come. That also is to show rather than to use. During the research, the author saw many houses with microwave ovens and similar appliances still in their original packaging as the migrants did not have a place to keep them or suitable electrical wiring to use them. All this indicates an

attempt by migrant families to be what they are not, to move up in the social ladder and live a middle-class lifestyle.

Improvement in the material and social standing of the household is not only a post-migration phenomenon. It starts during the migration period. The funds the migrant sends from abroad first enable the family to have a better (comparatively) standard of living and adopt new lifestyles. Family members start to dress better and food habits change and improved nutritional standards start to become visible. Gradually, other indications of better life start to appear. Living conditions improve, with either a new house being built or the existing one being extended. The two places that first start to change are the living room and the kitchen. A new sofa and TV in the living room and a refrigerator in the kitchen are the items that households often acquire from the migrant's first few months' earnings. Gradually the situation improves and the family moves upward socially.

Indicators of social mobility: Attitudes and behaviour

Imitating middle-class and upward mobility is manifested in the behaviour and attitudes of the returned migrants. There is a visible change in the attitudes and behaviour of these women. They imitate the middle class by adopting their mannerisms and practices in the household. One such change is seen in the way the spouses of the households of the returned migrants address each other. In rural households in Sri Lanka spouses do not use terms of endearment for each other when they communicate. Public displays of intimacy are not part of the social life of husband and wife in average low-income households. They often use the term *ēi* to address each other, which roughly is the local equivalent of *you,* or they do not use any term to refer to their spouse. The context in which the comment is made makes it clear that it is intended for the other. Among returnees, it is common to see spouses address each other by the terms *amma* (mother) or *thaththa* (father) or even by each other's first name, practices common in middle-class families. This could be seen as indicative of their attempt to imitate the middle class. It also shows emerging closeness and even equality between genders, which again are middle-class traits. Other similar developments which are indicative of an emerging middle-class mindset in these households can be seen in extra-household contacts, namely with friends and relations. In addressing friends and relations the returned migrant for

example starts to use English terms like *aunty* and *uncle* in place of the local terms they used in pre-migration household, and they encourage their children also to do so. They also use the few English sentences they know. This is noticeable when both husband and wife are talking in a group situation. The husband (if he is not young) will speak only in Sinhala while the wife, irrespective of her age, will use a few English words. This is also a way of showing her superiority over the husband to outsiders and it can intimidate the male. This brings us to another interesting aspect of upward mobility in these households, namely its gender-differentiated nature.

Gendered features of upward mobility: the superior wife

The upward mobility of the returned migrant and her household has an individual dimension, making this particular brand of upward mobility one of gender asymmetry. As individuals, it is the wife who is more aggressively upwardly mobile. It was found among returnees that they have developed a sense of superiority, or at least a sense of self worth. It is very common for the wife to emphasise the fact that she does not listen to her husband in everyday matters, at least for the sake of conversation. This contains a note of protest and criticism, showing that migration has contributed to the emergence of a more assertive woman. For example, a woman would say:

> 'I did it for my family not to please my husband' (Returnee, 44, 3 trips, six years abroad, TV, Ref no1.13).
>
> or
>
> 'He has squandered my money (emphasis is hers). These men they spend our money for drinking and gambling' (Returnee, 46, ULIS, Ref. no 3.36).
>
> or
>
> 'All the time he is fighting with me. If I get a chance I will go back' (Returnee, 37, ULIS, Ref. no 3.48).

The sentiments these women have expressed about their husbands and the way they treat them in household matters show an emerging critical and more vocal assessment of spouses among these women which is new phenomenon in these communities. The following is what a returnee woman from the traditional village had to say about her husband.

> These men do not know what we expect of them. You see... I do not know whether you noticed it but when my husband met you yesterday he was very shabby. He was without a shave and was wearing dirty clothes. He had not had a bath for weeks, I do not know how many. I do not like it but can't help it. Anyway why should I? I want to go back and I do not know when I will be back. (Returnee, 33, TV, Ref. no 1.17)

The above respondent was a childless migrant in her late 30s who has worked in a rich Arab household where both spouses were professionals (doctors). What is noticeable in her comments is that she sees things differently now, for example the dirty clothes and shabbiness of the husband. This would not have mattered to her earlier as these are not the concerns of women in poor households where none of the husbands are well groomed. She may have started seeing things differently now because her role model is her rich Arab former employer.

The migrant women's superior attitude is clearly visible not only in their opinion about their husbands in their conversations. In the labour colony, many women were found to be even defying their husbands and behaving contemptuously towards them. It is not uncommon for example for these women to speak highly of the male head of the Arab household (employers) even in front of their husbands, even though they know that such comments can deeply offend the male ego (see also Gamburd 2002). In the urban low-income area where, unlike the women in the other two communities, they do not show it publicly, the comments of women in private betray their contemptuous attitude towards their husbands. In general the view of the majority of the returnees is that their husbands are not capable of supporting the family, they know nothing about the world and are just loafers and good-for-nothings. This superior attitude is indicative of their newly acquired assertiveness and the feeling of power, the power within (Oxaal and Baden 1977). In pre-migration households, the women may have felt that the men are of less value but they never openly said it. They even criticised men for their cruelty and the poor way they treat women, but that happened only in private and in the form of complaints. Now the women in the post-migration household not only feel that the men are of less value but some of them are not afraid to say it. Today they consider that it is their

right to *criticise men* for their weaknesses and not only to *complain* about their bad qualities.

This does not mean to say that being superior and wanting change is always the case among returned migrants. There are women who go back to their familiar domestic role on return without complaining. Others expect a little more appreciation and concern from their husbands.

> I came back from Riyadh because I started getting asthma. Now my husband is ignoring me. He was angry because I returned but he was good to me when I was sending money (Returnee, 41, LC Ref. no. 2.11)

These are returned women who feel that they are now being treated unfairly by their husbands, like the following woman, who is from the urban low-income settlement.

> Now he treats me like a dud coin. He has forgotten that I slaved for five years for this family (Returnee, 43, ULIS Ref. no 3.3)

These women now notice that their husbands do not care for them and ignore them. But intimacy between spouses has never been part of these households, so it is a new custom that these women have picked up during work abroad (perhaps seeing the situation in the employer's household) and they now want to be treated better (as a woman) and appreciated because they have contributed so much to the family. It is not only indicative of a desire for intimacy but also wanting to be appreciated. In that it is also an indication of an emerging desire for equal treatment across the gender division.

Not all the wives in post-migration household have superior attitudes and complain about their husbands. There are women who are happy even when they have gone back to their traditional role of housewife. This returnee from the ULIS described her post-migration household, where she is now once again the housewife.

> I returned after five years in Lebanon. I managed to earn enough to get my daughter some education. We have a fridge, a TV. We also built part of the house up and added a toilet (toilet facilities are a major problem in the ULIS). Now I am back and do what I used to do. My husband like in the old days brings money home. Of course he drinks but you can't complain, can you?

Men will be always like that, you can't change them (Returnee, 45, ULIS, Ref. no. 3.8).

Generally however, the returned migrants have more self confidence and assertive personalities. This affects the relationships in the domestic sphere and the identity of the returnees. They do not project the traditional image of housewife who accepts the secondary role in the household. This changing situation is also reflected in another area, namely the lifestyle of the returnee.

Gendered features of upward mobility: new lifestyles of wives

Another noticeable development related to upward mobility among returned migrants is the changes in their lifestyles, especially their dress. These changes are more due to improvement in the economic situation of the households of the returnees than the migration experience. As we have already seen the host society experience is not emancipatory and the dress code is certainly not based on modern values. Migration has enabled these women, especially the young, to be more in touch with current trends in styles. Even middle-aged woman migrants start to wear stylish dresses and apply makeup on return, practices that were not common in the pre-migration household. The most popular garment among returnees is the Pakistani-styled *Kurta* (loose long pants and a long sleeved shirt and a shawl) for going out in the day time and a long frock for home wear[1]. The adoption of these styles is in place of the *sari* which is the common dress of women when they go out and a simple frock/short skirt or a piece of cloth and jacket for inside wear if the woman is a typical villager. Some return migrants even start wearing denim trousers but this is seen only among the young women[2]. Another important change of dress is returnees starting to wear a night dress, instead of any loose garment as is common in poor households, in bed. It is not uncommon for these people to wear their night gown even during the day time showing that, though these women tend to adopt new styles, they are no longer in the culture of which the styles and fashions are part. The adoption of new styles however is indicative of the fact that these women are either consciously or unconsciously challenging the existing order and tradition. Furthermore, this change of dress style conflicts with the dress of their husbands, especially the traditional ones in the

village. Husbands continue to wear their traditional dress, a *sarong* (loose cylindrical cloth that is worn on the hip and flows down to the ankles) at home and, if the man is young or from an urban area, long trousers.

Though one reason for the above change is that they can afford to do it, this alone does not fully explain why these women start adopting new styles of dress. Nor is it just a matter of changing tastes. Furthermore, some of these dresses are tight-fitting or expose certain parts of the female body, which is unacceptable to men who hold Victorian values (see McKinney 1996)[3]. The styles adopted by return migrants therefore clash with tradition and are disapproved by those with male dominant values. By changing their dress style the women are not only displaying the change in their tastes and level of affluence, but also defying traditions and norms. It is an attitudinal issue as well here and therefore indicative of changes in values and attitudes. In short the woman who dresses differently is a new woman who has the ability and the need to defy the existing social order and its values.

This upward mobility is also closely associated with something that we discussed earlier. The superior attitude of return migrants also has its roots in their comparatively higher level of education and their 'marrying down', which we discussed earlier. By migrating, they want to fulfil their aspirations not as individuals but as households. For example, 'doing it for the family' gives them a sense of achievement and fulfilment because they achieved what they wanted to do and did something that their husbands could not do themselves. The husbands just 'squander their money' (returnee from ULIS ref. 3.36). They elevate the household as a whole and they themselves have improved but their husbands remain the same old husbands, shabby and unclean. She did not mind it then (pre-migration) or could not do much about it. But now she is a new personality and she can express her displeasure. This itself is part of empowerment, i.e. *empowerment within* (Oxaal and Baden 1977, see also Lukes 2005).

6.3 Social Organisational Changes in the Migration Household: Domestic Regimes and Gendered Power Relations

The power relations in the post-migration household are in a state of flux with new practices, perceptions and norms becoming part of the household

operations. Therefore to understand how gender power is shaped in the post-migration household we need to be able to accommodate the above dynamics i.e. perceptions, practices and also normative structures in the explanation. We argue that the bargaining model (Sen 1991) and its feminist re-conceptualisation (Moore 1994), which bring contextual and ideological factors into the household decision-making process and power operations, provide the basis for such explanation.

6.3.1 The social organisation of the post-migration household

The return of the migrant woman results in changes in the social organisation of the households of the migrant. Returnees, with the exception of the very few who take up alternative income-generating activities, cease to be the principal provider of the household and return to their traditional role of housewife. The wife returning to her traditional role means that those who are substituting for her also revert back to their old tasks and activities, for example, husbands who had been doing the domestic chores do not need to do them any more. The proxy manager who was playing an important role becomes obsolete. Organisationally therefore the post-migration household is similar to the pre-migration household in many respects. But there are differences as well and they are important in understanding the emerging new formation in the post-migration household which is the basis of its gender power relations.

In re-conceptualizing the bargaining model of household Moore (1994: 8) says that socially and historically specific views about the rights, responsibilities and needs of a particular individual are important in defining the nature and outcome of bargaining and negotiations. This is clear recognition of the fact that ideological and contextual variables need to be considered in addition to economic relations to understand domestic power structures. This is used by others (Chhachhi 2004, Agarwal 1997) who, together with Moore (1994), consider domestic regimes as a locus of competing interests, rights, obligations and resources and also socially and historically specific views about the rights, responsibilities and needs of an individual which draw on normative understanding and practices (Chhachhi 2004: 34). The key words here are views, normative understanding and practices which bring in ideology to supplement material resources. We adopt the

concept of domestic regimes to explain the changes in the post-migration household caused by migration because the concept incorporates not only the structural organisation of the household but also ideologies and practices (Agarwal 1997, Moore 1994). There are behavioural and attitudinal changes in both the husband and the migrant woman. In the households of the returned migrant women the wife is more outgoing and active, and tends to take up activities that are traditionally considered male not only on the domestic front but also outside of it. In the case of the husbands, in some households they continue the domestic role they performed while the wife was away and share the housework, thus creating a more equitable household in terms of gender roles. Therefore though the migrant reverts to being a housewife and ceases to be the provider there are other factors that make her a force to be reckoned with. This is what we argue in the following sections.

6.3.2 Changing household tasks and responsibilities

A Time Use Diary was used to study the changes in the domestic roles of the spouses in the households of return migrants. The information from the Time Use Diaries shows that there are some changes in the gender division of labour in post-migration households. There was an increase in the number of husbands sharing work in some of the households. This change is only in certain domestic tasks where men have begun to share some cooking work and starting to wash and iron their own clothes. For example the Time Use Diary revealed that about half of the husbands get up with their wife in the morning. This was not the practice in the pre-migration household, where the husband as a rule used to sleep through till their breakfast was ready. In the pre-migration household the wife was expected to prepare the lunch and have things ready for him to go to work. The only thing the husband had to do in the pre-migration household was to clean and get ready to go to work. The following statement by a husband who was substituting for his wife illustrates not only the routine he had to follow but the acceptance of it.

> When my wife was abroad I used to get up early in the morning around five in the morning. I never did this when she was at home (wife nods in approval). I had to make tea, prepare breakfast and get the children ready for

> school. Then clean the home, wash clothes, fetch water as we did not have pipe water at the time (now they have a house connection) and had to find fuel-wood. There was then the time for cooking lunch. When children came from school I had to feed the small one. Then it is time to do dinner. Add to that I had to do shopping. I have very small time to spend with my friends. I did not have time to go to work. This is the way I spent six years while my wife was abroad …Now that she is here I still get up as usual in the early morning and help my wife to do her work before I go to work. (A migrant's husband, 45, LC, Ref. no. 2.3)

Wives also see this positive development in the household.

> When I came from Abu Dhabi I expected to do the same old things like before, cooking, washing and the like. But it is different now. He is helping me more. Those days he just got up from the bed for tea and then I had to stop everything and make tea. But now he makes his own tea and helps me too in housework, scraping coconut, peeling onion, and all other little things to help me out (Returnee, 47, LC Ref no 2.47)

This above change may be attributed to two causes. The first is that the husbands had to do this routine when the wife was abroad, i.e. get up early in the morning to do the house work and now it has become a habit and part of his daily routine. The statement of the husband from the labour colony shows that housework can become part of the life of a husband of a migrant. The second is that the new power and respect the wife has achieved in the household by being a provider has made them more assertive and self confident. So there is now even pressure from the wife on the husband to cooperate in domestic work. Some women for example wanted their husbands to continue to help them though now they are back as housewives. They further consider it is their right, as the following returnee put it.

> Why should I do every thing myself? I am not the only person who eats. They (meaning her husband) are not here just to eat and sleep. I am also earning. They (again husband) would not have had a chance enjoy the luxury of this TV without my slaving in Saudi. I earn only four years, but look at my house. Everything I bought. He has been working so long but what did he bring? (Laughs) (Returnee, 30, LC, Ref. no. 2.4)

This woman, who is also engaged in a self-employment activity (making string hoppers-noodles like local food eaten mainly as breakfast and supper-

for a nearby eatery), has very strong views about the duties of husbands and wives, namely both are equal because both make a contribution to the household.

The above cooperative behaviour of the husband and gender equality that goes with it are generally found in households where the returned migrant women are comparatively better educated. Many of the returnees who are happy are relatively young and have more understanding husbands. The following is an example from the traditional village.

> When I was in Bahrain my husband did everything himself. My elder daughter came of age when I was abroad. Not like many other fathers he did all the ritual with the help of my mother. He even kept my three children healthy and happy. He used my money very carefully. He used it to finish the house we started building. When I come back there was a house for me to live. You know especially in the village, husbands/fathers think women should be under them. My husband is different and treats me well. He was good before. He is better now (Returnee, 38, TV Ref. no. 1.31).

There are therefore some important changes developing in the post-migration household organisation. The returned migrant is a new woman in many ways. Her attitudes and behaviour have changed and she is more assertive and is mindful about her rights. At the level of relationships there is more equality and cooperation between the spouses in many households. After return the wife may not remain the principal provider but the power and recognition she had remains. The question is whether these changes have resulted in increased involvement of the wife in the decision-making process, which is the direct indicator of overt power. We emphasise overt power here for two reasons. First, the power of the woman in the pre-migration household was covert and manipulatory. Furthermore, that power was exercised under the supervision of the husband. Second, after becoming a domestic worker and principal provider, she acquired the power to control, which she exercised in the transnational household. Therefore to see whether the changes in the power position have a long-term and qualitative impact on return, we need to understand whether the migrant returnee continues to exercise the overt power she acquired. For this it is necessary to examine the decision-making process in the post-migration household.

The domestic/household regime, being the locus of interests, rights, obligations and resources (Chhachhi 2004), represents the sum total of household relations and operations at a given point of time. While agreeing with feminist reformulators of the bargaining model that household processes that are part of the domestic regime help perpetuate domination and engender control (Moore 1994, Agarwal 1997), we claim in this study that it is analytically limiting to hold that domestic regimes engender and perpetuate domination and control in all situations. Domestic regimes also help reduce domination and allow for change in household power relations depending on the situation, the actors involved and the processes in operation. Migration, we argue, is one such situation that brings in new actors and operations to the household. Based on this, we also propose that changes in the post-migration household can be understood as a negotiation process between the existing household gender regimes and the changes the returnee brings. These changes occur in two areas, as we saw earlier. First there are changes in attitudes and behaviour. Second there are changes in the operational basis of the bargaining process (figure 6.1).

6.3.3 The returnee and decision-making in the post-migration household

To understand the changes in the decision-making role of women the researcher collected information on the involvement of women in decision-making in four areas of activity in the household, namely the purchase and sale of assets[4], the purchase of food, the education of children and health matters, and saving and credit management. Of the purchases and sale of assets, fixed assets are an activity that traditionally comes under the authority of men. The buying of food, the education of children and health expenditure are traditionally considered the responsibility of the mother/wife. Though savings and credit are thought traditionally a male activity, the study found that there is increased involvement of the wife in non-traditional decision-making, namely buying fixed assets and acquiring formal credit from lending institutions.

Among returned migrants there are some women who have started their own economic activities, especially self-employment work. These are the enterprising women who, on their return, tend to go into self-employment

with some of their savings. The most popular self-employment activities are preparation of food for parties (commonly referred to as catering) of for local eateries, running a small grocery and money-lending. In these activities they are the decision-makers and men have no say at all. The decisions involving the acquisition of assets (for example, to start a grocery shop you need to either rent or buy premises), finding credit, etc., naturally become part of the return migrants' new portfolio. Even if the returnees do not start their own economic activity and become independent earners on return, which is the normal situation, still they have access to the money they have earned. The decisions involving these funds are also taken by the woman, or by the husband in consultation with the woman. Therefore the increased involvement of returned migrants in household decision-making is both a practical requirement and a result of the new sense of ownership and the sense of right migrants have acquired by being the providers. The statements the women made during the interviews about their new-found wealth and importance are also in line with this increase in their decision-making role. Describing the improvements migration brought to them, the women were almost unanimous in mentioning their increased ability to achieve what they always wanted.

> I am happy that I could do something to help my family. I have built a house and now I have bought a refrigerator, a television, and we never could have done this if I did not go (Returnee, 39, four years abroad, LC, Ref. no 2.12)

> I am happy about my trip. I have my own business and I do not depend on anyone now. I bought all household items from what I earned. I could never have done all these if I did not go (Returnee, 35, four years abroad, TV Ref. no. 1.49)

What is important to note in the above accounts is the reference to self and the conspicuous use of the word 'I' in the discussion. For the woman it is 'I' who did it. This shows that the woman not only considers that she is the one who did it for the family but also wants others to know it. Linked with this is the feeling that was observed during in-depth discussions that women have an increased sense of right to be part of household management in the post-migration household. This is in contrast to the delegated management powers and indirect power through manipulation (covert power) in the pre-migration household.

The above developments mean that there is change in the involvement of wife from the covert role (covert power) that was part of the pre-migration household to that of an overt and controlling role (overt power) and control in the post-migration household in some important areas of activity. This is a qualitative change in the transformation of power relations in the post-migration households. In the households where this development was observed the wife considers management of the household as a right more than a privilege. In the pre-migration situation the wife took part in managing the budget because she was better suited and the husband delegated that role to her either by default or by agreement. There was *no assertive element and control on the part of the wife, which is an essential criterion of overt power*. She was doing what her husband was unable to do but it was still the husband who was in charge. She was only an instrument in helping him to perform his role as provider of the household. It was a situation where she decided *how to do* but not *what to do*. What needs to be done and in what way was already set by established norms that are male biased, but how to make this male-preferred environment function was woman's work in the pre-migration household. She asked the husband and got his consent before doing what was to be done and taking decision to that effect, so everything was subject to male control. Therefore the male had the controlling or overt power and women manipulatory or covert power. What she was doing was not her own and the final decision rested with the man. In the post-migration household the woman is not just an instrument. She does what she does because she wants to do it. She is not constrained by an *I will have to ask my husband mentality* as in the pre-migration household.

6.3.4 The new bargaining process

The above has given rise to changes in the domestic regimes that we conceptualised earlier. Though resource ownership in the post-migration household does not seem much different from that in the pre-migration household, especially with the returned migrant often reverting to her traditional role, there are important changes in practices, rights and many other areas that matter in determining interests, rights, obligations and resource control and management in the household. In these areas, the post-migration household is different from the pre-migration household, giving women a better

position though there is no important shift in control of income, as in the during-migration household. This means that in the post-migration household, though there are indications of a shifting power balance favouring women, they cannot be explained by economic factors alone, namely wage work. The determinants therefore include ideological and contextual variables as well. The situation fits in well with the household operations described by the feminist reformulation of the bargaining model, particularly the cooperative conflict model. However, to explain the above situation one needs to broaden the bargaining perspective further (figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1
Post-migration household and the bargaining process

Determinants of bargaining process	**Factors affecting bargaining power of the returned migrant**
Fall-back options	Perceived opportunities for the woman to go back (transnational dimension)
	Network support she has cultivated – the migration chain (local)
	Alternative income generating economic activities (local)
Perceived interest response	Wife is concerned about family not her personal interests (no change)
Perceived contribution response	Recognition of the past contribution by wife (temporal dimension)
Local entitlement	Attitudes, images, perceptions, practices and norms (context specific)

The above figure shows how the bargaining process has changed in the post-migration household. Power is a bargaining process with interests and resources dynamically linked with contextual factors, but it operates differently. In the post-migration household the fall-back options of the returnee are not limited to the local context, namely employment or other alternative opportunities the wife can claim to strengthen her bargaining position and the network support she has built during migration. She also has the option of going back, which is a transnational opportunity which she can use as a threat. It is not just *I can find another job* but also *I will leave you to look after yourself*. Furthermore, this exit option is often not real (she does not intend

to) or practical (many of the returnees have only a little chance of going back as some of them are now past the age of migration. Nevertheless it is a bargaining chip they use and some women have gone back. The bargaining in the post-migration household has not only given returnees better options but also *has elevated bargaining to the transnational space.*

The other important change in the bargaining process is the temporal dimension. In the traditional bargaining model, the bargaining process takes place in one temporal space, namely, the present. But in the post-migration household, the perceived contribution response, i.e. how valuable one bargaining party is to the other, is also decided by past contribution. The returnee is valued for what she did as a migrant. It was the returnee who provided funds to educate the children, build the house and buy the fridge and TV[5]. She can always use this as a bargaining chip to get her way in family decisions. But this power is not in the present. It is power remaining from the past but still perceived hence important in the present operational context.

The above shows that power dynamics in the post-migration households are linked differently and operate differently. Yet the core process of bargaining remains the same. It is these differential linkages and differential operations that give returnees power. The operations are different because different temporal and social spaces are involved, namely the past and the transnational. The pluri-locality that we discussed previously is in operation here, influencing power dynamics. In addition there is also pluri-temporality bringing different time periods into focus. This shows that the traditional bargaining model needs reformulating not only to include ideologies and contextual factors, which Moore (1994) calls local entitlements, but also different spaces and time periods.

6.4 Social Situations as Negotiated Order: An Overview

No social situation is a set of mechanistic relationships where the behaviour of members is controlled by social rules and regulations. Social relationships are characterised by patterns but patterns are not the results of controls enforced by outside forces in the form of rules, regulations and values that are part of the overall social structure. Much of the social order is negotiated and is built on the meaningful and purposive interactions (Weber 1978) of

individuals who interpret the social situation they are in and exchange shared meanings (Mead 1982). This makes the social order both a product of the actor and their interaction (human agency) and existing structural constraints that provide the outer limits. The social order in this sense can be viewed as one that is constantly being negotiated and emerging. This view was first brought into social analysis by Weber (1978) in his examination of the meaning of action and was later taken up by behaviourists through phenomenology. The redefinition and restructuring of gender relations in the migrant household can be viewed as a negotiated social order as it involves the above-mentioned elements. But our conceptualisation of the negotiated order is broader than the one Weber (1978) presented in relation to the meaning of social action. It is closer to the one proposed by Mead (1982), but remains broader. It also has some similarity to strategy-based negotiations in the bargaining model.

Following Strauss (1978: 5-6) we define negotiated order to mean the sum total of the rules and policies, along with whatever agreements, understandings, pacts, contracts, and other working arrangements prevail in a given social organisational situation. Furthermore, the negotiated order is the consequence of give-and-take interaction within settings predefined by broader, and usually more formal, rules, norms, laws, or expectations, in order to secure the preferred ends of the structure/organisation as a whole, not individual ends, as in the case of negotiations in bargaining situations. This definition does not eliminate the shared meaning component of the original conceptualisation but only broadens the concept by bringing in structures and patterns. Though viewing social organisation as negotiated order has been criticised for resulting in inadequate attention being given to issues of power and politics (Day and Day 1977) or social structure, others (Strauss 1978) argue that the perspective is not inappropriate for clarifying, if not fully addressing, such issues. Negotiated social order, defined as shared meanings and an adjusting process leading towards structuring/structuration, can be seen at all stages of migration, but is more common in during-migration and post-migration households.

In established social organisations the space for negotiation is limited because the majority of social dealings are predetermined by traditions, rules and regulations. But when changes occur or are introduced into a social

situation the space becomes open, allowing for and even requiring negotiation to accommodate the new elements and adjust to them. The migration of women introduces such changes to post-migration households. They are mainly of two types. The first is that the woman acquires a new identity. Not only are her attitudes and behaviour different but, as a major contributor to the household, she also has a new sense of rights and more claims as a member. She and the others are aware to the fact that the household is what it has become because of her. The second change is in the operations of the household caused by her being a migrant and the provider and by her long-term absence. These have resulted in changes in the attitudes, norms and operations of the household.

6.4.1 The negotiation of domestic regimes and the building of a new order in the post-migration household

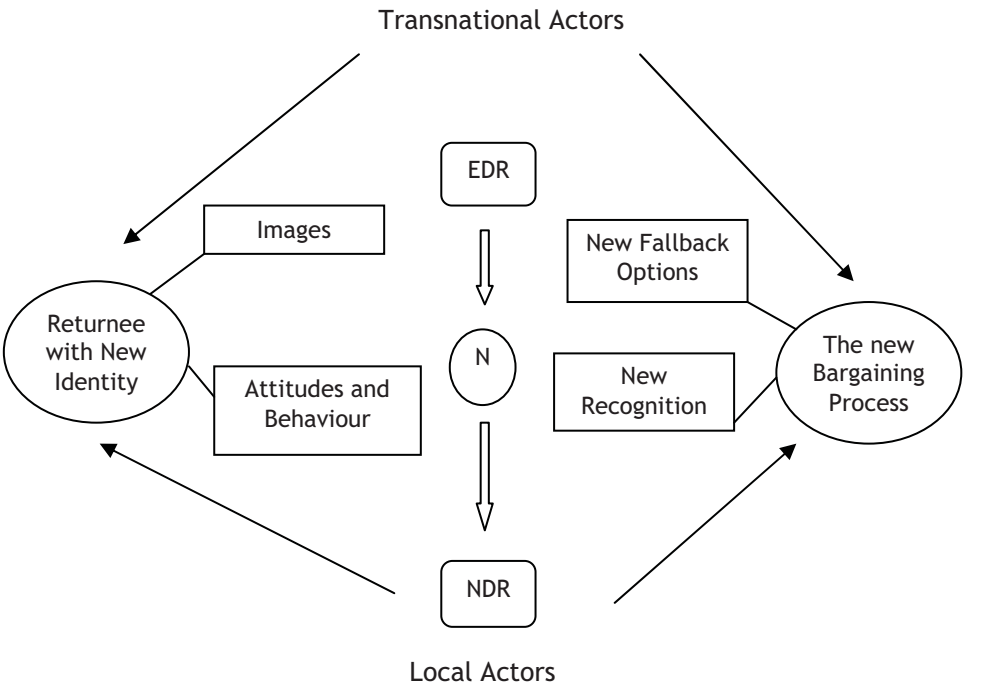
From an analytical point of view, the household is an organised set of relationships, processes and operational strategies in which different types of relationships, including those of gender, are organised into an interacting system. Viewed in this way domestic regimes (Moore 1994) are the manifest operational form of the household in a given context. There are context-specific processes determined/shaped by the norms, ideologies, practices and operations that define a particular domestic regime. In the post-migration households in the study area these processes have been affected by the reintegration process of returnees. There are two significant changes that have become part of the reintegration process. The first is the changes in the image and identity of the wife as a result of what she has acquired as a migrant. The second is the changes in the household bargaining process. Both we have discussed in detail previously. In this section we shall try to relate them to the negotiation process in the formation of a new domestic regime in the post-migration household.

In the post-migration household, the woman again loses her role as principal provider which she enjoyed in the during-migration household. She therefore no longer has the same control over the household budget. But neither does she become the same hapless housewife she once was. She may not have the ownership and control of resources, but there are other elements in her membership of the household organisation that make her a

different person and a force to be reckoned with. These are the elements of her new identity we have discussed previously and her new bargaining value in the redefined bargaining process (figure 6.1). There are new meanings and values attached to the woman for being a former migrant, especially having been the provider. The reintegration process in the post-migration household has therefore resulted in the creation of new processes and operational strategies in the household organisation to accommodate them and adjust to them. These are indicative of an emerging new *female-focused order* in the household built around the migrant woman to accommodate her newly acquired role of provider (mainly during migration) and to reflect her new-found authority, more specifically her new identity (post-migration). The challenge for the migrant is to work around the established order, with its own structures, rules, policies and operational strategies, avoiding potential conflict situations. The challenge for the household is to be flexible enough to accommodate the new woman so that the normal operations in the household are not disrupted. The adjustments that are made to household operations in the post-migration reintegration process need to be seen in this context. The post-migration household experiences this as a negotiation process in which the returnee and the others, especially the husband/householder, are trying to understand each others' needs and positions and those of the organisation, i.e. the household. In the process other actors who are part of transnational migration also become involved (diagram 6.1).

Diagram 6.1 shows the main actors and process in the post-migration household negotiation leading to a new household regime. On the part of the returnee there are two developments that are part of her new identity. They are the creation of transnational migration and the interpretation of transnational migration relations in the local context. They have a potential for conflict as they do not agree with norms, values and practices of the existing domestic regime. In terms of household bargaining, the bargaining process is redefined (figure 6.1), with the fall-back options and contributory response having been modified and given new meaning by transnational migration. The woman has power not because she controls resources but because she *used to*. The potential conflicts that could arise in this situation are managed by negotiations and this gives rise to a new domestic order.

Diagram 6.1
Negotiating a new domestic regime



EDR = existing domestic regime
NDR = new domestic regime
N = Negotiation

6.4.2 Change in gender relations and the emerging order

The discussion has revealed that *some* post-migration households are transformed due to migration, namely as part of the reintegration process of the returnees. There is an emergence of a new domestic regime with a focus on women. This new order is not based on the direct ownership and control of resources but on operational equality which comes from redefined norms, process and practices. For example, there is a better understanding between spouses and better task-sharing in many of these households. This means

that there is an emerging situation of gender equality in attitudes and practices. A number of important household processes are also reformulated, including the bargaining process, which is complete redefined, moving away from resource ownership to contribution. The woman in these households has a say in decision-making because of her earlier contribution, which made the household what it is today. That is recognised and given value.

The changes in gender relations in the household therefore can be seen as a change in the form and operation of the household system. There are two main advantages to conceptualizing the household as a system to understand the impact of migration on gender relations and empowerment of women. First, it helps us to bring in contextual factors in to the explanation. The systemic model has culture, resources and activities/strategies as three major components. Thus it enables us to combine different explanatory paradigms: the feminine one that emphasises culture (Moore 1994) and contextual variables (Chhachhi 2004), and the resource-based cooperative conflict (Sen 1991) and bargaining model (Muthoo 2000). Second, it also enables us to incorporate the strategic dimension of power into the explanation of empowerment. We saw earlier that power is sometimes reflected in the strategies women/wives employ in the domestic context, though they do not have direct access to power positions as resource owners. This aspect of power, as manifested in the decision-making role of women in pre-migration budget management, could be described as a qualitative form of power. The increase in power in the empowerment process therefore, as previously argued, cannot be understood quantitatively as *how much* but also in *what way*.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

The gender relations of the migrant household have changed in two important ways. First there is a significant change in the way they are organised. This includes role substitution and changes in the gender division of activities, leading to the emergence of an active wife who increasingly enters public space and a cooperative husband who accepts that the private space of the household is also his responsibility. Second, migrant women have increasingly become decision-makers in non-traditional decision-making in the household. These developments have reformulated/transformed the household system. The changes in gender relations in the household therefore can

be seen as a change in the form and operations of a system, i.e. the household system. Form is closely connected to the operations as it is the negotiation process in operations that constructs the order/form. The women now challenge the system, whereas in the pre-migration household they worked with it.

The increased power position of women in migrant households is part of a negotiated order where the new woman as achieved new status. The changing power relations in the migrant household are therefore not just quantitative increases in the form of controls and submission. It is part of a process of order negotiation in which women establish their power position through strategic operations within the existing male dominant system.

There are two main advantages to conceptualizing operations in the household as negotiation and the household as a negotiated order. The first is that viewing the household as a negotiated order enables us to incorporate the strategic dimension of power into our explanation of empowerment at household level. Second, it enables us to view power as a process and a dynamic phenomenon rather than a structured entity operating outside of individual action and controlling it. Power is something that is a result of action as well as the cause.

Women's empowerment as negotiated order-building raises an important question with regard to power in general and empowerment of women in particular. In the contemporary discourse on power and the empowerment of women the focus is on a quantitative increase in power. There is also the view that power and empowerment can be explained as a causal relationship where resources (sometimes qualified by ideological factors) lead to power. In this view the relationship is causal and linear. Studies look at only on the improved/enhanced ability of the woman get things done, her increased ability to impose her will. But our study has shown that the change in power is more than that and that there is a qualitative element to this change associated with the strategies people employ to impose their will in any given situation. It has also shown that there is dynamic order-building and a definition of power behaviour/structures in household power relations. Therefore empowerment is not a question of *how much?* but also *in what way?* It is the interactive relationship between these two dimensions of power that is

important in understanding changing power relations in the migrant household.

Notes

[1] This long frock which is tight on the hips and reaches to the ankles is the trademark dress of housemaids who have returned from their overseas contracts. Because of the popularity of this particular item of dress among this group of people it is commonly called the *Dubai skirt.*

[2] This is not to argue that these dress styles are not part of Sri Lankan society. The argument is that these styles were not part of social groups and age groups that these women belong to. For example, middle-aged women from poor households do not wear long trousers but return migrants often do.

[3] The infusion of Western values in Sri Lankan Buddhist society among the Westernised middle class was first discussed by Gananath Obeyesekere (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988) who coined the term Protestant Buddhism. Today this phenomenon is not limited to the middle class.

[4] Assets for the purpose of this analysis includes not only fixed assets but valuable household items like a TV and fridge that are common household consumer goods that migrants buy with their earnings

[5] There is a good analogy here in the dowry system. In Sri Lanka a dowry is the assets the bride brings with her. The assets she brings are often in her name, for example, if it is money, it is a bank account in her name. It is often argued that a dowry increases the position of woman in the family and the woman who comes with a dowry has more say in the household affairs. She is an asset. She can always use it as a bargaining chip and she often does.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study examined gender dynamics in the migration process with a focus on Sri Lankan domestic workers who have returned from the Middle East. It traced the affects of gender as a construct in government policy, social organisations of migration and the management of household relations. Particular attention is given to the transformation of gender identity through the migration experience and how this in turn can have an impact on gendered power relations in the household. Though household gender relations are the focus of this study they cannot be understood in isolation or within the boundaries of the household since the household is only one component/ unit of a larger system of relationships. Many linkages connect the household with its external systemic environment and extra-household forces operate on each other as well as on the household, and their influence on the household is important in understanding household operations. Thus there is an interlinked and interdependent relationship among these different actors. In this chapter we present the findings of the study in the context of this systemic interdependence.

The households the migrant women belong to during the entire process of migration can be classified into three types. The first is the pre-migration household where the migration decision is taken. This is theoretically characterised by traditional gender relationships. Once the migration has taken place the migrant is physically removed from the household but socially still a part of it. This is the transnational household where the migrant has a long distance yet very important connection through transnational linkages. The third is the household of the returned migrants. We discuss the changes in these three types of household due to migration in the following three areas:

the migration support system, the organisation of household tasks and relationships, and the household power structure. The findings and conclusions on these aspects are presented in this chapter in relation to the three types of household: pre-migration, post-migration and during-migration.

7.2 Extra-household Forces and Actors

Many actors play a central role in the migration process of domestic workers in the study area. Among them the state, the non-governmental sector, the media and the community, especially kinship and other social networks, are the major players. The state, which has a dual role as promoter and controller/regulator, became a major player in the mid-1980s. The role of the state has a very strong gender focus, as seen from the policies it has adopted and the services it provides. The non-governmental sector, whose main concern is the rights of migrants, again is concerned mainly with the women workers. The media, which is the main source of public response to the phenomenon and thus responsible for creating and manipulating the public image of the migrant, also focus heavily on women. Community actors, particularly kinship networks, play a role in the process by being both facilitators, and in the household context, even determinants of migration.

7.2.1 Perceptions of women migrants in the public sphere

There are many stereotypical views about the migration of women contract workers from Sri Lanka. Some of these views are part of the conceptions created by global level discourse that sees women migrants as an inevitable consequence of Globalisation and victims of exploitation associated with increasing global poverty. These views permeate down to local level and become established in local contexts, mainly through academic discourse, political debate and media projections. However, many of these views are local constructions (even the global conceptions are reinterpreted at the local level), created and promoted by various actors at national, community and household levels. These views shape the public conception of migrants and create social images that provide the basis of social categories. These, in addition to resources and other material possessions, are essential aspects of social groups that determine status, power and position.

The public images of these women migrants are built on two foundations, namely, the contribution they make to the economy and their migration experience as understood and interpreted by the social forces and actors associated with them and the migration process. The stereotypical images thus created are both negative and positive, resulting in an ambivalent attitude towards these women migrants among the public. From a purely utilitarian point of view the migrants are an asset to different actors. The government considers them a valuable commodity for its survival, while for the community and the household they are valuable for the benefits they bring. Therefore the public image of a national asset is part of the view of migrants in general. At the same time there are also images of the migrants as victims and bad attributes such as immorality are associated with the group. The implications of this phenomenon for women migrants are important to understand the impact of migration on women in general and migrant women in particular.

7.2.2 Social networks, migration and community relations

Though the decision to migrate is largely a household one and the impact is immediately felt in the household, the migration process is closely dependent on the immediate environment, i.e. the community. The migration process in the communities studied is closely associated with social networks based on kinship, extended family and neighbourhood groups. They play a broader role than the conventional one of being facilitator, i.e. assisting in finding employment opportunities, providing funds and helping with the post-migration settlement process. In the study area, these social networks play an important role in the operations of the during-migration (transnational) household. They are part of the essential support system that provides services such as minding the household's affairs during the absence of the migrant, for example providing personnel for important domestic chores. It is not an exaggeration to say that, without the social network support, the during-migration household would not function. In this sense social network support is not just a facilitator of migration but a major determinant in the area. Without the during-migration support provided by social networks many of those who have migrated would not have actually done so even if they had the opportunity and funds.

The link between social networks and the migration process in the study areas has an important gender dimension. The flow of services along these networks is not only gender-defined but also has a strong gender bias. Part of this gender bias can be explained by purely practical reasons. For example the creation of predominantly female migration networks is a natural outcome of the fact that the women migrants obtain information and access to similar opportunities in the destination country. Similarly, because of the nature of the services required in the during-migration households, the majority of those who provide them are women from the social networks. Yet the fact that the proxy manager, who is an essential actor in the household during migration, is predominantly a female shows that practicality is not the only basis for the female bias in migration chains and network support systems.

The kinship basis of the network support system also needs to be seen as extending beyond kinship and other similar emotional bonds. Though the support of the kin group is part of kinship obligations there is also strong element of reciprocity. Everyone expects something in return and therefore there is an instrumental aspect in the network support system. There is also a strong gender dimension to the formation of support system. Generally it consists of the wife's family members and, even when this is not the case, the support network is dominated by females. The chain of support flows from the migrant to her family members first and secondly to women.

7.3 The Organisation of Household Gender and Power Relationships

The three types of households identified by the study in the three communities (pre-migration, during-migration and post-migration households) differ from each other in their organisational and operational forms and in the way in which they are connected with the migration process. We also saw that these differences are the results of migration-led changes. The changes in gender-based power relations in the three communities can therefore be viewed as a process of social transformation that results one form of household emerging from the other in a sequential order, starting with the pre-migration household. The impact of migration is seen only in the latter two households as they are created by the process of migration. Between these

two types of households there is one important organisational difference that enables us to analytically separate the two. In the during-migration household the migrant is not physically present, while in the post-migration she is. The absence of the migrant from the during-migration household does not mean that she is not part of the operations of the household. The households can be conceptualised as transnational because the migrant plays an active part in these operations through transnational links.

The defining feature of the transnational household is the linkages that connect it with the migrant. This connection principally takes place using modern communication technologies, which enable the migrant women to be an effective operational partner in the household. The participation of the woman is legitimised by the fact that she has become the principal provider. In spite of transnational connections enabling her participation, her physical absence still imposes certain constraints on her legitimate role as the decision-maker, allowing the husband to continue in the role of leader of many households. Some households have however found an alternative that favours the migrant woman. An intermediary represents the migrant woman, helps manage the money she sends home and keeps an eye on the affairs of the household in general. This intermediary, when present, bypasses the husband in the management of much of the household affairs, especially his control of the wife's money. That reduces the role of the husband in the transnational household and increases the control of the migrant woman.

The post-migration household has a different organisational form. The migrant returns and in most cases becomes unemployed, making her the housewife again. This also means that she ceases to be the provider. Even if she does retain her provider role, as happens in some cases where the return migrant starts an economic activity, she is often not the principal provider. In the households the returnees the income of even economically active women is often less than what the husband earns if he is economically active. Other changes caused by migration remain, however. The returned woman was found to be more assertive, as reflected by her behaviour and attitudes. She has acquired a sense of self worth and often demands recognition for her past contribution. Therefore in the post-migration household the woman does not go back to what she was. She is a new woman with a

new identity. This makes the gender and power relations in the post-migration household different from both the pre-migration and the during-migration household.

7.3.1 The household power structure and empowerment of women

The literature on empowerment discusses a range of situations from lack of power or powerlessness, the ability to stand up for ones rights (challenging the order of things), participation in decisions and the ability to impose one's will on others. These different manifestations/facets of empowerment relate to different dimensions of power, namely overt power, covert power and latent power (see Lukes 2005). Viewed in this way empowerment is the dynamic aspect of power or emerging power. It therefore needs to be understood as a process towards power in its different manifestations, not only as acquiring the power to control, which is the traditional conceptualisation of power. In the different migrant households, power operates in these different manifestations, and empowerment consequently also takes different forms.

In the pre-migration household, the organisation of gender relations and the power structure associated with it places the woman, even if she is economically active, in the position of housewife because that is considered her primary role in the household. Her access to resources is limited, both in terms of ownership and control. This theoretically means reduced power because few resources mean little bargaining power. But the study found that lack of access to and control of resources for women does not necessarily mean that they are powerless. There are several other variables like age, skills and personality that intervene and provide women with power in the household. More importantly, the view of power as ability to control, which is based on the traditional one-dimensional explanation of power, was found to be inadequate to understand the complex manifestations of power in pre-migration households. Even in situations where women did not own resources, they take part in decisions and play a decisive role in the management of the household. They cannot, however, impose their will or get it accepted. The final result is the same, but it is reached from two different directions.

Migration changes the household to a during-migration household, in which the woman is the principal provider. That gives her more ability to control and impose her will, though she still has to operate within constraints imposed by traditions, practices, values and beliefs and most importantly constraints imposed by spatial distance, i.e. she is physically away from home. The power she has acquired in this situation, which is closer to direct power as it gives her ability to control, is not a direct transformation of her old position of power. It is not a change from being powerless (lack of power) to being powerful. She has acquired power in a different plane. The power she has in the during-migration household is not a quantitative increase of power but a qualitative change.

In the post-migration household too the change in the woman's power position is complex. On return, the woman becomes a housewife again and often becomes economically inactive. In the traditional conceptualisation of power this means she loses the power she enjoyed in the during-migration household. But the study showed that this does not result in the woman reverting to the same woman she was in the pre-migration household, where she had only manipulatory power. Instead she retains some traits of her new power she had exercised in the during-migration household. The study showed that the women in post-migration households have changed in terms of their behaviour, attitudes and practices. They are on the whole are more assertive in their ways and are ready to question tradition. This is indicative of a situation of empowerment often described as power within (Oxaal and Baden 1977) and is qualitatively different from the two previous forms of empowerment.

The newly gained power of women (empowerment) also has another dimension which is network-related and has a gender base. We discussed the fact that network support is an integral part of pre-migration support relationships. Networks provide financial and moral support. But the support network is not just a kinship network based on moral and other sociocultural obligations. There is a service relationship. There is a patron – the migrant who is in a position to support – and a client who expects some support during migration period. Members of the kin group are the clients. In the pre-migration phase, it was the other way around. Then the migrant was a client. So there is a strong business-type monetary/service value-based

relationship. The network is therefore an investment. It is part of the social capital of the migrant has built by further strengthening the kinship bond. The existence of a large kinship support network means that there is a group of supporters she can mobilise in the event of, for example, a crisis in the family where her position is threatened. This support is always forthcoming as the members of the support structures received support from her when she was a migrant.

7.3.2 Negotiating a new order in the household

Migration disrupts the existing order of things in the household and this disruption is more pronounced when the migrant is the wife and becomes the principal provider. The household economic base is transformed and operational strategies founded on the traditional order have to be redefined. In addition, the social organisation of household relationships, tasks and activities change. New positions are created and old positions and roles are redefined and restructured. These changes are accompanied by changes in behaviour, attitudes etc., resulting in changes in the personalities and identities of individuals, especially the migrant herself. All these changes have an impact on the organisation of power relations in the household in general. They affect the existing hierarchies, the evaluation of social positions and the tasks associated with them. This, in turn, leads to changes in gendered power in the household. But, as the study showed, there is no simple cause and effect relationship between these changes and power relations in the household. The changes brought about by migration are manifested differently in different household contexts and even within the same type of household. That variability is caused by contextual forces in different households and the way different households react to them. This differential reaction can be explained as a negotiation process through which the households confront the challenges posed by a changing situation that does not conform to the existing rules, ideologies, values and practices that reinforce the existing household order.

This is clearly a process of adjustment which requires understanding of the new situation and the formulation of new rules and practices. In transnational migrant households, for example, there is a new provider who is a woman. This goes against the core values of the traditional household,

where the provider is traditionally a male. That therefore calls for a redefinition of the image of woman, what she is and how much power she has. Transnational households also often have a new actor, the proxy manager. This is not only alien to a normal household but also a direct threat to its solidarity, as the proxy is often a not a member of the household. This again requires re-evaluations and redefinitions and agreements. What therefore happens in these situations is that the members of the household constantly have to adjust their practices and operations and devise new strategies to achieve an optimum balance of behaviour, so as to avoid conflicts and disruptions to the household affairs. When these adjustments are made in favour of the woman, a woman-focused household order is achieved. This is what appears to be happening in the households of migrant women, especially in the during-migration period.

By concentrating on the woman-focused household, this study distinguishes itself from another otherwise similar piece of research by Gamburd (2002). Gamburd's work is a social anthropological study of migrant domestic workers from Sri Lanka in the Middle East and aims to demonstrate the impact of Globalisation dynamics on local structures, particularly at village level. She also focuses on women's work and changing gender roles and power relations, but the context in which the changes take place and the impact are different. Gamburd places the changes in the village organisational setting and seeks to understand the link between the changing identity/image of women in that context. She therefore attempts to understand the village through the process (see Gamburd 2002: 232). This study situates the changes in the household and examines the emergence of a woman-focused household, i.e., of new gender regimes in the household.

7.4 Theoretical Implications

Power is traditionally considered a behaviour-associated phenomenon only, namely in terms of a one-dimensional approach that focuses on controlling power. In the bargaining model, where power is the focus of household power relationships, power is seen as part of a triangular relationship that connects it to decision-making and resources. It also sees power as control. Resources are seen as the foundation of decision-making and that in turn is taken as an indicator of power. One's involvement in decision-making, i.e.

controlling, is taken as the indicator of power in this traditional conceptualisation of power. This study demonstrated that, to understand dynamics of power relations in migrant households, we need to go beyond this limited conceptualisation and view power as multi-dimensional. Power must be seen not only as the ability to control but also as having a covert manipulatory dimension and a latent (hidden) dimension.

When power is conceptualised in one-dimensional terms, i.e. only as control, it does not allow us to understand the variations and nuances of power changes brought about by migration. Pre-migration women are by no means powerless; they do not possess control, which is only one manifestation of power. As we have seen, they have power to manipulate. What happens in the during-migration period is therefore not a straight change from *powerless* to *powerful* but a change in the quality of power, from *manipulatory* to *control* power. When migrants return home and become unemployed, they do not lose power because they are no longer the sole/principal provider, their power changes from control *assertive power (power within).* The power change brought about by migration cannot therefore be seen as only quantitative.

The study showed that there are other weaknesses in the contemporary explanation of power relations based on a one-dimensional view of power. Furthermore, it showed that the linkages between power, resource access and decision-making are not as straightforward as the above argument claims. In the pre-migration households in the study area women played an active role in the management of the household budget. According to current views of household power relations, this involvement is an indicator of power, because it entails participation in decision-making. But in the households in the study area, a decision-making role in budget-related activities is not indicative of any controlling power on the part of the women. The decision-making was a result of delegation of that role and was only *manipulatory power*. Furthermore, when power is consider in broad terms, to include both *covert* and *latent power*, the assumption that resource control (ownership and access) is the basis of power does not hold valid in the pre-migration household. The decision-making role of the wife in the budget management was not a result of the woman having access to resources. The wife

either acquired that role by default or it was delegated to her voluntarily by the husband.

This complex relationship is found in post-migration and during-migration households. Though controlling power, decision-making and resources are more directly and closely connected in the during-migration and post-migration contexts, contextual factors still intervene. In the during-migration household, the migrant had access to resources and was therefore the provider. That effectively gave her power, but again there were other ideological and contextual factors preventing her from becoming fully in control. But what is more important is the situation of the woman in the post-migration household. In the majority of households, she again becomes a housewife, limiting her access to resources. She does, however, retain some of the power she enjoyed as a migrant and provider in the during-migration household, and hence remains empowered. In spite of having limited or no access at all to resources, she retains her assertive personality and challenging behaviour. Added to this is the network-based power she has acquired during migration that supports her newly empowered position. These aspects of power cannot be understood by resource ownership or explained as structural relations/ structural positions.

What transpired from the study is that the present discourse of power relations is inadequate to explain all different the expressions and exercises of power in different situations in real life. In the contemporary discourse of power, the concept is defined only as the ability to control, i.e. impose one's will on others in the Weberian sense (Weber 1978) and as a property one acquires or possesses. It becomes part of the individual for various reasons, the most important of which being access to resources. The contextuality of power is not considered as important, except by some feminist scholars. There is another inbuilt weakness in this conceptualisation, namely that it considers power as something that needs to be understood in quantitative terms. This view imposes further limitations, as it prevents the consideration of power as a process in which people use strategies in practice to achieve power.

The above view is questioned by the findings of this study. The study showed that people not only acquire power but also exercise it, and in doing so, they employ contextually specific strategies, such as proxy-based house-

hold management in the during-migration household. Therefore the question is not only how much acquired power one has but also how much of that power is actually exercised and by employing what strategy. So change in power needs to be explained not only in terms of quantitative changes but also as changes in operational factors, i.e. the exercise of power in given contexts through strategic operations, as the wife in the during-migration household does. This makes a change of power, i.e. empowerment, not only a question of *how much* but also a question of *in what way*. This is where it becomes necessary to understand operations, and that requires moving beyond the confines of the present quantitative and structural analysis of power.

The importance of personality and behavioural aspects in the power structure of migrant household is another major theoretical implication of the study. In addition to the above argument about the importance of how power is exercised, this offers further evidence that migration-led changes are not fully explained by a structuralist analysis focusing on resource ownership and access. One's location in a resource structure is not an index of power. Only a human agency aspect can account for such variables as assertiveness and other personality and behavioural aspects, and how different strategies are applied to suit the context. This study presented a systems approach to explain power relations in the household to illustrate the importance of this aspect of power, i.e. human agency and its constant interaction with structure. This approach combines actions and structures and helps us to escape the structural bias of some explanations and the weaknesses caused by keeping the two separate as independent variables. This is possible because a systems approach enables all the different actors and variables to be brought together into one single explanatory paradigm of interaction. The researcher believes that this makes it possible to view all the different causes of power as making equal contributions to power relations and not as *other* variables.

Those who study migration and transnational linkages focus mainly on extra household organisations such as the national level (Esman 1986) or the community (Vertovec 2002). Studies of household bargaining process though have occasionally looked into the role of extra household actors (Agarwal 1997) the focus of these studies is not on transnational links that

are specific to migrant workers and how they connect with the household bargaining process. This study examines the relevance of transnational actors and space in household bargaining operations in relation to two contexts. The first is the during migration context when the migrant woman becomes the provider thus requiring her to play a major role in the household decision making process. The second is the post migration period when transnational links become a exist option for the migrant.

7.5 Policy Implications

The findings of this study also have a number of policy implications. Policy development and dialogue focus on decision-making ability as an indicator of power and, when devising ways to improve participatory decision-making ability of the powerless, do not recognise that manipulatory ability is also a form of power. Power controls and commands and the empowered must therefore be in control of their destiny. As a result, the present discourse of empowerment, as promoted by development practitioners, focuses on access to resources giving the empowered control they did not formerly possess. Though this study does not dispute that this is an important part of empowerment, it has also shown that it is not the only aspect. The lesson that development practice can learn from the study is that efforts to enhance empowerment action should also consider hidden/covert power.

Another area of importance for policy development in migration was also highlighted in the study in the discussion of the role of kinship networks. Policies aimed at supporting migration in the Sri Lankan context, especially those affecting women migrants, have thus far focused on creating formal structures to support migrants. No attempt has been made to use existing support structures, such as kinship, in developing new policies. The study demonstrated that support structures based on kinship are important in the migration process, providing assistance in meeting migration-led domestic needs, extending from care-giving and emotional support to satisfying more instrumental needs, for example by providing financial support. Improving these support systems and building their capacities may be an alternative and a more effective way of supporting migrants and the migration process.

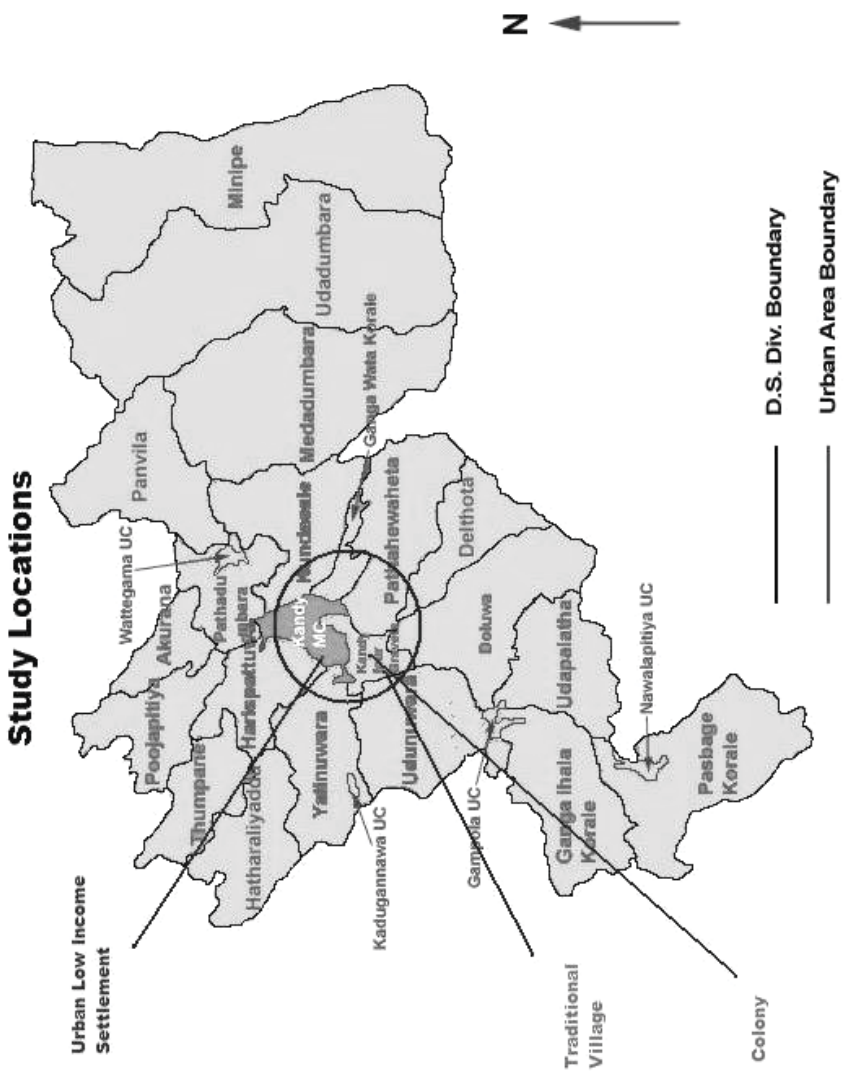
7.6 Future Research

The issues highlighted and the questions raised in this study are somewhat controversial and do not subscribe to some currently held views of power and empowerment. By doing that we hope only to take the dialogue forward, and not to claim that the thesis offers answers to migration-related problems. The findings are also context-specific. Further research is required both to address the issues and questions raised in this study and to improve its wider validity. Although the study raised many questions and suggested answers, the value of the findings and conclusions are limited by its regional (local) focus. The wider local context (Sri Lanka) is also to some extent not representative of women in South Asia. This, combined with the fact that the Middle East is one of the most tightly controlled and male-dominated societies in the world may have resulted in certain special situations and development. The migration of women to Europe for the same type of work, for example, may have had a more liberating impact on the migrants. It is therefore necessary to replicate this study to understand the main power-related issues it raises.

Appendices for Research Methodology

APPENDIX 1: Study district – Kandy in Sri Lanka

APPENDIX 2: Research Area – Locations of three communities in Kandy



APPENDIX 3: Sample of the Household Survey and Individual Case Studies – Demographics of the Respondents

(To preserve the anonymity of the respondents, names are not used as reference)

Respondents who were interviewed for individual case studies are marked with an * and respondents who filled in the Time Use Diary are marked with a + mark

Table i: Traditional village

Sample Reference	Age (yrs)	Civil Status	Ethnicity	Religion	No. of trips & period	No. of children	Present Job	Head of household occupation*
1.1*+	54	Married	Sinhalese	Buddhist	3 - 6	2	-	**Mason** -+
1.2	50	Do	Do	Do	1-1 1/2	4	House maid	Carpenter
1.3	55	Do	Do	Do	1 - 1	5	-	Labourer
1.4	38	Do	Do	Do	3 - 5	3	-	Self-employed
1.5	48	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	5	-	Mason
1.6	36	Do	Do	Do	2 - 4	4		Labourer
1.7*+	30	Do	Do	Do	3 - 5	3	-	Unemployed *+
1.8*	43	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	2		Labourer*
1.9	46	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	4	-	Farmer
1.10	30	Do	Do	Do	1 -1	5	-	Labourer
1.11	42	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	1	-	Watcher
1.12	29	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	2	-	Waiter
1.13	44	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	3	-	Driver
1.14*+	30	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	4	-	Business*+
1.15	30	Do	Do	Do	1-1 1/2	3	-	Self
1.16	34	Do	Do	Do	3 - 5	2	-	**Driver**
1.17	33	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	2	-	Carpenter
1.18*	43	Do	Do	Do	4 - 7	4	-	Self-employed*
1.19	45	Do	Do	Do	2 - 3	5	-	Labourer
1.20	42	Do	Do	Do	1 - 1	3	-	Merchant
1.21	33	Do	Do	Do	3 - 5	2	-	Labourer
1.22	25	Unmarried	Do	Do	1 - 1	-	-	Labour-farther-[Labourer-Father]
1.23	24	Married	Do	Do	1 - 2	2	-	Labourer

Sample Reference	Age (yrs)	Civil Status	Ethnicity	Religion	No. of trips & period	No. of children	Present Job	Head of household occupation*
1.24*	38	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	3	Labourer	Painter *
1.25	38	Do	Do	Do	1 - 1	3	-	Casual
1.26*+	39	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	5	House Maid	Self-employed*+
1.27	40	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	3	-	Merchant
1.28	41	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	2	-	Labourer
1.29*	41	Do	Do	Do	2 - 5	3	-	Self-employed*
1.30	35	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	3	-	Labourer
1.31	38	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	3	-	Tailor
1.32	51	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	4	-	Labourer
1.33*	43	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	4	-	Labourer*
1.34	42	Do	Do	Do	1 - 1	3	-	Casual
1.35	30	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	2	-	Unemployed
1.36	30	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	2	-	Mason
1.37	33	Do	Do	Do	4 - 9	4	-	Business
1.38	35	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	3	self	Labourer
1.39	36	Do	Do	Do	3 - 5	2	--	Self-employed
1.40	50	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	4	-	Labourer
1.41	52	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	3	-	Conductor
1.42*+	42	Do	Do	Do	1 -3	2	-	Labourer*+
1.43	43	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	2	-	**Plumber**
1.44	45	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	3	-	Merchant
1.45	46	Do	Do	Do	1 -1	4	Labourer	Labourer
1.46	47	Do	Do	Do	2 -4	2	-	Unemployed
1.47	45	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	2	-	Unemployed
1.48	37	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	3	-	Self-employed
1.49	35	Do	Do	Do	2 -4	2	Business	Labourer
1.50	30	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	3	-	*Kankani*

Bold – Permanent employees at University

Others are casual workers employed in the private sector or self-employed (not permanent/government employers)

Respondents in household case studies

N.B. The participants in the household case studies are not always the members who live in the household now. The main focus is on the persons who contributed to the migration process.

In addition to these main participants, many members of the family, especially relations, have participated and their views are also included in the text.

Respondent Ref. No	Sample Ref. No	Relationship to returnee	Sex	Age	Occupation	Marital status	Contribution to Migrant
1A	1.2	Husband	M	42	Carpenter	Married	Looking after family
1B	1.22	Father	M	58	Labour	Married	Remittance management
1C	1.12	brother	M	35	Mason	married	Financial support - Pre-migration
1D	1.36	Mother	F	60	Unemployed	Widow	Looking after children
1E	1.48	Daughter	F	16	Schooling	-	Overall family work
1F	1.38	Sister	F	30	Unemployed	Married	Remittance management
1G	1.48	Sister-in-law	F	25	-Do-	Single	Remittance management & look after family
1H	1.43	Mother	F	58	-Do-	Married	Looking after family
1J	1.27	Sister	F	33	-Do-	Single	Remittance management & looking after family

Table ii: Labour colony

Sample Reference	Age (yrs)	Civil Status	Ethnicity	Religion	No. of trips & period	No. of children	Present Job	Head of household Occupation
2.1	49	Married	Sinhalese	Buddhist	5 -10 yrs	1	-	Self-employed
2.2*	54	Do	Do	Do	2- 4	4		Painter*
2.3*+	45	Do	Do	Do	3 - 6	4	-	Self-employed*+
2.4	38	Do	Do	Do	2- 4	3	Self-employed	Driver
2.5	49	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	4	-	Labourer
2.6	39	Do	Do	Do	3 -5	4	-	Labourer
2.7*+	34	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	3	-	Labourer*+
2.8	49	Do	Do	Do	5 - 9	2	-	Labourer
2.9	42	Do	Tamil	Christian	1 -2	4	Business	Casual labourer
2.10	37	Do	Sinhalese	Buddhist	3 -5	2	-	Labourer
2.11	41	Do	Do	Do	1 -1	2	-	Casual labourer
2.12	39	Do	Do	Do	2 -4	2	-	Unemployed
2.13*	40	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	3	-	Driver*
2.14	45	Do	Tamil	Hindu	3 -6	4	HM	Self-employed
2.15	34	Do	Sinhalese	Buddhist	3- 6	2	-	Labourer
2.16	38	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	2	-	Driver
2.17*	30	Do	Do	Do	2 -1	3	-	Carpenter*
2.18	45	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	2	-	Labourer
2.19	55	Do	Do	Do	3 -7	4	-	Casual labourer
2.20	32	Do	Do	Do	4 -8	2	-	Casual labourer
2.21*+	34	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	2	-	Labourer*+
2.22	24	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	2	-	Carpenter
2.23	28	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	2	-	Labourer
2.24	43	Do	Do	Do	3 -9	3	-	Casual labourer
2.25	48	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	4	-	Mason
2.26*+	49	Do	Do	Do	4 -8	3	-	Self-employed*+
2.27	50	Do	Mus-	Islam	3 -5	6	Business	Business

Sample Reference	Age (yrs)	Civil Status	Ethnicity	Religion	No. of trips & period	No. of children	Present Job	Head of household Occupation
			lim					
2.28	37	Do	Sinhalese	Buddhist	3 -6	2	-	Casual
2.29	51	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	2	-	Driver
2.30	25	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	3	-	Labourer
2.31	49	Do	Sinhalese	Buddhist	1 -2	3	-	Mason
2.32	41	Do	Do	Do	4 -9	3	-	Unemployed
2.33*	43	Do	Do	Do	2 -5	2	-	Tailor*
2.34	52	Do	Do	Do	1 - 1	3	-	Labourer
2.35	39	Do	Do	Do	3 - 9	2	Domestic worker	Labourer
2.36	40	widow	Do	Do	3 - 7	2	-	Labourer (Mother)
2.37	50	Married	Do	Do	4 - 9	4	-	Labourer
2.38	43	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	2	-	Driver
2.39	26	Do	Do	Do	3 -51/2	2	--	Conductor
2.40	50	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	4	-	Self-employed
2.41	242	Do	Do	Do	1 - 2	5	-	Business
2.42	48	Do	Do	Do	1-6 months	2	-	Carpenter
2.43	44	Do	Do	Do	1 -2	2	-	Unemployed
2.44	45	Do	Do	Do	4 -5	3	-	Merchant
2.45*+	46	Do	Do	Do	1 -11/2	3	Business	Labourer*+
2.46	32	Do	Do	Do	3 -6	2	-	Unemployed -
2.47	44	Do	Do	Do	3 -5	3	-	Mason
2.48*	30	Do	Do	Do	2 -5	3	-	Labourer*
2.49	25	Do	Do	Do	3. -6	1	-	Unemployed
2.50	40	Do	Do	Christian	1 – 2	3	-	Conductor

- Almost all are employed in the private sectors
- Individuals on casual Business = Own business (Maintain a small boutique)
- Self-employment = Firewood business, supplier of prepared food to small eateries

Respondents in household case studies

Respondent Ref. No.	Sample Ref. No	Relationship to returnee	Sex	Age	Occupation	Marital status	Contribution to Migrant
2A	2.29	Father	M	68	Unemployed	Married	Remittance management
2B	2.10	Husband	M	48	Labour	Married	Looking after family
2C	2.8	Brother	M	40	Driver	Married	Financial support
2D	2.49	Sister	F	28	Unemployed	Single	Looking after children and remittance management
2E	2.43	Sister	F	40	- Do-	Married	- Do-
2F	2.34	Mother	F	60	-Do-	Married	Looking after family
2G	2.29	Mother	F	71	-Do-	Widow	-Do-
2H	2.21	Sister	F	28	-Do-	Married	Remittance management
2J	2.28	Daughter	F	17	Schooling	-	Overall family work

Table iii: Urban low-income settlement (ULIS)

Sample Reference	Age (yrs)	Civil Status	Ethnicity	Religion	No. of trips & Period	No. of children	Present Job	Head of household Occupation
3.1*	39	Married	Tamil	Hindu	4 -8 ½	3	-	MC*
3.2	55	Do	do	do	5 -9	3	HM	Self-employed
3.2	43		do	do	3 – 5	3	-	MC
3.4	43	Separated	do	do	1 – 1	3	-	MC –father
3.5	47	Married	do	Christian	4 – 6 1/2	5	-	Labourer
3.6*+	40	Do	do	do	1 -3	4	-	Unemployed*+
3.7	55	Do	do	Hindu	3 -7	3	-	MC
3.8	49	Do	do	do	4-8 ½	2	-	MC
3.9	42	Do	Sinhalese	Christen	1 -2	3	-	Mason
3.10	35	Do	Tamil	do	3 -5 ½	2	-	Self-employed
3.11*+	50	Do	do	Hindu	3 – 6	5	-	MC*+
3.12	29	Do	do	do	2 -4	1	Self-employed	Unemployed
3.13	43	Do	do	do	5 -10	3	-	Self-employed
3.14	35	Do	Muslim	Islam	4 -9	4	-	Self-employed
3.15	46	Do	Tamil	Hindu	3- 6	2	-	MC
3.16	48	Do	do	Christian	1 -2	3	-	Self-employed
3.17*	40	Do	do	Hindu	1 -3	4	-	MC*
3.18	44	Do Do	do	do	4- 5	3	-	Self-employed
3.19	55	Do	do	do	3 -6	6	-	MC
3.20	35	Do	do	do	1 -2	3	-	Unemployed
3.21	24	Do	do	do	2 -4	2	-	MC
3.22*+	34	Do	do	do	1 -2	4	-	Self*+
3.23	28	Do	do	do	3 – 6	3	-	MC
3.24	36	Do	do	do	3 -5	2	-	Labourer
3.25*	45	Do	do	do	1 -5 months	3	-	MC*
3.26	48	Do	do	do	2 -3	3	-	MC
3.27	51	Do	Muslim	Islam	2 -5	6	-	In Prison-Unemployed

Sample Reference	Age (yrs)	Civil Status	Ethnicity	Religion	No. of trips & Period	No. of children	Present Job	Head of household Occupation
3.28	33	Do	Tamil	Hindu	1 -2	3	-	Labourer
3.29	57	Do	do	do	3 - 6	2	-	Self-employed
3.30	25	Do	do	Christian	1 -2	4	-	MC
3.31	39	Do	do	Do	1 -2	3		Conductor
3.32	41	Do	do	Hindu	4 -5	4	-	MC
3.33	44	Do	do	do	1 -2	3	-	MC
3.34	42	Do	do	do	2 - 4	2	-	MC
3.35*+	39	Do	do	do	2 - 5	3	-	Tailor*+
3.36	40	Do	do	do	4 - 9	3	-	Waiter
3.37	31	Do	do	do	5 - 10	4	-	MC
3.38	26	Do	do	do	1 - 2	2	-	Labourer
3.39	34	Do	do	do	3 -6	2	HM	Self-employed
3.40*	40	Do	do	do	2 - 3	5	-	Unemployed*
3.41	42	Do	do	do	4 - 5	3	-	Self-employed
3.42	46	Do	do	do	4- 5	4	-	MC
3.43	41	Do	do	do	4 -8	2	-	Labourer
3.44*+	48	Do	do	do	2 -5	5	-	MC*+
3.45	40	Do	do	do	3 - 6	2		MC
3.46	27	Do	do	do	5 -9	2	-	MC
3.47	24	Do	do	do	4- 81/2	3	-	Waiter
3.48	37	Do	do	do	2 -4	4	HM	MC
3.49*	32	Do	do	do	2 -4	3	-	Unemployed*
3.50	30	Do	do	do	1 - 2	3	-	Waiter

Notes:

- Labourers are mostly workers in private sector employment, often employed on a casual basis.
- MC are workers for the Municipal Council; the majority are permanently employed
- A common form of self-employment in the community is street hawking in Kandy
- Business means running a small corner boutique
- HM =Housemaid

Respondents in household case studies

Respondent Ref. No	Sample Ref. No.	Relationship to returnee	Sex	Age	Occupation	Marital status	Contribution to Migrant
3A	3.5	Father-in-law	M	64	Unemployed	Married	Remittance management
3B	3.12	Brother –in – law	M	32	Labourer-MC	Single	Remittance management
3C	3.15	Husband	M	53	Labourer	Married	Looking after family
3D	3.7	Sister	F	40	Unemployed	-Do-	Looking after children and remittance management
3E	3.43	Mother	F	60	- Do-	Widow	Looking after family
3F	3.43	Sister	F	26	-Do-	Married	Remittance management
3G	3.22	Sister-in-law	F	30	-Do-	Single	Looking after family and remittance management
3H	3.46	Mother-in-law	F	55	-Do-	Married	Remittance management
3 J	3.38	Sister	F	20	-Do-	Single	Looking after children and remittance management

APPENDIX 4: Numbers of research participants and summary of research method

Method	**Technique**	**Number of respondents**								
		TV		*LC*		*ULI*		*Total*		
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	All
Household sample Survey	Structured Interview Schedule	50	-	50	-	50	-	150	-	150
Household case studies	Interviews & Discussions	06	03	06	03	06	03	18	09	27
Individual Case Studies	Interviews & Discussions	10	10	10	10	10	10	30	30	60
Time Use Study	Standard Time Use Diary	05	05	05	05	05	05	15	15	30

For the household case studies, unmarried women and a divorced woman participated

APPENDIX 5: Overall information and how to link it to the methodology -

** See appendix 3 for details

Stage 1

Type of information	Requirement for research	Method
Contextual information	Cultural and environment of the research setting	Recall method and discussion / Existing literature /Interview officials in related areas
Demographic information	Demographic information about participant**	Household survey
Perceptional information	Images about migrants	Life history of migrant women / Media / Interview outsiders of migrant community
Theoretical information	General overview of gender relations & status of women in Sri Lanka	Review of country literature SLBFE and IMO publications / Library survey

Stage 2

Migration Stage	Objectives of basic research questions	Research Participants	Information reserved (main points)	Methodology
Pre-Migration				
	To understand the gender power relations in the household i) How were the household situation and gender relations? ii) What was the gender specific response in migration related activities? iii) What were the tasks of kinship and network? iv) What were the main reasons for the migration decision? v) How did the potential migrants deal with the recruitment agencies? vi) What was the role of government during pre-migration?	Returnees, household members, relatives, agency owners, officials (SLBFE)	Covert power of women & manipulation power under male authority Involvement of migration decision & provide facilities as a kinsman Economic & social reasons mainly act as pull factors to migration Migrant as a business item & agencies as exploiters Facilitates migration	Household survey Case studies, interviews, discussions

During Migration				
	To analyse the nature and patterns of the transformation of gendered operations in the household i) What were the changes in gender-based activities & relations? ii) What strategies did households adopt to fill the gap created by migrants? iii) What were the linkages that connected migrants with the household ?(Especially regarding remittance & decision-making) iv) What was the position of men when the migrant was abroad? v) What was the role of relations and friends while the migrant was abroad? vi) What were the host country experiences? vii) Did you contact your clients while they were abroad & her family members here ?(How, how often and why?) viii) Did you get involved in solving the migrant's problems, e.g. with her employer? ix) What facilities did you provide for migrants abroad and for their families here?	Returnees, household members (especially male members), relations, (especially remittance managers), neighbours, agency owners, SLBFE officials	Migrant became principal provider for the household & remote decision-maker and her power changed from covert to overt. Proxy/remittance manger's task became very important Having good and bad experiences in the host country Many husbands became househusbands & left their money-earning work The role of the network was very important. Conflicts arose between remittance managers and male members of the family Family problems arose, especially relating to husband s behaviour Not a good relationship between migrants and their families with agents Government provided welfare facilities for migrant families & involved with some host country problems (recent trend)	Household survey Case studies, Interviews, discussions Household survey Case studies. interviews, discussions Time use diary
Post-Migration				
	To explain the emerging power relations in the household and elevation of power positions as a result of migration i) What are changes in gender task, roles, value & attitude? ii) What are the feelings of women about themselves & about family members, especially husbands? iii) Are there any economic contributions to the family by returnees?	Returnees, household members, SLBFE officials, community leaders, relations	Male member / husband again became main provider Many returnees do not contribute to the family budget. But their position is not the same as in the pre migration stage. Many gender tasks and roles are shared & the relationship has improved positively than negatively.	

	iv) What is the position of power of returnees & how does it differ from before? v) What kind of relationship do returnees now have with family members, especially with the husband? vi) What is the position of the husband now? vii) In what way is the network and kinship important now? viii) What is the role of government regarding returnees? ix) What is the public image of returnees?		Many family members think she is a "value" to the family Many returnees have changed physically and mentally Power became assertive power and negotiations is important in new household gender order Task of kinship and network are no longer important. Public image of migrant women is negative. Government is planning to facilitate migrants' situation.	

APPENDIX 6: Basic guidelines for interviews and discussions

i. For case studies

- Identify the participant & relationship with migrant
- Recall the pre-migration period
  - Situation of the household/position of the pre-migrant/gender relations
  - The way migration decision came out
  - Support system
  - Your feelings
- Recall the during-migration period
  - The way the household was managed
  - The way they maintained a relationship with each other in transnational space
  - Remittance management
  - The role of kinship/support system
  - Feelings /position /experience
- Present situation
  - Changes: household / attitudes / feelings / behaviour / appearance / position / gender relationship
  - The way they make decisions

ii. For higher ranking officials

- Identify the organisation & position of the interviewee
- The way she/he sees the migrant women (HM)
- Facilities provided for three stages and how
- Relationship with sending counties and the way it affects migrant women
- Position of diplomatic service of sending countries and facilities for migrants
- Future of sending domestic workers to Middle East

iii. For recruitment agency owners: general discussion about the agency – past, present and future

- Connection with government (SLBFE)
- How do they recruit women for DW
- The final cost of migration and how they receive it
- Facilities provide in the three periods
- How they maintain the relationship with migrants and their families

iv. For source community headmen & community leaders

- General information about community – households, people, economic, social & cultural
- Past situation in the community – special attention to changes of social and cultural nature compared to present situation
- Changes in community and reasons for them
- Relationship between changes in community + household and migration of women to Middle East
- The way they see the future of the household + community

APPENDIX 7
Questionnaire for household survey

Gender Transformation and Female Migration: Sri Lankan domestic workers negotiate transnational household relations

Serial No:----------
Date of Interview:----------

Address of the Respondent:

Religion:-

Code: -	Buddhist	1	Hindu	2
	Islam	2	Christian	3
	Other	0		

Ethnicity:

Code: -	Sinhalese	1	Tamil	2
	Muslim	3	Other	0

1. General Information

1.1 The Household

Number (1)	Name (2)	Sex (3)	Age (4)	Relationship to Respondent (5)	Marital status (6)	Education level (7)	Occupation (8)	Income (9)

Codes:

Sex:- Male 1 Female 2

Relationship:

Spouse	1	Sister	2	Brother	3
Mother	4	Father	5	Sister in Law	6
Brother in Law	7	Father in Law	8		
Mother in Law	8	Other	9		

Marital status:-

Single	1	Married	2	Separated	3
Widowed	4	Other	5		

Educational Level :

No Schooling	1	Grades 1-5	2	Grade 5-10	3
O.L.	4	A.L.	5	Other	9

Family Income:

2,000 <	1	2,001-5,000	2	5,001-7,000	3
7,001-10,000	4	10,000>	5		

2. Family Finances

2.1 Savings

2.1.1 Do you have a savings account? Yes ☐ No ☐

1 2

If yes current balance LKR _____

2.1.2 How did you save this money?

From local job ☐ 1

From foreign earning ☐ 2

Other (Specify) ☐ 9

2.1.3 Does any other person in this household have a savings account?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes the current balance LKR _____

(include total balance of all other accounts)

2.1.4 Sources of funds for these other accounts?

From migrant remittance	☐	1
From earnings of other members of Household	☐	2
Other (Specify)	☐	9

2.2 Indebtedness

2.2.1 Do you owe money? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If yes to whom and the amount?

Bank	☐	1	Merchant	☐	2
Money lender	☐	3	Relative	☐	4
Other (specify)	☐	9			

2.2.2 Why did you borrow money (multiple responses)

Family event	☐	1	Sickness	☐	2
Other emergency	☐	3	Economic activity	☐	4
House construction	☐	5	To go abroad	☐	6
Consumption	☐	7	To settle another loan	☐	8
Other (specify)	☐	9			

2.2.3 How do you plan to repay?

Take another lone	☐	1
Migrating abroad	☐	2
Other (specify)	☐	3

2.3 House and Property Ownership

2.3.1 The house you live is your

Own house	☐	1
Rented house	☐	2

Family House ☐ 3

Parents' or any other relation's ☐ 4

Other (specify) ☐ 5

2.3.2 If own house where did the money come from to buy/build

Self ☐ 1 Husband ☐ 2 Both ☐ 3

Other (Specify) ☐ 9

If self then where did you get funds?

Employment local ☐ 1 Employment foreign ☐ 2

Dowry ☐ 4 Other ☐ 9 (specify)

2.3.3 Household Items

Item	Funds		
	Self Migration	Self other funds	Others
TV			
Refrigerator			
Cassette player			
VCD			
Oven/Cooker			
Microwave oven			
Gas cooker			
Rice cooker			
Bicycle Mortar/ push			
Other			

Codes

	Self Migration	Self other	Others
TV	1	1	1
Refrigerator	2	2	2
Cassette player	3	3	3
VCD	4	4	4
Oven/Cooker	5	5	5
Microwave oven	6	6	6
Gas cooker	7	7	7
Rice cooker	8	8	8
Bicycle Mortar/ push	10	10	10
Other	9	9	9

2.3.4 Land ownership

Acres	Ownership
1/4 <	
1/4 – 1/2	
1/2 – 1	
1>	

Codes 1/4 < 1 1/4 -1/2 2 1/2 -1 3 1> 4

If land is owned by self how did you get the land? Bought ☐ 1

Inherited ☐ 2

If bought where you did get the funds?

Migration ☐ 1 Other ☐ 2

2.4 Financial contribution to family operational budget and Asset Management
From a migrant at present or returned migrants only

2.4.1 What is/was your salary? LKR

Codes for 2.4.1

15,000<	1
15,501 – 20,000	2
20,001 - 25,000	3
25,000>	4

2.4.2 How often do/did you send money home?

Every month ☐ 1 Regularly but not monthly ☐ 2

Occasionally ☐ 3 When requested ☐ 4

Did/do not send money ☐ 5 Other (Specify) ☐ 9

2.4.3 To whom did/do you send money?

Husband ☐ 1 Male child ☐ 2

Female child ☐ 3 Own mother ☐ 4

Own father ☐ 5 Husband's Parent ☐ 6

Other relation of self ☐ 7 Other (specify) ☐ 9

2.4.3 When you send/used to send money home did you tell them how that should be used?

Always ☐ 1 Occasionally ☐ 2

No ☐ 3

If always ask

2.4.4 Why did you tell them?

It is my money ☐ 1 They do not know how to ☐ 2

Other (specify) ☐ 9

If No ask

2.4.5 Why do/did not you tell them?

Trust ☐ 1 Not for women to do that ☐ 2

No use, they would not listen anyway ☐ 3

Other (specify) ☐ 9

If occasionally ask

2.4.6 What are/were the occasions?

1……

2……...

3……

2.4.7 Who is managing your earnings/other assets now?

Self	☐ 1	Husband	☐ 2
Male child	☐ 3	Female child	☐ 4
Own mother	☐ 5	Own father	☐ 6
Husband's Parent	☐ 7	Other	☐ 9

If she has not taken over management after return to country ask her to explain

3. Pre-migration experience

3.1 What made you migrate for work?

Had to earn and could not find a job locally	☐	1
Wanted to work and could not find a local job	☐	2
My friends were going/were already there	☐	3
Other (specify)	☐	9

3.2 Did any one of your family object?

Husband	☐	1
Children	☐	2
Husband's family	☐	3
Own family	☐	4
Other (specify)	☐	9

3.2,1 What were their objections?

1……..

2……..

3……..

4…….

3.2.2 How did you manage to get their consent?

I did not listen to them	☐	1
I got my other relations' help	☐	2
I got my migrant friends to convince them	☐	3
Other (specify)	☐	9

3.2.3 If you did not listen are they still holding the same view

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2

3.2.4 If they have changed what made them change?

Money	☐	1
Other (specify)	☐	9

3.3 How did you find the job?

Job agency	☐	1	Friends	☐	2
News papers	☐	3	Broker	☐	4
SLBFE	☐	5	Other (specify)	☐	9

3.3.1 Did you pay? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

3.3.2 If paid how much? LKR _____

3.3.3 How much were your total expenses? LKR _____

Codes for 3.3.1 and 3.3.2

25,000<	1
25,000-35,000	2
3,5001-45,000	3
45,001-65,000	4
65,000>	5

3.3.4 How did you find money to pay?

Bank loan	☐	1
Loan from other financial agency	☐	2
Government scheme	☐	3
Money lender	☐	4
Job agency	☐	5
Friends/relations	☐	6
Sold/mortgaged property	☐	7
Pawned jewellery	☐	8

Had money	☐	10
Other (specify)	☐	9

3.3.5 Have you paid all the money back?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4. Migration (Host country) Experience

Destinations	Period From-To

4.1 How did you reach the place of your employer on the first day?

My agent/broker had it arranged	☐	1
My friend took me	☐	2
Sri Lankan Association Rep. came	☐	3
I found my way	☐	4
Other (specify)	☐	9

4.2 Was the job you expected? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4.2 What were the problems?

1……..

2……..

3……..

4……

5……..

4.6 How did you communicate with home?

By phone (employers)	☐	1
By phone (own)	☐	2
By phone (other)	☐	3
By phone (public)	☐	4
Did not have phone access	☐	5
Letter	☐	6
Other (specify)	☐	9

4.7 How often did you communicate with home?

Every week	☐	1
Once a month	☐	2
Occasionally	☐	3
Employer did not allow	☐	4

4.8 Were you treated well? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4.8.1 If no were you physically abused? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4.9 How often did you get a chance to go out?

On holidays (monthly)	☐	1
Occasionally	☐	2
Never	☐	3

4,10 When you had a chance to go out what did you do?

Went out alone	☐	1
Went out with friends	☐	2

4.11 Will you go again? Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

4.12 If No what are the reasons for your decision?

1……..

2……

3……..

5. Post Migration

5.1 What are you doing now?

Housewife	☐	1
Started a business with money brought	☐	2
Planning to start a business	☐	3
Do not know	☐	4
Other (specify)	☐	9

5.2 In your opinion your position has changed

For the better	☐	1
For the worse	☐	2
No change	☐	3

5.3 Please explain your answer

5.4 Change in attitudes, practices and behaviour
Ask from migrant woman

5.4.1 Has any one of the following changed after? (if yes put a x mark in box)

Your dress	☐	1
Radio programmes you listen to	☐	2

Newspapers/Magazines you read	☐	3
Friends you associate with	☐	4
The way treat your children	☐	5
Way you treat your husband	☐	6
Way you treat other family members	☐	7
Your views on children's education	☐	8
Other (specify)	☐	9

5.4.2 How often you used to the following before and how often do you do them now?

Activity	Before			After		
	Always	Rarely	Never	Always	Rarely	Never
Cooking						
Washing						
Ironing						
Taking children to school						
Doing the all family budget						
Helping to do the family budget						
Marketing						
Going out alone						

If any one of the above activities were shared then mention it

If there are changes in any one of the above areas ask to explain.

5.4.3 What was your involvement in the following decisions before and after migration?

Decision area	Before			After		
	Always	Rarely	Never	Always	Rarely	Never
Purchase/sale etc. of property						
Purchase of household items						
Purchase of food items/Marketing						
Education of children						
Education of female children						
Savings						
Loans						

If any one of the above activities were shared then mention it

APPENDIX 8: Time Use Diary

Household Time Use of Women/Men
One-Day Diary

Interviewer Use Only

Household Number

Person Number

Diary No.

1st Diary Day 2nd Diary Day

Diary Date

MM. DD. YY.

Diary Day

Mon. Tue. Wed . Thu. Fri. Sat. Sun.

Any information you provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for research purposes only.

Name of diary-keeper:

Please read these instructions and go through the Examples before you start

Everything that people might do is important. However boring you feel that something is please write it in.

What were you doing?

What were you doing In the column" ?", we would like you to write in what you were doing for each thirty minutes of the day.

On the page opposite is an example of a diary that someone has already filled in. If you have a look at it you will get an idea of how we would like you to complete your diary. The person who filled in the diary opposite was a housewife/mother taking a child to school.

It may seem like a lot work to write in what you were doing for every 30 minutes of the day but if you were doing the same thing for more than 30 minutes you can use an arrow instead of having to write in the same thing lots of times.

If you were doing something you feel you don't want to tell us about, please write "personal".

Where were you?

Please write in where you were.

If you were in the same place for more than thirty minutes please use an arrow - as is shown in the example.

You do not have to fill in this column for time you were asleep.

Were you with anybody?

Please show if you were with anybody by putting a cross or crosses in the boxes. Have a look at the example on the next page. You can use a line to show how long you where with anybody, but put a cross in the box when you stop being with them.

To be with somebody does not always mean that you do things together, but that you are in the same place – like in the same house.

You do not have to fill in this column for time you were asleep.

Example (This is an example of how somebody might fill in one page of the diary day).

Date	What were you doing?	Where were you?	Were you with anybody?						
			Alone	With Husband	With Daughters	With Children	Others Family	Other Females	Other mixed
6.00-6.30	Getting children ready for school	Home				x			
6.30-7.00	Do	do				x			
7.00-7.30	Do	do				x			
7.30-8.00	Taking children to school	Bus stop				x		x	
8.00-8.30	Do	Bus				x		x	
8.30-9.00	do	do				x		x	
9.00-9.30.	do	do				x		x	
9.30-10.00	Talking to Friends	School premises						x	
10.00-10.30	do	Bus						x	
10.30-11.00	do	do						x	
11.00-11.30	Washing	Home	x						
11.30-12.00	do	do	x						

Please take this diary with you during the day and fill it in now and then. The diary starts at 4.00 am Thank you for your help.

You do not have to fill in these columns for time you were asleep.
Please make sure you fill them in for all other times.

Date	What were you doing?	Where were you?	Were you with anybody?						
			Alone	With Husband	With Daughters	With Children	Other family	Other Females	Other mixed
4.00-4.30									
4.30-5.00									
5.00-5.30									
5.30-6.00									
6.00-6.30									
6.30.-7.00									
7.00-7.30									
7.30-8.00									
8.00-8.30									
8.30-9.00									
9.00-9.30									
9.30-10.00									

You do not have to fill in these columns for time you were asleep.
Please make sure you fill them in for all other times.

Date	What were you doing?	Where were you?	Were you with anybody?						
			Alone	With Husband	With Daughters	With Children	Other Family	Other Females	Other Mixed
10.00-10.30									
10.30-11.00									
11.00-11.30									
11.30-12.00									
12.00-12.30									
12.30-1.00									
1.00-1.30									
1.30-2.00									
2.00-2.30									
2.30-3.00									
3.00-3.30									
3.30-4.00									

You do not have to fill in these columns for time you were asleep.
Please make sure you fill them in for all other times.

Date	What were you doing?	Where were you?	Were you with anybody?						
			Alone	With Husband	With Daughters	With Children	Other Family	Other Females	Other Mixed
4.00-4..30									
4.30-5.00									
5.00-5.30									
5.30-6.00									
6.00-6.30									
6.30-7.00									
7.00-7.30									
7.30-8.00									
8.00-8.30									
8.30-9.00									
9.00-9.30									
9.30-10.00									

You do not have to fill in these columns for time you were asleep.
Please make sure you fill them in for all other times.

Please look back over each diary page and check that you have filled in all the columns you need to.

About Your Diary Day
Please complete the questions below after completing the diary.

When did you fill in this diary?

- Now and then during the diary day ☐
- At the end of the diary day ☐
- The day after the diary day ☐
- Later, about ___ days after the diary day ☐

Was this day unusual for any reason (e.g. A birthday or a day you were ill)?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

Please write in why

Did anyone help you to fill in the diary?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

Thank you

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