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**THE FEMINISATION OF GLOBAL MIGRATION:  
PROFESSIONAL SRI LANKAN WOMEN  
IN NEW ZEALAND**

**BY**

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**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Education, The University of Auckland, 2011**

## ABSTRACT

The migration of highly educated single women from developing to developed countries is a phenomenon of the global knowledge labour market. While it is a response to the requirements of that market it has considerable effect on both sending and receiving countries and on the lives of the young women migrants. This thesis examines the experiences of six Sri Lankan female knowledge migrants who are highly educated professionals and recent migrants to New Zealand. Its purpose is to contribute to a greater understanding of the feminised character of professional global migration by identifying how the phenomenon was experienced by these independent young women.

Four significant features were identified in the case studies of the women's experiences. The first showed that the desire for independence and gender equality was the result of the women's advanced education in Sri Lanka but it took migration to the liberal New Zealand environment for that independence to be achieved. The second feature concerns the complex negotiation that occurred as the women's relationships with their parents changed. Rather than a rift developing between liberalised young women and traditionally-focused parents, both parties accommodated the changes to the women so that the relationship could be maintained. A third feature concerned the young women's attitudes towards marriage partners and future family life including considering marrying outside their ethnicity or putting their careers before marriage and families. The fourth feature was the complex interaction between traditional Sri Lankan values and the culture of the modern independent professional woman living on her own in a liberal society. While the women rejected the inequalities inherent in traditional gender roles they maintained Sri Lankan cultural values such as concern with social status, wealth accumulation, and family dignity that could be adapted and personalised to their lives in New Zealand.

The highly educated sons and daughters of the South Asian middle class are moving into the globalised professions at a rapid rate. This phenomenon has the potential to affect a number of sites: the social and cultural capital of the traditional home country, the new host country, and the globalised knowledge labour market more widely. The study suggests that gender equality is a key factor in the migration patterns of highly educated independent young women. If Sri Lanka wishes to retain this group it needs to develop policies that encourage the nation's female population to actively participate in the economy. Such policies should recognise women's desire both for employment and for equality. It is the liberal environment of gender equality available in New Zealand that is the main reason for that country's appeal to this group of highly educated professional women. Given the increasingly feminised character of global migration by well-educated professionals, the desire for gender equality is one that both developed and developing countries need to recognise.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank go to my dear participants, six bright young women who shared their stories, their struggles and their hopes for the future. I came to admire their genuine hearts, their brilliant efforts in creating a better future and their cheerful spirit. Their enthusiasm with writing their own journals in addition to interviews have contributed immediately to this research.

I am also deeply indebted to my supervisors, Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata and Dr Allen Bartley. Their corporative guidance, patience and encouragement have been instrumental in the completion of this thesis. I have great respect for their intellectual insight and creativity, I have been fortunate to have had such outstanding supervisors.

I wish to thank Dr Airini, the head of School, Critical Studies in Education, for generous provision offered for me in the doctoral suite at the School.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Bill Smith (The University of British Colombia) for giving me invaluable feedback and encouragement for this study.

I am very grateful to Dr Iresha Karunaratne in The Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

I wish to thank Professor Vijitha Nanayakkara in The Department of Sociology at The University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

Many thanks to Mrs Rosalie Panaho for assisting with proof reading.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to my Sri Lankan friends who are living in New Zealand, for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my family who have been a constant source of warmth and energy for me in a long process of transcribing, writing and editing. Your graciousness and humour help sustain my spirit during challenging times. In particular, I would like to thank my dear husband Rohan for his attentiveness and forbearance throughout the course of this research.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AUT - Auckland University of Technology

CENWOR - Centre for Women's Research

CIMA - Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

IOM - International Organisation for Migration

IT - Information Technology

LTTE - Liberation Tamil Tiger Elam

NIT - National Information Technology

OECD - Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development

SLBFE - Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment

SLIIT- Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

## INTRODUCTION

### **A new phenomenon of migration?**

The expansion of the global market in higher education in the opening decades of the twenty-first century provides professional opportunities for women from the emergent middle-class of former Third World countries (Giddens, 1995; Vidich, 1995; Iredale, 2002; Gunn, 2002; Sorenson, 2004). The increasingly feminised character of higher education contributing to the movement of single independent young women from developing countries to universities and professional employment in developed countries, is a relatively under-researched feature of the phenomenon (Luke, 2001). It is a phenomenon with a range of implications. These include social implications for families in the traditional societies (Raghuram, 2009) left by these ‘footloose’ women as well as employment and social implications for the new host countries as young single professional women enter their labour forces. At the level of individual lived experiences, the women themselves undergo change as they find a place in the globalised knowledge labour market. The changes occur as the women negotiate along a paradoxical path of opportunities and restraints. My research investigated the experiences of six young Sri Lankan women who are highly educated, independent professionals who have migrated to New Zealand. The study examined the ways in which they adapted to life in New Zealand in order to gain insights into the relatively under researched phenomenon (Raghuram, 2009; Kofman & Raghuram, 2011; Coates & Carr, 2005) of independent female professional migration.

For the first time in history large numbers of single women from developing countries with relatively traditional societies and travelling without their families are moving to developed countries to study and take up professional employment (Harvey, 2000; Luke, 2001; Raghuram, 2009). Although women have always played an important role in migratory movements (Campani, 1995) the new phenomenon is characterised by features not seen in earlier migration movements, in particular, the migration of unaccompanied, well-educated young women moving to the life of a well-paid, independent professional in the middle class of a first world country. The phenomenon

now characterises the United States' patterns of migration and marriage with women who never married or previously married but are now single becoming a significant feature of migration patterns (Raghuram, 2006; Society, 2006; Hymowitz, 2007; Badkar, Callister, Krishnan & Dilham, 2007; Hay, 2008). It is a phenomenon also affecting New Zealand.

Luke's study of the socio-cultural and political issues related to women and education in the South East Asia, (Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Malaysia) examined women who, after choosing careers in different fields, found themselves breaking away from their traditional social environment. This is also the case with many middle class Sri Lankan women. Their tertiary education enables them to consider previously unimaginable ways of living (Gordon, 2002). For example, some well-educated Sri Lankan women, as well as women from other developing countries, now marry out of their ethnic groups. This is an identified feature of 'footloose' female professionals (Arnot, 2000; Luke, 2001; Vidich, 2007; Hymowitz, 2008) which has implications for increased ethnic fluidity at a global level. As part of the investigation into the Sri Lankan women's lived experiences, the study examined attitudes and behaviours concerning family and gender roles, including attitudes to marrying out of the ethnic group.

The study investigated the motives of women who migrated to New Zealand, how they achieved their goals in adjusting to the host culture and the extent to which they changed their way of life in this context. Although there are a number of studies, both from New Zealand and other countries, about the migration experience of women (Campani, 1995; Cohen, 1995, 2001; Leckie, 1995; Skeldon, 1997; McKenzie, 1997; Basnayake, 1999; Kivisto, 2000; Fonow 2000; Ip 2000; Dodampegamage, 2002; Kolig, 2005; Badkar, 2007; Anderson, 2007; Perera, 2008; Liu, 2010), there is no study that focused specifically on the experience of Sri Lankan young professional women who migrate to New Zealand. Research (Badkar et al. 2007) suggests that Asian migrants are a significant and increasing source of skilled labour to developed countries. New Zealand is in competition for these skilled professionals, of whom many are women. Indeed, according to Badkar et al. (2007) there are significantly more Asian women than men living in New Zealand as a result of this skilled migration. A growing proportion of temporary workers and students make the transition to permanent residency within five

years of being issued their first work and student permits. The significantly larger number of skilled female migrants may lead to gender imbalance in the New Zealand Asian resident population and it is also likely to affect female labour in the source countries. Along with contributing to a greater understanding of the feminised character of global migration and the knowledge labour market this study will provide knowledge about these professional Sri Lankan women in New Zealand.

It is also intended that the research would contribute to identifying the characteristics and experiences of this new type of social group in the global knowledge labour market. While migration from developing to developed countries is a well-established and well-documented phenomenon, the migration of young women moving without their families from developing countries, such as Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia, to professional employment in developed countries is a new phenomenon (Luke, 200; Raghuram, 2006). Today's migrants hail increasingly from developing countries and move towards multiple destinations in the developed world in search of economic opportunities. They are migrating not only to the countries that traditionally attract a large numbers of immigrants but are also moving in significant numbers to countries in Western Europe, the Persian Gulf, Japan, and the fast growing East Asian economies (Hagan, 2006; OECD, 2008).

An account of Sri Lankan migration in the post-colonial period since the country's independence in the mid-1950s show that people from all social-economic classes leave the country. Wealthy, educated English-speaking elites have migrated to countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom. In response to the demand of the labour market in the Middle Eastern region the Sri Lankan governments lifted restrictions on travelling to that region for employment in the 1970s. The establishment of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) in 1985 institutionalised employment migration policies and practices. Kottegoda (2002) suggests that this led to the estimated 970,000 Sri Lankan migrants who were employed in foreign countries. In addition, since the ethnic conflicts erupted in the early 1980s, mainly Hindu Tamil people have migrated for refuge and settlement in countries such as Canada, Norway and Sweden (Gamburd, 2010). In 2003, the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), the main administrative office for migration estimated that 1,003,600 Sri Lankans worked abroad. From the late

1980s women made up the majority of this labour migration, up to 75% of total Sri Lankan migrants. In 2008 this number increased to 1,792,368 of the Island's 20 million population. The majority of them are domestic workers. Much of the global North's demand for transnational domestic workers has been met by the women from less developed opportunities such as Sri Lanka. However the 75% female proportion of the migrant flow in the mid 1990s declined to 50% by 2008. In recent years Sri Lankan officials have actively encouraged male over female emigration. The male guest workers fill more diverse roles with skilled and unskilled workers an equal percentage of the male migrants (42% and 41% respective in 2008). Most Sri Lankan migrants (92%), both male and female, migrated to the Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait.

Domestic workers are usually given two year contracts and live in their employers' residence. They have less autonomy at the workplace and the isolation of the work situation can often lead to abuse and exploitation. Most Sri Lankans who worked abroad in liberal-democratic countries such as Canada, Australia, and United Kingdom have plans to settle there but migrants in Gulf countries have no hope of settlement. It is difficult to meet the criteria for bringing in family members. The inability to own land and businesses and the impossibility of obtaining citizenship, combined with the absence of legal rights means that most migrant workers tend to keep the visit short, temporary and informal. The migrants have no hope of settlement or integrating into the host society. During their short-term stay, most if not all Sri Lankans focus on earning and sending funds back home, not investing in the host country.

There are national and family incentives for Sri Lankan migration. Migrants' remittances contribute significantly to the Sri Lankan economy. Migration alleviates unemployment among the poorer segments of Sri Lankan population. Local jobs are paid poorly particularly for women and their wages are lower than men's wages. In the Gulf countries woman could earn four to five times more than an average worker in Sri Lanka. In such situations the migrant women often become the sole bread winners for their families. Several studies (Kottegoda, 2002; Gamburd, 2008) suggest that each migrant woman supports four to five members of her family. Labour migration to the Gulf had become a core feature of the Sri Lankan economic strategies at the family and national

levels. Diversifying preferred destinations, the local unavailability of desirable jobs, and the continued capacity to send workers while tending to an aging population at home have encouraged Sri Lankan women to choose migration as an economically sensible choice.

In contrast to poorly educated women the new patterns of migration involving professional women are a response to the recent and rapid expansion of the global knowledge market. This is itself a feature of the fundamental shift in global capitalism from its industrial form to one characterised by flexibility, technology, and consumerism (Held, 2001; Hoogvelt, 2001) and known variously as flexible accumulation (Giddens, 1995, 2000; Robertson, 2004; Castells, 2004; Harvey, 2005), post-Fordism (Harvey, 2005), and post-modernism (Giddens, 1999; Harvey, 2005). The very 'newness' of this market means that it is less well understood and documented than more established forms of migration. The United Nations Development Report (2007) noted that the collapse of space, time and borders may be creating a global village, but not everyone can be a citizen. The global, professional elite faces low borders but millions of others find borders as high as ever. Within the uneven global market knowledge workers are more advantaged as valuable globalised human capital. Since the 1980s, globalised education systems have had a dramatic effect on professionalising women who become increasingly integrated as players in the world production and consumption process. These study inquiries into that new type of female migrants as a global phenomenon within the knowledge labour market. The women who migrated to New Zealand in the early periods came either as wives of migrants, as potential wives, or as a source of domestic labour (Leckie, 1995, 2007; Fraser and Pickles, 2002; Hastings, 2006; Badkar et al. 2007).

I am a Sri Lankan professional woman who migrated to New Zealand in the mid-nineteen eighties and experienced the challenges that accompany migration (common challenges discussed in Chapter 2). This insider position has made me aware of the invisibility of Sri Lankan professional young women in New Zealand research literature despite the key role played by women in migration and the knowledge work force. The experience provides the motivation to undertake this study. It is intended that the research will contribute to a better understanding of the experience of Sri Lankan young professional women migrants who are part of the knowledge labour market in New

Zealand by identifying the process of adaptation and the contribution made by these women in the new society.

The study explored the real experiences of the women's lives from their own perspectives and their understanding of the ways in which identity and gender role changes occurred to them. Furthermore, I was interested in how and why these experiences led them to integrate into a new social order. How did they deal with the conflicting values and practices between New Zealand and Sri Lankan cultures and how did they negotiate the conflict? This tension between tradition and modernity plays a crucial role in the lives of the women. The young women have to make decisions about the extent to which they will maintain the cultural restrictions which are framed by patriarchal norms and measured by the dominant male yardstick. These traditional gender boundaries are in contradiction to the opportunities offered by modernity, particularly the economic and educational opportunities that have emerged within the contemporary global economy. Women now have a professional status to consider when making decisions about the sort of life they will lead. As young women, they have to deal with the psychological state that comes from living as individuals with a range of desires in their personal lives and the need to maintain professional dignity in the public sphere, in addition to the wider forces of tradition within which they were raised, traditions which reinforce the notion of female dignity. I use the term 'paradox' to explain the contradictory state between traditional cultural mores and the prevailing social practices in modernity, all of which are themselves characterised by internal contradictions and which intrude into every area of the young women's lives as they experience the daily life of the professional female in a new, developed country.

### **Sri Lankan women and education**

There are two major reasons for people's movement from one place to another: the first arises from circumstances in the country of origin, while the second reason is concerned with the consequences of migration for the individual in the new destination (Lee, 1996). Several researchers (for example Sandilands, 1995; IOM, 2000) suggest that the main reasons for migration could be categorised as 'push' and 'pull' factors respectively. According to this view, population growth and the scarcity of resources, ethnic, political

and religious oppression, and natural hazards ‘push’ people out of societies and the opportunities that are foreseen for upward economic mobility available in destination societies ‘pull’ people into the new societies. Despite these common ‘push–pull’ factors shared by all migrants, the individual experiences of Sri Lankan women migrants are not always the same. The experience differs according to the particular situation of the individual and also according to her educational background and qualifications, social status, and employment experience.

Professional women exhibit the dispositions of modernity associated with the shift to secularism and rationalisation of the modern period. Unlike poorly educated female migrants who seek to maintain their traditional ways in the new country, the young well-educated professional woman is rational and instrumental in her approach to the migration experiences and the dilemmas within these experiences (Susan, 2003; Baker, 2007). However, there is a new dilemma. The young women have many destinations to choose from. They move to a number of developed countries seeking their professional expertise and they have the range of opportunities that such freedom brings. They are disposed to embrace transformation and choice in the globalised world market that provides free access to those who have achieved educationally.

### **‘Footloose’ women**

The term ‘footloose’ in this study is applied to the young women who participated. ‘Footloose’ was used literally in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to mean ‘free to move the feet’ and originally the United States (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) meaning was in this sense. Simply, ‘footloose’ means ‘free to act and travel as one’, ‘free to go and do as one pleases’, ‘able to act as will, not hampered, not under compulsion or restraint’, ‘free choice’. I used this term for the young women who are migrating to different destinations for their own reasons. They are young women who have no child-rearing responsibilities and are free to make their own choices unhindered. They are relatively free from the boundaries of their former traditional society and have sufficient freedom to pursue their career and personal aspirations.



A key feature of contemporary globalisation is the emergence of the global education market (Peren, 1998; Afshar, 1996, 1999; Baker, 2004) which structures the knowledge society. The new group of educated women from developing countries enter the global knowledge worker arena, one created by the higher education market, simultaneously freed from the restraints of tradition to become members of a 'footloose' and 'flexible system' (Harvey, 2005). In an increasingly globalised educational economy women's academic career mobility has removed traditional barriers and created new places for women in local circuits within the push-pull dynamics of global flows (Luke, 2001). Luke uses the terms 'domestic self' and 'political self' to describe the contemporary woman who is experiencing a complex duality in her daily life, one that is fundamentally paradoxical (p. 197).

One of the ways the global market in higher education has changed middle class women from developing countries is by giving opportunities to access the world's top ranked universities. Women are graduating from universities in their own countries then moving to developed countries for professional employment (De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007) or further university education in universities that rank in the top 500 (OECD, 2007). The liberation of many developing countries' middle-class women from the 'domestic-self' of the family and into the 'public self' of the world of work and education in what some commentators call the 'global village' (Glassman, 2004) is not as straight forward as it appears. Luke refers to the on-going duality between the two selves. Indeed over half of the students in many developed countries are now female (Luke, 2001) with many subject to the tensions created in the ambivalence between domestic and public selves. Franceica (1996, cited in Besenmere, 2007 p. 19) argues that current migration movements show young people travelling for a multitude of reasons with an important reason being the search for themselves. Franceica concluded that the search for identity is a greater motivator than socio-economic conditions or political factors.

The young women are in case studies described in this thesis are graduates who decided to leave Sri Lanka to expand the boundaries of their professional careers. In making such a life-changing decision they exercised autonomy and independence and displayed the aspirations of Sri Lankan middle class professionals. Women professionals, as members of the globalised knowledge economy, move freely across borders with

dramatic changes in their personal lives as well as contributing to more general changes for the societies they leave and the societies they join (Iredale, 2001, 2004; Callister, 2007). The growing reliance on female labour made possible by the new technologies has led to an increased demand for educated and employable women. The migration of young female graduates to universities and work forces of the mainly western, developed societies has consequences for the host society, the emerging economy of the society they left behind, and as this study reveals, the lives of the women themselves.

Fine (2006) identifies this cosmopolitan consciousness within the phenomenon of globalisation and the resultant weakening of national identification, one predicated on the freedom to travel. Along with a cosmopolitan consumer culture, the archetypal global knowledge worker is characterised by transnationalism. The worker is 'footloose' and not a settler in a new land as was the case for migrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is also positioned within the class structures of global capitalism. Her knowledge is a commodity brought in the global higher education institutions and sold in the global market. It is subject to those competitive forces with its value and price fixed by the market. Perera (2008) suggests that the phenomenon of general migration flows is also directly linked with the macro level determinants: supply side factors and demand side factors and government policies as well as individual determinants. However, Fine's research was not borne out by my study. Here the young women, while 'footloose' in having left Sri Lanka, had all decided to settle in New Zealand.

Higher education institutions are at the centre of the rapid shift towards global knowledge economic policies being made by developing economies, such as Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, China and Indonesia, to fully developed market economies (Vidich, 1995; Harvey, 2005). Yet, many of these institutions are in already developed countries and not in the developing nations. The transformations of Sri Lankan culture in the recent decades by the expansion of consumer culture and other forces of contemporary global capitalism have led to the emergence of a rapidly expanding new middle classes (Clammer, 2002).

The dramatic increase in higher education participation has become one of the key themes in these sectors internationally. Governments are attempting to increase the skills base and advancement of human capital and the increasing marketisation of higher

education institutions, products and services are closely linked to this contemporary trend. Women's participation into higher education has caused significant changes within traditional societies enabling women to be upwardly socially mobile, as a result of their own labour. Skilled female migration affects are both sending and receiving countries; especially as traditional male dominant societies are faced with challenges to gender roles and relationships.

### **'Brain drain' dynamics**

Sri Lanka is an excellent example of a developing country, which, as a consequence of its colonial heritage, has very high standards of public education with English as the language of instruction, so is ideally placed to export highly-skilled labour to mainly developed nations. Other countries almost certainly capture the lion's share of Sri Lanka's education dividend (Rankin, 2001). Sri Lanka seems to be better at creating rather than employing graduates because Sri Lankan employers cannot pay as much for educated Sri Lankan workers as can employers in other countries.

Weerakkody (*Daily Mirror*, 2007, June 28), points out that profitability for firms in high wage markets is the result of strategies that develop exceptional human resource management practices. In the future the global demand for talent and the effective management of that talent is likely to intensify further. Sri Lanka is struggling to find enough good quality engineers, technicians, doctors, marketing experts and English teachers as skilled people leave the country. A shortage of 'brain power' will cause serious problems to any economy and Sri Lanka does suffer from the migration of middle class young women as they move to other countries to expand their futures in the 'brain power' economy. These young women have a new structural location in the world that is produced by global economic forces which shape and direct their lives. They can and do leave Sri Lanka for the global market. How does this inclusion in that knowledge market provide experiences and how does it change the women? My aim was to explore the effects of this inclusion in a new structural location, to understand how a new context allowed the women to change and how much of the change was completely different from Sri Lankan ways of living.

## **Women migrants**

Gugler (1995) suggests that there is every indication that female migration will increase dramatically over the next few years. He refers to South Asia in particular, saying that because a number of women remain unmarried for some years they are potentially mobile. Such independent women are usually faced with limited rural opportunities and are attracted by cities that offer better opportunities in terms of work as well as marriage. However, Wanasundara (2000) argues that economic liberalisation which facilitated the influx of foreign capital to the country resulted in increasing numbers of women being used as cheap labor.

In Sri Lanka, the preponderance of women in the urban population is a recent phenomenon and it is to be expected that more women will continue this trend of urban migration. It is a trend that may be understood in terms of a decline of patriarchy. In Sri Lankan society, male dominance is being weakened by a number of developments which include birth control, education and women gaining access to work outside the home. In addition later marriage reduces female fertility and leads to the greater independence of women. Gugler (1995) points out these wider social changes are “modifying cultural definitions of women’s roles as wives and mothers and setting them free to move (p. 453). Significant numbers of women who have never married or who are separated, divorced and widowed are attracted by the opportunities the global economy offers them. This has transformed the gender composition of net rural urban migration (International Organisation for Migration, 2002).

In addition, the stresses and strains of poverty are often borne by women and are a cause of the violence many of them suffer. As an alternative survival strategy women have chosen overseas employment while their children are subjected to neglect and abuse. Foreign domestic service is one of the largest fields of employment for female migrants. The economic liberalisation which facilitated the influx of foreign capital to the country resulted in increasing numbers of women being exploited as cheap labor (Wanasundara, 2000; Perera, 2004). Many are subject to harsh treatment and unfair work conditions in Gulf countries. Often, this is not very visible. Research (Chang, 2000 cited in Burn 2005: 83) found that Sri Lankan women domestic workers are often subject to widespread exploitation and abuse. Although, Zlotnik (2004) highlights individual

choice, mainly of women migrants in the above category are driven more by necessity at home than choice of opportunity abroad. Large number of such women are vulnerable to often harsh abuse. An example was reported in Sri Lanka recently, describing how three women were crucified by their employer as punishment (*Daily News*-14 Sep. 2010). Gruesome cases such as this highlight the victimisation of poorly-educated women who are vulnerable to exploitation than their educated counterparts.

However, the status of the Sri Lankan women in New Zealand is very different to that of the women used as a source of cheap domestic labour in the examples above. Butcher (2010) observed that having shared a common British colonial legacy, many Sri Lankans are familiar with the New Zealand education system with its similar curriculum, the use of English as the medium of instruction, and the qualification process. The colonial bridge between Sri Lanka and New Zealand is one of the attractions for the women to move to New Zealand. The recent leading role played by New Zealand in Sri Lanka's educational restructuring programmes provides another link between the two countries. However, whatever the reasons for leaving Sri Lanka most share the desire to find a better quality of life. Those women in the study had graduated from Sri Lankan universities and migrated mainly to find better opportunities in the global knowledge market and to further their education in the higher educational institutions in New Zealand.

## **Research design**

The research is designed to contribute to a better understanding of New Zealand's role in the globalised knowledge labour market as New Zealand provides a host country for extremely mobile male and female global knowledge workers. Marketing experts, computer consultants, legal affairs specialists, financial accountants and top managers move frequently in order to obtain the highest price for their services in an increasingly competitive market. The global market acts as a competitive force that equalises payment for services across national boundaries. Given the choices available to the women on the 'open market' the study examined the women's identification with and commitment to

New Zealand. Research questions focused on whether the move to New Zealand was a means to an end in the way of settlers of the past or a staging point on the path to other destinations such as Australia, Britain, the United States, and Canada. In order to do this the case study investigated the participants' attitudes and practices towards settling in the host nation or taking on a transnational lifestyle. Given the effect of the 'brain drain' on Sri Lanka, the case studies in the research included an examination of the effects on the families and communities resulting from the emigration of young women to see how this feminised 'brain drain' is experienced by those left behind from the perspective of those who leave.

The research consisted of case studies of the experiences of individual professional women from Sri Lanka to interrogate Luke's (2001) theoretical analysis of a new phenomenon in global migration patterns that is its feminised character. The investigation was designed using an ideal or archetypal feminised global knowledge worker constructed from the literature (for example, Harvey, 2005; Luke, 2001; Hymowitz, 2008) to serve as a reference point in identifying and examining the characteristics of the participants. The archetype is conceptualised according to four fields of inquiry: freedom and autonomy, the global knowledge market and higher education, professional lifestyle and the national and transnational identity. Each field was the basis for categories of data collection and analysis.

The in-depth case studies examined the extent to which the archetype corresponding to these fields exists in reality. How did the women experience the professional lifestyle available to them in New Zealand? Did their future plans also change and assume a transnational nature? What values did they hold onto from their Sri Lankan upbringing and what changes did they consciously make to these values? Campani (1995) suggests that "migrant literature usually depicts women as passive rather than active in migration, because traditional migration involves women moving with their husbands or parents and as family unification" (p. 547). Their role was to make a home in the new country. However, the new type of migration shifts agency to the women as decision-making actors. Whereas the role of the women has traditionally been assigned by their culture, contemporary economic circumstances enable changes to their roles. They have new aspirations for employment as a result of increased access to education

and career opportunities. These enabling conditions for well-educated middle-class women in developing societies like Sri Lanka provide the opportunities for them to move from their culturally prescribed roles in a male dominated society to the life of a professional with a different status and different life trajectories. The young women have greater decision-making power in the new conditions. I refer to this enabling context as providing a degree of agency that was not available in their traditional gendered roles.

I interviewed six young Sri Lankan female professionals who live in New Zealand to find out more about the level of agency they believed they had. Each individual was interviewed three times over a six month period and asked to describe her experiences in response to open-ended interview questions. The Interview responses were organised into four categories: 1. Old assumptions and traditional structures. 2. New definitions and broader horizons. 3. Experiencing the professional lifestyle. 4. Forging a new identity and moving on (See Appendix I). In Category One, often in lengthy comments participants expressed their views about the home culture and its social structure, the educational system and the politicised nature of its institutions. They were often critical of the assumptions about gender roles in Sri Lankan society. In Category Two, the participants shared intriguing insights into their views on what educational achievement meant to them, often highlighting the shifting trends towards exploring and choosing non-traditional career choices in the global labour market. The questions in the Category Three explored the experience of the participants as professional young women living in an increasing globalised world driven by the dynamics of consumerist culture. Their views on making decisions about earnings and saving were discussed. Finally, Category Four shed light on forming a new identity, a fascinating process of metamorphosis highlighted by the reluctance of most of the participants to defined themselves as strictly Sri Lankans or strictly New Zealanders. The responses from the young women provided a glimpse into the formation of a Sri Lankan-New Zealand identity for these women.

Four significant features were identified in the case studies of the women's experiences. The first showed that the desire for independence and gender equality was the result of the women's advanced education in Sri Lanka but it took the migration to the liberal New Zealand environment for that independence to be achieved. The second feature concerns the complex negotiation that occurred as the women's relationships with

their parents changed. Rather than a rift developing between liberalised young women and traditionally-focused parents, both parties accommodated the changes to the women so that the relationship did not suffer. A third feature concerned the young women's attitudes towards marriage partners and future family life. They consider marrying outside their ethnicity which is a marked departure from the traditional male dominance and its manifestation within the family. The women also considered that being single is better than carrying a lifelong burden as wives and mothers. They would put their careers before children if it came to a choice. Fourth feature indicates the women's negotiation of identity.

### **Thesis structure**

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. This introductory chapter has provided a brief description of the thesis to explain what it is about and the purpose of the study.

**Chapter Two** summarises the literature about the research topic. It presents an overall picture of both traditional and modern migration with reference to the emergence of the contemporary global economic system. It discusses the literature about the emergence of the knowledge labour market, the global educational market and the production of migrant professionals and 'footloose' women in the global knowledge labour market.

**Chapter Three** describes the phenomenon of this study- the feminisation of contemporary professional migrants. It discusses the motivations for leaving Sri Lanka and the reasons for migration in general and the specific reasons for moving to New Zealand. The nature of the contemporary global knowledge labour market and the migrant women as significant contributors to the knowledge labour force are discussed. It sketches the theoretical framework employed with reference to the literature and includes a brief evaluation of the contribution of New Zealand to the global knowledge labour market.

**Chapter Four** describes the methodology employed in the thesis and the methods used to collect and analyse the data about each individual's experiences. The chapter also describes the reflections, concepts and themes that accompanied and influenced the development and shaping of this thesis. As an introduction I have included the



biographies of the six participants in this research study. There is a brief note about myself as a reflection of my position within the research so that the reader will understand my motives in undertaking this research study and my insider/outsider status within the New Zealand-Sri Lankan community.

**Chapter Five** discusses changing gender roles within the global knowledge labour market. This chapter provides an overview of the research findings presented throughout the next three chapters and examines sociological and political issues related to gender relationship negotiation in the context of the cultural exchange between Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

The chapter presents the findings drawn from the six cases that illustrate how the women in these case studies demonstrate the characteristics of the contemporary global social phenomenon in their response to traditional expectations of gender relationships. The illustrative extracts are used to conceptualise the cultural politics within the discourses of Sri Lankan family relationships and gender norms drawing on the findings themselves with reference to the literature. The research shows how the women are negotiating major shifts in their parents-daughters relationships with those relationships undergoing substantial change as a result of the daughters' migration.

**Chapter Six** provides an account of the women's perceptions of men and marriage to show how the women's ideas have changed. It discusses how far they are able to negotiate the family expectations of marriage and their own expectations. It also examined what the women hope for from relationships within the new, New Zealand context. The extracts provide the information of how the young women are re-positioning themselves within the two contradictory social norms of the public self and the personal self. These young women do not want to return home for several reasons which are discussed in the chapter. These changes affect the society, the family and the women themselves. The theoretical discussion integrates the comments of women under three sections: their changed expectations with respect to men and marriage, what they want from relationships, and how they are negotiating these new expectations. The final section of the chapter moves into the theoretical discussion that incorporates the relevance of literature to the findings.

**Chapter Seven** is about professional lifestyles. It includes a discussion of the women's attitudes towards work, money, leisure and possessions. The experiences of the women are illustrated in extensive extracts drawn from the interviews. These show how values from traditional Sri Lankan society-values about education, social status and conserving building wealth are re-contextualised in New Zealand. Interestingly values such as valuing education have changed little but the way those values are experienced in the women's professional lifestyles is very different.

**Chapter Eight** is an account of negotiating a sense of belonging to New Zealand society and also retaining connection to Sri Lankan identity. I discuss the women's involvement with the wider New Zealand society and their interactive engagement with New Zealanders to show how each woman deals with the complex task of adapting to a new life in a new society.

**Chapter Nine** is the discussion chapter and followed by the conclusion. This chapter integrates the findings with the theoretical approaches that are identified in the literature. In using the experiences of the six Sri Lankan professional women I suggest that the phenomenon identified by Luke (2001) can be applied to these women. They illustrate the phenomenon of single women professionals migrating from developing to developed countries in a number of ways. They are independent, they make conscious decisions about what traditional values to maintain and what to change or even discard. They are autonomous and value that freedom to control their own lives. They may not marry or have children given the demands of this professional careers but it is a price they consider worth paying for both financial and social freedom.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Background: The migration context**

#### **Introduction**

The increasingly feminised character of global migration, particularly involving the movement of single independent well-educated young women from developing countries to universities and professional occupations in developed countries, is a relatively under-researched feature (Kofman & Raghuram, 2011). In investigating the experiences of six young Sri Lankan women who are highly educated, independent professionals and recent migrants to New Zealand this research contributes to building the literature on this phenomenon. It is a phenomenon with a range of implications that are considered throughout the thesis.

The expansion of the global market in higher education in the opening decades of the twenty-first century provides globalised opportunities for women from the emergent middle-class of former Third World countries (Giddens, 1995; Vidich, 1995; Gunn, 2002, Sorenson, 2004; Badkar et al. 2007; Raghuram, 2009). There are also social implications for families in the traditional societies left by these ‘footloose’ women and social implications for the new host countries as young single migrant professional women enter their labour forces. At the level of individual experiences, the women themselves undergo change while finding a place for themselves in the globalised knowledge labour market. The changes occur as the women negotiate along a paradoxical path of opportunities and restraints. The term ‘tension’ is used to explain two types of contradictory feelings experienced by the young women. It captures the psychological state where the women feel that it is difficult to be in Sri Lanka and it is also difficult to be a migrant in New Zealand. Typically, migrants experience such feelings as they try to reconcile missing things that are familiar from home with adapting to unfamiliar ways in the new home. The young women in this study are dealing with these contradictory feelings between the

status of migrant in another country with the more familiar status of being a woman in Sri Lanka despite the opportunities of the former and the constraints of the latter.

### **Women and migration**

Campani (1995) observed that the composition of the new migratory flows has changed, with one of its characteristics been the growing importance of women, along with urban highly qualified, middle class migrants (1995). Perera (2008) also highlights how the determinants of labour migration have changed noting that “the autonomous migration of females was significant” (p. 9) in these labour migration changes. Traditional migration involves women moving with their husbands or parents with their role being to make a home in the new country. Leckie (2006) states that during the 1930-1950s “the female Indian diaspora to New Zealand coincided with the establishment of small business by existing migrants, as women and children could provide reliable unpaid labour in shops and farms” (p. 80). Leckie shares the view of other researchers (Campani, 1995; Perera, 2008; Raghuram, 2005, 2009) when she suggests that “the neglect of migrant women by earlier researchers was partly because it was wrongly assumed that these women were economically inactive” (p. 89). Yet, by working unpaid in family businesses the migrant women continued their traditional role, but this time in the new country.

In contrast to the women of these traditional migration patterns, for the first time in history large numbers of single women from developing countries with relatively traditional societies and travelling without their families, are moving to developed countries to study and take up professional employment (Luke, 2001; Harvey, 2000; Zlotnik, 2003; Parrenias, 2001, 2003). Literature on medical migration from the developing to developed countries (Martineau et al. 2002; Raghuram, 2003, 2006) recognises that female doctors and engineers are now a significant part of this migration stream. Although women have always played an important role in migratory movements (Campani, 1995) the new phenomenon is characterised by features not seen in earlier migration movements, in particular, the migration of unaccompanied, well-educated young women moving to the life of a well-paid, independent professional in the middle class of a first world country. Raghuram (2005) points out that certain types of migration

have received less attention than they deserve. This includes the migration of the skilled (including the participation of women). Parwathi Raghuram (2008) argues that research on women's migration is often restricted to sectors such as domestic work and entertainment. There are virtually no studies of women in male dominated sectors of the labour market and little on women ITC workers or women entrepreneurs and the developmental impact of their migration (Raghuram, 2008).

The very newness of this phenomenon means that it is less well understood and documented than more established forms of migration (Raghuram, Maruja, Asis & Piper, 2005). It is a phenomenon also affecting New Zealand with the migration of women from Asian region such as India, Indonesia, China and Sri Lanka to this country (Badkar, 2006; Iredale, 2000, 2001, 2004). The phenomenon now characterises the United States' patterns of migration and matrimony. Marital status, including being unmarried, plays a crucial role as a determinant factor for contemporary migratory movements. The literature points out the women who have never married or who were previously married but are now single, are now a significant feature of migration patterns (Society, 2006; Callister, 2007; Hymowitz, 2008).

From 2000 to 2005, the Sri Lankan average annual migration of females overseas for foreign employment was around 126,119 (Gamburd, 2000; IOM, 2005; Department of Census & Statistics; 2002, 2005, 2007; De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007). This was sixty percent of the total emigrant population with labour migration to the Middle Eastern countries a core feature of Sri Lankan economic strategies at family and national levels. Such extensive migration is likely to continue in the future particularly for domestic workers and unskilled work categories. The increase in female migration has several explanations, among them the trans-globalisation. The trend will depend upon several features such as diversifying migrants' destination countries, economic growth in Sri Lanka and the local availability of attractive jobs, and the country's continued capacity to send care workers abroad to tend to child and an ageing population and in the destination countries (Gamburd, 2000). Most of these women are not professionals. They left Sri Lanka to work as domestic servants in Middle Eastern countries.

However, the recent increase of professional women migrating without their families suggests a new and significant phenomenon that warrants investigation. In 2000,

935 female professionals from Sri Lanka migrated to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. By 2005, this number had increased to 2,678 (De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007). The new type of migration shifts agency to the women as decision-making actors, and encourages research into who these women are and what are their experiences given that they have greater control over their lives than do those in the larger category of uneducated/lesser educated domestic female workers.

In order to undertake such research, the thesis provides case studies of the experiences of individual professional women from Sri Lanka. This material is used to interrogate Luke's (2001) theoretical analysis of a new phenomenon in global migration patterns, that is, its feminised character. Luke's study of the socio-cultural and political issues related to women and education in South East Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Malaysia) examined women who, after choosing careers in different fields found themselves breaking away from their traditional social environment. This is also the case with many middle class Sri Lankan women. Their tertiary education enables them to consider previously unimaginable ways of living (Gordon, 2002). For example, some well-educated Sri Lankan women, as well as women from other developing countries, now marry out of their ethnic groups. This is an identified feature of 'foot loose' female professionals (Vidich, 1995; Luke, 2001; Gordon, 2002; Hymowitz, 2008) which has implications for increased ethnic fluidity at a global level. As part of the investigation into the Sri Lankan women's experiences the study examined attitudes and behaviours concerning family and gender roles, including attitudes to marrying out of the ethnic group.

Marital status is one of the key determinants of gender related overseas migration in Sri Lanka with young adults and those who are not currently married (single, divorced, separated and widowed) having the highest migration rates (Schachter, 2001; Weeks, 2005; Kottegoda, 2008). The new patterns of migration are a response to the recent and rapid expansion of the global knowledge market. This is itself a feature of the fundamental shift in global capitalism from its industrial form to one characterised by flexibility, technology, and consumerism (Held, 2001; Hoogvelt 2001) and known variously as 'flexible accumulation' (Giddens, 1995, 2000; Robert, 2000; Harvey, 2005; Castells, 2001), post-Fordism (Harvey, 2005), and post-modernism (Giddens, 1999;

Harvey, 2005). Gordon (2002) argues that participation in the labour market has improved unmarried women's position. The change has taken place relatively recently and the labour of single women is in demand. Therefore unmarried women had more opportunities to construct independent status. Since the 1980s, globalised education systems have had a dramatic effect on professionalising women who are becoming increasingly integrated as players in the world production and consumption process. The study inquiring into this new type of female migrant has focused on Sri Lankan women moving to New Zealand as illustrative of this phenomenon.

Butcher (2010) point out that in recent decades New Zealand has developed a large market in education with international students enrolling in the country's higher educational institutions in considerable numbers. This growth occurred as a result of internationalisation of higher education through policy changes in both Australia and New Zealand. At the same time Asian countries turned to the southern hemisphere for globally recognised courses and qualifications offered by the universities. New Zealand provides a market for extremely mobile male and female global knowledge workers. They are members of a new, highly mobile class of well-educated, young or middle aged marketing experts, computer consultants, legal affairs specialists, financial accountants and top managers who move frequently in order to obtain the highest price for their services in an increasingly competitive market.

Li (2008) suggests that the Asia-Pacific region is the site of an increasing share of the world's international migrants. Li's study provides an overview of immigration policies and comparative perspectives on changing Asian immigration and settlements. He observes the consequences of contemporary international skilled migration including changing social hierarchies in New Zealand. Peren (1998) argues that the ideas and judgments of such professionals will in due course have an effect on attitudes and perhaps lifestyles of New Zealanders. As a result New Zealand will become more multicultural with the inclusion of these minority groups. The global market acts as a competitive force that equalises payment for services across national boundaries, although because New Zealand salaries are lower than the other countries like Australia, it is a less favored destination. Among these 'cosmopolitan elite' (Peren, 1998: 27) women professionals have interests which cross these national boundaries. The study

examined the implications of the women's 'post-national' interests in terms of their identification with, and commitment to, New Zealand. Was the move to New Zealand a means to an end in the way of settlers of the past or a staging point on the path to other destinations such as Australia, Britain, United States and Canada?

It is likely that the emigration of young, well-educated women from developing countries, such as Sri Lanka, will have far-reaching implications for those countries currently building their professional class. The numbers involved are considerable and potential costs can be great. In 2000, of the total 21,820 migrants from Sri Lanka to the United States, 15,630 (70 percent) were tertiary educated while 5,695 (26 percent) had a secondary education. Other OECD destinations for these well-educated migrants include Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and European Union countries (De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007). The 'brain drain' from developing countries and its corollary, the 'brain overflow' in receiving countries can lead to a downgrading of the cosmopolitan migrant's professional skills and increased competition for employment. As numbers increase the 'brain drain' may have social consequences for the countries of origin including increased strain on family and gender roles. In addition, the emigration of young professionals in considerable numbers from developing countries contributes to growing regional inequalities as rich countries benefit and poor countries lose their educated people (De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007). On the other hand coherent policies adopted by countries such as Sri Lanka, which loses high proportions of educated people, can, according to the OECD-2007 report (Policy Coherence and Development, 2007), help transform a brain drain to a brain gain and increase the benefits for the sending countries.

The Report (OECD, 2007) points out that the effects of migration on sending countries depend on their position within the migration cycle. This is a cycle that has to pass through several stages. Emigration can affect growth and poverty reduction through three channels: changes in the labour supply, changes of productivity, and through migrants' remittances. It is expected that sending countries can benefit from low skilled migration during the exit and adjustment phases by reduced pressure on the domestic labour market. This creates employment opportunities and increased wages for other low skilled workers who remain at home. In general, low skilled workers remit more than the



highly skilled and come from poorer communities where their remittances make a greater contribution to poverty reduction than the remittances of the highly skilled. Benefits from the departure of the highly skilled accrue in the later stages of the migration cycle. Therefore, 'brain drain' entails risks for sending countries but can also encourage higher levels of education at home; temporary circular migration of both low skilled and highly skilled workers can benefit migrants and the sending country often more than permanent migration. Migrant remittances globally were estimated at \$232 billion in 2005, were 72 percent going to developing countries (OECD, 2007). The remittances are of major benefit to non-migrants as well as to migrants' families as they can have a multiple effect on the community.

Doctors, engineers and accountants top the outflow of skilled professionals from Sri Lanka seeking better opportunities in developed countries (Raghuram, 2000; Iredale, 2000, 2004; OECD, 2007; Department of Census, 2007). The island faces a shortage of skilled people in many fields according to the report on the migration outlook for Sri Lanka done by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPD) for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Each year around 60 doctors leave for the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and other nations in the developed world to complete a year's compulsory training, but only half of the them actually return, worsening a growing crisis in health care services. A study conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka has revealed that doctors and accountants top the outflow of skilled professionals from Sri Lanka, seeking better opportunities in developed countries. The study said that Sri Lanka had the highest expatriation or migration rate of doctors. The IPS study said that because of the brain drain, in the health sector, there were only 800 specialist doctors in Sri Lanka to serve a population of 18 million.

Contrary to this situation in Sri Lanka, with the changes to the New Zealand general skilled category in 2002, female migration from South Asia to New Zealand increased. Badkar, et al. (2007) observed that the number of women in the professional category also increased by 64 percent between 2003/04 to 2005/ 2006. In terms of gendered migration from some source countries there is a similar number of men and women qualifying as doctors, whereas in other countries medical training may still be male dominated. However within the overall professional category the numbers of

women who are health and life science professionals significantly outnumber men. The settlement experience feedback survey in New Zealand (Badkar, 2005) shows that women skilled migrants were more likely than men to be classified as professional (40 percent and 28 percent respectively).

Sri Lanka has the highest expatriation of migration rate of doctors and third highest expatriation of nurses to OECD countries (OECD, 2009). The other highly skilled category with high outflow is that of accountants. Many Sri Lankan management accountants seek employment opportunities in Australia, Africa, the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and Canada. From the qualified chartered management accountants (CIMA), around half migrate to other countries (OECD, 2009). The migration of skilled professionals from Sri Lanka increased because of the ethnic war which intensified in the early 1980s. Today the Sri Lankan government encourages Sri Lankan migrant skilled professionals to either return or invest back in their country of birth to help with the recovery of war torn country. Given the effect of the brain drain on Sri Lanka, the case studies in the research included examining the effects on the families and communities resulting from the emigration of young women to see how this feminised “brain drain” was experienced by those left behind from the perspective of those who leave.

Some of the features of Indian emigration are similar to Sri Lanka; for example there are more women than men in the contemporary migration flows. Leckie (2006) observed that “there was virtually no global analysis of the gendered patterns of migration and ethnicity...there was an absence of women’s voices, an omission that has now changed substantially” (p.77). Pandurang (2003) suggests that the tremendous pressure of the growing population in India, combined with the globalised labour market ensures the large scale mobilisation of different employment categories outside the geographical space. It is expected that India may well have the world’s largest expatriate citizenry by the end of this decade as male migrants look for better opportunities to improve life chances. They are joined by an increasing number of middle-class well-educated young women who see the possibility of emigration almost as a given. Prior to the 1990s professionals who chose to leave often severed contact with their country of origin. However, today globalised knowledge workers expect to maintain regular contact with the home, a possibility facilitated by the rapid technology developments in

information communication and the low cost of travel (Levitt, 2010). For professional women the movement out of the geographical space of the home culture provides an opportunity to go beyond the middle class social status of the home country as well as to explore the possibilities of “the agentive new woman” (Pandurang, 2003: 90). She argues that young women have to make the “painful struggle” in balancing the tradition and the modern. Emigration adds to the complexity of her position.

### **Contemporary globalisation and its features**

The term ‘globalisation’ has been used to define various aspects of global expansion in the past decades that relate to the transformation of the world order. Giddens (1985) defines globalisation as ‘the intensification of worldwide social relations which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shared by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’. McCurry and Smith (2001) suggest that globalisation is characterised by the increased linkages between states and groups in states. The emergence of a global economy and the emphasis on liberal free-market economies has led to an increasing divide between those benefitting and those disadvantaged by this process, one reflected in divergent patterns of social, cultural and health risks. Migration not only involves the movement of people but also “the flow of capital, goods, images, ideologies, the flow of subjects and objects” (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002:5).

Migration for many people in New Zealand and other countries is not simply a one way movement but involves many global cross-border movements of political, economic and social processes. This has led to the recent term ‘transnationalism’ (Benton & Gomez, 2001; Murata, 2001; Spoonley & Macpherson, 2004). Several overlapping trends are involved. First, the worldwide communication revolution that began in the late 1960s has produced an enormous intensification of global communications, the most profoundly important being the internet. Second, the ‘weightless’ economy is increasingly globalised and this knowledge economy almost certainly operates according to different principles from the industrial economy. Financial markets make up its leading edge and are stunning in their scope, their instantaneous nature, and their enormous turnover (Hutton & Giddens, 2000). Third, globalisation refers to a post-1989 world after

the fall of Soviet Union and to the resulting increased integration of the global economy around neoliberal principles (Hutton & Giddens, 2000; Ongley, 2004) which resulted in the restructuring of international capital and the adoption of neo-liberal economic and social policies in Western capitalist nations. Finally, globalisation refers to the transformation occurring on the level of everyday life (Hutton & Giddens, 2000; Ongley, 2004) that is leading to growing equality between men and women. Generally, globalisation refers to increasing global connectivity, integration and interdependence in the economic, social, technological, cultural, political and ecological spheres (Harvey, 2005; Dale, 2009).

All these trends affected, in various ways and either directly or indirectly, the women in this study. However, the most direct effect is from the globalised knowledge economy, its market in higher education, and the creation of a cosmopolitan professional class to which the women appears to belong. The following discussion examines these trends and their inter-relationship within the broader changes to twenty-first century global capitalism.

### **The global education market in Sri Lanka**

During the 1960s and 1970s the elite of developing countries sent their daughters to developed countries for education. For example, Benazir Bhutto from Pakistan went to Britain, Chandrika Bandaranayake from Sri Lanka attended university in France, both later inheriting their fathers' political mantle. In contrast to the daughters of political aristocracies from developing countries, twenty-first century women professionals from countries such as Sri Lanka are from the educated middle class. They are self-directed individuals who pursue their future prosperity as 'footloose knowledge workers' to New Zealand and other developed nations. These high-level knowledge workers are to be distinguished from the less-educated and the poor, who comprise another, quite different, group of global migrants because of the purpose of my research.

The emergence of the global consumer society and the resulting tendency to cultural homogenisation has had a significant impact on developing countries. Technology changes the way in which information crosses the boundaries of nation states to transcend global barriers, gaining access to products and information in ways that were once unimaginable. This borderless nature of the global market has contributed to the rapid expansion of the education sector, enabling many individuals to adopt a cosmopolitan lifestyle (Cooper & Broadfoot, 2006). An inherent promise of modernity for autonomous individuals is the opportunity and freedom to develop and change, albeit under conditions of risk. Liberalised social arrangements free women in particular from restrictive traditions and expand their potential capacity to change their lives fundamentally but into an unknown future. The new relationship between the individuals and the social groups that characterises modernity has been recognised by sociologists from Weber and Durkheim. It is still at the centre of contemporary society.

Information age technology enables human capacity to transform global barriers in ways that were once unimaginable (Vidich, 1995; Gunn & Bell, 2002, Sorenson, 2004). This 'boundary less' nature of the virtual world requires the global market to accelerate with cross-border flows of trade, investments, ideas and people featuring as another key feature of globalisation (Castles & Miller, 2003; Hagan, 2006). Marxists, such as Ellen Meiksins Wood, argue that globalisation is a redundant term for the internationalisation of capital and that should rather be considered the latest stage of capitalism (Shiva, 2000). New forms of competition function in every layer of the education market and the society. Within this competition, new types of opportunities are created for women who become increasingly independent as they move under their own volition to other countries (Harvey, 2000).

The university plays a major role in opening up these opportunities and creating the globalised female knowledge worker with an international education. It is both an educational institution and a work place and has long been characterised as an international enterprise. However, the accelerated pace of people and information flows, global marketing and increasing standardisation across the sector have reshaped the institutional practices and discourses into what is now termed the 'globalisation of higher education' (Luke, 2001). This is a key factor of worldwide knowledge circulation which

has encouraged the movement of international students and skilled migrants in crossing national borders. Universities play a key role in contributing to economic growth and social reform and in building large middle classes (Kidd, 1998; Roces & Edwards, 2000; Bridges, 2007). Now, as a result of a more integrated global education structure provided by the global market, education is also a key part of middle class consumer culture.

### **Migration pattern change**

International migration was predominantly a male phenomenon during the large labour movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and the US, with women and children following in secondary waves of family reunification in the 1980s and 1990s. But by the 1990s, women were migrating in far higher numbers, both as family members and independently, voluntarily or involuntarily (IOM, 2000) In general, the early stages of labour migration to Europe were heavily male. Females migrated as family members rather than labourers in the workforce themselves and this was captured in the research. However, studies of recent migration have recognised its feminisation (Castles and Miller 2003). For example, the literature (Anderson, 2000; Parrenas, 2001; Buchan & Dovlo, 2004) on the contemporary migration of women to the United Kingdom identified the women participating in the new international reproduction of labour where women from the economically less developed countries have moved to provide labour for highly paid countries that pay higher salaries. The dominance of women in the labour market means that gender issues have arisen. Addressing these issues is important for the way that women's migration is understood and theorised. My thesis is part of this newly emerging research about female professional migration.

Discourses around such migration are becoming gender sensitive both in the countries of origin (Ball, 2004) and countries of destination (Dovlo, 2004), as writers recognise the new role of professional women. Between 1995-2000, the numbers of migrants is estimated to have doubled worldwide, from 75 to 150 million (International Organisation for Migration 1965-2000). The movement of migrants from developing and transition economies to OECD countries has created concern about the cost and provision of sufficient services to cater for such expansive movements of people. The mobility

among developing countries themselves is considerable with seasonal patterns of migration as well as new patterns emerging (OECD, 2008). North-North and South-South population movements have replaced traditional patterns of South-North migration as large international companies fuel the international demand for knowledge workers, such as technician and specialists, among who are many women. Badker et al. (2007) suggest that for a variety of reasons, highly skilled women in particular have now become critical players in the migration process. It is a significant factor in some of the migration flows into New Zealand.

Sri Lankan migration exemplifies these new patterns and the issues they raise are reflected in Sri Lankan public discourse and in the country's national policy about migration. The main issues are the feminisation of migration, the brain drain of professional and specialised technicians, and remittances from emigrants to their families in Sri Lanka. For instance, it is argued that women's gendered roles, which are significantly influenced by familial ideologies and centre around households, where the dominant imperative is stability and stasis, are disrupted by migration and mobility. While collapsing gendered norms in order to earn for one's family is made necessary by the need for survival in the context of deepening global inequalities (Raghuram, 2004), this significant social changes brings with it considerable social cost. Current research highlights how the imperatives of household survival drive female migration. It may even be about individual survival within the household in a context of violence, inequalities and abuse. Raghuram (2004) argues that migrant women's participation in the economic sphere is concentrated with ensuring survival within capitalism, and in a context of patriarchy. Work becomes a route to that survival. The satisfaction of career aspirations and career promotion may be another driving force behind women's migration for middle class women at least given that women are also entering the professions in ever increasing numbers (Crompton, 2002; Evertts, 2003). One result is the growing interest in women who take up professional careers in the field of medicine (Riska, 2001; Mink & Khulmann 2003). The feminisation of the medical work force in Western Europe, in particular the gender balance in medicine in Nordic countries and the United Kingdom, has stimulated an interest in women's experiences of the medical labour market (White, 2001).

It is research of relevance to Sri Lanka where the number of Sri Lankan female professionals employed abroad has risen from 935 in 2000 to 2,678 in 2005. This is a strong indicator of a new migration pattern, one in which the women in this study appear to fall. In addition, the emigration of all skilled workers has also increased from 36,475 in 2000 to 45,590 in 2005 (De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007). This is a significant contribution from Sri Lanka to the wider world, which indicates the intensity of the new phenomenon within the global market.

### **Changing class structure: Emergence of the middle class women**

The beginning of the modern era shows dramatic social transformation. Seminal social analysts such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud laid the intellectual foundations for much of the theoretical examination of social phenomena that accompanied the emergence of industrial capitalism. The phenomenon includes the growth of bureaucracy, the consequence of the accelerating specialisation of labour, the significance of religion in a scientific and secular age, the formation of the individualised self and changes to the moral foundation of modern society. All these factors are aspects of the ongoing rationalisation of modern life. Their ideas explain deep-rooted structural trends in Western society. Later thinkers, such as Marshall Berman, Jonathan Friedman, Arthur Vidich and David Harvey, in engaging with the intellectual debates spurred by the earlier philosophers, developed intellectual frameworks further to explain the effect of individuals within late industrial capitalism and, from the 1980s, in the shift to the technological economy (Friedman, 1994; Vidich, 1995; Berman, 1999; Harvey, 2005). As Goransson (2006) argues the emergence of modernity has produced a range of social characteristics with the adjustment of traditional social structures. For example, some of the features of modernity are the nation-state, industrial capitalism, commodification, individualism, secularisation, alienation and social movements, all the features that have changed the society in fundamental ways. She further argues that modernity is associated with the experience of a break between past and present forms of social life. Quoting Eisenstadt (2002), Goransson defines the contemporary world as a story of continual



construction and re-constitution of a multiplicity of cultural programmes which give rise to unique expressions of modernity.

Vidich (1995) following Weber and Durkheim has identified four major structural trends in contemporary global capitalism within which the experiences of individuals are grounded. The first trend is the ways in which bureaucracy, as the organisational form of modernity, affects the private lives of those who are exposed to such bureaucratic structural influences. National policy ensures that the shift to global free trade economic affects all level of society. The globalised education market, in particular, plays a vital role in the lives of the professional migrant woman enabling her to be increasingly internationally mobile. The effects are considerable both for localised societies and for higher education. A second trend identified by Vidich (1995) is the way in which the technologies of mass communication and management of mass society have created numerous large metropolises, which represents the centre and symbol of modern life. The third trend in the transformation of capitalism at a structural level is the change to the social and political psychology of the new middle class. The fourth is a new cultural rationale towards gender. The demand for access to participation in higher education is highly feminised. Indeed the social phenomenon examined in this research, that of a feminised professional migrant with her cosmopolitan tastes and global workplace demonstrates this aspect of contemporary character of the post-war ‘new middle class’ (Vidich, 1995; Macfarlane, 2002, Gunn & Bell, 2002; Eggins, 2003). This study of the experiences of the six Sri Lankan women illustrates how individuals fulfil the Marxian dictum of ‘making’ their lives but in circumstances not of their own choosing as they contribute to and respond to the wider forces operating at the structural level.

The structural changes to global capitalism with the shift from industrial to technological capitalism have changed migratory labour patterns in some important ways. However, technological capitalism still includes within it the industrialisation of the former ‘Third World’ and the migration patterns of that form of capitalism as the continued migration of unskilled and domestic workers indicates. But for those newly industrialising countries, such as China, India, and Sri Lanka, the influence of global technological capitalism is illustrative of the type of 21<sup>st</sup> century industrialisation, distinguishing it from the industrialisation experienced by Western nations in the late

19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. One important new feature is the education of women to tertiary level in the industrialising countries, their resultant middle class professional status, and their location in the global knowledge market (Luke, 2001). National policies of deregulation, marketisation and internationalisation, designed to fit the neoliberal politics of technological capitalism, have altered the contours and colors of university student populations. A mobile 'fit anywhere' curriculum with staff offshore, on site, or online, has enabled new cross-cultural contacts, interactions and networks among women on an international scale (Luke, 2001).

The expansion of global capitalism throughout the twentieth century brings with it a remarkable economic productive capacity which elevates the life styles and life chances of large sections of the world's population. It creates a large, well-educated middle class to enhance the stability of modern legal representative democracy in the developed nations, and engenders political changes in the developing nations. Developing countries such as China, India, and Sri Lanka today are experiencing increasing demand for democratic representation among their grown university-educated middle class.

However, the increasingly integrated globalised financial markets have consequences for social democracy that act against its expansion. These include weakened nation-state regulation and national barriers, that while tightened against unskilled labour, are weakened against financial and trade effects. The emergence of a global consumer society with its greater cultural homogenisation affects First World and Third World societies as well as the former Soviet economies. Economic liberalisation, according to the neoliberal global vision, is presented as a borderless world in which national boundaries are dissolving and countries are integrated into a unified world order (Afshar, 1999). Such trends have brought free trade opportunities, increased access to world markets, technological advances, and the global education market to developing countries but the effects on democracy's spread are debatable as middle class individuals may be seen as consumers first, and only secondly as citizens.

Another feature of contemporary globalisation is the emergence of the global education market (Peren, 1998; Afshar, 1999; Baker & Brown, 2004) which structures the knowledge society. In the 1990s the globalisation of higher education internationally pushed Western universities to seek a share of the overseas market and to acquire

increasing numbers of overseas students. Education became a new global 'trade' as the new technologies, particularly the worldwide web, enabled new forms of knowledge exchange. A globalised new professional class developed in the last two to three decades with the last decade in particular characterised by the emergence of this class as a new phenomenon within the Third World countries. Twenty first century university students are accepted as 'customers or consumers', a status which characterises the relationship between students, the universities and individual staff within the institutions. Higher education is a 'new e-bay'...student as customers are no longer seen as active participants in the hard slog of teaching and learning but as consumers, acquisitive and passive browsers in the knowledge bazaar...Students window-shop for perceived quality of education or they may simply purchase degrees' (Baker& Brown, 2004:174) from the education market.

### **Women in the global knowledge market**

In traditional cultures socio-cultural mores restrict the mobility of women, hampering their ability to benefit from educational opportunities. Pronk (2000) point out that, for Sri Lankan women, a combination of factors, such as socio-cultural barriers, time and place related problems and the influence of traditional culture have been the most influential factors. But contemporary globalisation is changing the lives of middle class women in those traditional cultures that have modernised in response.

Higher education institutions are at the centre of the rapid shift being made by developing economies, such as Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, China and Indonesia, to fully developed market economies (Vidich, 1995; Kurian, 1999; Freedman & Randeria, 2004; Harvey, 2005). The expansion of universities, the increase in student numbers and faculty staff, and the movement of intellectual property between nations are all features of contemporary higher education. These issues: the increasing global demand for students, the diversification of students and growth of private providers, and the diversification of delivery create problems for developing countries. Students must be prepared to develop the skills and knowledge required to participate effectively in the globalised social institutions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The migration of graduates, including women, to

universities in developed countries, at a stage of the developing countries' own emergence into developed market economy status, has consequences for the society left behind, the new host country, and of concern for this study, on the women themselves.

The young women in this growing middle class are experiencing significant change. It is a profound change occurring at the level of individual psychological dispositions (Rose, 1992; Gordon, 1998, 2002; Hymowitz, 2008). Gordon (2002) points out the single women are independent and strong individuals with economic autonomy, they emphasises the importance of financial self-reliance. Independence means to them being one's own caregiver, being in control in terms of life decisions and choices, being free of cultural expectations directed at women and refusing to confirm to pressures of traditional femininity. Gordon points out that a distinguishable form of emotional independence is mental independence, a broader sense of being an individual in charge of one's own life. My study is interested in the nature of this dispositional change, hence the case study approach which looks in-depth at the lived experiences of women in this category in order to explore how the wider social impacts of the global higher education market 'brain exchange' has affected their lives. Professional women exhibit the dispositions of modernity so the question is asked how 'modern' are these Sri Lankan women. Unlike uneducated female migrants who seek to maintain their traditional ways in the new country, the young well-educated professional woman is adopting a rational and instrumental approach to the migration experiences and the dilemmas within these experiences (Susan, 2003; Baker& Brown, 2007). Is this the case with the six young women I studied?

Within the adaptation to modernity a new type of dilemma emerges. The young women have many destinations to choose from. They have the freedom to move to a number of developed countries that seek their professional expertise and they have the range of opportunities that such freedom brings. They are disposed to embrace change and possibility in the globalised world market that provides free access to those who have achieved educationally. The new group of educated developing countries women entering the global knowledge worker arena, one created by the global higher education market, are simultaneously freed from the restraints of tradition to become members of a 'foot-loose' and 'flexible system' (Harvey, 2005). But they must also face the effects of the

changes brought by this freedom. Freedman & Randeria (2004) argue that the “movement of people in the world today that has led to their loss of rootedness” (p. 81). Stepping into the structural place opened up for them by global technological capitalism they are given many choices, ones that change them in fundamental ways—ways and that may well bring new type of restraints and opportunities. This paradox is of central interest to the research because the women in the case studies must negotiate along the path set by the paradox. The research interviews explored how each woman coped with the tensions that emerged from this paradox.

A time gap exists in the rate of change between women in traditional societies such as Sri Lanka and women in Western societies that modernised earlier. But in the twenty-first century, the status of women in traditional societies is also changing. According to Bras (2001), “twentieth century is women’s liberation perhaps, twenty first century will be that of her freedom. They are not the prisoners of traditions in the world conceived and shaped by the men” (p. 256). The transformation from submission to self-responsibility was exceptionally fast for several generations of Western women in the second half of the twentieth century. It is now underway for women in developing countries such as Sri Lanka. The growth in the numbers of academic women, primarily from First World countries, enabled the formation of new types of female communities and relationships. In an increasingly globalised educational economy women’s academic career mobility has removed traditional barriers and created new places for women in local circuits within the push-pull dynamics of global flows (Luke, 2001). Luke uses the terms ‘domestic self’ and ‘political self’ to describe the contemporary woman who is experiencing a complex duality in her daily life, one that is fundamentally paradoxical. One of the ways the global market in higher education has changed middle class women from developing countries is by giving opportunities to access world top ranked universities. Women are graduating from universities in their own countries then moving to first world countries for professional employment (De Mel & Kulatunga, 2007) or further university education in universities that rank in the top 500 (OECD, 2007).

The liberation of many developing countries middle-class women from the ‘domestic-self’ of the family and into the ‘public self’ of the world of work in what some commentators call the ‘global village’ (Glassman, 2004) is not as straight forward as first

appears as Luke points out in recognising the on-going duality between the two selves. Indeed over half of the students in many developed countries are now female (Luke, 2001) with many subject to the tensions created in the ambivalence between domestic and public selves.

The transformation of Sri Lankan culture in the past decades by the expansion of consumer culture and other forces of contemporary global capitalism has led to the emergence of a rapidly expanding new middle classes (Clammer, 2002). Consequently, increased female employment is changing the division of labour between men and women to the advantage of women. In an increasingly globalised economy, women have greater career mobility both locally and as migrants to other countries (Gielle, 2001). For example, women from South Asia comprise one of the largest sub-groups of immigrants to enter Canada, although little research has been conducted on the way these women adjust to their new occupations in Canada (Immigration News, 2006). In Britain, the Office for National Statistics (2005) reported that the largest single groups of immigrants were 121,000 arrivals from 'New Commonwealth' nations principally, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka in 2004 to 2005. By 2001, fifty per cent of the world's migrants were women. This is about 95 million. Significantly foreign women entering Britain were highly educated, with 13 percent holding university degrees (OECD, 2001). The employment status of these professional women in the host country has implications for the home nation, especially in terms of financial flows. Women contribute more than 62 percent of the \$1 billion dollars sent in remittances to Sri Lanka in 1999 (Immigration News, 2006). It is likely that as the proportion as professional women migrants to unskilled women migrants increases, remittances from the professionals will overtake the unskilled remittances.

### **The global labour market**

Until the early 1990s, Europe was the number one destination for students from developing countries who wanted to study abroad. During the 1990s Europe increasingly lost its position to the United States. The Bologna process, which restructured Europe's

higher education system, was the response in Europe to the challenges and opportunities of globalisation in education (Education & Training, 2005). Among other goals, it was designed to promote Europe's role as a desirable higher education destination in the global education market. The effect of this global market in higher education has been the 'brain exchange' as global phenomenon. Sri Lanka is an excellent example of a developing country, which, as a consequence of its colonial heritage, has very high standards of public education with English as the language of instruction, so is ideally placed to export quality brains to mainly First World nations. Other countries almost certainly capture the lion's share of Sri Lanka's education dividend (Rankin, 2001). Sri Lanka seems to be better at creating rather than employing graduates because employers cannot pay as much for educated Sri Lankan workers as can employers in other countries. Sri Lanka considers its brain drain as one of the major costs of labour migration.

Many small developing countries currently are experiencing an extremely high level of brain drain, with 43 percent or three out of seven individuals with university education living outside their country of origin. The 'brain drain' in East Asia and the Pacific region is even higher, at 50.8 percent (Schiff, 2008). In 2000 alone, the demand for Sri Lankan professionals and senior management from OECD countries saw the emigration of 935 professionals in the year of 2000. By 2005, it had increased to 2679. There is an argument advanced by Dibaja (1997) and others (Harvey, 2005; Baker & Brown, 2007) that globalisation is no more than the integration of the powerless marginal developing countries into the agenda set by the west (Dibaja, 1997 in Afshar, 1999). But whether, 'brain drain' 'brain gain' or 'brain exchange', there is without doubt considerable implications for the both sending and receiving countries (OECD, 2007).

While Marxist writers identify the rearrangement of labour on a global scale in terms of a new proletariat, neo-liberal writers explain it in terms of labour imitating capital. In the last two decades capital has moved increasingly more freely, almost second by second within financial markets. Now labour is catching up with capital and becoming as 'footloose'. Though both Marxist-neoliberal perspectives explain it differently, they are examining the same phenomenon. 'Flexible accumulation'– 'Post-Fordism' (Harvey, 2005) refers to the freeing up from national restrictions of markets under capitalism. In the process of neoliberalism 'creative destruction' (Harvey, 2005) the division of labour

brings all human actions into the domain of the market for the purpose of the emergence of the information society. This introduction of greater flexibility into labour markets has become one of the most visible phenomenon of modern society.

A Marxist approach explains contemporary globalisation as a new form of capitalist accumulation that re-arranges the social relations between capital and labour. Commodification of individuals' skills and knowledge is referred to as 'human capital' or cultural capital within this 'flexible economy'. Knowledge workers are to maximise flexibility. A disposable worker culture has emerged (Harvey, 2005). Like capital in the international sphere, neoliberalism has transformed the positionality of labour and of women knowledge workers. The concept of 'place' has changed in this new order and knowledge is now a major capital resource and knowledge workers (the new professionals) are in demand. They are brought into the global market place as knowledge workers through global higher education. That marketplace is characterised by as globalised postmodern culture that links the time and space.

It is the very globalised character of the education systems in First World countries that provide opportunities for those new middle class young women to move to other countries to expand their futures. These young women have a new structural location in the world that is produced by global economic forces which shape and direct their lives. How does this inclusion provide experiences which change the women in significant ways? The study explored the effects of this inclusion into a new structural location, how the placement changes the women and what significance should be given to their new experiences.

Women professionals, as members of the globalised proletariat or knowledge workers, move freely across borders with dramatic changes in their personal lives as well as more general changes for the societies they leave and the societies they join. The growing reliance on female labour, made possible by the new technologies, sees a demand for educated and employable women. Female socio-demographics in the 1970s and 1980s also contributed to the emergence of new and expanded forms of women's mobilisation as professional workers (Iredale, 2000, 2001; Bras, 2001; Callister, 2007). As a result of fertility control women had greater freedom to take part in the civic activities, while their educational attainment increased their socio-political awareness,



aspirations and expectations (Mohandom, 2005). The inclusion of young women from developing countries into the global market place indicates a turning point of the modern era. Daughters of the middle class, through their inclusion into global higher education, experience notable shifts in their lives, as they emerge into the globalised professional class.

Educational achievement allows these women to break through the barriers of traditional social structures and to move into the modern. I examined how the women lived this breakthrough, particularly those women's lives as knowledge workers within a globalised system of flexible acculturation. Therefore, the research question asked; 'How is change experienced by the young women as they move into the paradox of new opportunities and new constraints. Autonomy, independence and self-directedness characterise the women of this professional group who make their own decisions to move from their homes to pursue freedom (Vidich, 1995; Luke, 2001; Cooper & Bradfoot, 2006). Of course, women have always played an important role in migratory movements; there is a particular female experience in women migration (Campani, 1995) but the female experience of the new phenomenon is under-researched and under-theorised (Raghuram, 2009; Kofman & Raghuram, 2010). The case studies in this research are intended to provide illustrations of their experiences, ones that contribute to greater theorisation and understanding.

In the newly globalised economy, relatively well-paid jobs go to many of those with degrees. This encourages young women in developing countries to enrol in colleges and universities in an unprecedented way. However, there are powerful social effects in terms of both destination and source countries. Predominantly, that educated women are staying single is unsurprising; degreed women have always been more likely to marry late (Hymowitz, 2008). The combination of these trends, delayed marriage, expanded higher education, and labour force participation, with global migration and a disposable income results in the lifestyle of the cosmopolitan professionals. This research will provide a deep portrait of the women and their migrant stories.

## **Biographies of six women**

The six women in my research project graduated from Sri Lankan universities and migrated to New Zealand. Family background and the social class of those young women and their profession has created differences in their attitudes towards their culture, identity and selfhood. As a researcher, I am responsible for the confidentiality of the participants therefore I have omitted some personal details of the respondents. I have used pseudonyms while I don't mention the specific occupation I do refer to the field of employment. I have renamed them as Achini, Hiranya, Sanjula, Asanka, Thanuja and Nimmi. All the women are Sinhalese, the ethnic majority of Sri Lankan society.

*Achini Perera:* Achini is twenty nine years old. She graduated from the University of Colombo and migrated to New Zealand in 2004. She has two sisters, one older and the younger. She moved to New Zealand to undertake higher education at Massey University. While doing her Masters degree in food science she started her first employment as a food technician at a food processing company. She has been grieving for many years for her mother's death. Her migration was intended to be a therapeutic solution for her emotional distress.

*Hiranya Mendis:* Hiranya was also a twenty nine year old Information Technology expert. Failing to get access to the university in Sri Lanka she enrolled for a Chartered Management Accountant degree and diploma in Information Technology in a private university institution and graduated in 2004. Her expectation was to study in a foreign country and to be free. She is the eldest of the family of three girls. She moved to New Zealand to further her education and to obtain a degree of Technology in Electronic Engineering at Auckland University of Technology and Masters of Business Administration (MBA) at the University of Auckland. She made her parents and family proud with her decision to migrate. Having a job in New Zealand enabled her to meet her parents' idea of success. Her ultimate goal is to be a network engineer or system administrator. Now, her parents allow her to do whatever she wishes. (This is the Sri

Lankan mentality of ‘living abroad craziness’). Her primary expectation is to advance her career and then she would consider her parents’ expectations for her personal life, such as finding a partner or allowing her parents to find a suitable partner for her.

*Sanjula Gunawardhane:* Sanjula’s main purpose in migrating was to find a ‘good job’ and to further her education. She graduated from the University of Kaleniya but despite having a first class honours degree in Economics she could not find a suitable job and decided to move from Sri Lanka. She is critical of the government’s education and employment initiatives with regard to youth generation and graduates in Sri Lanka. She looked for a place where her educational qualifications are valued. While working for a bank in New Zealand she was able to update her educational qualifications and experience. As an economist and data analyst she recalls her first two years of hard work in New Zealand.

*Asanka Jayathilake:* Thirty two years old Asanka is come from a business family in Sri Lanka. She was the most autonomous young woman I met through this research programme. Asanka has been motivated by her friends at a well-known school in Colombo and the University of Colombo to migrate. Her move to New Zealand at age 24 was the beginning of her adventurous life journey designed to be followed by higher education. Her multicultural attitudes led her to be a freedom chaser and self-dependent with a vision to run a profitable firm in New Zealand. After graduating with a Bachelor of Engineering in Sri Lanka she enrolled in a Masters of Engineering and joined a Non-Governmental Organisation in New Zealand.

*Thanuja Wickramanayake:* Thanuja is a 31 year old who moved to New Zealand in 2003. She is very talented young woman, currently working as a Information Technology designer and a consultant. She was born as the eldest to two younger male and female siblings. She comes from highly educated family. Her parents are university graduates and her younger siblings are undertaking prestigious degrees at the University of Colombo. She obtained her Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree from the University of Jayawardhanapura and the Information Technology degree from a private tertiary

institution. Living in the capital city of Sri Lanka and born to a privileged family has been advantaged to development of her character significantly. Her dream was to be a medical doctor but she couldn't get access to the university because of the limited educational provision in the Sri Lankan university system. She was determined to turn her lost dream into a challenge and decided to come to New Zealand to pursue that challenge. Now she is a permanent resident in New Zealand.

*Nimmi Jayasekara:* Nimmi is a thirty years old who has been living in New Zealand about seven years. She is the only girl and the youngest of her family. Her parents graduated from the University of Sri Lanka and both were government officers who successfully spent their life as a highly respected family. They are now retired. Nimmi also graduated with a commerce degree from a Sri Lankan university. Being an upper class young woman she is intimately familiar with Western social values and attitudes. As a professional she is closely attached to the Kiwis (as she refers to White European New Zealanders) with whom she works. She has to deal with many 'born and bred Kiwis' in her work as a chartered accountant for a recognised company based in the Auckland region. Her profession as a commercial law consultant in relation to the property management has enabled her to become a careful investor. She now owns business shares.

This chapter provided an overview of the global economic system that has been the driving force of massive scale international migration. The emergence of global knowledge labour market and the global education market which produces professionals for that market were discussed. I also highlighted the consequences of knowledge circulation and exchange dynamics: 'brain drain', 'brain gain', and 'brain overflow' and the role of women knowledge workers in this exchange. These processes have significance implications for both sending and receiving countries and in positive and negative ways. The next chapter provides an overview of women's migration in terms of the Sri Lankan and New Zealand contexts.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Sri Lankan Migration

#### Introduction

This chapter provides a more complete understanding of Sri Lankan international migration by examining the elements of contemporary female migration. I examine the extent to which international migration is driven by the institutions which exploit the social, economic and political vulnerability of women across the globe. Also, I examine Sri Lanka as a particular case study of global dynamics within which it operates as a sending country. The discussion provides further background material to my research and its participants.

#### Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand

Sri Lanka has a long history of international labour migration as a migrant receiving country prior to its migrant sending status in recent years. European inhabitation of Sri Lanka began with the Portuguese (1505-1668), followed by the Dutch (1669-1798), then with British domination for over four hundred years (1798-1948). During these colonial periods the country experienced labour immigration particularly during the British colonial era due to the large flow of south Indian immigrant labour that was brought in to work in the plantation sector from the mid-1830s. Perera (2008) suggests that this immigration was a significant contributory factor to the population growth in Sri Lanka from that time.

Sri Lankan migration to New Zealand has occurred in different periods of time and for different reasons, and until the 1950s, under the restrictive nature of New Zealand's race alien policies. Leckie (1995) argues that the presence of Sinhalese during the 1870s reflects the forgotten multicultural population of gold prospectors in New Zealand. Appo Bay in Golden Bay was named after a Sinhalese who discovered gold there. Census data since 1874 shows a very small but increasing Ceylonese (now known

as Sri Lankan and including Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher people) presence in New Zealand.

The research (Dodampegamage, 2002) on Sri Lankan migration and settlement in New Zealand since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century has focused on a historical analysis of Sri Lankan migration to New Zealand in three different time periods. Dodampegamage (2002) examined the reasons for migration to New Zealand, settlement patterns, the shaping of small New Zealand-Sri Lankan communities and the contribution of these communities to the wider New Zealand society. Research by McKenzie (1997) focused on the Sri Lankan Sinhalese ethnic community in New Zealand while Basnayake (1999) investigated different aspects of Sri Lankan experiences in New Zealand. According to Coates and Carr (2005) these experiences were characterised by 'brain waste'; a situation that indicates a failure of policy formation to properly utilise skilled migrants in New Zealand. Those studies reveal that the experience for people who immigrated to a country with markedly different cultural values and practices is characterised by a degree of difficulty as tensions arise between different, and sometimes conflicting, cultural values and practices.

My study continues in the tradition of the Dodampegamage, McKenzie research by also investigating Sri Lankan settlement in New Zealand. It differs from these studies however in its focus on the ways in which women migrants negotiate the conflicting values and practices to make their own contribution to the skilled professional workforce. It also investigates the extent to which the women make conscious decisions to maintain Sri Lankan cultural identity or to seek identity change through adaptation to new values and practices. Although there are a number of studies, both from New Zealand and other countries, about the migration experience of women (Campani, 1995; Cohen, 1995, 2001; Skeldon, 1997; Kivisto, 2000; Fonow 2000; Ip, 2000; Kolig, 2005; Badkar, 2006, Leckie & Voci, 2011) there is no sole study that focuses specifically on the experience of Sri Lankan women who migrate to New Zealand. Importantly, the status of Sri Lankan women in New Zealand is very different to that of the women used as a source of cheap domestic labour. In the 1960s the predominant phenomenon was the 'brain drain' to developed countries with the recent trends in globalisation and the liberalisation of opportunities encouraging increasing temporary or permanent skilled

labour movement. Iredale (2003) argues that “skilled migration still incorporates ‘brain drain’ in the search for greater opportunities and better life chances and lifestyles by professional people from both developing and developed countries” (p.122). The majority of the migrant Sri Lankan women to New Zealand fit into this category. They are educated, qualified, and experienced professionals in their homeland and continue their professional careers overseas.

The colonial bridge between Sri Lanka and New Zealand is one of the attractions for these women to move to New Zealand. Having shared British colonisation, many Sri Lankans are familiar with the New Zealand education system with its similar curriculum, the use of English as the medium of instruction, and the qualification process. The recent leading role played by New Zealand in Sri Lanka’s educational restructuring programmes provides another link between the two countries. Migrants prefer to go to the former colonial centres like New Zealand, believing that their problems of adaptation will be much less compared to those in countries with a different language and religion where it is more difficult for the migrant to adapt (Cohen, 2001).

Previous research (McKenzie, 1997 Dodamegamage, 2002) has highlighted the need to investigate the cultural conflicts that are manifested in a variety of ways in the life of immigrants. That was an aim of this study - to provide empirical evidence of the experience of negotiation within the process of cultural adaptation by Sri Lankan women. This chapter provides the background to the study including a brief history of Sri Lankan migration. It introduces the research already available about Sri Lankan migration to New Zealand and discusses the experience of Sri Lankan migrant women in recent times. The purpose of the research is located within this wider setting.

The idea of migration from developing to developed countries produces experiences that affect the cultural identities of individuals and their sense of belonging to both their homeland and the new country. The complexity of relationships in the two places adds to feelings of confusion and alienation. McMaster (2001) points out that “people who leave their home and country, for whatever the reason, feel the tragedy of uprooting and the loss of identity, home and community, and also experience being rejected” (p. 32). Kivisto (2002) discusses how global migration has shaped ethnic dynamics and cultural identity differences in the integration of the migrant community to

the new society. He argues that the “intensity of cultural spreading has caused tradition and modernity to coexist and reciprocally influence each other, creating tensions and conflicts which are significant characteristics” (p.20).

According to Kivisto (2002), Asian migrant groups are far more culturally distinctive because their ethnic identities, religious identities, traditional values are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing. For example, gender issues create significant conflict around areas such as male authority, arranged marriages, and pre-marital sex. The conflicts and tensions which exist between the transnational second generation and their first-wave migrant parents are quite common. A similar study on migration (Hirshman, 2004), tended to focus more on the psychological benefits of cultural continuity and religious faith following the trauma of immigration while Raza (1997) points out that gender identity may be an important mediator of adaptation. She indicates that in Indian culture, women are considered as the primary guardians and transmitters of culture and are encouraged to be more traditional.

There are a number of other studies of immigration from Asia that focus on India and China (for example, Ho, 1995, 2004; Spoonley et. al. 1996; Raza, 1997; McKenzie, 1997; Ip, 2000, 2003; Liu et. al. 2005; Ho et. al. 2007). However, my aim here is to concentrate on Sri Lankan migrants who are relevant to the purpose of my research. Influenced by Cohen, (1995) the recent research by Dodampegamage (2002) on Sri Lankan migration and settlement in New Zealand provides comprehensive analyses in this field. It provides an historical stages approach for the analysis of Sri Lankan migration to New Zealand, in three different time periods, since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. He examines the reasons for Sri Lankan migration to New Zealand, and how the migrants have settled and shaped the community formation in the new context. Dodampegamage categorises those events into three waves: from 1850 to 1950, a period when both Sri Lanka and New Zealand were British colonies so that migration was influenced by this imperial context; after the World War II, from 1950 to 1979, when US hegemony affected migration; and a third wave, characterised by conditions created by the relative decline of US hegemony, the neo-liberal restructuring of economies and the new electronic technologies. The literature investigates the role of the three different waves of migration process in shaping the socio-demographic characteristics of the contemporary



Sri Lankan community in New Zealand. It covers the vast area of the formation of the way of life of migrants and their different experiences and challenges in adapting to the new society (see Dodampegamage, 2002). In the light of this literature, my aim was to open up and provide access to understanding the new phenomenon of Sri Lankan professional women in the New Zealand labour market.

The small number of Ceylonese (Sri Lankans) who migrated to New Zealand during the early stage were colonised subjects of the British Empire. According to Dodampegamage (2002) they were the educated lower administrative class or Burgher descendants of Dutch and Portuguese, or domestic servants of the expatriate British households, or convicts and indentured laborers. The New Zealand Census records only 33 Ceylonese migrants in 1874 and 149 both male and female, in 1936. While the first wave of migration can be understood within the colonial context shared by both New Zealand and late nineteenth, early twentieth century Ceylon, the second migration wave, from 1950 to 1979, occurred as the consequence of declining British hegemony, decolonisation and the development of US hegemony after World War II. De Silva (2002) also argues that after the independence of Ceylon, in 1948 from the British, the country was faced with inherent problems of the decolonisation. In particular, Independence gave rise to the possibility of the cultural and political empowerment of the majority Sinhalese Buddhists elements of the society. Sabaratnam (2001) emphasises the importance of the Citizenship Act of 1948 and the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 1949 and later in 1956 the Language Bill, when Sinhala became the official language, affecting both minorities and some Sinhalese. Prioritising Sinhalese as the state language and Buddhism as the state religion was an issue for minority groups as well as for the many westernised middle-class Sinhalese who preferred to use English in their work. Their commitment to English can be seen in their promotions, transfers, scholarships and merit raises (De Silva, 1997, 1981, 2002; Sabarathnam, 2001; Perera, 2008). As a result of these changes and of the liberal economic policies pursued by independent Sri Lankan governments in the latter part of the 1960s minority ethnic groups such as the burghers' descendants of Dutch and Portuguese along with the educated class of professionals from all the smaller ethnic groups left Sri Lanka (De Silva, 1981, 1997, 2000; Perera, 2008).

Dodampegamage (2002) suggests that the second migration wave to New Zealand can be seen as the consequence of the diffusion of skilled labour that was exchanged within the global economy. This group included Sri Lankan administrative professionals such as doctors, engineers, accountants, and lawyers. In the third period, after immigration legislation was amended to incorporate a points system a greater number of Sri Lankans qualified for permanent residence in New Zealand. They were not required to secure a firm job offer before arriving in New Zealand, but rather gathered points in different categories such as educational qualifications and professional experience, language skills, age, financial resources, and family size. However, both Dodampegamage (2002) and Basnayake (1999) noted that under-employment and unemployment became a serious problem for a number of educated professional Sri Lankans who migrated during that period to New Zealand.

### **Migration and identity**

Research (for example, Ward & En- Yi Lin, 2005) showed that migrants use acculturation strategies to simultaneously maintain their cultural heritage and as well as to become a 'Kiwi'. In New Zealand, as in many other countries, there is a strong preference from migrants for integration. The term 'Kiwi' is used by people of different ethnicities to refer to themselves as a 'New Zealander'. This demonstrates their sense of belonging and reflects a changing identity (Didham & Bedford, 2004), though one not without its conflicts and contradictions. Ward & Liu (2004, 2005) found that identity conflicts among migrants are an influential factor in changing family relationships as well as a threat to traditional cultural continuity. Colleen Ward (2005) suggests that ethnic and national identity positively affects migrants' achievement and well-being, including greater life satisfaction as well as higher levels of self-esteem.

The 1995 New Zealand migration review substituted the existing category point system for a more general criteria that included qualifications, skills, and English language capacity. This system has led to the increased immigration of skilled migrants from a wide range of countries including Sri Lanka. Today's migrants are, on the whole, better educated than native-born New Zealanders (Statistic New Zealand, 2002; Zodekar,

2005). This high migration of non-New Zealanders has resulted in significant reactions from New Zealanders towards migrants with some in the news media viewing these new cultures as a threat to New Zealand culture and national identity (Trlin & Watts, 2004; Butcher & Spoonley, 2011).

However Liu (2005) points out that social identity always undergoes constant change and is historically patterned. When people change their context by immigration, their identity also undergoes considerable change. These changes can be seen in different forms within their new context. Experiences in the new society reduce or add to the original states of their identity. One of the focuses of this study is this experience of identity change in a new context. Identity and culture are key issues for migration in the new diasporas of the post-colonial post-modern West that are the legacies of colonialism (Weedon, 2004). Weedon (2004) examined how people negotiate identity and differences in post colonial multicultural societies with reference to the importance of hybrid cultures and identities. Similarly, Fonow's (2000) research on Asian American women in the United States traces identity change and tensions between cultural norms and traditions. Within the social interactions of the new society the young women negotiated their gender identity as they learned the social norms of the host culture. In the Fonow's study, the participants actively maintained their Asian identity in the new context. However in making the choice to do so, the women were being consciously traditional, that is, modern. The findings of my study are more ambiguous and show much more active negotiation between the contradicting processes of identity change and maintenance, although like the women in the Fonow study, they exhibit a high degree of conscious decision-making.

Gender norms are constantly changing in the contemporary globalised world and these affect how culture influences shape women to their roles in the changing society. It is not a matter of choice between the traditional and the modern. Life is far more complex and messy than that. According to Fonow (2000), culture provides opportunities to confirm, modify or resist social dictates about the nature of women's roles with social and cultural factors, such as race, ethnicity, religion, and social class influencing the way we solve our moral dilemmas. Fonow comments that cultural clashes are common among migrants but they typically assimilate in the second generation. However, she also found

that some migrants remain isolated, particularly in Asian communities. Fonow argues that 'Asian American' women often retain the traditional emphasis on the family and the collective unit, something which may heighten cultural conflicts.

Traditionally, Sri Lankan women are family oriented and tend to keep alive some of the traditions to maintain specific gender roles that are a vital feature of the culture. However, this study provides evidence that those women are also constantly negotiating with the host culture and integrating to the host society by redefining their identity effectively (See Chapter 7). Ip & Pang's (2005) study of young Chinese found that the younger generation in a Chinese migrant family rejected traditional cultural values and practices. This was not the case with the Sri Lankan younger women in my study. They were engaged in constant negotiation between their native culture and the host culture and made conscious decisions about what traditional values to maintain and what to change.

Unfortunately there is little current research in relation to the Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand, particularly regarding women so I have drawn on female migrant literature more generally to understand how a range of women who migrate deal with the cultural dilemmas that accompany change. The majority of migrants from developing countries to many developed countries in recent decades have been women (Parrenias, 2003; Raghuram, 2006, 2008; Carter, 2009; Levitt, 2010). Researchers (Gugler, 1995; Campani, 1995; Raghuram, 2006; Perera, 2008, Jayaweera, 2008) argue that migrant literature has treated women as dependants rather than autonomous actors, with women largely invisible in international migration literature, particularly highly skilled women (Kofman, 2000; Iredale, 2001; Parrenias, 2003). Kofman & Raghuram (2010) argue there are three major reasons for researchers continuing to neglect skilled migrant women. First, literature on female migration is increasingly concerned with their role in the domestic and caring sector where the growth of labour is considerable. Secondly, the economic benefits of migration are often only analysed in the context of male dominated occupations in knowledge-based industries such as finance, science and technology (Kofman, 2007). The third reason is the unjustified assumptions that migrant women not employed in skilled sectors do not possess skills (Kofman & Raghuram 2010). The women who do appear as significant players are those in the skilled women migration

stream who are available to fill the demand of the current labour market. Recognising the complexity of issues faced by the women doctors who migrate from the Asian region to United Kingdom, Raghuram (2006) emphasises the need to investigate the migration of skilled women from developing to developed countries. Eggins (2003) argues that recent years have seen the issues of globalisation that cause fundamental change to the flow of people and services. This results in on the one hand on a global inequality and on the other the capacity for harmonisation. Castells (2000) regards these new forms of space and time as coexisting with traditional forms of space and time in the setting up of a new economy with the global net-works of information society. The rapid increase in cross-border flows of trade, investments, ideas and people is one of the key features of globalisation (Castles & Miller, 2003; Hagan, 2006) which has considerable effects for the society and education in particular. East Asia's success was based on globalisation especially on the opportunities for the trade, increased access to markets and technology. Because social cohesion is a necessity for economic success developing countries' governments aims to provide a high quality of education. Reforms supported by the World Bank have led to a strong technological emphasis with advance training to promote equality and rapid growth.

From 1995-2000 the number of migrants worldwide is estimated to have doubled from 75 to 150 million (International Organisation for Migration 1965-2000). The movement of migrants from developing and transition economies to OECD countries has created concern in the OECD countries about the cost and provision of sufficient services to cater for such expansive movements of people. The mobility among developing countries themselves is considerable with seasonal patterns of migration as well as new patterns emerging (OECD, 2008). Traditional patterns of South-North migration are replaced by North-North and South-South population movements as large international companies stimulate the international demand for knowledge workers, such as technicians and specialists. Due to the host nation and home nation relationship the emigration pattern has been changed. The earlier stage professionals who choose to leave the country for better futures have been blamed by the home nations leading to restrictions were imposed by some governments. Pandurang (2003) argues that the increased frequency of contact with home, facilitated by rapid technology developments

in information, communication and trade has lessened the effect on sending countries with skilled migration became more acceptable. Kofman & Raghuram (2010) suggests that women also form a small but significant minority among migrant information and communication technology (ICT) professionals entering developed countries. Raghuram (2004, 2008) argues that this category is rapidly rising. Until recently researchers have not been concerned about the significance of skilled female migration but the OECD and World Bank (2007) have begun to address the issues of data deficiency in relation to skilled migrants and labour market (SOPEMI, 2007) and the gendered “brain drain”. Generally, women migrate for variety of reasons: including economic intensives, family unity, the longing to escape marital problems, political violence and war and opportunities for greater social independence. International female migration is multifaceted. Migration is a global issue with profound opportunities and challenges for both source and destination countries. Due to the current and continuing demographic and economic divergence, migration pressures are likely to increase over the next decades and the migration will occupy the centre in development debates (Ozden, 2009).

### **Contemporary Sri Lankan migration**

From the mid-1970s Sri Lanka emigration for overseas employment began in large numbers. Prior to this, such emigration had been limited to several hundred workers going to developed countries. With the Sri Lankan government introducing ‘opened market’ economic policies in expanding the employment opportunities availability and of these new economic prospects in the Middle Eastern countries, the volume of emigration increased rapidly and steadily. Currently, an average of 230,000 people migrate annually for employment in the Gulf region. The activities of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) organisation in the North, and, later in the East, during the past twenty five years, has increased migration with many people leaving the country as refugees. Among them are clandestine or irregular migrants seeking employment opportunities as well. According to Dissanayake (2008) these refugees are either actual political refugees or those who are in fact migrating for economic reasons but use refugee status as a way to entering into and gain residency/citizenship in foreign countries. De Mel & Kulatunga

(2007) argued that the feminisation of migration is one of the foremost trends with most women coming from underprivileged groups to migrate to work in service areas, often as housemaids or domestic workers. Their lack of English language skills and low level of professional skills makes them vulnerable to the flexible labour market, especially of Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and United Emirates which are the major destinations for poorly paid Sri Lankan domestic workers. From the 1970s, market liberalisation and structural adjustment have contributed to the increase in the number of Sri Lankan women in the labour force and to the nature of their employment, both within and the outside the country. Those flows increased rapidly in subsequent decades and despite the cultural restraints that prevent women from working outside the country, women have a great willingness to do so. This is attributable to a number of factors, one of which is that women are seeking higher wages, especially if they are semi-skilled. Another important factor is the higher rate of unemployment among females in Sri Lanka (De Mel & Kulatunga (2007)).

Sri Lankan government policy under the control of the (SLBFE) Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) is intended to facilitate safe migration. The key objectives of the SLBFE are to provide protection and welfare to domestic migrant workers, regularise the labour migration industry and promote Sri Lankan labour for overseas employment opportunities. Migrant workers' remittances brought USD 1.3 billion to Sri Lanka in the beginning of the last decade (OECD, 2007). It is now the country's second largest foreign exchange earner and a major boon in restoring Sri Lanka's war torn economy. Women constitute 70 to 90 per cent of the labour force in the top three currency-generating industries of Sri Lanka: apparel industry, migrant remittances and tea industry respectively. Yet there is a clear discriminatory process in all three sectors as these women are integrated into the labour market on unequal terms and are denied access to the acquisition of new skills that would make them upwardly mobile.

## **Reasons for migration**

Generally, migration from Sri Lanka can be categorised in terms of the reasons for migration. People are moving for settlement in other countries. These are usually skilled personal moving to take advantage of opportunities to upgrade their skills in a foreign country. Others who migrate for economic reasons include a range of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. Migration literature (Asis, 2004, OECD, 2007; Dissanayake, 2008) points out that migration offers women, education and career opportunities that may not be available, or are denied them, at home as well as providing alternatives to marriage, the traditional role of home career and to some of the more negative cultural practices regarding women. Some move for political reasons, mainly as refugees who are skilled and semi-skilled. Young people in particular migrate for educational purposes, mainly for undergraduate and post graduate studies. Leaving Sri Lanka for tourism does occur but only a very small segment of Sri Lankan people travel as tourist, pilgrims or for business purposes and mainly to neighbouring India, Israel, Mecca and Singapore (Perera, 2008). Migration may also result from the relationship networks among people (Levitt, 2010).

The household economy has been another factor that stimulates migration with increasing house prices forcing educated urban people to leave the country in order to own their own houses. The cost of living and daily expenses have increased but income levels remain fairly static. A new middle class has emerged within Sri Lankan society, one wanting living standards to match their aspirations. There are also traditional values that closely link the family to a home of their own. Many traditional customs and celebrations have to be done in the place where they live. Weddings, funerals, religious ceremonies, rituals called almsgiving and chanting '*pirith*', and sermons delivered by the Buddhist clergies have to be done at home within a large family gathering. This makes the family home the main focus of personal life. It is important that funeral ceremonies take place at the dead person's home rather than a funeral parlour. For a woman her main goal is her own home and some middle class Sri Lankans migrate to achieve the goal of owning their own home. Home is the focal point of the Sri Lankan culture and migration may occur in order to re-unite families.



According to the OECD Report (2007) migration is part of the solution to the labour shortage and population ageing in the OECD countries. India is the one of the countries with highly educated people willing to relocate to other parts of the world, particularly to English speaking countries. This is also the case for Sri Lankans who choose English speaking countries where by do not face the language barriers of European countries. In addition, many think of Europe as a conservative, socially and culturally protectionist region and also a place where racism can be expected (Vergeron, 2006).

Economic reasons are the main reasons for the migration of both men and women. Perera (2008) has identified gender differentials in the pattern of international labour migration in Sri Lanka. Migration flows increase in response to increasing unemployment in the country. These flows occur despite the cultural restrictions that have traditionally restricted women from working in Sri Lanka let alone outside the country. Women are willing to overcome these restrictions especially the semi-skilled seeking higher wages (Wanasundara, 2001). The higher rate of unemployment among females in Sri Lanka (over 20%) means that many are faced with poverty. Women in this position readily migrate for work which requires little or no training or experience. Some women seek to escape from domestic violence or alcohol addiction among the male members of the family. According to the migrant literature (Wanasundara, 2000; De Mel & Kulathunga, 2007; Perera, 2008; Dissanayake, 2008) and the mass media reports (*Daily News*, 2010 August 17, Human Rights Watch, 2010) many female domestic workers are exploited and experienced sexual harassment and abuse (Shreen, 2010 ). They frequently undergo a wide range of hardships before and after their arrival in the new country. The stories of Sri Lankan housemaids being ill-treated, beaten, tortured, some killed, imprisoned overseas are countless in the Sri Lankan press. The SLBFE reported that in 2002 there were 144 deaths, and in 1756 cases the family was unable to contact the migrant, 114 women went missing after the completion of contracts and 1411 women were sexually harassed. However, women are choosing to migrate in the hope of a better future despite there being no proper assistance for female migrants.

In contrast the accounts of the educated and skilled women, those who have migrated and employed in developed countries are markedly different. They have higher

paid jobs that match their educational qualifications and have the living standards and working environments of the modern professional.

### **Ethnic conflicts**

For the last three decades ethnic conflicts has been a major factor behind the migration of educated Sri Lankans. Many of those in the war ravaged areas in Sri Lanka have moved to the other parts of the country or to the neighbouring south Indian States. Most well educated Tamil people left the country to resettle in developed countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, America, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Others have exiled themselves to the South Asian countries with Singapore serving as a main hub of such movement. The poorest people and some middle class or minor business owners have no choice but to remain and become victims in the war torn regions.

Putman (2004) suggests that the boundaries of difference are simultaneously boundaries of hostility with ethnic conflicts defined as conflict motivated by factors that include or exclude- that is, by ethnic solidarity or ethnic hostility. This has always been the case in Sri Lanka with social solidarity among Tamil and Sinhalese existing throughout the Island but not in the northern areas. To understand the deep rooted reasons for the current emergence of ethnic rivalry one must look to the period of British colonialism. Several scholars (Dharmadasa, 1993, Silva de, 1965, 1998; De Silva, 1998, 2002) noted that under the British colonial rule ethnic groups were separated as a matter of policy with some favoured over others. For example, the British tended to selected public representatives from Tamils rather than majority Sinhalese. This created rivalry between the two groups (De Silva, 1971, 1981).

The traditional Sri Lankan social structure was organised on feudal lines with social position assigned according to caste. Working as labourers under foreigners was seemed as causing humiliation and disgrace in the Sinhalese Kandyan caste system. Dignity was very important to Sinhalese Buddhists. They rejected the idea of working for the British colonisers as labourers. As a consequence the colonial rulers hired cheap Indian labour which led to the influx of foreign workers. Because traditional landowners had no deeds proving their ownership of the land that was their generational inheritance,

such land became government property under British law. The government sold the land to the planters (Silva, 1965, 1981). Consequently land owners lost their source of income and became landless and poor. The Sinhalese were deeply resentful but powerless to resist the colonial power. Their fate was to live as dispossessed native people of the land (De Silva, 1981; Bandarage, 1983). The Tamil plantation workers from Southern India settled in the tea producing states and acquired citizenship. At the beginning of the twentieth century the liberation movement led by Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims working together against the colonial power and against the common enemy united the native Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim population in the struggles for independence from the British. Independence was finally acquired in 1948.

One of the main reasons for contemporary ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is the language policy reform of post-independence Sri Lanka (De Silva, 1981, 2002; Spence, 2007). The society was composed of the majority Sinhalese consisting of approximately 74 per cent of the population, Tamil 14 per cent, Muslims 8 per cent, with Burgher and other ethnic minorities making up 4 per cent. At independence Sinhalese leaders removed the colonial symbols from the society. As a replacement for the English language the majority group prioritised the Sinhalese language and forced minorities to learn in Sinhalese in the schools. In the northern part of Sri Lanka, English education was set up by the American missionaries and offered privileges to those who converted to Christianity. These advantages included freedom from taxation and job opportunities. This advantaged the Tamil populations made up of farmers and labourers who had not had access to literacy previously (De Silva, 1981; Daharmadasa, 1993).

De Silva's (2002) discussion of the historical reasons behind the ethnic violence, includes an analysis of the role played by the language policy of 'Sinhala Only' which was developed by the government in the sixties. According to De Silva (2002), language replaced religion as a central divisive factor and rivalry over educational and employment opportunities connected to language use has accentuated the rift between ethnic groups. Those who had privileges during the colonial period were the English educated professionals in the Northern part of the Sri Lanka. Following independence, this group moved to the capital city of Colombo where they were recognised as an upper class or elite, the same as the Southern Sinhalese who had similar privileges from the colonial

government. The post-independence language reform has affected members of both these groups as well as the European descendants known as Burghers. The language reform was disadvantaging to these English educated Tamil elites but not more like to the Tamil minority, a situation which led to some Tamil leaders being prepared to unite with the Sinhalese elites. The State Language reform had made it difficult for those who learned in English or in Tamil to access employment opportunities and promotion (De Silva, 1981, 2002; Spence, 2007).

Tamil representatives in parliament failed to influence public opinion and make changes within the political structure. They also failed to implement development plans for the remote areas and to improve the lives of the Tamil minority in Northern Sri Lanka. Within the political power structure and the educational system Tamil people have remained marginalised. Later, between 1970 to 1978, affirmative action policies that introduced the regional quota system to the national education system limited university access and job opportunity for Tamils (De Silva, 1981). This led to controversies over university admission during the 1970s. The unemployment rates are higher in the north and there was no reform or development process and infrastructure planning. As a reaction, Tamil youth unrest was flamed by what was seen as the indifference of the Tamil political leaders. The people rebelled against their leaders to force change and recover.

The young Tamils organised over twenty liberation groups, later recognised as main two groups: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) and the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). Money from Tamils in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Norway funded the liberation guerrilla groups. In 1983, 13 government armed force personnel were killed in the northern part of the country. The majority Sinhalese reaction was to attack Tamils who lived in other areas all over the country. Violence began between both parties and army raids and attacks were common place (Spence, 2007). For two and a half decades the civil war continued with thousands of army and police personnel and civilians including both Sinhalese and Tamil political leaders killed and villages and family homes destroyed. Innocent civilians including women and children were massacred brutally in their thousands.

De Silva (2002) observed that forced migration in Sri Lanka is strongly associated with ethnic conflict and two and half decade of civil war. While deteriorating relations between Sri Lanka's two main ethnic groups, Sinhalese and Tamils led to some migration from the 1950s, the civil war from 1983 saw a massive increase in displacement among the Tamils. Even from the mid-1970s, Sri Lankans started migrating for overseas employment in large numbers. Prior to this migration numbers was limited to several hundred going to developed countries. As Sri Lanka develops open market policies with the growth of employment opportunities in the Middle Eastern countries, Sri Lankan migration continues to increase rapidly.

### **Gender and migration**

Gender plays a crucial role in the process of migration and affects how gender changes are implicated in the way immigration policies are developed and how the social institutions which control the migration flows adapt to gendered migration. According to Omelaniuk (2005) gender inequality can permeate decisions, processes and impacts of migration, as well as affect the networks and support systems that play a key role at all stages of migration. She suggests that migration can also help reconfigure gendered relations, particularly by offering more women the opportunity to enter the global labour market. Omelaniuk states that the perception of international migration is that it was predominantly a male phenomenon during the large labour movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and the US, with women and children following in secondary waves of family reunification in the 1980s and 1990s. But by the 1990s, women were migrating in far higher numbers, both as family members and independently, voluntarily or involuntarily. Furthermore Omelaniuk identified that through their earning power and exposure to different gender norms abroad female migrants from developing countries have also been able to change their own gender relations within the family. This self-directed change was something that I found in my study.

Women now move in order to improve their economic positions as well as the domestic position in the home. They move to further their careers, to acquire new skills and not just to make money. This suggests that it is not enough to understand female

migration from the Third World to First world as a question of survival (Sassen, 2000). As Raghuram (2003) identified these women also aspire to the professional satisfaction, career progression and the development of skills and abilities. Many studies (OECD, 2007; Tirana, 2006; Moghandom, 2006) about female migration elsewhere indicate that remittances are more likely to be spent on human capital investment such as education.

The accounts of the six young professional women in this research showed that their families are sufficiently well off to live in Sri Lanka with nobody there dependent on remittances from abroad although two of the participants said they spent some of their income paying for their younger siblings' education. However, it is more 'gifts of encouragement' for them than a necessity. The professional women have come from the middle or upper middle class and their parents are not dependent on them. The young women are motivated to succeed educationally and economically for a better future. They are part of the labour market as players and consumers within the field of transnational employment. They are unlike the domestic workers and skilled workers who migrate to Middle East countries where there is no possibility of settlement in the destination countries. In those cases migration is more likely to decline over time. Migrants in the Gulf are more likely to save their income and either send it as remittances during their stay or bring with them when they return home. But the professionals who live in developed countries tend to save their income for the future (The South Asia, 2010).

Post-independence educational policies were designed to create equal opportunities for all Sri Lankans irrespective of their social class, gender and ethnic identity. Although not always successful these policies have contributed to an increase in the number of educated people and professionals in Sri Lanka (Silva, 1978; Silva, 1988; Jayaweera, 2002; ADB- 2008; Karunarathne, 2009). However despite the increase in the literacy rate and the large number of highly educated individuals, the government not has been able to create a truly equitable system of education to assist the economy. Jayaweera (2003) suggests that many educated people have not achieved the higher education and upward mobility they desire. In deciding to migrate, the professional young women in this study show that professional satisfaction and career progression and opportunities for greater social mobility are contributing factors to that decision.

The 'brain drain' is usually a label used to describe the phenomenon of emigration of highly qualified, talented professionals from one country to the other and as such, it is part of the broader process of international migration' (Tirana, 2006: 6). The expression was used for the first time in the United Kingdom during the 1960s, when a great number of engineers and scientists immigrated to the United States attracted by higher salaries and more favourable conditions. Since that time skilled migration is a brain drain phenomenon which has affected to Sri Lanka as a sending country. Many educated and highly skilled people find it in difficult to find a job that fully uses their educational qualification and skills. As a result there is a large exodus of young people to United States, Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan and other countries. Most of them migrate as students, later they find employment and apply for residency in those countries. This is mainly the result of the competitive education system and its lack of spaces for qualified youth in Sri Lanka. Only 14 per cent of those who qualified annually at the Advance Level (University entrance) examination can access the universities in Sri Lanka. Increasing political, economic and socio-cultural changes such as are also key influential factors in the migration of the young generation. Dissanayake (2008) points out many young well-educated migrants prefer to undergo hardship and make many sacrifices for the opportunities in developed countries.

Marital status is a key determinate of gender related overseas labour migration in Sri Lanka with those who are not currently married (single, divorced, separated and widowed) having higher migration rates (Schachter 2001; Weeks, 2005, Goransson, 2006, Badkar et al., 2007). According to Perera (2008) the multiple transitions occurring in Asian countries including Sri Lanka have caused significance changes in traditional values and to the attitudes and roles of young men and women. Four decades ago women migrated as followers of their husband or associational movers but not as autonomous migrants due to social constraints. The emergence of the new migration trend seems to be closely linked with the establishment of free education which has preceded the demographic transition in Sri Lanka. It is arguable that in terms of female migration Sri Lankan society is experiencing an irreversible decline of fertility.

## **Sri Lankan labour in the global economic system**

The factors in the 'brain drain' that 'push' educated people to migrate are often the unappealing educational, economic and intellectual conditions in developing countries. Low wages, the lack of suitable advance training and the career development opportunities, isolation from international intellectual debates and the perception that the situation will not improve all contribute (Tirana, 2001). The 'pull' factors are the shortage of skilled professionals in the developed economies, a key driving force for people to leave developing countries. The technological advancement in developed countries has resulted in the growth of fast growing commercial industries with a rapid demand for highly skilled professionals. These countries turned to the developing countries to meet their labour demand needs through the use of a number of attractive visa schemes. The existence of migrant networks in the developed countries may help to reduce the problems experienced by individuals in moving to a new country (Meyer, 2001; Levite, 2005) and the safe and socially stable environments in developed countries offers a more secure, stable and certain present and future (Tirana, 2006).

There are positive and negative outcomes of the 'brain drain' for both countries of origin and countries of destination. The literature (Zlotnik, 2003; Tirana, 2006; OECD-2007; Rankin, 2007) supports the opinion that host countries, which are mostly developed countries, benefit rather more than they lose. The host countries are able to save the cost of producing highly-skilled specialists by hiring them from the sending countries. Importing foreign students has become a feature of the labour market for developed countries there by producing a net 'brain gain'. The 'education business' in foreign students creates a large number of employment both directly and indirectly for the host country. The brain drain has negative consequences for Sri Lanka, which has invested in a free education system since 1945, three years before Sri Lanka's Independence. The Sri Lankan government encouraged skilled professionals to return even on a short-term basis for join the nation building mission. However, the increasing cost of living in Sri Lanka continues to encourage skilled professionals to migrate.



The theories of international migration explain various aspects of international migration flows between countries and regions in a number of ways (Cohen, 1995; OECD-2007; Crompton, 2000). The divided labour market theory (or the dual labour market theory), the new economic theory of migration, as well as social theories, are useful in explaining gendered aspects of international migration (Zlotnik, 2003, Raghuram, 2006). According to the segmented labour market theory (Ramji, 2003) international migration is demand driven. In modern industrial societies two types of labour markets exist. One is the primary sector that produces secure jobs, high wages, generous benefits, good working conditions and more attractive features for the native people. The secondary sector produces less stable jobs, low pay, limited benefits, and unpleasant working conditions.

Since the 1970s, Japan, Korea and newly industrialised countries and oil producing Middle Eastern countries have experienced labour shortages which are filled by recruiting immigrant labour from developing countries. This has divided the labour market into two segments. The demand for 3D jobs (dirty, dangerous and difficult) segregates workers along gendered lines. Females work in domestic services, helpers, cleaners, entertainers and factory workers while male jobs are mostly based around construction and unskilled labouring jobs. Immigration regulation has considerable influence on skilled women's migration. Since the 1990s traditional countries for immigration, Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom began to position themselves in the global competition for skilled labour, altering their immigration regulations to facilitate the entry of skilled migrants (Kofman et al. 2009). The changes in the negative aspects of skilled migration are counterbalanced by the gains made through remittances. The economic structure of the Asian labour market and the rise of global integration have increased demand for international labour flows for both males and females.

A number of social problems arise from large-scale migration. Families who are left behind by migrants may experience difficulties without the presence of the primary wage-earners. The misguided idea that labour receiving countries are 'heavens' where one can earn enough to live comfortably for the rest of the life can lead to misery when reality is confronted. Senanayake (2008) says how these false pictures of migrant life continue because migrants do not admit their difficulties, and instead paint a picture of

‘all is well and good’ which tempt more and more people to follow suit-making migration to countries such as Italy and the Middle East ‘a fashionable thing to do’.

It can be argued that brain exchange is an opportunity to develop both sending and receiving countries which would be beneficial to both sides. Within the global knowledge market exchanging skilled workers may not be a cost of society. Ideally each society gains the knowledge workers to fill the gaps while earning themselves. However, migrants are more than labour units. They are real people and their relationships with family and friends are changed by migration. Among married people a very common effect may be spousal relationships breakdown, the neglect of children and aged or vulnerable members of the family. There is a psychological cost to migration along with social and economic effects.

A feature of contemporary transnational migration is the tendency of many migrants who set roots in the host society to preserve strong links with the origin society. This is the case for skilled and unskilled workers who work in one environment and maintain familial ties in another (Vertovec, 2003; Weeks 2003; De Wind, 2008; Levitt, 2010). In terms of Sri Lankan migration patterns, the network is an important factor that connects the home country and destination, one made possible by the development of modern technology and flows of information that enhance the social network between Sri Lanka and the destination country. This reduces the social cost of migration to an extent.

The negative aspects of skilled migration may be counter balanced by the gain made through remittances (OECD-2007). According to the OECD (2007) remittances across international labour migration have played a key role in shaping macro-economic development in Sri Lanka. Jayaweera (2003) considers that future policies should address the gender aspects of labour migration in order to enhance the benefits of labour migration and also reduce the social cost for the families left behind and for the migrants themselves.

Although women migrate across international boundaries at roughly the same rate as men, a great deal of international migration scholarship has been based on the assumption that international migrants largely consist of male workers. According to traditional assumptions women migrate only to join their husbands abroad, with economic factors not considered the main reason for migration flows. However, this view

of women and international migration is challenged by the contemporary young professional women who migrate as global knowledge workers. Ramji (2003) argues that Asian women's successful encounter with Western education leads to a 'clash of culture' where women achieving professional careers abandon their traditional cultures and choose to assimilate the host cultural norms. However, as my study shows, the actual situation is more complex than this. Rather than a 'cultural clash' there is negotiation, adaptation and the fitting of some traditional values to the new ways. Although when it come to a traditional gender inequality, the young women in this study are quite clear that they will abandon these inequalities for the personal autonomy and gender equalities promoted in developed societies.

Callister (2007) observed that the marriage markets and labour markets have long been a driver of female migration. In early migration periods, the women who migrated to New Zealand came either as wives of migrants, as potential wives, or as a source of domestic labour. The traditional role of the woman was to be a home-maker. Giele (2004) argues that effective adaptation to the environment and to changing circumstances includes a shift in gender relations. This at the very heart of changing life patterns today particularly with respect to migration. Other studies (Pandurang, 2003; Raghuram, 2003; Ramji, 2003; Badkar, 2006; Badkar et al., 2007) suggest that women migrate for a variety of complex reasons and that in terms of migrant adaption to host societies women experience migration in unique ways that differ from men's experience. International relations have treated women as if they were insignificant actors and women remain hidden from international relations. Feminist scholarship (Kofman & Raghuram, 2010) challenges the notion that women are unimportant actors in global politics. This literature (Luke, 2001; Raghuram, 2003) argues that fundamental assumptions in the mainstream perspectives on international relations are gender-biased.

Kofman & Raghuram (2010) found that migration has become more feminised amongst the highly skilled leading to a greater gender balance amongst well-educated professionals. The share of women immigrants holding tertiary degrees in OECD countries is only three percentages point below that the men. They found (Kofman & Raghuram, 2010) that women migrate for the purpose of employment in significant numbers and many highly skilled women also enter as the spouses of principal applicants,

as is the case in Canada. In European countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Hungary there are relatively high rates of female skilled migrants among the foreign-born. Badkar et al. (2007) suggest that for a variety of reasons, women have now become critical players in the migration process. However, the main focus on female labour migrants in low labour waged sectors has meant a lack of attention on the migration of professional women and skilled female workers. To an extent this is because there is limited data on female migrants which can distort the picture and the reinforce assumptions about women migrants being secondary, rather than primary players in the migration process.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter sketched out the migration in different periods of Sri Lankan history including the role of Sri Lanka as a migrant sending country and the reasons, issues and challenges of female migration. The next chapter will discuss the methods employed in this research study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The Research Process**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined the background to the migration of professional women. This chapter discusses the research process which includes the research methodology employed in the study, the sample selection, ethical considerations, data collection, and the data analysis procedure. It also includes a discussion of the theoretical position and a review of the literature concerning case studies as the research strategy is in the qualitative research tradition and uses such studies. Methodology is defined in its broadest sense, including both the philosophical and practical aspects of conducting research. The chapter briefly discusses the research design to justify the case study approach and to address the credibility and validity of data sources in achieving the aims of the research questions. It includes an overview of the data analysis and the trustworthiness of the procedure. My position as an insider- researcher is discussed as well as the findings that point to specific discussion chapters.

The purpose of my research was to investigate the experiences of female knowledge migrants who are highly educated, independent professionals, and recent migrants to New Zealand, thereby contributing to a greater understanding of the feminised character of professional global migration. The main focus of the study was to examine how their experiences in the globalised knowledge labour market demonstrate a particular female phenomenon in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and the nature of the changes occurring to those young women. The highly personal and sensitive nature of the research lends itself to using qualitative methods mainly based on case study in-depth approaches. I decided to choose a few cases to explore the women's experiences in-depth and analysed the cases within the contemporary political and economic context of the global phenomenon of feminised migration, a phenomenon which was documented in the literature. This supports the research goal while is to describe and analyze the 'incidence or prevalence' (Yin, 2003) of the phenomenon.

## **Research design: The choice of research methods**

Qualitative research is one of the two main research methodologies. Qualitative research methodology refers to research strategies and approaches which are capable of providing a rich, dense description of the phenomenon under research. Therefore, the main strength of qualitative research is its ability to investigate social phenomena. Esterberg (2002) suggests qualitative research assists social researchers to look beyond the ordinary, everyday way of seeing social life, enabling them to understand complicated social processes in context in novel ways. Moreover, qualitative researchers pay attention to understanding the subjective nature of human life and allow for the subjectivity of the researchers themselves. In addition, qualitative research involves interpretation, contextualisation and generation of any ideas that might be useful in studying others' lives. The methods allow the accumulation of valuable knowledge by examining the participants. This can produce a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation through the use of descriptive data approaches in the forms of words to illustrate and substantiate the perceptions of the participants. Qualitative researchers emphasise the process and meaning of what is examined in viewing social phenomena through the eyes of their subjects. Furthermore, they try to understand how the researchers' own perspectives affect the research.

According to Esterberg (2002), the most difficult parts of qualitative research are the complex issues of interpretation and long term data gathering. The researcher has to employ personal analytical skills and apply them to text while incorporating theory and evidence. In capturing the socially constructed understanding of participants, there is an emphasis on data collection that is open ended, persistent and prolonged in nature. Gomm & Hammersley (2001) suggest that it is important to capture the complexity of the situation given that participants have diverse ways of interpreting the same situations. Qualitative methods were considered the most appropriate for my research project as preference was given to describing and probing the intentions, motives, context, situations and meanings of the words as well as the circumstances of actions (Denzin, 1978). There are four major methods used by qualitative researchers: observation,

analysing texts and documents, interviews, recording and transcribing. Researchers employ those methods both in qualitative and quantitative research, either by combining or using different ways according to the purpose of their research. Taking into account these challenges, it was decided to employ qualitative research in-depth case study techniques for this research.

### **Case study approach**

Yin (2007) defines case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The researcher needs to identify and describe the boundaries of the case as clearly as possible. Yin (1989) suggests that the term ‘case study’ refers to an event, an entity, an individual or even a unit of analysis. Therefore, case study can be defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence. Hamersley (2000) considers that the case study gives access to the inner lives of people, to the emergent properties of social interaction, with some advocates arguing that case study is designed to produce theories (Silverman, 2005). The idea is that case study provides direct insights into relationships patterns for conceptualisation. Stake (2002) argues that the case study researcher has to search naturally occurring cases for comparative purposes, to identify differences and commonalities. According to Yin (2003) there is an idea that case studies are only a preliminary research method and cannot be used to describe or test propositions, however some of the best and most famous case studies are explanatory case studies, for example: Alison Zelikow, 1999 (in Esterberg, 2002).

According to Newman (2003) “in cross-sectional and longitudinal research, a researcher examines features about people or units, either in one time period or across the period...” and refers specifically to a common set of features on many cases. In case study research, researchers examine, in-depth, many features of a few cases over a duration of time. Newman points out such cases can be “...individuals, groups, organisations, movements, events or geographies” (p. 33) and most involve qualitative

data about a few cases. In case study, a researcher may intensively investigate one or two cases, or a limited set of cases, focusing on several factors. Therefore, case study is a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case and coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. My study involves a few cases (six individuals) and was aimed to illustrate and understand the features of the social phenomenon.

The method of case studies is widely used in different disciplines of sociology and social anthropology where researchers use multiple sources of data and data collection methods. The case study approach was chosen here as the most suitable technique, in terms of its appropriateness for my research question with an open-ended interview schedule used for the data collection. It was intended that the method enable the achievement of a holistic view of the phenomenon and the understanding of the complexity of real life activities. Another advantage is that the case study approach is able to capture the emergent and immanent nature of the individual, where it is changing rapidly. The purpose of exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, through the six cases in detail, was aimed at understanding the women's views and attitudes in the process of their in-depth negotiation of cultural change.

The choice of the open-ended interview schedule offers sufficient flexibility to be able to approach the different respondents in an appropriate way, using the same interview schedule to cover the intended area of data collection. The interviews are audio or video recorded for secure and accurate accounts of the interviews and protection of the data, and also to potentially obtain more insights and clear understanding of the phenomenon which is under research. Ying (2003) outlines three conditions in using case study methods: the type of research question, the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events and the degree of focus on contemporary events.

The decision in choosing qualitative research method case study approach for this research was to enable the exploration of the feminised character of contemporary international migration in a global social sphere. My expectation was to obtain invaluable insights into, and understanding of, women's experiences, behaviour, attitudes and their active nature in-depth, drawn from the interviews. The nature of the study encouraged me to employ an in-depth study of cases at the phase of research implementation. For this



research, the case to be studied was the experience of six young professional migrants within the context of New Zealand.

### **Sources of data**

Esterberg (2002), points out that different data collection strategies have different strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, researchers often use two or more research strategies to strengthen the data. For example, case studies of in-depth interviews can provide insight into people's thoughts and feelings, but people's behaviours do not always match their words. The literature (Esterberg, 2002; Yin, 2007) emphasises the fact that case study inquiry relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation of results. In qualitative research, the researchers often combine multiple sources as research strategies to help balance the complexity of case study research. In order to address the research questions in Chapter One a multiple source technique was used. The interviews were the main sources of data gathering but I also used my researcher's journal and the participants' journals (to be described later). This use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation provided more evidence that strengthened and validated the data.

In employing these techniques, I expected to capture more details from participants' experiences than would be the case if I relied on interviews alone. As Esterberg (2002) pointed out, women have historically been silenced; they have not always had the opportunity to tell their own stories, and in-depth interviews allow them to do so. More than the notes and the recollection of the conversation, tape recorded interviews provide more emotional expressions: such matters as pauses, overlaps, in-breaths and sighs of the interviewee (Silverman, 2001), which added deep meaningful accounts to the research. Such very personal details provided genuine in-depth aspects of the individuals' social life. The interviews were a valuable methodological tool and the main method which used. The respondents were encouraged to express and offer their own understandings of their personal lives.

## **Interview schedule**

An open-ended interview schedule was used as the primary research technique with three inter-related aims. Firstly, it is to understand the experiences of well-educated women migrants through an in-depth study of six professional Sri Lankan women in New Zealand. Secondly, to theorise the experiences of these young women in terms of a new social phenomenon created by the globalised knowledge market; that is, the independent migration by young women from the emergent middle class in developing countries for employment as professionals in developed countries. Thirdly, the research is intended to contribute to the relatively small literature about independent middle class female migration from developing to developed countries in the contemporary period.

Four categories drawn from the conceptual fields of inquiry have been used to collect the data (see Appendix I). These categories are:

- Freedom to autonomy
- The global knowledge worker: Higher education and career experiences
- The professional lifestyle
- National and transnational identity

The interviews, as the primary data gathering technique for the research, were carefully designed to provide rich and more intimate views of the social world inhabited by the women than is possible with more structured methods (Esterberg, 2002; Schott, 2006).

In gathering comprehensive first-hand information I used the audio recordings and also took notes during at the interviews and then expanded these into comprehensive field notes. By using the recorded interviews and transcripts, I intended to achieve highly reliable data.

## **The participant's journals**

After the first interview, each participant was asked to keep a journal in which to record biographical and educational details, migration experiences and reflections of how they

view those experiences. By asking them to maintain a journal, my intention was to explore the reality of their daily behaviours, and how they view and reflect on such behaviours by themselves in the process of the interview. Esterberg (2002) suggests that the “diaries and letters can provide important information about what individuals think and feel about the texture of daily life... and financial records give clues about the economy and people’s standard of living” (p.123). These journals provided an illustration of the participant’s experience of daily life, as well as views and insights about involvement with this research project. At the data analysis phase, those brief documents were used as proof of information and were collaborated with the main findings of the interviews. This should make the consistency of the findings reliable and genuine. I have used some aspects of the participants’ journal accounts that are amalgamated with the transcript accounts to cross examine or triangulate their point of views. The triangulation process assists in providing accurate measures of the interview accounts as is possible. According to Denzin (2003) “social researchers apply this technique to look at something from several angles than to look at it in only one way” (p. 138). He (1989) also suggested that triangulation brings different kinds of evidence to bear on a problem and reduces the limitations of the study process. I used the researcher’s journal and participants’ journals as data collection techniques in my study in order to strengthen it in this way.

I planned to incorporate these three sources of data for two reasons. The first expectation was that these three sources would provide complementary roles in the analysis of the data. The journals of the participants can be used as cross references to the accuracy of the detailed information collected from the interviews. Secondly, the journal accounts would be the evidence for the credibility and authenticity of the information and reflect the genuineness of the women’s account. The journals of the participants can be considered as a method in cross validating information collected from the interviews so, that they enhance the validity and reliability of the findings of this thesis. The participants’ journals are the women’s perceptions of their views recorded throughout the research process.

## **The researcher's journal**

Since starting my research programme, I have maintained a journal on the progression of the research through its different stages. In the main it was a reflection of my insights into my readings and the experiences connected to the research project during the four years of the project. Those experiences themselves are connected to the thesis questions about how people adjust or make sense of, and (self) identity with, social and cultural change. I analysed the ideas developed in my self-reflective journal in the data analysis phase and the writing stage of the thesis.

My journal was a reflection of my personal views and thoughts which I noted as free expression. I recorded insights, thoughts and some ideas which were constantly expanded on throughout the progression of the thesis. My journal also served as a fieldwork record. I included observation notes after each interview. The record of interviews was developed further by my ideas about how to improve the next stage. My intention in employing multiple sources for data gathering was that if there were contradictory issues on main sources of data arising through the interviews I could refer back to each source although was expected that the journals would be a means of resolution between main data source rather than a contradiction. In the data analysis process and accessing the interview data, I considered the researcher's journal and participants' journals combined together with each kind of evidence having its own strengths and limitations thereby balancing the outcome (Esterberg, 2002).

## **Interviews**

The study was designed for in-depth qualitative interviews which were carried out in the Auckland region of New Zealand. Each interview was arranged to be conducted individually to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. Most interviews took place at the participant's home or apartment around the Central Auckland City and Newmarket areas and two participants negotiated alternative venues for their convenience.

The participants of this study are aged between 22 and 34 and all have a range of migration experiences which appear to typify the feminised face of global knowledge workers. This was ideal or archetypal feminised global knowledge worker constructed from the literature (for example, Luke, 2001; Kofman & Raghuram, 2003; Harvey, 2005; Hymowitz, 2008) which served as a reference point in identifying and examining the characteristics of the phenomenon. The archetype is conceptualised according to four fields of inquiry. Each field is the basis for categories of data collection (see Appendix I). It is recognised that these are theoretical categories only and that the actual experience of the women may not fit these categories. It is a nature of qualitative research that a theoretical position may 'draw' the analysis. I was aware that this may cause problems at the data interpretation stage and ensured that the categories were not 'read into' the data.

The life experiences to date of the six young women selected to be invited to participate in the study appeared to fit the four fields identified in the literature and described above but it was the task of the in-depth case studies to examine the extent to which the archetype corresponding to these fields actually fitted in reality. How is the globalised professional lifestyle experienced by these young women? To what extent are their present lives and future plans transnational, or will they settle in New Zealand? How does their structural position in global capitalism provide and restrict opportunities? While the six young women all match the archetype in a number of ways, the study planned to examine what such shared characteristics actually mean in the lives of each individual.

Each interview took one hour or more (approximately 60 to 90 minutes). The times depended on the participant's willingness and openness to share information about her personal life experience. As perceived by each participant and in her own words, the personalised approach was been employed to acquire insights into her opinions, thoughts, attitudes and feelings. That is how she views her own worlds and acts accordingly. The interviews had to be audio taped and transcribed in order to be analysed. Later, at the data analysis stage, I used the journal accounts of the participants as a cross reference to the interview accounts. Some recorded material confirmed the genuineness of descriptions they gave in the interviews. One of the young women has written 'When Mrs. Bandara asked about my way of spending I felt shame about myself'. Another woman has said

‘sharing my experience with somebody I feel free after the interview’. Such deep reflections impressed me in my later involvement with them. I believe that this degree of honesty in their self-reflection was a confirmation of the accuracy of the women’s accounts. Both participants’ journals and my own journal reflections were used as original raw materials and reproduced.

The questions were arranged to focus on the areas where more qualitative descriptive data was required or where a range of answers was anticipated, especially with attitudinal topics or those that required more detailed descriptions of experiences. The open-ended interview schedule for the response categories allowed a deeper exploration of the individual experiences which enabled the comparison between, and with, the other research findings.

The interviewees comprised six young professionals and each participant was interviewed three times, during a five month period. The flexibility of the open-ended schedule assisted in using different approaches with the insights gained from one interview providing starting points for reflection and insights for the next interview. For example, I changed the way I asked the follow-up questions from one participant to the other. Sometimes I had to change the way I approached them. This personalised approach enabled me to acquire knowledge about the quality of the experiences as perceived by each participant. The data produced by the six cases suggested a range of similarities which gave confidence in the overall outcomes and the consistency of the findings. Regular contact with the interviewees helped in producing rich material from each participant. Apparently, some of the questions have made a strong impact on some women’s personal lives (see the discussion on Achini and Asanka). I stayed mainly with the interview guide having already acquired in advance details about the women’s life histories. This information helped me pose the initial and follow up questions more effectively and probe into the hidden depths of the women’s experiences.

The interview motivated discussion about the early stage of the migration with the reasons for migration provided the initial discussion in the interviews. I asked how they engaged with New Zealand and about their impressions of its multicultural character. I also asked about in terms of their social participation and life they have chosen. The open-ended interview schedule focused on areas of adjustment to New Zealand and their

understanding of cultural differences, and the effect of the experience of their personal and work environment. I was also interested in how they perceived their adjustment to becoming 'Kiwis' as well as to how they adjusted to life in Sri Lanka during trips home. I asked about the benefits and challenges of their new lives.

The in-depth interview techniques allowed me to interact fully with each interviewee and to acquire comprehensive information. While I was recording the interviews, I carefully listened and responded to the participants' expressions. I could observe their body language as well as consider their verbal expressions. If I felt it was important, I made some short notes (perhaps, it may be a single word or sign: x, y, + or \* ?) for the purpose of later expansion that helped me to pick up the unspoken tales through their body language which can only be identified in first hand experience by observation. That is the purpose of the triangulation in a research project. After each interview, I made a commentary about the interview, elaborating my memories of the event while they were fresh. Listening to the recorded interview accounts I connected the event with my notes which were made at the interviews. During the interviews and the subsequent meetings with the participants, I asked them to share ideas about their daily lives in order to discover their hopes and pains, their aspirations and fears. In doing so, my intention was to capture the deeper insights by identifying their inner feelings and thoughts. My own journal is a mirror image of my own views and ideas on the progression of my research project. The journals of the participants' are the reflections of their perceptions about their views during the research processes.

After each interview, I transcribed the recorded interviews to be deposited at the main supervisor's office at the Faculty of Education, the University of Auckland. Then I emailed a draft of the transcripts to each interviewee. The participants checked that the transcript was correct. This was important as the process of transcription and revising assures the accuracy of the data and its confirmation. For ethical reasons the interviewees were assigned pseudonyms to guarantee confidentiality. I have also not mentioned their actual professions in spite of references to the fields of professions where they were involved for the same reason.

## **The sample selection criteria**

Qualitative researchers are typically concerned with the perceptions of a particular group of respondents and the meaning they connect to events and experiences rather than with generalising findings to a wider population. Esterberg suggests sample selection will bring “the greatest possible insights into the study topic” (2002:93). Newman (2003) points out researchers use many different methods to identify the cases but focusing on the research goal means the researcher should choose research participants with specific qualities they can bring to the study. My targeted population was young women who are a segment of the particular social class and who were drawn from different professions. This was expected to minimise the differences among the participants. The young women were selected to be different in their perceptions, views and behaviours and similar in terms of socio-economic location. There are a number of variations of non-probability sampling in qualitative research. Convenience sampling that is the accessing of a population to which the researcher has easy access is one variation. Ezzy (2002) argues that convenience sampling is one of the least desirable approaches to non-probability sampling, however Punch (2005) points out that the approach is associated with difficulty of access to the participants. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2003) convenience sampling is relatively unproblematic as long as it is recognised the convenience sample represents no other group than itself. Punch (2005) points out that “qualitative research usually use probability sampling, but rather would use some sort of deliberate sampling” (p. 187). ‘Purposive sampling’ is the term often used; it means sampling in a deliberate way, with specific purpose or focus in mind. Newman suggests that purposive sampling occurs when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation. The purpose would be less to generalise to a larger population than it is to gain a deeper understanding of types. I identified one of the young professional women for the interviews via my network of Sri Lankan friends and acquaintances. She agreed to be interviewed and to find more others who might be willing to take part.

This sample selection issue led me to use both purposive and ‘snowball’ sampling criteria. Both approaches helped me reach previously inaccessible individuals. In case



study research, qualitative sampling involves identifying the case(s) and setting the boundaries, where the researcher indicates the aspects to be studied and constructs a sampling frame. My research samples (cases) belong to the Sri Lankan upper middle class and live in New Zealand. I considered the variety of these highly educated knowledge workers who belong to different professions would provide insights into different aspects of their lives. The sample selection strategies fit with the overall validity of the research design, purpose and research questions of the study. Newman (2003) observed that researchers use qualitative analysis to examine and organise observable data such as ideas and concepts as well as the deeper reality and in depth meanings. The interview schedule aimed to draw out such unseen data about their motives, career ambitions and attitudes towards material possessions.

All the participants are well-educated professionals who have been living in New Zealand for a period of time (3-8 year period), with some of them recommended through the small Sri Lankan community in Auckland. Each person was contacted by telephone and asked if she wished to be invited to participate in the research. If they were interested in learning more about the study, an informal meeting was arranged. This meeting was conducted with each potential participant and held according to her preference especially whether the women preferred to meet with me privately and confidentially. It was very difficult to contact or meet them. After several efforts, only three women agreed to meet for a short time. At the initial information meeting, I explained the purpose of the research study and the methodology which I intended to use. Some of the young women had no time to meet and I contacted them by phone. Again, one by one I contacted the potential participant by phone to identify who had agreed to participate in the research. The potential participants were not told the names of others. The option of the separate information meeting with only the potential participant and myself present was available for those who desired complete confidentiality. Given the small size of the Sri Lankan community in Auckland it was inferred that most potential participants would most likely prefer complete privacy. A total of ten young women were contacted. The purpose of the research and the way in which interviews would be carried out was explained to them. Two doctors postponed the meeting several times and later acknowledged the difficulty

of taking part in the interviews. Two other professionals were on holiday and my time frame could not be adjusted to interview them. The final number of participants was six.

Esterberg (2002) emphasises that using 'snowball' sampling is a risk because too similar participants are unable to provide different perspectives. Mainly my study uses a qualitative method, case study approach of research based on six interviews which used the 'snowball' technique in sample selection criteria. This has been beneficial in achieving diverse perspectives of equal status participants. The group of potential participants were selected for use in this study on the basis of relevance of the research questions and theoretical position; also in order to identify the general characters within the explanation of the accounts.

### **Overview of the research**

For the data gathering and analysis, I drew on the literature about the processes of world migration to provide a theoretical framework and examined migrants and their experiences particularly the accounts of women who are depicted in international migration literature. The writing of Carmen Luke (2001) and Parvati Raghuram (2003) were particularly useful in theorising the new phenomenon of professional female migration in recent decades. The methods of investigation were the open-ended interviews, the researcher's on-going journal (my own journal maintained throughout the research process), and a brief journal written by each participant. I made an effort to understand the six young women during the three rounds of interviews over a six month period. The third method consisted of using sources, such as published and unpublished books, articles, reports, surveys and institutional statistics. Secondary sources have come from a wide variety of disciplines including sociology, education, anthropology and psychology. The additional secondary resources include various conference proceedings, publications on current migration and global issues on unpublished theses. This includes an overview of the available literature on globalisation, labour market, brain drain dynamics, educational and immigration policies and practices adapted by different institutions and countries. The literature provided the conceptual frameworks and the theoretical categories with which to organise, analyse and interpret the data.

In the research project, the six cases have been studied in order to investigate one general phenomenon which illustrates some features or processes in which I have an interest. In addition, the data has been assessed comparatively, with currently available research literature where different types of research studies have been undertaken produced in other countries on ethnic, cultural and social groups (British, Chinese and Japanese and Australian societies). The theoretical analyses provided by the literature has enabled me to generalise about the professional female migrant phenomenon and to apply the analysis to understanding the expressions of young women in the study.

After each interview I noted the comments, observations and feelings of participants which could not be captured on the audio tapes and which provide a rich collection of data. These notes were used as guidelines for the analysis process, as clues and evidence which can be linked with the main data which was collected from the interviews and produced the knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon. In listening to the recorded accounts and reading the transcripts a number of times a number of key concepts were identifiable which merged with the main themes of the interview schedule. By becoming more familiar with the data, I could identify the number of main themes in the analytical process.

The interviews were completed in three rounds and the data collection was finished at the beginning of September, 2009. The audio tapes were transcribed immediately after the interviews, which was the most difficult part of the mid-phase of the research process. Listening to the recorded accounts was stressful sometimes but for a while I became a part of the social phenomenon (this will be discussed on the next page under 'Being an insider and researcher'). Also, the accounts of the women expanded my knowledge and understanding about areas of social life that have developed in unintended ways.

I expanded and transcribed the data analysed and grouped it as themes. In this process within the themes which emerged I decided which data was most appropriate and effective for my research focus as the selection of the theme must be of relevance to the scholarly debate and society as well as to the central aims of the research question that I sought to explore.

The analytical categories included a number of sub themes which emerged within the data analysis, and those themes are developed in the findings chapters of this thesis. The themes are closely inter-connected to the features of the social phenomenon examined on the global scale. The study examined the attitudes and behaviours concerning family relationships and gender roles changes, including attitudes to marrying out of the ethnic group and remaining single. The findings in these areas have been illustrated in the first two chapters of findings. My intention was to contribute to the relatively small literature about independent middle class female migration from developing to developed countries in the contemporary period. I believe the research will contribute to a better understanding of New Zealand's role in the globalised 'brain exchange' dynamics as a migrant receiving country.

### **Data analysis and interpretive criteria**

At the interviews I observed how the women's body language coordinated meaningfully with their conversation. The tape recorder was set up to capture what they said while I listened and encouraged them to talk by nodding myself and keeping eye contact to show I am concentrating on the flow of conversation. Carefully listening and guiding them to speak, I engaged with the interviewees by seeing how they behave while they are being interviewed. This allowed me to gain insights into the interviewee's feelings or reasons for behaving in a certain way. Being an insider-researcher, I am privileged to be connected with them in this way. The interviews became natural conversations between the interviewees and me. According to Esterberg (2002) using multiple data analysis helps to balance the strengths and weaknesses of the research approaches. Also, using different types of techniques helps a researcher feel more confident of the findings and assists in seeing how individuals make decisions about their own lives.

### **Ethical considerations**

I have been aware of four ethical issues. These are: the voluntary nature of the participation, the well-being of each participant throughout the research, issues of identity

disclosure, and the importance of confidentiality. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality in two ways: first, by ensuring privacy for each participant, and second, in the way the data is recorded. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, all the data was coded so that no individual could be identified in any reports resulting from the study. All necessary steps were taken to ensure that all participants remained non-identifiable. The names of the interviewees are not stored in the data. The recorded interviews can be seen by the researcher (myself) and the two supervisors only, and are not available to the participant's family members or anyone else.

As a qualitative research tool, using an in-depth case study approach, the interviewer always engages with the respondents' emotions and conveys their own feelings to both respondents and readers (Gabrium & Holstein, 1997). The research asks young women who are experiencing major life events to reflect on these events. Such self-reflection may be emotionally moving sometimes, therefore the interviews become real conversations where important personal thoughts were shared. They tended to be spontaneous and free flowing.

### **Being an insider and a researcher**

As a woman who was born in Sri Lanka, I am privileged to undertake this type of research on the Sri Lankan younger generation, particularly on women professionals in New Zealand. Having been in New Zealand for many years my experience and acquired understanding has helped me considerably in this research study. For the sample selecting, post and pre-interview phases I have been in regular contact with young professionals which increases my understanding of that generation. Having first-hand knowledge about Sri Lankan culture of the participants I am more privileged than the non-Sri Lankan researcher. I could easily approach the potential participants because I am familiar with the implicit cultural norms and ways to reach out to them. My academic background and position within the community have also helped me to approach and communicate with the participants on an equal level as a well educated woman. In engaging with this type of research the young women were also privileged in that they able to rethink their pathways within the contemporary wider world. Given the

generational difference assumed to be distant to some extent it was a privileged role to gain access to insights and knowledge of cultural, linguistic conventions not available to outsiders nor perhaps even to near insiders.

Bonner & Tolhurst (2002) outlined three key advantages that come from being an insider within the research domain: superior understanding of the group's culture, ability to interact naturally, and relational intimacy. As an insider researcher to a large extent I had to be aware that the personal nature of the data could lead to difficulties in the process of the interview. I had to deal with the ethical issues involved throughout the research from when I approached my participants to all the ongoing issues regarding privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent. While these principles provided the ethical framework for my engagement with the participants, personal codes of social interaction also framed the relationship. Sometimes I felt deeper digging would be rude or inappropriate; feelings that came from the emotional connection I had as an insider.

Both insider and outsider positions have strengths and limitations in the process of research. The important thing is balancing the advantages and minimising the disadvantages that come from the researcher's positioning. In terms of my research I considered myself to be both an insider as well as a researcher. I interviewed the participants from the position of someone who shares their cultural background, a position which gives me something of an insider status. However, despite the fact that I share the same heritage as my participants there were considerable gaps between us. The age gap was significant in distinguishing me from the young women I interviewed. All the participants called me 'aunty'. (Generally Sri Lankan young people may call any female adult 'aunty' to show their politeness.) I addressed them as 'duwa' (daughter) which suggests a feeling of intimacy and closeness. Despite this degree of intimacy, the age difference meant that I was something of an outsider to the participants, at least in terms of age.

On the other hand, I am someone investigating the migration experience of those young women and am myself a Sri Lankan migrant to New Zealand. In addition, I, like my participants, am a well-educated professional migrant. This shared experience strengthens my insider status and has enabled me to establish trust and connection with the group. Esterberg (2002) talks about the importance in qualitative research of choosing

interviewees who can give the greatest possible insights into the topic. Being an adult female professional who have an understanding about the context of Sri Lanka and New Zealand meant that I was able to make this choice more easily than someone outside the Sri Lankan community. In addition, the young women were keen to express their experiences to someone who had shared the same migration experience and who was willing to listen to them. Being an insider enhances the depth and breadth of understanding to a group that may not be accessible to an outsider, and gives greater reflexivity, objectivity and authenticity to the research project (Esterberg, 2002; Silverman, 2005). I believe this was the case with my research.

However there are limitations to being an insider. The very existence of an emotional connection meant that I couldn't get the young women's views of sexuality. This is a subject about which there is still silence among Sri Lankans publicly and privately. I might have been able to probe further but at the interviews the young women maintained reserved attitudes towards anything to do with sexuality. My insider position meant that I was intuitively aware of the taboo and couldn't cross the ethical and moral norms in our culture. My age was also a possible hindrance to probing any further about the women's intimate relationships. The participants in my research were not as open about their sexual views and possibly even practices as they may have been if there was no age gap between us because despite the taboo in the society more generally young people will talk to each other. I was aware that the participants' voices must be heard in this type of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) so I became silent to allow them to be more open themselves. I also maintained a positive listener stance throughout my researcher role in the interviews and responded to interviewees' accounts of their experiences in positive ways.

I tried to maximise the advantages of my insider status in accessing material by employing multiple sources and methods of data collection (Berg, 2002), such as journals of the participants and my own journal where I documented daily tasks, memos, and my observations about the interviews (Etherington, 2004). This enabled me to obtain deeper insights while standing in the space between the insider and the researcher. The participants in my research understood that they were providing information for a doctoral research and allowed me to access their personal lives aware that the nature of

the research provided a degree of objectivity to the findings. I encountered some limitations in other areas which affected the extent to which the benefits of this research could be fully realised. One of the main limitations was collecting official data on skilled female migration in Sri Lanka institutions. During the several weeks I spent in Sri Lanka I encountered obstacles in dealing with potential informants in institutions. Often information was not available, at least not to researchers. This is probably due to the overly bureaucratic nature of officialdom in Sri Lanka as well as the absence of a history of social science research. The tense political context was also a factor in the difficulties I encountered in obtaining information.

While processing the data and listening to the recorded interviews many times and to the same account several times, the women's accounts have connected me not only directly but emotionally back to Sri Lanka. That emotional connection has assisted with keeping the talk flowing during the interviews. I was amazed by some of the ideas that have been gained currently during the last two and half decades in Sri Lanka. In taking about the current situation in Sri Lanka the women harshly criticised recent political developments. They asked me to turn-off the recorder for a while because they were afraid to have their political views recorded as they thought it might affect their families back in Sri Lanka.

The women who took part in this project will continue to change or maintain their beliefs about what they value from their heritage as they integrate into New Zealand. However, their anonymity and privacy must be protected. It is crucial that their individual status is protected because the respondents as individuals are still exposed to Sri Lankan society through a myriad of information channels. It is important that their family relationships remain without conflict. Therefore, I am very grateful to the participants of Sri Lankan community who contributed to this research project. However, this thesis is only my perceptions of the experience of the young women. It is limited to only Sri Lankan women and conducted at a certain point of time. It is not possible to say that this group represent all Sri Lankan women in New Zealand. Some researchers only use one strategy and others combine several together. Each strategy carries its own strengths and weaknesses. A mainly data analysis procedure involves searching for patterns in data. Once a pattern is identified, it is interpreted in terms of common themes in each case and



compared against the features of the archetype that was identified in the literature. Newman (2003) observed that qualitative researchers have used this technique to contrast the impact of context and analogy. Another technique is contrasting between contexts to bring out specifics or distinctive features within the cases. With regard to my study, the content of each case was organised as common themes and contrasted and compared with each case.

Esterberg (2002) emphasises that qualitative researchers work with texts (language). Their analysis relies on their own judgment and usually data is manually processed and arranged using the computer. Qualitative data analysis typically involves (1) recognising patterns or categories in the data (2) generating ideas about what these patterns might mean, and (3) exploring potential meanings in the data. In this study analysis of the data began with manual processing to find the main themes. The data analysis plan aimed to identify behaviours or objects that constitute some particular patterns in the data. Such patterns are meant to be the basis for formulating concepts and theoretical generalisation in this research to illustrate the theory. The conclusions about symmetries and patterns intended to compare with one another in creating useful insights in the description and interpretation of the women's world.

For the analysis and interpretation of the interview material I used the comparative analysis often found in qualitative research as well as the systemic coding procedure also used in qualitative research. This enabled me to compare and contrast the data to locate similarities and differences (Esterberg, 2002) between the individuals and the characteristics of the idealised archetype of the single female professional migrant. Data analysis involved several stages. Listening to the recorded interviews, I gained a deeper understanding about each case separately. When more clarification was needed from interviewees, I contacted them by phone and asked for clarifications. When I was satisfied with my understanding of their views I added the information to the transcripts. I arranged and re-organised the three sources of data. At the data analysis stage I gave a code number to each interview transcript as I had conducted the interviews chronologically and I used a pseudonym for each individual. Then the transcripts and other documents - the interview reflection notes and the participants' journals - were filed together and kept separately. I arranged the transcribed responses in sequential order

of the questions in the interview schedule. I made several copies of the transcripts and read them carefully to grasp the main idea of the paragraph and made notes at the side of the documents in red ink. Then for the process of data analysis procedure, I immersed myself in the gathered data in order to understand the cases. I engaged with the data deeply to become familiar with the material and tried to make sense of and search for categories, themes and patterns within the accounts and for their significance. Merriam (2005) suggests that the case study researcher can be seriously challenged in trying to make sense of the material which is derived from interviews. Therefore, attention to data management is important under these circumstances.

Coffey & Atkinson (1996) suggest that qualitative coding entails three basic procedures: noticing relevant phenomena, collecting examples of those phenomena, and analysing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures. The goal is to focus on the potential meaning of the data. Merriam (2005) emphasises two stages of analysis - the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis. For the within case analysis, each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Upon completing the analysis of each case, cross-case analysis can begin and general explanations be developed that fit with each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details (Yin, 1994:112). My focus was in generating themes, categories and identifying patterns within the data. I recognised patterns and categories which generated ideas about what these patterns might mean and explored those potential meanings for these in the data. In the first instance, I examined the raw data considering a number of interpretations in order to find connections with reference to the research question. During the course of the evaluation and analysis process I pursued new insights and uncovered important meanings and patterns. Cross examining the emerged patterns and types of data I identified deeper relationships between different findings which may assist in the thoroughness of the study. Through these processes the level of analysis led to categories and themes that conceptualised the data from all the cases.

A number of prominent themes which were relevant to the topic emerged. Those themes and categories were considered in conjunction with one another to produce the most likely best interpretation. Looking for patterns in the data, comparing, contrasting and building typologies help me to figure out how the women share features of their

characters, behaviours, attitudes and reactions to what they experienced throughout the migration process. Within the data analysis process the most prominent themes and concepts concerned gender issues, lifestyles changes, and thoughts about how the women identity with both Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

In analysing the themes across a modern, traditional trajectory I intended to assess the personal characteristics of women in terms of culture, gender norms, age, and level of educational qualification, their socio economic status and occupations. The concepts of “traditional” and “modern” showed to what extent these women manifest characteristics of one or the other in all areas of their lives including their professional lifestyle. The extent of the women’s national identification was analysed by comparing their willingness to negotiate western cultural mores in New Zealand and their motives for settling and staying in New Zealand; for example, their decisions to apply for residence-visa or for citizenship status. The location of women in the global knowledge labour market was considered in terms of the requirements of that market. This involved the demand for their educational and professional qualifications. The questions also set out to understand their personal views on their “belongingness” to the host society and their understanding of changes to the way they identified with Sri Lanka.

## **Conclusion**

The research hypothesises that the participants illustrate the lived experiences of the phenomenon identified in the literature- that of the emergence of a distinctive new type of migrant. This type is one of young, single professional women from developing countries moving to developed countries with the contemporary global knowledge labour market. It is not claimed that each woman’s experiences are generalisable in every way or that each woman fits easily into the four categories of the archetype. Rather, it is understood that the experiences of individuals are social biographies that illustrate the opportunities and restraints available to individuals within the socio-economic conditions of particular historical periods. However, given the shared context it is likely that the women share a number of similar experiences, ones that may be analysed using the fields of inquiry adopted in this thesis: social relationships, professional lifestyle and social belonging.

This chapter has outlined the methods which employed in the thesis and the process of the research. It involves the development of the research design, selection of research methods, creating the sources of data, process of interviews and data analysis, and the development of themes drawn from the data. It also includes the discussion of the theoretical position and reviewing the literature about case study as the research strategy to address the research question. The research methods employed in this study are qualitative research methods using in-depth case study approach.

The subsequent chapters are based on the findings of this study which I claim make an innovated contribution to knowledge in the area of migration studies. The main finding is that the new phenomenon involves a re-positioning of the women's gendered relations, particularly relationships as daughters to their parents and as young women to men. The data shows how the women are negotiating quite major shifts in these relationships. These are also interesting findings coming women's professional lifestyle and their attitudes towards their identity, respectively. The next four chapters discuss in depth the research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Migration and gender

#### Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research findings which are presented in greater detail in the next three chapters. It examines the sociological and political contents within with the young women negotiate changing gender relationships in both Sri Lanka and New Zealand. A significant finding was about how these women negotiated gender relationships as daughters to their parents within the discourses of Sri Lankan family relationships and gender norms. It describes the gender role changes that were experienced by these women as seen through their own eyes. I focus on the research topic and present an overview of the framework for the theoretical analysis of Sri Lankan gender relationships and gender indicators. Secondly, I examine the key changes to the lives of women as shown through their own accounts. These show that the women repositioned their gendered relationships and negotiated significant shifts in these relationships as a result of their participation in the labour market in New Zealand.

The women in this study are urban, upper middle class, highly educated and professionally successful. Being well-educated and coming from this social class the women are an advantaged social group in Sri Lanka. As migrants, their move to New Zealand is that of the privileged young generation of developing countries. Unlike some migrants, these women have three key advantages: English language skills, financial resources, and tertiary educational qualifications, advantages which enable them to engage with the knowledge labour market. The young women are exposed to the wider global world and are included as professionals in the new social context of New Zealand. This inclusion enables them to feel freed from restrictions which were traditionally imposed on them in Sri Lanka. Now, they have the opportunity for greater individual freedom.

Moving away from the controlled Sri Lankan cultural context gives them freedom to make choices and act as autonomous women. Changing the geographical location in

which they were more restricted, the women do not need to play submissive roles or be passive women anymore. They are very much autonomous actors within the knowledge work force. Being members of respected professions and with well-paid positions gives a sense of freedom. This has meant that the young women experienced changes in their attitudes and beliefs towards gendered relationships.

The changes occurred within the work environment which is created by the global labour market and as they adjusted to that environment. As young women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century their personal interests were aligned to the way of life of contemporary young women in developed countries (See the chapter seven). Within the three areas of work, society and lifestyle the women located themselves as autonomous individuals. In making the decision to settle in New Zealand they choose to change their personal and public selves to fit with that context.

### **Reasons for migration**

The young woman called Nimmi explained why she wanted to come to New Zealand. The account shows her motives in starting a new life and her desire to live as an independent young woman away from the family home.

Achini:

The main reason was... to leave Sri Lanka... I think that mainly to find a good job. Because they don't want to value our education qualification yah everything depends on political favor. So, after my graduation, I decided to go somewhere where my educational qualification was valued than in my own country. The particular reason to move to New Zealand was...I think that the educational opportunities. Because, I needed to do further study somewhere in a developed country. Then I decided to forward an application to New Zealand for a job.

There are some opportunities and advantages. Main is job opportunities, and connection with other different nationalities. It's more than in Sri Lanka. Now in Sri Lanka there are many nationalities present but it has very few effects on our daily life. Here there are multiple nationalities, 'Kiwi' people like Pilipino, Indian, Fijian, Cambodian and other Asians...In my work place also when you go

there a lot more nationalities... different colour and languages. It's very interesting thing to be with such different people in the same place. Yah...its advantage of having different ethnicities or nationalities in New Zealand society. But they are living with good understanding... you know. It's exciting!

And then we go with them. We could go out like often. Sometimes I have some friends to my apartment. We enjoy with them in parties or some events like... ya. That's good opportunity to have experience for us to live in the wider society. Even we can get more education opportunities that are very rare in Sri Lanka. You can study while you are working...Not only one thing but also so many things.

Both Achini and Hiranya came to New Zealand for further higher education. However, they also wanted, as Hiranya mentioned, to be away from home and to enjoy an independent life.

Hiranya:

I wanted to be free like a bird. Probably, I have fulfilled my parents' all kind of hopes. I did not waste their effort for my success...and then, I needed to do, what I want to do, for my entire life.

Thanuja:

I got much more freedom here than at home, where I am not allowed to enjoy freedom in many aspects. There were some restrictions for us. My parents and I were focused on my studies...getting excellent results. The main task was getting through university entrance...I did not go anywhere without my parents or an adult family member. Wherever I go my mother is always inquiring...what I am doing. With whom am I studying or chatting? With friends? Like that (she said with a smile). But here...there are no bodyguards. I can drive myself at midnight. I have to look after myself. I earn...and I spend. My work...my own flat...my decisions. Everything I do is what makes me happy.

Thanuja enjoys the freedom away from her parents' intervention. She believes the parents' constant attention can inhibit the growth to independence of younger generation- something that she values.

Sanjula and Thanuja found, 'very good jobs' in the field where they are working in New Zealand. They would not give up such positions to return to Sri Lanka because they don't want to return to a place where women traditionally have a subordinate position within the patriarchal family structure. If they did return, they would find it difficult to readjust to the norms of traditional Sri Lankan culture. Several of the young women expressed a reluctance to return to these traditions. They resisted the distinct gender boundaries which they saw as unjust and disrespectful of the dignity of women as human beings. They actively promote their workforce participation rights and apply them in the personal lives. They are more autonomous and they have developed strong characters which were not developed by their parents in the traditionally structured Sri Lankan family setting.

The women in the study come from different religious contexts: two are Buddhist, two are Catholic, while two have no religion affiliation but come from a Buddhist family background. Only two women, one Buddhist and one Catholic, spoke defending the traditional roles and responsibilities of a woman seeing it as their inherited position or 'real nature'. They spoke about the 'lack of opportunity and work place flexibility' and the difficulties of women in pursuing both professional aspirations and their obligations to family and home. However, three of them criticised the 'racist, extremist religious ideologies' which appear to be 'a romantic model' in contemporary Sri Lankan society. The Buddhist and the Catholic said that weddings, almsgiving, church masses, and other significance religious celebrations embedded the cultural imagery of Sri Lanka with women required to hand on such legacies for future generation. The other women were more neutral in comparison about religious and cultural identification. They had adapted more to popular youth culture and its secularism and were comfortable with the shift away from traditional religious constraints.

All the young women in the study have chosen New Zealand as their home. They left behind their parents and none are prepared to return and live with the parents. During the interviews I asked them, 'If you could choose any country as the best place to settle,



which country would you chose? All the women chose to settle in New Zealand and the reasons for their choices were very similar.

Sanjula:

There are very good opportunities in Sri Lanka in my field. But some issues, like long term political conflicts, the downfall of the economic sector discourage me, not only me actually, most of the young generation professionals are discouraged by the situation in Sri Lanka. Once, I had a hard time there. After my move to New Zealand, I've got very encouraging feedback and now I feel I'm so strong enough to put up with anything.

I am holding down a key consultant position in a particular company. It is big company. I try to do my best for the best achievement in that field. I'm flying here and there to different domestic destinations with busy work, sometimes, to Australia and African countries. Even though, I am happy to work with such tension and there are so many challenges and much hard work, but I enjoy my work and life. So, there is no point...I would not go back home.

She enjoys her position. It is important to her that she thinks and acts as a responsible professional. Her position within such a highly recognised profession makes her determined to be in New Zealand.

The young women were initially intrigued by the liberal thinking of Western women.

Asanka:

I am doing well my job and...having a good salary. I am thinking to improve my career field. My company gives me opportunities to get extra qualities and skills. So I want to get more experience...career wise through the seminar and workshop. Already I have attended such workshops and got certificates which are significant career wise. I want to reach my career target and the target of my company. The most important thing to me was I wanted to live a free life. I mean...that is not a bad lifestyle but I want to enjoy my freedom. This country is a very good place for liberal thinkers. My thinking pattern has shaped by the

Western values because of my school background. It is very English or colonial type. Actually, my imagination has developed within English literature. As a teenager I wanted to be like Western teenagers. My teachers have punished me because they thought my behaviour was 'naughty'. In their eyes I am more like a western girl. It was annoying. That's our society and how they think. That's why I dreamed to live in a Western country.

Over time liberal attitudes and behaviours became more familiar to them showing a way of life that they wished for themselves. Within Sri Lankan culture it is expected that women are responsible for the transmission of cultural values and the educational success of their children. They must provide emotional support and care for husbands and family elders while at the same time developing their own abilities that are recognised as a family asset. Contrary to these social expectations the young professional women in this study have chosen to be single or postponed their marriage and to identify as "Kiwis" in New Zealand. One of the key reasons for this decision is their plans for career expansion and multi-area skill upgrading. These plans which affect their personal lives in significant ways. This is what Luke (2001) referred to as the contradictory dual self that women have to maintain within contemporary society, a duality which is difficult to balance.

One of the women (Nimmi), in responding to my question, 'What are your hopes for having your own future family' said;

You know...nowadays, for a woman, motherhood and raising family is a choice between career and personal life. It's depending on what you choose; you have to pay the price. If you choose one, you lose other...

Thanuja and Achini's responses to the same question was very similar to Nimmi's.

Thanuja:

I can do anything by myself. I am confident about myself. I am strong enough to keep on my personal and employment responsibilities. Marriage...sometimes limits your capacity. I want to make decisions about my life. I think if you are

married it's difficult to maintain your own opinion. I mean...it's like making some kinds of decision and take action about your life. Sometimes women are powerless...you know.

Achini:

I think for a woman marriage is meant to be a way of upward social mobility. It's typical some women look forward to a better future by a marriage because of their economic inability. Usually parents encourage girls for higher education...because they may hope that better education provides better marriage opportunities for girls. If so it is a huge relief for parents. I think if you are well enough you can live alone. You can care for yourself. I know some of my married friends are always worrying about their husbands and kids. First you have to think of your family not yourself. They have to prioritise the family. That's the role of women but not of men... bonds and endless responsibilities. What happened to my freedom? At the moment my main focus is my career...and I enjoy my life and freedom. It's my choice.

These responses indicate that they have chosen their careers as the main focus for their lives rather than accepting the social norms for a woman born and reaching adulthood in Sri Lankan society. This tendency among contemporary women may lead to the 'empty cradle' identified by Longman (2005) as professional women make their choice in favour of the autonomy that comes from choosing a career over taking on family responsibilities. Hiranya also said that as a professional she has to delay her marriage. She referred to changing gender roles saying that women have to adjust to suit the social challenges and to achieve employment related goals. In this process of social change the young professionals choose to be independent young women. They emphasised the importance of freedom. For them the concepts of 'freedom' and 'independence' meant being able to make decisions and act on those decisions in their own lives.

Nimmi told me:

In our society some people treat women as slaves, in spite of being human. Any young woman has a dream in her life to be free from burdens. Like... think freely, act freely...or have a free life. I mean choosing a life like, being freed from responsibilities; I mean being away from complicated family matters or household obligations is a kind of expectation. Financial freedom is the first and main challenge before me. I want to stand on my feet I think...

I choose to be settled in New Zealand. One day, I would like to bring my parents to be with me. So, then, they will be happy and I will have more company than living alone here. In Sri Lanka the majority of new doctors, engineers, nurses and teachers are female and it is common that they think a bit later about marriage. I know, many women, those who are professionally successful...do so...Which is good...Right? Currently, I do not think about marriage.

Nimmi has set up her future destiny to free as her desired way of life. Her concept of freedom means being away from family responsibilities and being able to live alone - individual autonomy in other words.

Sanjula spoke about her life in relation to her professional workload. She wanted greater freedom to enjoy her professional lifestyle rather than take on family responsibilities. Even urban, upper class females in Sri Lanka have a long working day that often exceeds 10-14 hours with responsibilities including household management, supervision of house/property and associated activities, as well as their education or professional work.

Sanjula:

I have to maintain my professional image as well as my personal image. Family responsibilities prevent me meeting the deadlines of my work... and my career progression is my main purpose. Back in Sri Lanka we spent a long time on our studies. We had no time to enjoy our life. I mean, I want to enjoy freedom.

Marriage is always connected with responsibilities and now I have no time to think about marriage because of my work and... I love to be free (She says with a

smile but was not a real smile suggesting instead that this is not an easy decision to make).

The Sri Lankan education system imposes a heavy burden on children within all social groups. Both children and parents are caught in a tiresome competition which traps the children between parents' dreams and their own childhood.

Sanjula's ambivalent response reflects her commitment to her profession and her awareness of the price to be paid in terms of a restricted personal life. She has no friendships with fellow Sri Lankan as she did when living in Sri Lanka. For the sake of freedom that comes with being a professional, Sanjula has adapted a strong persona. (My journal has a note on my first impression of this young professional). *She was well dressed with a fine, lady-like dress for the interview. I felt that she must be follower of a popular western fashion icon. She also pronounced her Sinhalese name with an American accent.*

In most cases, these young women attempt to secure their place in the competitive job market where they can be creative and productive, but also enjoy their new way of life in a Western country. They think that their skills and creativity will not be focused on family which they see as limiting their capacity within the boundaries of a traditional woman's role. Today, some career roles require constant growth and maintenance of professional image within the market therefore young women strive to reflect that professional persona. The young women in the study were keen to maintain and update their professional image.

They were willing to sacrifice their personal life for the sake of their profession and its prestigious image. If these young women are indicative of similar professionals from developing countries. The change indicates a new position of women away from what is traditionally defined and located in the ancestral context. Women in Sri Lanka have had to tolerate a disproportionate burden when it comes to family, cultural maintenance and continuity, regardless of how well-educated they are. What is new about this young generation is their emphasis on independence and freedom and their desire to move away from centuries of tradition that obligates them to the family. Recent research (Riley, 2011) point out that contemporary women are choosing to forgo motherhood to

build their careers. Riley argues that whilst childfree people enjoy the greater financial independence of the childfree lifestyle, the freedom and more selfish living enabled by the choice is not necessarily the motivation, but simply a benefit.

The accounts of the participants of this study provide evidence about significant migrant strategies in contemporary population movements. The young professional called Hiranya revealed that her move to New Zealand extended to her younger sister, bringing her here for higher education and then bringing her youngest sister. Asanka had a greater desire to see the world and made her own decision to move from home and began on her own great adventure. She made the decision to migrate in searching for a job opportunity, which motivated her through her readings as well as networking with her friends those who are living in other countries. As a young engineer she has been inspired by some senior, prominent engineers who are working here in New Zealand. Asanka's behaviour and thinking patterns expresses the idea of individual freedom as important for what she wanted to achieve but had been restricted from achieving by her culture and family background. As a young professional woman she wanted to make her own decisions about her personal life. She referred to this as 'autonomy', the idea of the self-sufficient individual which is what she wants to be. As a young woman she is a very well-maintained professional with multicultural attitudes, one who comes from the new urban generation in Sri Lanka.

Both Hiranya and Sanjula indicated that they have decided to go somewhere, where their educational qualifications are more valued, than in their own country. The particular reason to move to New Zealand was the educational qualification offered by the New Zealand higher educational institutions. Hiranya, as a qualified graduate from the University of Sri Lanka obtained an Economics special degree with first class (honours), yet couldn't find suitable employment in Sri Lanka. Due to high unemployment in the Sri Lankan economy she was also advised and assured by her friends that she would find a good job in the New Zealand market. After her arrival she realised the scarcity of employment in the New Zealand knowledge market. First, she could not find a suitable job and then she upgraded her qualification and later found what she expected.

## **The politics of gender in Sri Lanka**

In this section, discusses how the traditional society in Sri Lanka was heavily based on subsistence agriculture with strong sex role differentiation. Within the agrarian social structure, the extended family exists as a key social structure with family relationships interwoven by kith and kin a distinctive system of interdependency. The responsibilities and obligations are essentially reciprocal and each member of the family has to play a role within the family. For the women there were restrictions and taboos imposed. Boys and girls are socialised into prescribed social and productive roles (Jayaweera, 1991, 2002; Perera, 2008).

The politics of gender in Sri Lankan context should be situated within the larger socio-political and cultural context. The fundamental values of Sri Lankan culture are based on a sense of collectiveness, 'high power distance', and intergroup harmony. Along with collectivism, 'high power distance' has been an important feature of Sri Lankan culture. It reflects to the importance given to age, seniority, rank, maleness and family background (Silva de, 1972; De Silva 1977, 1991; Jayaweera, 2002). In addition collectivity is an integral part of the culture. The emphasis is on the perceived benefits of hierarchal relationships, a typical representation of Buddhist teaching. Buddhism is deeply rooted in Sri Lankan society as the state religion. It is assumed that the leader of the country would be a Buddhist (De Silva, 1981). Sri Lankans who are of low rank are expected to indicate their lower status in their speech and behaviour. Such modesty is considered to show a high quality of upbringing. However, in modern-day Sri Lankan families, the traditional absolute power of the patriarch is greatly reduced (De Silva, 1981; Spence, 2007). In general, the institution of family norms tends to operate by male dominance ideologies rather than overt power. Submissiveness is a key component in family relationship, such as wife to husband, children to parents and younger siblings to older family members. These values are deeply embedded in Sri Lankan society.

In contrast to Sri Lanka, New Zealand is a liberal and a secular country which values individualism. Individual character and expertise, democratic decision making, equal rights and relations, as well as equitable remuneration based on performance are

valued- values the young Sri Lankan women also shared especially as they become more familiar with these New Zealand ways. The way of communication is much more direct and explicit than that of the Sri Lankan culture. The effect of the New Zealand way of life on the young women has changed them as new dimensions are added to their lives and former ways of life altered, often permanently. It is significant that none of the young women have decided to return to their parents in Sri Lanka. Yet it is likely that the parents have the expectation that young daughters who left home for better employment and educational opportunities and are working towards a better life in developed countries would return one day to take care of them. The role of daughter is one of caring for parents, adult relatives, the sick and the aged. The absence of daughters will have a negative impact on those who are left behind.

The social expectation is that the daughters will provide the emotional strength, love and support for their elderly parents. If the daughters don't return those parents will miss out on their role as the elderly who advise the younger generation. This leaves another gap between the generations in terms of their expectations. The parents' dreams of their involvement in their daughters' marriages, new family relationships and grandchildren may be unfulfilled dreams. This particular missing role of the daughter would be a significant emotional loss to the aged. However, these are compensations. If the parents are Buddhist they would link this to Buddhist teachings that say separation is the source of suffering which every human being goes through (Harvey, 1999). They will also have emotional satisfaction from their daughter's success in a foreign country. This is a matter of considerable prestige to the family which could be shared with the neighbours. While the parents get to experience a high level of emotional satisfaction, the neighbours would respect and offer help to them. So there will be a degree of compensation for the parents but the 'missing daughters' phenomenon, but if it continues to grow it will affect cultural transmission practices more generally.



## **Parents and daughters**

Sri Lankan women began receiving the benefits of independence, mobility and higher incomes as they moved into in the formal labour market. The improvement in economic status and social position is the result of their ability to receive an independent income, to be employed outside the home, and to have ownership rights. These economic factors strengthen and promote independence and empowerment. The exposure to ideas outside the home make the Sri Lankan woman more effective in terms of her agency, a factor which contributes to the reduction of relative and absolute deprivation.

Within the context of shared obligation in the formerly closely knit society Sri Lankans would assist each other in their time of need. For example, the extended family and close relations will share responsibility in such circumstances. If the daughter of the family has moved from the family home, the parents will relocate to be with her. But with the emigration of young professional women the daughters' responsibility would have to be shared by the relatives if possible. The women who are regarded as the bearers of the cultural mantle of the nation and the carriers of the culture will no longer fulfil the role if they live in another country.

The young women were empowered by the greater freedom to make their own choices by positioning themselves in another location. The new concepts of female freedom and related activities are in direct contrast to the traditional social norms. Traditional Sri Lankan society was framed in such a way to unite family relationships. However, the components of such a model are now weakening.

I asked Nimmi, Do you think you will settle in New Zealand and become a New Zealand citizen?

Nimmi's response to my question was,

I left everything I knew behind to come and start over. Whatever struggles and victories I've had made this place my home. I belong here. I got here legally and rightfully, thanks to the educational qualifications and our parents and their hard work and experience. Home is the place where you feel at home, not necessarily

the place you were born...Already I'm a New Zealand citizen'...Now I am a free young woman who stands on her own feet.

I feel I am a part of this country because nobody has looked down on me. I have no such experience like being ill-treated. I have lived in this culture and worked with 'Kiwi' people and you know I do things obviously in the wider social setting I think that very much makes me feel as though I am New Zealander.

Nimmi's expectation was a new beginning for her life. She feels free and is comfortable in her new home. She appreciates her parents' struggle for which has made possible her adventure into a better future characterised by greatly increased personal autonomy.

Traditionally, Sri Lankan women are expected to be obedient, shy, quiet and meek, as the family honour is reliant on an eloquent son and a beautiful daughter. Such norms prevent the women reaching their potential and affect the character construction and leadership capacity of women. Recent research (Perera, 2008) points out that in general female applicants at job interviews in Sri Lanka have been unsuccessful in proving their capacity to a satisfactory standard, due to such norms which continue to control the performance of women. Women are unsure as to the extent to which they should promote their skills and abilities. They become anxious in front of an interview-board, unsure as what decision might be passed on to them for either overacting or underperforming. The professional migrants in this study were repositioning themselves as autonomous women by negotiating the conventional expressions of gendered roles. This included rethinking how they wished to present themselves to others.

I asked Thanuja, 'Do you think you will settle in New Zealand and become a New Zealand citizen? She responded this way,

Already, I've got a resident visa. I choose New Zealand as the best place to settle down. I love to live in urban areas and I enjoy the urban lifestyle. I feel it's quite free and comfortable here...a lot more advantages...convenience, standard lifestyle... and I'm free and comfortable here. I speak in English, dress as Westerns do; I follow the liberal cultural and political values. Living in this

country I absorbed so many things from the society to my life, you know. Not all the bits and pieces of this society but I have picked up some good things out of this society and apply into my life. My thinking pattern is very different to a typical Sri Lankan Young woman and also New Zealand young women. I think my orientation towards more liberal world views has broadened my mind set and broaden my attitudes to be a New Zealander. It is a huge turning point in my personality, thoughts, values and future vision.

Thanuja's comment is a reflection of what she expected in moving away from home. I felt that the sense of independence made her feel more secure and powerful in her new home.

Asanka described her views on settling in New Zealand:

I love New Zealand. It's a good place to enjoy freedom, relax in the clean environment and it's peaceful. The society is not much corrupted compared to some countries...I have been here for seven years. We have to negotiate some aspects of our lives, but I would like to be here... My parents were very sad, because I am the youngest daughter of my family and thirty two year old but still single. My parents did not want me to come to New Zealand but now my parents are happy, because my expectations have been fulfilled, and I am in a very good firm and in a high position.

Asanka accepts that generational changes are occurring. Making a radical decision to move from the home, she justifies her act as "an adventurous journey".

Asanka:

I think that the gender roles have been changing...because of the education development and influences of western ideas. Our attitudes, values and thinking patterns are different to our parents and our grandparents. We look differently at anything rather than our previous generation...you know. I think those who living in western countries are not living as Sri Lankan who are living in Sri Lanka.

They are more liberal. They have to adapt to the new lifestyles. We have to obey the rules of those countries, respect their values...we have to follow up other social conduct as theirs. I think that here we have to change our attitudes in a very positive way towards others. We have to respect and value their social norms. We are as the young generation so adventurous and radical...a bit more...rather than the previous generation. Which is good...yeah? That's why I decided to be here, because I am a bit radical.

Hiranya:

I am in touch with my parents...because I am committed to do so. As the eldest of the family I am responsible to care for them...but they would not be happy to be here. If I could bring our parents here I would be happy to be here. I think...except for Sri Lanka, the best place to settle down is New Zealand. There are no such restrictions here like in back home. I am like...I am free. Back home wherever I go my mum is texting and calling me. There is too much intervention for girls but not much for boys. I need freedom...and I will be here.

Whether or not it will happen in the future, she would like to bring her parents to be with her. It is a reflection of her compassion for her parents and family as a loving daughter. She wishes to be as affectionate as she can for the sake of their emotional well-being. The parental involvement in adult children's lives is a significant factor in the Sri Lankan culture. All the women in this study were displeased about the extent of parental intervention in their lives. The women shared their views.

Hiranya:

The amount of freedom in Sri Lanka is very difficult to compare because we are two different countries...I mean...that there are very different social environments. We are...it's a traditional Eastern society. As children, we always have to depend on our parents. It's obvious that parents are always interfering with the personal life of their children. I found that there is more freedom when you come here...it because you are alone. Nobody is here to say 'no'. You

know... I don't think...anyone is there to say don't do that. In Sri Lanka, my parents say 'No! 'Always, they say 'don't do... this and that'. Now, I can make my own decisions. And... you have to always think very carefully...because when... anything goes wrong there is none to say 'no'...here. Especially...when you are alone. When I came here, I was twenty-three. Our parents think like we are little kids. I mean, they think we don't know anything about the world or yeah...! They think we are like little children. But when you are alone you know how to adjust to the context. So, I take action myself because of my job. Because of ... now I am a grown-up enough to make choices.

Asanka described her feelings of freedom. Leaving home has changed her in significant ways. She has a well-developed personality, confidence and self-esteem which is rare among many Sri Lankan young women.

Asanka:

I moved from home, because I needed to improve my skills, and employ them in a more competitive working environment...I needed to grow like an adult. So, now, I am a free woman...I have to upgrade my skills in improving my career...So, then, I can employ my work experience anywhere...I want to enjoy my freedom and I want to live a free life...without their (parental) intervention. At this moment they will care for themselves. I do not want to worry too much about that.

In Sri Lankan culture, female children particularly, have to be under the protection of the parents or adult relation. The family values are centralised within the extended family. Children are expected to obey their parents and their adult family members and fulfill the desires of their parents by completing their education successfully.

Asanka described her views on moving to New Zealand and how to manage the increased freedom. She is aware that she must maintain her image as a 'good girl' in terms of Sri Lankan culture. She emphasised that she has not misused the freedom she has in New Zealand.

Asanka:

I got... yeah...I got enough freedom in Sri Lanka...there were no many barriers for me. In some aspects here in New Zealand...there is more freedom for young people...They can use wrong way or right way. There are cultural barriers because we are bound to protect our cultural values...Aren't we? Most young people have no freedom under their parents. My parents trust me. They think that I would not do 'wrong'...my decisions are correct...because I have proved it. I don't have a boyfriend at Uni. My sister had...you know in our country people think that if you have a boyfriend...you are a bad girl...if you haven't....You're good girl. So...I am a good girl...yeah...(laughing loudly). Yes I am...really. The freedom I got from here is huge compared to in Sri Lanka. Because there are no watchdogs here...your relatives or guardians. You can do anything. In Sri Lanka...you have to be careful about whatever you do...but here there are no eyes to catch you. If you want you can do anything. I am not a teenager and I am not doing wrong or bad things or illegal or antisocial stuff. You know...I am a professional.

Asanka has so many future plans to achieve and is delaying marriage for that the career advancement.

Asanka:

My future family... well... I haven't decided to get married or have a family. First, I have to think about my professional career. I have to get some qualifications and skills and experience in the field of engineering... As a civil engineer when I joined the field, I was inspired by other senior professionals. So...I thought that I would acquire such qualifications in my professional life. Currently, I am working towards it. Before my thirty second birthday I have to gain some of them. Then I may think about my future family.

Asanka criticised the Sri Lankan national education system which she called the 'education horse-race'.

Asanka:

We have never enjoyed our childhood, like our parents' generation, because of the competition in the education sector. From morning to evening we are like; go to school...go to tuition class...then music class and swimming class (she said sorrowfully). I do not want to punish my kids like that...one day (she smiles and says) that's why I wanted to be here.

Sanjula:

If I decided to live somewhere, I would choose New Zealand as best place to live. We find more freedom, very good healthcare and educational systems, law and order, and standard life. Everything is here...like friends, good times, movies, sports, wine and good food...everything!

Sanjula chooses to be here because she has found the lifestyle that she preferred, a way of living that she did not have back home.

Achini wanted to be an independent young woman and now she is enjoying what she hoped to find.

Achini:

First, I got the student visa. And already, I have got my permanent residence visa. Yeah... I would settle down here. I hope this will be my home. I am expressing the image of, I am who I am. For me my personality is more important, also saving and financial management is important. I think it is very easy for women to adjust into traditional gender roles and not take an active role in their assets beyond their bank accounts...

My two sisters are there. They look after my dad...I have many cousins there and aunties. They are my dad's relations. They love him. I think I don't need to be too much concerned about my dad. Because he doesn't expect our help. He allowed me to be here....

As with many other South Asian parents, Sri Lankan parents are committed to providing the best education for their children. When their sons and daughters grow up, the parents expect them to get good job opportunities as well as to make a suitable marriage. For a daughter marriage is supposed to be a sanctuary, and the husband, a guardian figure, and to complete this picture, the family would be one that takes care of its members with the many and various domestic tasks. However the reality is often far removed from this idealised picture as children who are professional often emigrate for a prestigious career which may mean forgoing a family life. In that case parents may have to settle for the existing circumstances by accepting what is in the best wishes of their sons and daughters.

Hiranya views freedom, independence and autonomy by comparing her life to that of traditional women who were placed into a pre-defined structure.

Hiranya:

When...I compare...yeah...here you can do anything without minding but my mother and my grandmother had no such privileges. That's why I say, we are very lucky. They were not allowed to go out at all. They were restricted from everything which we are doing right here. There are many differences between us. I think...it's a generational gap between us. Here, if you go somewhere, nobody knows about you. Many differences...yeah. So many. In Sri Lanka, girls are afraid to form relationships with boys. But here it's no problem. Who cares? You can make friendships...more than one. My mother had such restrictions. Definitely, my grandmother used to have...I think. Nowadays ...in Sri Lanka it's very different. Most urban girls are behaving how most New Zealand young women do.

Thanuja told me how her separation from her family caused stresses for her and that she pays a high emotional price. However, she and her parents have come to a point where they accept the pain of separation and the existing circumstances for the sake of her



achievement and progress. The fulfillment of family dreams at least in terms of her professional success has led them all to this acceptance.

Thanuja:

While I was studying at the university, I completed a computer skills programme and I applied for a computer design programme in India and New Zealand. I thought, it's a bit expensive but I chose to be here for my postgrad studies. It's sad to leave the family but I can improve my life...myself...alone here. It was a very hard decision...because I was supposed to be a doctor. That was my parents' dream. I've received very high marks and ranking in the mark system in the Colombo district. But I couldn't get through. (Her tone was a bit sad, maybe for missing the opportunity or not being able to achieve her parents' cherished dream). It is very hard to compete. With that disappointment...then, I thought...that I should do something I have never expected to do... so I completed my BSc at the University of Colombo and moved to New Zealand.

Now, most of my expectations are fulfilled. I am in a very good position and in the highest position (she smiles cheerfully). I am happy...my parents are very happy. My brother is a doctor. My parents have not missed their dream...the dream of a doctor in the family.

### **Changing daughters: Changing parents**

The educated daughters of the study were inspired by the well-paid employment opportunities in foreign countries and by a new freer life. They are reluctant to maintain traditionally cherished social and cultural values which were passed on to them by their families. However, the parents too are changing their attitudes, becoming more accepting of their daughters' ideas and values and professional aspirations. Their thinking is to adjust itself to a more flexible approach and to cope with the new reality created by their daughter's migration. Most Sri Lankan parents dream that their sons and daughters will study and work in Western countries. That is what they perceive as prestigious, and in pursuing this goal they invest heavily in the education of their children. Now they are

reaping the fruits of what they have sown with the positive achievements of their daughters though the feeling maybe bittersweet.

The parents' expectations are for a very good education and financially secure employment as well as a respectable marriage for their daughters. However, contrary to the parents' expectations, the young women prefer to be in New Zealand and some of them prefer to remaining single. Two are willing to consider marriage if they find a suitable Sinhalese man while the other four are uncertain but willing to consider marrying someone outside of their ethnicity. Indeed one of the four said she would not consider marrying a Sri Lankan. The other three were not concerned about ethnicity.

Thunuja and Achini's parents, as with many other parents, allowed their daughter to migrate because they believed it would lead to better life. Thanuja describes why she wanted to migrate.

Thanuja:

Most people in Sri Lanka have positive attitudes. These days people are migrating everywhere. There are amazing changes in the society you know. Anybody would go abroad if they can. For educated women like us it is not a problem. During the last couple of years...very talented, very intelligent students have failed to get through to the university. Many parents...if they have enough money, send their sons and daughters to foreign universities. If they can afford it, they send children to US, UK, Canada or Australia or any other western country.

Many parents have an idealised view of migration. Often they do not know how their sons and daughters struggle in gaining the expected family prestige while struggling with studies or employment in a strange land.

The young women discussed their views on marriage in the interviews. They have made their minds up according to their own views but the parents too can be seen to be adapting to the new reality. The parents were willing to accommodate their children's changing preferences. They may have preferred the type of marriages that occurred for

preceding generations in their communities - once which they themselves experienced. While marriages are no longer arranged they still believe it is very important that their daughters marry. These young women are very much in control over the marriage decision than were the women of previous generations.

I asked my participants what are your hopes for your future family?

Sanjula's response to my question was;

Sanjula:

My future family, umm...really, I have no idea about marriage. It's very hard to make up my mind. My parents would not allow me to be single. Already, they say women cannot survive without a man. When you are getting old you need help from your own family. Every woman should marry and raise children to look after you. That is the way of life.

These women argue against the traditional norms in relation to the marriage institution because they think that women have been bound down with family responsibilities. They also believe that marriage prevents women from enjoying their independent lives. They prefer freedom, celebrating femininity, professional aspirations, and career expansion. They have discovered exciting opportunities for themselves and have a very different picture of what it is to be a woman than the view found in their parents' generation.

Asanka:

My grandmother says, women are vulnerable...They are fragile... like clay pots...It is uncertain...I am not decided....you know. If you are financially stable, you can live much easier than ever before. Any woman can build up her own life outside of the marital framework. For a woman marriage is important because of the financial stability, because she needs to depend on someone else. Actually, I am not ready to marry.

In general Asanka spoke with a positive attitude and manner. However in terms of marriage she spoke negatively. Her journal account reveals a clue about her decision to be single. Once she described;

Asanka:

When somebody asks about marriage I feel I am like an outcast. It's very hard to make up my mind about marriage...when I think about some of the experiences of married families.

Asanka's account revealed that her sister's unhappy experience in marriage had affected her considerably. She often worried about her sister's family problems which were generated by her in-laws. While I was interviewing Asanka, she spoke about the in-laws intervention in the Sri Lankan society mentioning how this made her sister's life a misery. I assumed that this unfortunate situation had made her unsure about the prospect of marriage- especially to a Sri Lankan man.

The young women were asked, 'What is your opinion about marrying a non Sri Lankan man? What would your family say?'

According to Thunuja;

Marrying a non-Sri Lankan man? (She asks as a rhetorical question), if I do, definitely my grandmother would give Sinhalese language lessons to him. Yes, they will teach him Sinhala (she smiles and says I am joking). But in reality, my families would not be happy. They are racist. They live in Colombo Seven (a residential area for some of the richest people in Sri Lanka), and they are very conservative (she said sarcastically).

Thanuja has a very good multicultural understanding and sense of equality and shared values.

Thanuja:

If I find a man who meets my requirements,...I would marry such a man but it wouldn't be very soon. My main focus is to improve my career first. If he exists I would marry him but not now... I would consider marriage later. I don't care about the nationality of a man. It is not an issue for me. I think that the traditional

meaning of marriage is changing. The idea of family and marriage as a lifelong unity is weakening fast...because now marriage is not a compulsory thing...see how does it work in many western countries.

Initially, I thought that those comments may an excuse or a justification for postponing marriage in order to pursue upward social mobility. During the interviews, I observed that Asanka and Thunuja talked seriously. Their facial expressions were genuine and sincere. But if Thanuja marries a man who meets her requirements, it is certain that she will be up against her parents' wishes that she marry a Sri Lankan.

However, Nimmi will not face this conflict.

Nimmi:

Actually, I have no intention to marry. If I couldn't find a suitable man I would give up the idea...But... I never...I would not marry a Sri Lankan man...even...when I was in Sri Lanka, I loved cultural diversity and enjoy being with a man who comes from a different race, colour and background. My parents are liberal thinkers, who only want my happiness...they want a man who would look after me, care for me as they did for me. They don't believe that happiness only comes from marrying a Sri Lankan.

Now I am 31 years old. I have enough time to think about things like marriage and family. Because I have some personal and job related things to get done, I don't know how long but not soon. If there is no chance, then I would be single.

Asanka also spoke of her marriage choice, explaining it this way;

Asanka:

When somebody asks about marriage I feel that something is missing in my life. Now, I am 33. My friends and some relatives are asking 'When are you going to marry?' I can't answer directly but I don't like such questions. Why is marriage so important to some people? I don't know...I would not marry. I really admire marriage but not for me. It's a burden...

The concept of women as the torch-bearers of tradition is still strongly embedded in the domestic sphere in Sri Lanka although the image of women is slowly changing as responsibilities themselves change. However, there are still strong cultural obligations to care for the aged. Sri Lanka is predominantly a *Theravada Buddhist* country and Buddhism considers the compassionate concern and caring for each other as meritorious acts which each person should practise for the improvement of healthy social relationships. Within the Sri Lankan social structure not only the children but also the extended family is responsible for caring for the aged members of the family. The majority of Sinhalese Buddhists believe this reciprocal care is an essential part of everyone's lives and which will be a meritorious contribution in the life after death. The sons or daughters who are living at or around the family home are responsible for looking after the parents. If there are no children, or, if they are away from the family due to their work, the responsibility might be taken by the other family members and/or the community. Unlike most Western countries there is no provision of institutional assistance for the aged. In poorer countries it is a family matter. However, the increasing number of women in outside employment and changed lifestyles and living conditions have made it sometimes more an inevitable duty rather than a welcome pleasure (Marga, 2005).

The young women in this study have confidence that the obligation of caring for parents is being taken care of by other siblings who are living back home. Not being in the same physical locations as each other, the daughters maintain an emotional connectivity with their parents via the new technology. The young women described that they are skyping, emailing, and communicating with parents on the phone.

Where a daughter leaves her parents to marry, other siblings, male or female who are living at home, or living near the parents' home, are responsible to care for their parents. Those who are financially well off may hire a care-taker or domestic worker to care for the elderly in the family. For the young women who belong to the urban middle or upper-middle social class, their parents (those who are professional parents or business families) are able to manage their care themselves. Where there is no financial contribution required by the daughters to the parents the young women may spend their income as they wish.

I asked the young women in the study about the effect of the migration on their families back in Sri Lanka. Each of the participants made an effort to justify their belief that their parents were not affected by the separation from their daughters, probably because the daughters were thinking about the financial effects more than the emotional ones.

Achini:

Actually, I don't know whether they...yeah...there are no effects I think...actually, they are not ok. Because my mum had already passed away so...my younger sister is very young. Yeah... she is very young. We had domestic workers like that. I had some kind of feeling that ...it's like being alone... So, I think there is nothing to affect them.

Achini's family may have positive attitudes towards her move because her life had already been affected by her mother's death.

Hiranya:

My parents approved my coming to New Zealand but they were sad...also happy...because of my education. First, they were so sad. After so many long discussions they agreed with some promises. But, there are no effects on their lives. My sisters were so sad. Because we all lived together...as a family...yes...they are happy...because...in moving to New Zealand...I got an opportunity to study abroad. Now I can help them to get here to further their education. My sister also completed her Chartered Accountant course at the university.

Hiranya and her family are experiencing a mixture of feelings because she has to be an example for her two younger sisters and they may be empowered by their sister. Hiranya indicated her intention to bring her sisters to New Zealand to further their education, which means she has started the process of 'chain migration' (Tilly, 2005; Baldassar, 2007; Plaza & Ratha, 2011) which is well known among developing nations.

Asanka:

Umm... effect on my family...I don't think that there is a big issue with my family. In moving to New Zealand I proved I would not be in trouble. Because they know...my parents know very well about me. I was a bit naughty as a young woman. But I am well educated and grown enough to get good and bad from...from wherever, it is not matter. My parents have enough income to have a very good life. My mother is an educated woman but she doesn't work...a house wife. They do not need anything from me...because they have everything. I have a sister and she finished her business management degree from the Colombo Campus and is married to a chartered accountant. He is her university boyfriend. My parents wasn't happy but later they allowed marrying him because...they were lovers for a long time...now they are living happily ever after...(She laughs loudly). I don't know...

Asanka's story was one of intergenerational upward mobility within the family. Her class privilege has made her comfortable and she was not concerned about any traditional moral obligations to her parents.

Sanjula:

I think there is no effect on my family... I think (she smiles). It's sad to leave the family and friends but... I can improve my life...myself... alone here. I hoped to be a doctor. It's the dream of my family. But, I couldn't get through. I've been very close to the district's cut-off mark. Because... Colombo is a very hard...place...to compete in. Then, I thought that... I have to do something I have never expected. Finally, I decided to do a BSC degree...I expected to do here whatever I could do. Like...I wanted to accept any challenge for my future (she look courageous) because I was a bit upset about my lost dream of going to medical school.

I know that I have to work hard here but it's a challenge to face life. My parents are very sad ... because I am the eldest... you know... they have some ideas in their minds...



Sanjula has responded to the challenges which were encountered at the closed door of the medical faculty. She has no reason to return home or give up her outstanding career in New Zealand.

Nimmi answered my question, 'what was the effect on your family back in Sri Lanka?

Nimmi:

Actually, my families were not happy. My immediate family, grandparents, aunties, uncles were sad to see me go, some were jealous.

Nimmi:

And the other thing is my parents are younger and healthier, they are not yet in need of personal care. If they needed they are also financially able to purchase care support. I have no obligation because my brother is at home with my parents. They do not want financial help but only need is kind of emotional support...when they are getting older. We are talking on phone regularly...skyping fortnightly...

Often migrants' relationships with home are based on continued financial support with remittances maintaining the strong links and there is less emotional and moral obligations to those who are left behind. However, in terms of these young women, the emotional ties remain strong while the moral obligations are weakened and there is little financial interaction.

### **Career aspirations as the turning point in negotiating relationships**

Generally, migration plays a significant role in the Sri Lankan society and it is a vehicle in social upward mobility. Significantly for Sri Lankan women migration offers a way out of the re-structure of Sri Lankan society. They can step out of the boundaries that restricted them. In Sri Lankan women are required to protect both the family reputation and their own dignity. Parents' are accountable for their daughter's virginity at the time of her marriage. Failing to undertake this responsibility will bring disgrace, not only to

the woman but also her family. Youth pregnancy is unacceptable in Sri Lankan culture and the actual situation is worse than portrayed because it is usually hidden from public view.

The young women in this study are constantly negotiating their gender roles and their position in the host society. They believe gender roles should change to meet their new life. They saw their parents' acceptance of the separation as providing hope for a different life one that enabled strong interdependent family ties to be maintained. Many Sri Lankans preserve or attain family prestige through their sons and daughters living in developed countries. There is a view that Sri Lankans who live in an English speaking country bring prestige to the family with English language still seen as an instrument of class prestige. Even in post-Independence Sri Lanka speaking in English is considered a symbol of upper-class status. This has added to idealising migration to English speaking countries.

In the realisation of their daughters' achievement, parents feel pride and a sense of accomplishment. For that reason they encourage their daughters to achieve high educational goals and pursue professional careers. The obligation of the parents to their daughters is over and now it's time to enjoy the harvest of their labour. The daughters are considered sufficiently mature to make wise decisions about their lives. Included in the changes to intergenerational relationships occurring to Sri Lankan families is a change to the way parents are regarded. Previously, parents were recognised as aged and experienced and expected to give advice to the younger generation. Today there is some uncertainty about the claims to wisdom of the older generation. One of the reasons for the adjustment to or re-negotiation of the relationships between the generations is the need for both parents and adult children to recognise the reality of their lives and by doing so to avoid potential contradiction and conflicts between generations. It may be that parents believe or pretend to believe that their daughters' views cannot be challenged so bear the emotional cost in a dignified silence.

## **Conclusion**

In presenting the findings of the study I wanted to ensure that the voices of the women are comprehensively documented. The purpose of the research was to investigate how each woman perceived the process of negotiating the migration therefore it is important to present the women's account in her own words. In the extracts from the interviews presented in chapters four, five, six and seven each woman explains how she negotiated the new situations in everyday life in order to 'find' herself.

The new phenomenon of young independent professional women migrants involves a re-positioning of the women's gendered relations with the women are negotiating major shifts in these relations. In this chapter, I have discussed the main issues of traditional family norms versus the personal autonomy of professional women in terms of gender roles as they are played out in the shift from Sri Lanka to New Zealand. The chapter examined the social and political contents within which the young women negotiate changing gender relationships in both Sri Lanka and New Zealand. It illustrated how these women negotiated gender relationships as daughters to their parents within the discourses of Sri Lankan family relationships and gender norms. It described the gender role changes that were experienced by these women and how they perceived these changes. I presented an overview of the framework for the theoretical analysis of Sri Lankan gender relationships and gender indicators. The main focus in this chapter was to show how family relationships, especially the parent-daughter relationships, are changing in the face of the new circumstances. The findings indicate that the women are re-negotiating traditional emotional bonds and their obligatory commitments and the 'sense of family' (Baldassar, 2007) with those left behind. The next chapter discusses the findings about the women's attitudes towards men.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Women's attitudes towards men and marriage

#### Introduction

The preceding chapter has shown how the gendered position of the young women in relationship to their parents underwent substantial change as both parents and daughters adjust to the effects of the migration on their relationships. This chapter is about the changes to the women's ideas of relationships with men and marriage. It discusses how far they are able to negotiate within the family expectations of marriage and their own expectations. It also examines what they want from relationships and how they are negotiating these new expectations within the new context. The data analysis has traced their interests in terms of ethnicity and religion to look at possible transnational and cross-marriage options. The extracts show how the young women are re-positioning themselves in terms of the public self and the personal self.

The young women have chosen New Zealand as their home saying that they do not want to return to Sri Lanka and have given reasons. As a result alternatives have been considered about how they will live in New Zealand. The theoretical discussion integrates the women's comments into the analysis under three sections: the changed expectations of young women, what they want from relationships, and how they are negotiating these new expectations. The final section of the chapter develops the theoretical discussion further with reference to the literature.

The new phenomenon of professional women re-positing their social relationships as global knowledge workers and as migrant young women within the host country is characterised by constant negotiation. The research shows how they grapple with what is appropriate in the new context. They change their ideas about fundamental matters such as whether to raise a family or to marry and if so what sort of partner. Interaction with men too is another area where the women test out new ways of being. These young women are part of the rising numbers of unmarried educated women who contribute to the declining birth rate in developed countries. One survey (Survey of American Society-

2001) found that educated, unmarried females in their thirties have the most negative attitudes to marriage and parenthood. These women often face criticism from relatives and friends for not performing their role that of marriage and childbearing. This is something the young women in the study had experienced.

While, it is assumed that a Sri Lankan young woman will not leave home until she gets married, changes in contemporary Sri Lankan society have meant that increasing numbers of young women find their marriage partners themselves and then introduce them to their parents. Following negotiation the choice may change because while there is some choice involved, the parents' preferences are still considered important.

In terms of choosing a marriage partner young women consider the man's status and qualifications in order to find a degree of equality. Class status, education qualification level, family background, and the in-laws intervention are all taken into account. The study shows that six participants were heavily influenced by the Western model of marriage. The women said that their major concern is to be able to share their lives in a relationship characterised by reciprocal roles but with a man of the same social status. This latter requirement shows the continued Sri Lankan influence. However, they thought that marrying a non-Sri Lankan would enable them to avoid traditional cultural restrictions.

### **Equal relationships between men and women**

Asanka discussed the reasons for changes to gender roles in Western and Eastern culture. She compared the old ways to the new and declared her strong commitment to gender equality. She talked about the importance of women having more opportunities to work without experiencing gender bias and referred to situations she had encountered where women are in positions of power and authority over men noting considering that this will change the perceptions that women have of men.

Asanka:

In the workforce, there is no significant difference between men and women and there are more opportunities and responsibilities to share together. Why are women inferior in the domestic space? Why can't we share our roles? We need flexibility. The main thing is we have to make up our minds first. Sri Lankan men are reluctant to respect women as equals. Men are not willing to honour or respect women, because culturally they are taught to be inflexible.

You know, some men are like puppets, they are under control of their mothers and old sisters or aunties. In-laws intervention is a big issue in Sri Lankan family structure... (After a little pause she spoke thoughtfully) you know, some families are under threat because of the in-laws involvements. Normally, the recorded family violence related incidents have been rooted in in-laws involvement.

Simply, every woman has a dream to make her own home on her own way. You know...but some mother-in-laws are so...so...you know...

It is of huge significance that these young women professionals are in a position to change their lives. While gender equality is always important to them, especially as they moved into higher educational study, in Sri Lanka it was not possible to reject the conventional social order. Migrating to New Zealand has changed that. Now they are permitted a new home, and it is believed that they can apply what they learned. In-laws involvement in particular was a feature of Sri Lankan life that they were happy to leave behind. Asanka's brief journal note mentioned how 'the interview engaged me with home and sweet memories but also some of the unpleasant memories back in home'. This was a reference to in-laws interference in the family.

Sanjula too was happy to change and become integrated into New Zealand society.

Sanjula:

As migrants we tend to change. Some others are changing their way of life very slowly. Some of them get only what they needed or like...what they can get

easily. Obviously, young crowd, love to get something that they can admire in fascinating...as educated people we should know what we have to get or avoid. I believe, we have to fit with the new society and it's necessary to change.

Sanjula believes that just because she is from Sri Lanka she shouldn't be stopped from selecting those new ways of living that will benefit her. She is quite definite in her view that women should change to fit with the new society.

Sanjula:

The social values are changing because of educational improvement. I think that...because it is why traditional role of women are changing now...Generally, Sri Lankan women choose employment in the field of education and health care sectors, as teachers and nurses. But, the young generation has a tendency to be looking at highly respected fields in Sri Lanka, like medical personnel and engineers, lawyers, accountants and IT experts, which is a significant improvement of the position of women in Sri Lanka. They are highly respected at work or in their profession but: the same woman at her home will become insignificant. It's a shame!

Now, women are going abroad for job opportunities, and both men and women are sharing their roles, it is very positive improvement. They are doing well. Some professions barred women because of childcare responsibilities in the family. In the contemporary society, most cultures are blended with each other and traditional social structure and the social values...and ideologies are changing. So...women have to change according to their work and study environment or work place responsibilities...I think.

Inspired by the other female professionals, Sanjula is confident in negotiating herself into New Zealand ways of living. She justifies her new values and behaviours both in terms of her status as an immigrant and as a member of a new 'liberated' generation.

Sanjula:

These days, there are enough opportunities in educational development in Sri Lanka...and parents are aware their children's education in every level of society, from rural to urban areas. Now, most women choose non-traditional jobs rather than government jobs. Once, traditional roles limited the potential of women, but now it is changing. You know, in my mother's time, teaching was the best option for a woman. Even though, now, my mother hopes that we should be doctors, engineers or IT specialists. Everything is changing and why shouldn't we? Our roles have to change in a timely manner...I think.

She recognises that adjustments are needed. Migrants should be flexible and willing to mingle if they wish to be part of the host society.

Asanka:

Well, throughout the last three generations, the role of the men and women has been changed. Our attitudes, values and thinking patterns are different from that of our parents, and more than our grandparents...so...we are as professional women, definitely... I think... somebody those who are living in western countries are not living as people who are living in Sri Lanka. It is hard to accept...because, we, migrants, have to survive in another society...you know, you have to follow the rules, values and follow the social conduct, like people who are living in those countries. I think that we have to change our attitudes towards others. We have to respect and value their social norms. Our generation is very radical and self-sufficient and are more liberal thinkers than the previous generation. They were involved in different roles and responsibilities...I mean women are earning well in different fields. They are more valuable than ever before.

Like Sanjula, Asanka values her autonomy. She would not venerate a man in the traditional Sri Lankan way given her respect for equal rights for women although as she notes, the role of women in Sri Lanka is also changing.



Asanka:

Nowadays, there are some business women in Sri Lanka, and they are holding executive positions, or are bosses of companies and projects. I know one of the friends of my mother, runs a very successful business back in Sri Lanka. She is amazing! A tough woman...very strict...very masculine...She has developed her personality to fit with the job, not actually her job but her career. Such woman should marry a man who has good understanding about her role. That's the point.

She seems to be suggesting here that these new roles require as women to become like men, a change that will affect her 'domestic self'. Marriage will be a challenge for herself and the 'professional self' that she is keen to develop.

Thanuja:

I think that gender roles are changing all over the world, 'the world' means, men and women..., basically, I think that the reason is subsequent educational advancement at the end of the last century. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century; there are rapid improvements in the IT sector. We are enjoying more opportunities than our parents did. The effect of communication progress and the use of the internet and other high technology usage have made significant impacts on the lives. Because of that, lifestyles have changed very fast... you know. The speed of the change is very...very...fast, between my mother's and my generation. When the games change, the players have to change... and the rules of the game has to change (she justifies her opinion)...And the purpose of the sport has to change. Changing social structure anticipates different goals from people you know.... Nowadays, traditional social norms are changing in Sri Lanka...and the western influences are dominating all over the world...more changes are taking place because of the influences of equal opportunities for women.

Thanuja is quite clear that change is acceptable. Women, as co-players in human relationships, have to change if they want to benefit. In her understanding of how women have changed, she says:

Women writers, and women organizations...and the...UNO and... the human rights organisations are now addressing women's issues. World organisations and groups are concerned with women's rights. Through the Mass media all those ideas informing people...and these NGOs and the governments have co-operative plans for development because of that, the thinking patterns of women are changing. I think that it's very positive mode of change, because women should get to know what are their rights and their position as human beings.

Now, men are begun to look at women as human beings and... assessments of the importance of women have progressively changed. Once, some jobs were banned for women. I mean the jobs are segregated or gendered. And now status is changing significantly. Why would women want to be inferior to men?

She is confident about the new order, indeed looks to a future in what she sees with enthusiasm as a world of increasing gender equality.

Thanuja:

Well, now, there is no difference between male and female in the job market. Only work quality and skills become measures of the suitability of workers. So, women have proved their potential skills in the work force. I am qualified and I am confident about my capacity. I always think that there are no superiors over me. (*Her looks serious*). That's why we are...I am here. (*She smiled triumphantly*).

Thanuja emphasises the skills which empower women and give them access the labour market. She played down the reality of unequal power relations between men and women that still exists. Her emphasis is on equality.

Achini:

One of my dad's best friends hardly stays in Sri Lanka. Once while he was abroad, his daughter had an affair with a married man. Later, they knew of it. Having heard that, I remember that my dad said, 'Oh my God!' He was so surprised that he could not believe that the boy is a family guy. He didn't like that they were having an affair... But he used to try to find a guy for me (She smiled). Later he said, you can find your own. He doesn't care whether the guy is rich or poor but educated and same as with my qualification. I want to do something better than now, career wise. Like...to reach out somewhere in the future. My aunties say it's time to marry because I am alone here...so then, they want me to get married. Any way, if possible, I would choose a Sri Lankan who is living in New Zealand, because I don't want to marry a man from another culture. Because for a girl... I don't know.

Achini recognises her family's concern for her future and while she will choose her own husband, her decision to consider a Sri Lankan man is a nod to the strength of family influence. However, Sanjula and Hiranya are committed to their own choice.

Sanjula:

I'm concerned with the quality of a man...rich or poor doesn't matter. My parents may think about the caste, up country, Buddhist so on. But I should have a right to find a man for me. My choice will be a Sri Lankan Sinhalese man, educational qualifications should be the same as mine or higher than me. Same field is better. I would like to choose a migrant who are from Sri Lanka but not directly from traditional Sri Lankan background. .. Oh... Children! The work condition would be very tight. And a 'big family' is very difficult to run right now. Two is the perfect number.

Some families living in New Zealand speak both Sinhalese and English with their children. Father is speaking English and the mother is speaking in Sinhalese the

children speak well in both. I suppose to do so... because when they visit to Sri Lanka they should converse in Sinhalese.

It's like an imaginary. I don't now really, whether I will marry or not. This is what I think. But there is no exact time. One day....

The issue of children concerned the women. Unlike men, in postponing marriage the age matters for women. They had thought about choosing not to have children or postponing or limiting the number of children they intended to have.

Sanjula hopes to have no more than two children.

Sanjula:

I would like to be married and having no more than two children... yeah, I think so. He would be a Sri Lankan and a Catholic because I know about Sri Lankan culture and the values, traditions...some extent. As a Catholic believer it's my dream to have a Catholic husband. My parent and family will be happy...I think my mum is matchmaking right now. Because I am 27 now.

Yeah, I would be happy to choose a Sri Lankan who is living in New Zealand. Well educated professional, a university lecture was my dream because I like academic husband from educated family background. And professionally similar or higher status. I would be happy if he is from business sector... if I found I would marry but not soon. My parents are too much thinking about but I have to think. For me marriage is to share my life equally and peacefully with wider understanding with the role of the family and life. I do not want to accept a stranger as my husband. We have to know each other and love each other...respect each other... you know.

Sanjula wants to choose a partner who will love her, care for her and understand her. She looks forward to work and gender roles coordinating together for a successful future.

Achini:

I have no idea about how many children. But I know I have to think about it because employment and family life have to be co-ordinated. It is not like our

parents' time. Nowadays both husband and wife are working and more children will be a problem. I think two children is better choice for a family. Sons or daughters are not a matter. The children are children. This is our time girls' time... (She said smiling). Yeah...I do not want to be a house wife. I want to work and need to financially independent. Financial autonomy is the strength of a woman and money is benefited for a better life. Children...? I don't know, which one is more important

### **Marriage expectations**

Contemporary professional Sri Lankan women make the final decision in their choice of a marriage partner. Those living in the West look for certain qualities even if they chose a Sri Lankan man. The young women in my study have high expectations of the type of relationship they will have with their husband. They expect a woman's self-dignity to be honoured, her contribution to the family appreciated, and her work acknowledged and admired. While most Sri Lankan men expect the domestic burden to borne by the woman within the family these young women believe that men and women should share family responsibilities.

As the women move from traditional ways of living they negotiate what beliefs and practices remain important to them. They wish to leave behind some selective aspects from the host culture. Just as western women have done in the modern period education played a crucial role in enabling these professional women to make these decisions. They negotiated marriage partner selection, marriage stability, reputation, self-respect, companion marriage like westerners, equal rights and dignity, sharing the life with the partner, some needed cultural understanding against cross cultural marriage partner selection.

Nimmi has knowledge of the spousal relationships within some families in Sri Lanka as well as in several New Zealand families. She agrees with Sanjula that contemporary men and women should have equality in the home and at work. She sees the influence of New Zealand ways as a positive sign for the future.

Nimmi:

Gender relationships are improving among many countries, but in Sri Lanka, it still seems like a typical patriarchal country with father at the centre. With regards to migrants however, living in a country where gender roles and boundaries are pushed and challenged, they find themselves equal in most cases. As I know some immigrants who are living in New Zealand, probably, are still quite patriarchal in their approach to family, but if you are a bit open minded, you see the father and the mother both helping in the kitchen, both doing work that may not have been in their 'traditional' role. I think it's time to close the traditional chapter. There are massive amounts of knowledge around us but most people are blindfolded. They are very reluctant to give up their privileges, I think.

Nimmi is approving of what she regards as the more liberating of her friends and compares this to Sri Lankans who have come from traditional social cultural contexts and who are show reluctance to make adjustments. Similarly, Achini and Asanka emphasise the reluctance of Sri Lankan men to take on traditional women's roles and share the work with their partners. As Nimmi observed, the patriarchal male ideology still plays a significant role in the relationships between Sri Lankan men and women. But the young women consider it unacceptable and speak appropriately of changes they observe.

Achini:

Back home my mum had to do so many things for dad. And dad was doing what he has to do the things that belonged to him like business and... like that. Children also have to do the things like 'these are for women' and 'those are for men'. Like..., I can remember, if I wanted to put up framed photograph on the wall I got the hammer and a nail and asked my dad or a male domestic worker to help me, but did not ask my mother or a female worker. Now that's changing in Sri Lanka I think.

My dad is watching TV and mum has to do the cooking, I mean she does it with helpers... and other things at home. But my dad has never done cooking. Even,

after my mum's death he did not cook for us. Because we had servants, but there are compulsory things that they have to do. But I have seen a newly married family who are doing everything together. It's very nice to see them, cleaning and cooking together in the kitchen...But some other guys back home yeah... really. It's changing which is good!

Achini compares two different families in terms of shared gender role and is much more approving of the couple who share tasks than of the husband who holds onto traditional ways.

Achini:

Yeah, the new generation is changing. But not all are the same. One of my friends has been here for, quite a long time but he is not really dominant ...but...you know. He doesn't like to have one or two curries for lunch or dinner. He needs the dinner table, the way it was back home. He wants to cook really, like three or four curries...He wants really nice things... So, I think that the new generation is really changing. One of my friends who recently married... Sometimes, they cook and do some easy things...because they have to adjust their time to fit with their work and studies at university. They do all things together. It is so nice to see. If I found such man I would marry... (She laughed as if it may not be a possibility).

Achini's parents have maintained a traditional model of family relationships but her friends who are living in New Zealand have adopted modern ways. She sees the contemporary model family as one that shares roles with men interacting freely.

Thanuja compares changes across three generations. She single outs the possibilities available for women today as providing a very different life from that lived by her mother, even though her mother was well-educated.

Thanuja:

Comparing my life with my mother's life there is much that is different. I think there are some differences. She is an educated woman. She do not need to move

from the country it's a little bit foreign concept I think... she studied at the university and met a suitable man, got a good job and started her life. It's enough. But our generation have so many tasks, roles and goals to achieve...

Thanuja has built on the changes experienced by her mother and grandmother. Her grandmother gained basic rights. In turn she encouraged her granddaughter to achieve a higher education in order to acquire economic freedom and autonomy and also to choose a husband who would respect this. Thanuja sees her future far beyond the horizons of her grandmother.

Thanuja understands changing gender roles as connected to changes in the global labour market. She sees these changes as important for her generation especially because the global market offers opportunities for women like her to migrate. Changes to lifestyle are acceptable because migrant women have to integrate into the host country. She sees this as adding to her life because of the opportunities and the range of choices that are open to her.

Nimmi believes that gender relationships have improved within Sri Lankan society too as a result of the knowledge economy. Women are able to move away from the traditional roles, especially young professionals who are influenced by modern liberal ideas. For those living in a liberal country like New Zealand, the young women are even more influenced.

Nimmi:

The attitudes towards gender roles have improved a lot in Sri Lanka as well as in other countries. But it still seems like the typical patriarchal country with father at the centre. However, living a broad-minded society where the gender roles and boundaries are pushed and challenged, some of the immigrants probably are also still quite patriarchal in their approach to family. I think that many Sri Lankan migrants change their mind and attitudes.



Asanka:

Yeah...there is some kind of cultural restrictions for females in Sri Lanka but here in New Zealand you can give them up...to some extent...I got some Sri Lankan friends from the very beginning of coming to New Zealand. We are still friends. Some of them got married to the Sri Lankan girls. Even, without a marriage I can enjoy my life but not like most Kiwi girls...every Friday night going out with boyfriends...and drinking as a habit... no I am not...I didn't have such relationships with Sri Lankan or non Sri Lankan guys. We are going out with friends, some weekends we have a plan. Perhaps, there is no reason, but parties, concerts, movies...like that...so many things to do. Sri Lankan parents do not allow their sons and daughters to have a glass of wine...before or after marriage...But publicly (She laughs loudly and added). You know, most Sri Lankan youth are swallowing a couple of bottles of wine at a time. Here, both males and females are the same.

With integration into New Zealand society, as successful professionals and with friends and the economic means to enjoy life, marriage is less central to their future than it was for their mothers' generation. In fact, Asanka compares Sri Lanka and New Zealand and finds Sri Lanka lacking in terms of gender relations.

Asanka:

In Sri Lanka, gender difference exists everywhere. Here in New Zealand, generally, it's wonderful, good relationships between men and women, men respect women. They share their roles. Even at home and work place... any public places like that...yeah.

I hate the way men treat women in Sri Lanka. Have you ever noticed back in Sri Lanka? (She imitates the behaviour) The woman accompanies her man, like your neighbour's wife you know what I mean? Some couples are walking on the pavement...the man walks on the front and the woman has to follow him. Do they think like that they would be defiled, in walking with a woman? It's so funny.

*(During the interview session I enjoyed Asanka's sense of humour. I had*

*memories of such observations and incidents more than she did. I am laughing even while I am listening to the recorded interviews).*

As with the other women, Asanka wants control over her own life.

Asanka:

First, my parents were not happy to send me to a foreign country. They thought I would be spoiled, you know, a single young woman alone, abroad...? (She smiled ironically). Later they agreed, because they are very positive people and they trust and believe in me. They know I am not an irresponsible person and I am going for a good job... so they do not want to prevent such an opportunity.

My sister was happy for my future progress and she wished me, 'Good luck!' She may think that I can get more opportunities by going to New Zealand. She said that 'You are lucky to travel before marriage. Don't be like me, and enjoy your life before your marriage'. My sister had an affair with a guy. It's ended with a marriage. Now, she has two kids and so many responsibilities with family life... I feel so sorry my poor sister. Having seen my sister's marriage life I was disappointed...

Asanka's sister's statement is a reflection of the different status of two educated women. Marriage and family responsibilities have placed a burden on her sister's shoulders. It is a warning to her younger sister, 'don't hurry to get married like me.' Asanka has made up her mind to be single probably because of the lessons she has learned from others, especially from her sister.

Asanka:

My mother is also an educated woman and she also graduated from the University of Peradeniya. She has worked as a graduate teacher for a short period in a popular girls' school in Colombo. After my sister's birth she had to give up the job. My dad is a businessman and he did not allow my mum to work. Then she became a housewife. I think she is not unhappy about that...I think. She has made

up her mind to be at home and look after her two daughters. As a wife of a rich man she doesn't need to worry about money, because everything at hand. She has house-keepers, cooks, gardeners and everything, you know. However, she has become an obedient wife to a businessman. It's a good fortune for a Sri Lankan woman.

This is another illustration of a graduate woman's involvement in family responsibilities and child rearing. It is the role of an obedient wife in a traditional society. The positions of mother and her sister too, may be another reason for Asanka's decision to be single.

Asanka:

Yeah... my grandparents are respectable people in the neighbourhood. They lived in that same area... and my grandmother was married to a man who was proposed by her parents... who are living in the same village. So, she lived her life in a very limited geographical area. At the time, emigration was a strange idea for a woman... I think.

Asanka's story shows how education was a contributory factor to change but it wasn't education alone that caused the break with traditional roles. Migration was the key factor, specifically migration to a liberal society where the women could live out their autonomy and meet men who accept non-traditional roles.

### **The women's variety of marriage choices**

In response to my question, 'How has these new approaches changed you', the women described how much their lives were affected by having the choice to make their own decisions.

Asanka:

There are many friends and some relatives living in European countries, UK and USA. Some of them are studying and others are working. Among them, there are some of my university friends. They are doing well. My best friend got married to a Sri Lankan who was born in America and ...then she moved to America and

found a job there... Now, they are settled there and once they invited me to try a job from America. But I didn't like to live in America. It's not my taste...for me American life is so complicated and stressful. I need a relaxed life, like a peaceful life in a natural environment...a country like New Zealand.

Asanka's friends have chosen transnational migrants as their marriage partners. Asanka will not choose a transnational or typical Sri Lankan. If she is unable to find someone who meets her requirements to marry she can continue to develop her career.

Asanka:

My future family...well...well... well...I haven't decided...to get married...have a family. First, I have to think about my professional career progress...and I have to get some qualifications and skills and experience in the field of engineering... when I joined the field as a civil engineer, I got some aspirations from the other senior professionals. So...I thought that I would acquire more qualifications in my profession. Currently, I am pursuing this. Before my thirty second birthday I have to gain some of them. Then I may think about my future family. Maybe or may be not...

Asanka has put off marriage for her career aspirations. She is influenced by the senior professionals in her field and aspires to be an outstanding professional. While she is not happy to marry a Sri Lankan man her family would not be happy for her to marry a man who is not from the same ethnicity. This adds a significant complication to the idea of marriage.

Asanka:

Marrying a non Sri Lankan man...would be a bit of a problem...I think...probably with my parents and relatives. My sister will not be opposed to that kind of thing. For me... really...nationality is not a problem. I am looking for certain...qualities in a husband. If I find such qualities I would marry him. With a man from out of my culture...would not be allowed by my parents. Because, for a woman, they do not allow it I think. There are some prominent men there who

have been married British, American and European women. It is ok, with men, but not women sometimes.

There are some Sri Lankan and non-Sri Lankan guys, they are my friends or known to friends. Some of them have told they are happy to marry a girl like me. But I did not encourage them. Because I have to wait for a long time for marriage... until I meet the particular requirements... (laughing loudly). Sometimes...maybe never...

In contrast both Hiranya and Sanjula have different ideas about marriage. They see marrying a Sri Lankan man as important and Sanjula also requires someone of the same religion.

Sanjula:

I have no idea about a non Sri Lankan husband. It's very difficult for me to think about a man from outside. And my family would disagree... definitely. I have no choice. My convent school has disciplined me in the ways that acceptable to my family background. And my religious belief will not allow me to cross-marriage.

Sanjula was educated at a strict Catholic convent. Her beliefs mean that she would not marry a non-Catholic man, whether or not he is suitable in other ways.

Hiranya is similar in terms of her upbringing in a strict Buddhist family. This influences her ideas about who is a suitable marriage partners.

Hiranya:

I don't like to marry a non Sri Lankan. I would like to find a man who share my future...and he will be a Sri Lankan. Definitely...because I like my culture. I want to be a Buddhist and a Sinhalese all the time. I even try to get along with the people who like the culture. I don't like someone talking in English. Even some people, who have come to New Zealand with us...they do not use Sinhalese here. I don't like that...also...I want to marry a Sinhala man (*she is very patriotic and religious, a typical Sri Lankan*).

I noted in my journal after interviewing Hiranya.

*Hiranya is my second interviewee. She talked in negative and conservative way about marriage partner selection. She said that 'I would hate it if my possible future husband will speaking in English. When I was conducting the interview I was amazed by her attitudes of quite extremist nationalist flavour. Then I started the follow-up questions for other interviewees to verify my perception about the views of my second interviewee. All others considered that the English language is as an important feature of the contemporary time and that they would seek well-versed English speakers for marriage. This made me wonder about Hiranya. Is she trying to be a real Sinhalese Buddhist patriot? For me it is strange for someone her age to talk like a middle-aged woman.*

Later I knew that she is very close to her family back in Sri Lanka and shares their strong nationalistic and religious beliefs.

Sanjula:

I am not ready to think about a marriage and also I haven't a boyfriend. You know...my mother has sent wedding proposal to a Sri Lankan newspaper. It's a Catholic newspaper. It's the hope of many Catholics in Sri Lanka and abroad. Because they can find a suitable partner through that newspaper. So, my mum has found a Sri Lankan Catholic, a well-established professional in New Zealand. My mother has contacted that family and they have agreed to see me. I think, without seeing me, they have decided to accept the proposal. As I heard...I think... that...it's not bad. Two weeks ago, my mum came here. Then she met them... and... talked with his parents. And they visited our place and... oh! I saw him... not bad. A handsome man... (Ha...ha...haa). He is an engineer...if I get married to that Sri Lankan born New Zealand citizen. May be. I would be a citizen in New Zealand... My mum came two weeks ago...with the wedding proposal. My mother was so busy during the last two weeks. She was always on the

telephone... Calling daddy... and my aunts...and...family friends... getting advice (she is laughs).

Well, man is not bad...everything is ok. He is a Sinhalese, a catholic...well established career...good family background...in his early thirties. Yeah...mum wants to hurry the engagement. Oh my god! My freedom! I feel sad... (She was laughing and after a little pause she concluded) I need enough time to think about that...

Thanuja is very aware of her status as a professional but also of her reputation as a Sri Lankan woman.

Thunuja:

Well...I am...as a professional...I need to protect my reputation. Because, there are a lot of Sri Lankans here around Auckland and I do not like to be labelled... like a 'bad girl'. Driving late at night, going out with friends for dinner, movies and concerts...have a glass of wine with friends or having fun...making holidays somewhere in holiday resorts. Nowadays, those things are happening in Sri Lanka too. But the only thing...I don't have a boyfriend...I am so careful about my good health and protection of my life. I have made boundaries for everything...I don't know how I am developing my personality and character. I have a limit for 'everything'...I know what amount I have to take from this new freedom. As an example...you know...I have some male friends but no boyfriends... my personal life...you know I have very good self-controlling methods. Like...like...you know...a man come to make friendship...I know...where the devil...is or...you are known. No living together. I am not interested at all. Without marrying I am not ready to go for a trial (she looks serious but I could see her blushing). If I had dinner with a male friend I would take only one glass of wine at the restaurant. That's it. Then I am right back to my flat. No more alone time with men. I am not enjoying my freedom for the sake of the desires of the others.

If she gets an opportunity she will marry but she is waiting for a suitable man to match her qualifications. She wants a stable marriage, and is not interested in short term relationships. If such man cannot be found she will be another single professional.

Thanuja:

I see some parallel with my life and my mother's life. It is not too much different. I think there are some differences too. She is an educated woman. She does not need to move from her country, it's a little bit foreign concept I think...she studied at the university, met a suitable man. At the time it is easier to find a job for an educated woman. She got good job and started her life. It's enough. But our generation have so many tasks, roles and goals to achieve...

While Thanuja is considering the purpose of marriage her main aim is to develop her professional career.

Thanuja:

My grandmother was also a teacher and she also studied in a missionary school. Once she visited India with my grandfather. A very typical Sri Lankan, but she believes that women should have an education to nurture their family life. When I was young...she encouraged my study. She encourages working..., she says that a woman should have financial autonomy to enjoy her life and her freedom... she is wonderful. She still believe in arranged marriages with some changes...(she is smiling)...no drinking ... no smoking...a Buddhist... is the man for me. She would never find such a man (she smiles).

My future family, would it be here...? (First she laughs and said reluctantly)...I have no idea about marriage. It's very hard to make my mind. My parents would not allow me to be single. Already they say, 'Woman cannot survive without a man....when you are getting old you need help...so you should marry and raise kids to look after you...blah...blah... blah...'Women are vulnerable... like clay pots they are fragile...That's my grandmother's slogan. (She did not indicate her real attitude toward the marriage).



Non Sri Lankan man...yeah ... if I do...definitely... (She look serious) they will teach him Sinhalese...I think (she bursts out laughing). They are racists. Very conservative. If I find a man who meets my requirement I would marry him but not very ...soon. My focus is to improve my career ... and then I have to consider it. For me nationality is not a problem.

While Thunuja is interested in a non Sri Lankan, if she chooses that, she will face opposition from her parents. A non Sri Lanka man would run counter to the family expectations. However, her main focus currently is her career.

Nimmi has a different option:

I have never wanted to marry a Sri Lankan man, even when I was in Sri Lanka. I love cultural diversity and enjoy being with a man who comes from a different race, colour and background from me. My parents are liberal thinkers, who only want my happiness and a man who will look after me. They don't believe that happiness only comes from marrying a Sri Lankan.

Nimmi strongly rejects of the same ethnicity as herself. She enjoys cultural diversity and if she found an appropriate man she would marry him, but not in the immediate future. Asanka too likes the option of a transnational Non Sri Lankan. All three women, Nimmi, Thanuja and Asanka like the idea of marrying someone of a different ethnicity.

## **Conclusion**

All the women in this study are over twenty seven years old and have postponed marriage with the first three looking for a Sri Lankan transnational migrant. They believe that a transnational Sri Lankan will have a better understanding of how Sri Lankan women think and behave. However, if such a man is not to be found, they will marry outside of their ethnic group. Above all else with the new type of marriage options the young women saw the stability of marriage as essential. Another possibility which the women considered is to marrying a 'Kiwi' (European descendant or British or American).This

option was favoured because such a man is considered to be more respectful to a woman than a typical Sri Lankan man. Such a man would share family roles and care for his wife. The young women believed that a marriage between a New Zealand man and Sri Lankan woman will be successful while marriage between a Sri Lankan man and a 'Kiwi' woman (European descendant) will improve the man, because he would not be able to continue traditional patriarchal ways.

According to Hymowitz (2007) the United States and North Western Europe have a long tradition of 'companionate marriage', that is marriage based not on strict roles but on common interests and mutual affection. Companionate marriage contains the assumption of female equality, something that challenges traditional Sri Lankan beliefs. While Asian countries are adapting to the new order, with no history of companionate relations, their cultural norms are challenged and it is often difficult for individuals to change. However the women in the study are embracing changes in relationships on several fronts. The preceding chapter showed the changes occurring to parent-daughter relationships while this chapter discussed the women's attitudes towards marriage, as their migration to New Zealand opens up greater options in terms of marriage partners and roles within marriage. The next chapter discusses how the young women negotiate their professional lifestyles as Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Professional lifestyle**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the changes occurring to the women's ideas of relationships with men. This chapter presents the third category of findings of the study to discuss the lifestyles of the young professional women in their migration to New Zealand. It is about their attitudes towards work, money, leisure and possessions. Throughout this chapter I illustrate my discussion with reference to the experiences of the women with extensive extracts which are drawn from the interviews. I hope to be able to convey some of the complexity of the changes that influence the lives of young professional women globally and the Sri Lankan professional women in this study in particular.

#### **Women's attitudes towards work**

These accounts of the participants from the interviews provide insights into their reasons for migration and their ambitions to be free and successful women. Asanka described her family background and her motives in moving from home to find a life where she can have greater freedom and better professional prospects.

Asanka:

Well...I decided to migrate... somewhere... a foreign country. While I was studying at the University of Sri Lanka some of my friends pointed out their ambitions in the career fields. When I've been heard that their motives I thought that...can I go somewhere...after my study programme is completed. And ...while I am studying at the school...I got some kind of motivations from my friends about foreign countries and through my studies and readings I have

motivated to go out ... and see what is happening outside world. We Sri Lankans think that we are the only great nation in the world...as a young girl sometimes I felt that all such ideas are exaggerations. I wanted to know what the reality was. Yes, it's just like getting an exploratory experience...I don't know...think so.

Some of my close relatives live in Australia and they encouraged me to apply for a job in Australia. So I forwarded an application for a job in Australia. It's just after I finished the university degree. And I tried New Zealand for a job as well as for education because I wanted to further studies. Like...masters of engineering...and I joined with a non-governmental organization. Via that connection I had an opportunity to come to New Zealand for research purpose. Before I find a job in Australia, I have been selected to the New Zealand job. Ya...so then I came to New Zealand, because I love to be in New Zealand one day. I met some senior Sri Lankan engineers working in the field of what I love to do with. Later they helped me to join with their company in New Zealand. I have heard that New Zealand is the best country to settle down. The people who seek to live peacefully and live the way that ...their own way (she smiling)...yes.

Thanuja failed in her dream of becoming a doctor and now wants to take any challenge.

Thanuja:

I know that I have to work hard here but life is a challenge. I moved to New Zealand for my post grad studies...I decided to move from Sri Lanka because I wanted to get some overseas qualifications and experiences for the career development...there is no effect on my family. Only emotional effects that due to separation from the family.

Similarly Nimmi was aware that being an educated woman in Sri Lanka wouldn't guarantee control over her life. In explaining why she moved to New Zealand, Nimmi talked about greater opportunities.

Nimmi:

I decided to move from Sri Lanka to choose a better place to grow as a professional. My intention coming to New Zealand was to search for a better life, better opportunities and further education...

Achini's explicit purpose in migrating was for higher education. There was a hidden motive as well. She spoke about needing to move from her very traditional family, away their very conservative and strict ways. When she said that 'there are no effects on the family I think...' she was meaning in terms of finances. She didn't talk about the emotional cost borne by her parents with having a daughter based in another country.

Hiranya said that she has been inspired by her friends, those who had already taken up educational and employment opportunities and were living in foreign countries. She was keen to improve her life through higher education. She said... 'My expectation was to study well and be free... get a good job in New Zealand'.

Sanjula's main reason was to find a good job and make full use of her educational qualification.

Asanka's account shows the choices of non-traditional employment for women that have opened up in the global marketplace.

Asanka:

I think that in my parent's time... there are no female engineers in Sri Lanka. I think so. And I really appreciate the Sri Lankan educational system. It has allowed for female students to take advantage of educational opportunity. It's a privilege for us to take part in education... the medicine or the engineering fields have opened for us. I studied in a...convent in the Capital of Sri Lanka qualified the A/L and got through the University of Colombo. I have graduated in Bachelor of Engineering at the University of Colombo in early 2000. And I have pursued some other related courses in New Zealand. I am hoping to do further study too. The education system in Sri Lanka encourages the female students to do engineering courses from the secondary level. The people believe that it's a

highly respected job in Sri Lanka. It's my dream...to be an engineer. My parents encouraged me to be one. I could achieve dream. Yes, professionals, most of the engineers, are leaving the country because they can earn more than in our country. But now if you have foreign qualifications and experience you can get a job with a good salary. But...I don't want to work there. Sri Lanka and New Zealand are two different working environments. It's easy to integrate to the work places here. But I feel uncomfortable there. I have to think about my professional career progress...and I have to get some qualifications and progressive skills and experience in the field of engineering... when I joined the field as a civil engineer, I was inspired by some aspirations from the other senior professionals. So...I thought that I would acquire such qualities in my profession. Currently, I am chasing these. Before my thirty second birthday I have to gain some of them. Then I may think about my future family.

The women are attracted by more non-traditional employment which is more challenging and provides opportunities for autonomous decision making practices. But these careers can make it difficult to choose marriage and raising a family. All the women viewed marriage and raising children as an obstacle for the professional woman's career, and believed that it was necessary to choose between work or family.

The women enjoyed the material benefits of a professional job. They had to dress well, and saw owning a nice car and having a good apartment as all part of being a professional. Having choices, as compared to previous generation was not always easy. Working in a highly respected profession brings status and a comfortable life but also involves the stresses and tensions of the competitive employment market in addition to the problems about marriage that I discussed in the previous chapter.

Sanjula identified changes occurring to gender relations in the Sri Lankan society where women's increased skills and qualifications have led to less inequality. She was insistent that women have to change according to where they are living, that they should adjust to the new context and reap the benefits.

Sanjula:

In recent years, women working outside the home created so many issues. When the social values are changing, because of the educational improvement more women entered the workforce. I think that...because the traditional role of the women is changing now...Once generally, Sri Lankan women preferably chose employment in the field of education and health care sectors, as teachers and nurses...now the young generation has a tendency to be looking at highly respected fields in Sri Lanka, like medical personnel and engineers, lawyers, accountants and IT experts which is significant improvement for women in Sri Lanka. Women are attracted to more non-traditional employments.

Nowadays, there are some business women in Sri Lanka, and they are playing as executives or heads of companies and projects. Now women are going abroad for job opportunities. Some women choose to join the armed forces, and both men and women have to share their roles. Some professions were barred for women because of the childcare responsibility in the family. In the contemporary society most cultures are blended with each other and with traditional social structure and the social values...ideologies are changing. So...women have to change according to their work and study environment...I think. I choose to work first later I would think about marriage.

Sanjula believes that she has to negotiate the values of the host culture and should integrate into the new context. Living within a multi-cultural setting encourages flexibility and cultural mingling.

Asanka sees the non-traditional field of engineering as opening up many opportunities.

Asanka:

I think that ... my friends...most of them are working... they have good jobs. Some of them are getting a very good salary in Sri Lanka...the private sector is very good... now. But politics...everywhere. They have official vehicles and their own vehicles... some of them have quarters...some of them are married to rich

men or businesspersons or government officers. So... they have enough freedom to buy what they need. I think that the only difference here is ... we are living in a foreign country with non Sri Lankans. Not much class difference here. But in Sri Lanka my friends represent the layer of the upper class I think. Their buying habits are different...I think. They change their jobs...most of them are the same. So many choices...so many choices...chasing 'the best'... unlimited satisfaction...

As I mentioned a little while ago... my long-term motivation is ...yes ...I would like to form an engineering firm. In the immediate future, I am collecting qualifications to be a successful boss... (Her countenance is really determinative).

Thanuja talked about work place discrimination in New Zealand. She believed that her efforts and qualifications are undervalued compared to those of her New Zealand colleagues.

Sanjula:

In the working environment we have to be watch out. There is something going on in every layer of the work place. There is some kind of discrimination. As a first class degree holder in economics, I thought that I could do a banking job or similar job that related to the financial field. From my first degree, I got enough qualifications for the current job. I have worked hard for two years and pursued this job, because I love the banking. It is my only hope. Now, I was working as a data analysist for a big company. My first job in Sri Lanka is a private bank position. I was so happy to do it but gave it up and moved to New Zealand. If I go there again now, I can get a very good position with a very good salary including a vehicle and other facilities. Comparing both countries, here, in New Zealand, the salary level is lower than Sri Lanka, so I think that I can earn and spend there more than now. Another thing that made me upset was, some of New Zealanders are less qualified, unskilled but they have higher positions than highly educated workers like us who have come from other countries. They have no quality work to offer but their roles are higher and they are ordering us, it's irritating. That is



the most unpleasant experience in my life. My first work place in New Zealand was very unhappy. Because there were two Kiwi female bosses, nearly in their sixties. They were moody women. They talked rudely in front of the customers and other colleagues. It's annoying. But most of others were friendly.

The young women believed that, as professionals, it was important that they work. This is different from their mothers. As Asanka points out, her mother was well-educated but the traditional expectations of women as homemakers meant that the older generation of women, no matter how well educated would stop working. This is especially the case with upper middle class families where the husband's income is enough for a very comfortable lifestyle.

Asanka:

After my sister's birth my mother gave up her job. My dad has enough money and he did not allow my mum to go to work. Then she became a housewife. But she is not unhappy about that...I think. She may make up her mind to be at home and look after two daughters. As a wife of a rich man, she hasn't to worry about money...because everything coming to hand... she possesses property, house-keepers, cooks, gardeners and everything, you know. Finally,...she became an obedient wife for a businessman. It's a good fortune for a Sri Lankan woman. It's my mother's time. It's a little bit old fashioned. Why do you hide your potential?

Despite to her commitment to her professional career, Achini had a number of unpleasant experiences, mainly she felt as a result of her difference from the main group of migrants at her work. Sanjula also had unpleasant experiences at her work. She believed that her qualifications and skills weren't enough to overcome a degree of prejudice towards migrants, although like Achini, her worst experiences were at the hands of other migrants.

Achini:

Some ethnic groups are dominating over other migrant groups. My previous work place is a well-established company. There were so many ‘\_\_\_’ (*I have removed the name of other migrant group*) Even the general manager is a ‘\_\_\_’ and one of the CEO and the company is full of ‘\_\_\_’ people. They gave opportunities to them first. So we are getting bullied and most of the time I have got horrific experience. Once I rang to my friend and I cried whole day from right the beginning. I can’t perform well. I was just so upset because of that people but not all. They are not the employers but colleagues. I am the only Sri Lankan girl in the whole branch. And the managers are really good. There were two other technicians they all were belonging to that group. They talking their own language and trying to be separate and all that. I don’t want to know all that. The managers are good but they have trouble in recognising our qualifications and skills. I think they don’t want to recognise. The other thing is that ‘\_\_\_’ people are very rude, hatred, they are always swearing in front of others. They don’t know how to behave and talk politely with the colleagues.

As a result of her unpleasant experiences Achini wants to migrate to Australia for a while at least. Now she has a New Zealand qualification she thinks this will be easier.

Achini:

I am looking for a job in Australia, maybe, career-wise, better than this. If I find a place somewhere, I would move for a while, you know. I would be happy to do my job well, as I can. As a part of the team, I like to work at some new thing... But...yeah. So, they give that very much less opportunity to go there and learn or improve your quality of work. Always same thing, like, you know, stuff with routine work. Routine work is so boring when you work every day engaged with the same work. Just the same thing, but I really want to do some research in my field. So, I would like to do some research in my field and improve my skills in an exacting task. Then, again my career is risky because most of time, I have to use

some chemicals which are risky to my health. So, in the long run, I probably don't want to be with that. I think. I needed a different role I think.

### **Lifestyle and income**

The young women talked about how living in a different society has changed them. These were changes that they seemed largely happy about as their comments show.

Sanjula:

As migrants we tend to be changed. Some others are changing their ways of life very slowly. Some of them get only what they needed or like what they can get easily. Obviously...as a young crowd they love to get something that they can admire or find fascinating...as educated people we should know what we have to get or what we have to avoid. I believe it's necessary to be changed and to be suited to the new society.

These days there are enough educational developments in Sri Lanka. And parents are aware of their children's education in every level of society from rural to urban areas. Now, most of the women choose non-traditional jobs rather than government jobs. Once, traditional roles limited the women's potentials but now it is changing.

Asanka:

Yes, throughout the three generations the role of the men and women has been changed. Our attitudes, values and thinking patterns are different from that of our parents and our grandparents... so...professional. I think anybody of those who are living western countries are not living as people who are living in Sri Lanka. It is hard to accept... because they have to survive in another society...they have to obey the rules, values and follow the social conducts like people who are living in those countries. I think that we have to change our attitudes towards others. We have to respect and value their social norms. Our generation is very radical, self-sufficient and more liberal thinkers than the previous generation. They are

involved in different roles and responsibilities...I mean women are earning well in different fields.

Thanuja:

I think that gender roles are changing because again the reason is educational advancement of the end of the last century. This is 21<sup>st</sup> century there are rapid improvement in the field of IT. The effects of the communication progress and the use of internet and other high technology, has made significant effects in the life of the human being. Because of that the lifestyles have changed very fast... you know. The speed of the change is very...very...rapid between my mother's and my generation. When the games are changed the players have to be changed... the rules of the game has to be changed (she justifies her opinion). The purpose of the sports has to be changed. Changing social structure anticipates different goals from the people... you know...nowadays, traditional social norms are changing in Sri Lanka. It's happening all over the world... and the western influences are dominating all over the world... more changes are taking place...because of the influences of equal opportunity provision for women. Women's thinking patterns are changing. I think that it's a very positive way of change. Now, men are trying to look at women as human beings. It is progressive change. In the early days, some jobs are banned to women. Now, it has changed. There is no difference between male or female at the job market. Only work quality and skills measures the suitability of the workers. So, women have proved their potential skills in the field of the work force. (Oh! she is so serious. I think). That's why we are ... I am here. (Her face is filled with a victorious smile).

Nimmi:

It is an improvement in Sri Lanka, but it still seems like the typical patriarchal country with father at the centre. With emigrants however, living in a country where the gender roles and boundaries are pushed and challenged, they find themselves equal in most cases. Some immigrants probably are still quite patriarchal in their approach to family, but if you are a bit open minded you see

the father and the mother both helping in the kitchen, both doing work that may not have been in their 'traditional' role.

Asanka:

There are more opportunities here in the field of employment and education. I love these job choices here which are not back in Sri Lanka. You have only one chance to get a job there but here there are more choices. I have qualified for a job and I got a good job worth my qualifications. There are a range of jobs... when you get a job.... You can get vocational training: there are no restrictions, if you are qualified to do so. Everything is new and high standard...food! Clean water, fresh food... there are so many choices and variety of foods. Prepared food is wonderful. If you have enough money you can get anything that to fit your purse. But, I don't like some of cheap clothes in New Zealand. You know Sri Lankan shops are full of clothes. You can find anything you want. All those are good quality like in European countries, because of the garment factories in Sri Lanka. I think that there were no restrictions for me there. But the recession makes me scared... though I don't think that I might be made redundant by my company. They need me. I have to complete some particular projects and programmes. That's something only I can do, because I am the only one expert in that area. A single young woman is going abroad alone? My parents are very positive and they believe me. They know I am not an irresponsible person. I am going for a good job... so they do not want to prevent me from such opportunity.

Thanuja was also very positive about the changing gender roles that she regarded as the result of the global labour market. She seeks it as an important generational change. According to Nimmi these global changes were improving the attitude towards women in Sri Lanka but the most change occurs to immigrants who change as a result of adapting to New Zealand society. She emphasised that traditional norms block the emancipation of women. She, like the other young women, believe the contemporary trends of more women working in the profession is a positive change, one that gives them much greater freedom.

Arnot (2000) argues that degree of change depends on how far the customary concept of femininity is problematic for the society and how far traditional forms of male power are challenged in the family, the economy, and in the life of individuals. While traditional cultural norms encourage the women to be remain in subsequent roles contemporary economic forces push against these norms. The open economy in Sri Lanka of the past three decades has brought in foreign investment and encouraged women to be part of the resulting economy. This has created multiple choices and opportunities for women but these may conflict with the traditional idealised model of women as moral examples. For the young women in the study, feminist ideas support increased autonomy in their lives while education and migration provide the opportunities. Their intellectual achievements have contributed to a confidence that they can succeed as immigrants in New Zealand despite some having experienced what they perceived as discrimination.

The experience of colonisation of Sri Lankan brings fears that globalisation does in practice means neo-colonialism (Lynch, 2007). Anxieties about cultural preservation were part of Sinhala Buddhist discourse during the colonial period. These have resurfaced since economic liberalisation in 1977. The effects of the open economy have been criticised by many pressure groups in public discourses and debates. These groups point to the disadvantages of an open economy claiming that allowing foreign investment is an open door for the erosion of cultural and moral values. The political debates highlight the centrality of gender in the preservation of tradition where the strength of the nation is seen to depend on how well women follow the feminine ideal (Raghuram, 2006). The stereotypes of various categories of women are of obedient, self-sacrificing 'good girls' virgins at marriage and subservient to their parents and husbands. In contrast to the 'innocent good girls', of the Sri Lankan ideal foreign and westernised women are seen as hedonistic, immoral, and promiscuous. The women of the free trade zone are judged by the standards of 'good girls of Sri Lankan modernity' and found wanting. Lynch argues that maintaining the 'good girl' reputation subjects working women to numerous forms of industrial discipline and social constraint which is another reason to maintain this conservative ideal.

The family structure is also being transformed by the diversity of lifestyles now possible in contemporary society with many conservative societies seeking to retain

traditional gender relations in response. Social change, gender relationship change and educational change have a key role to play in promoting gender equality in the different levels of the social structure. Gender norms are constructed and maintained in the home so that change is a contested process. Migration is a crucial factor in enabling change and greater freedom for these young women. Despite being educated remaining at home would mean that traditional norms would be less easy to resist. The educated young women are moving from home and are enjoying freedom which they have gained from being educated. This can be seen as resistance to the traditions of the home culture.

### **Leisure and lifestyle**

I asked my young women to describe how they enjoyed the increased freedom in New Zealand. Their responses indicated much how they enjoy the greater freedom available to them.

Achini:

I might enjoy. Ok how can I say that? I like it here because I am going out or I have some friends...you know, like...a really good crowd all that. Going to night clubs I might enjoy but I know, because if I go out, that I just go out with my friends. You know, play with them and if I have a girls' night out, or /and at one of their houses and we just eat and do crazy things you know...that's all. But I don't like act unlimitedly... you know like go totally crazy or something. Back home my dad does not allow me to. If I have a party at a friend's place he would take me and keep with up family or friends and again back home, you do not allow doing anything without permission. Yes. Here I enjoyed my freedom so much. Freedom means...it's like getting free from family intervention and making my own decisions in terms of improving my life.

Nimmi also admitted that she enjoyed a life where she could make even small decisions for herself.

Nimmi:

More freedom, yes I enjoy the increased freedom, small but important things like spending time with friends, being able to walk around at night with friends safely.

Asanka spoke of her self-imposed restraints on how she expresses her freedom especially where men are involved.

Asanka:

Well...I...as a professional...I need to protect my reputation, because there are a lot of Sri Lankans here. I do not like to be labelled...like a bad guy. Driving late at night, going out with friends for dinner, movies, concerts, having a glass of wine with friends or having fun...making holidays somewhere at holiday resorts is not spoiling my freedom. Nowadays, these things are happening in Sri Lanka too. But the only thing...I have no 'boyfriends'. I am so careful about my good health and protection of my life. I have made some boundaries for everything...I don't know how I am developing my personality and character. I have a limit for everything...I know what amount I have to take from this new freedom. As an example, you know, I have some male friends but no 'boyfriends'. My personal life, you know, I have very good self-controlling methods. Like, you know...a man come to make friendship...I know... where is the devil...or...you know. No living together! Yes I am not enjoying sexual life...because I am not interested at all. Without marrying I am not ready to go to trial (her look is so bold but I could see her blushing face). If I had a dinner with a male friend I would take only one glass of wine at the restaurant. That's it. Then I am right back to my flat. No more being alone with men. I am not enjoying my freedom for the sake of the desires of the others.

Sanjula's experience flatting with workmates has led her to appreciate living alone now.

Sanjula:

Flatting was very hard... flatmates are...like a headache. We have to share our flat with male colleagues. There were some Sri Lankans...they are very bossy.



It's very hard to compromise but I found some mates...they are very good. They have a good understanding about the others...particularly female flatmates. For me, at first...it was very unusual, flatting with males. Later, I didn't care...male or female no matter. Everybody felt equal. If I needed I explained what should or should not do. If it does not work, I demanded of them to do so. However, from my second year, I could get an apartment so it's really freedom and privacy altogether.

While she recognises the greater freedom she has in New Zealand she is aware that her upbringing in Sri Lanka has imposed internalised restraints.

Sanjula:

There are some kinds of cultural restrictions to females in Sri Lanka but here in New Zealand you can give up all of them...to some extent. I had some Sri Lankan friends from the beginning of my life in New Zealand. We are still friends. Some of them get married to Sri Lankan girls.

I enjoyed my life but not like most Kiwi girls... every Friday night out going with the boyfriends...and drinking as a habit... no I am not... I didn't have such relationship with Sri Lankan or non Sri Lankan guys. We went out for different kinds of...parties...birthday parties...usually, for dinner. To some music events or concerts...like that. Usually, Sri Lankan parents do not allowed their kids to have a glass of wine...before or after marriage... (She smiled - she doesn't agree with it).

She is also aware that Sri Lankan men brings with them to New Zealand their deep-seated beliefs about male superiority.

And, in Sri Lanka there is a big gender difference. Here in New Zealand generally there is less respect from men to women. Even at home and in the work place... any public places like that ...ya. Sri Lankan men do not respect female bosses as women. They think that women are inferior to them and if they respect, they believe that they are undermining their masculinity.

Nimmi's views are influenced by her ambition.

Nimmi:

I would have very much liked to have a career in the field of Arts, but I shifted my focus to project management, where I can learn about business and related subjects. My career pays well, I think, compared to some jobs! It also gives me the financial ability to pursue other avenues of interest like ...writing, creativity. When I left Sri Lanka and at the time I wanted to be in the entertainment industry, but I didn't think Sri Lanka was a good place for it.

New Zealand workplaces are probably a lot better and the working conditions are fairer compared to a country like Sri Lanka but one eventually finds it dull and boring, because of the conservative approach to promotions and pay rises.

### **Young women's spending and saving habits**

Each woman responded to the question of 'What are you doing with your income?' in different ways.

Asanka:

In Sri Lanka, I had enough money. All those things I got from my parents. They did not control me too much. I had no need to over spend... because at the time I did not earn... but was just a dependant. In Sri Lanka, my buying habits are different from here in New Zealand. I have enough money... I mean...that...I am earning...and...here...I have no obligation to spend my money. Here...I have more needs and freedom...because of the...too much motivation to buy. Actually...nowadays, in Sri Lanka there are many more things to buy. Fashion items...electronic items, luxury clothes and accessories... the things like that... I think... Kiwi... young women's buying habits are based on their value system. They are earning throughout the whole year, planning the next year-end holiday. That's the life circle. But we have Sri Lankan focus on life, I mean a house...marriage...family first. It's a long term plan. But most Kiwis...I

mean...my age, young people are choosing and passing partners, flat mates and holidays in Europe, Australia, and the Pacific Islands, Fiji likewise...and yeah.

Asanka:

Oh...no!...my income. Yep...! I am...spending...yeah...and I am saving some money for my future. I am spending my salary in the fashions-shops, body shops...cosmetics restaurants. Yeah...some supermarkets... (She laughs. I could see a kind of guilt and embarrassment through the laughter). Surely... honestly...I am spending a bit more...I don't know. Am I over spending? I have no dependants, though; I have some savings for my future. I am not wasting money...but I am a young woman... I need some...you know...kind of girly things to do...I think that anybody would agree with me...

Her tone is persuasive as she justifies herself.

Really...I have a plan for my future...I am saving some money... fortnightly. And, I have to consider my spending...I keep a record about my earnings and spending... if I feel...that... I am spending a bit more. I am trying to limit my needs. It's annoying. I am... sometimes buying some unnecessary items because...not because I needed them...but (Laughing) I want them! Because...I think, I am, as a consumer...I am not awful. My consumer behaviour is not too bad.

When I asked what you do with your income Achini laughed loudly at my question.

Achini:

Oh, my god! I am not doing anything. It just goes. Yeah, I don't do anything except... just only shopping. I am trying to save but can't save. I waste my money. I am trying... and I want to save. But, I definitely want to ... I'm trying to ... start it to? But can't save. I don't have.... any saving...maybe I... yeah (she is laughing). I'm spending here and there and I send some money to my younger

sister. Not regular sending. Just I send. Whenever she asks...if she wants. I want to save. Yeah...I would. I should. But I can't. It's hard to save any way.

Achini explained how she spends her income. There are some similarities with Asanka's consumer habits.

Achini:

I spend my money for clothes... shoes... cosmetics... I am a shop-holic. There are lot more thing to buy here. Because of being here, I think, I want to buy everything...sometimes...I do not need. If I see something, I want to buy it. Sometimes, I know that I can't use it or ... wear it. But really, want it... so then I buy it. Not because of, 'I need it'. But 'I want it'. I should stop it. Here there is no control.

Achini knows she is irresponsible in spending her income. In recording her post-interview experience in her journal, she said, 'I felt guilty about wasting money and I need to make a plan about my spending. I should manage my 'shopaholic' life'...I should save my income... so I will plan my expenses...'

As I observed during the interview, Achini's lack of financial management was very different from the other young women. After the interview she decided to reorganise her life in balancing her earning and spending. Once she contacted me on phone to tell me she had sorted out a plan to improve her life and to be more in control.

Hiranya's response was completely different from that of Achini. New Zealand people do not ask or talk about their pay packets. In contrast Sri Lankans comment on their monthly or fortnightly incomes openly. It is not seen as boasting, more just what one does.

Hiranya:

Well, I have to do lot more with my income here. I am not wasting money. I receive a four-figure salary paid fortnightly... and I save very good part of my earnings. I have a sports car... a bit expensive. Maintenance costs are a bit higher. I have a plan to spend the money. It is about my future plans for my career development. And...I have to do some...girly things...like you know...like fashion, clothes, cosmetics, movies, parties trips and tours. I follow...a timetable and have a plan for everything that I have to do in my life. I have no dependents, even though I am trying to save some money for my future. I am dreaming about my own house and belongings that I am earning by myself for my family. There would be some effects from the world economy. I am preparing for the future job loses or redundancy things like that.

In Sri Lanka, I just got a job but gave it up and came here. Even...at that time I had a habit to save money. I am maintaining that habit...even better. In Sri Lanka, when I am studying, my parents have done everything. They had enough income to spend for both my brother and me. Now, as a worker, I do not need others' help.

Hiranya has a well-planned life style. She wants to settle down and buy a house in New Zealand. She values her self-reliant nature and sees herself as a responsible professional.

Hiranya:

I would like to do more studies to add more qualification for the future of my career. It will be a higher position in the field of business administration. A lot of my friends are working somewhere in Sri Lanka or some other countries. I think that most of them are successful in their career field. They would choose to do what fit with their social class. But, on comparing with New Zealand women who are at my age, I am so happy about my life. I can say, I am a well-disciplined young professional. I am very well aware about my good name and character...As well my protection, because I do not want to be surrounded by trouble. So, I have

no drinking or smoking habits. I love different foods like Italian, Greek and Turkish. For some events I enjoy such foods with my friends.

Sanjula is preparing for her career development and determined to do it on her own using her own resources.

Sanjula:

Once I worked part time as a student. I had to earn and pay the tuition fees. Tuition fees are very high. I did not ask money for my expenses. I myself earned and spent carefully. Actually, my parents offered their help but I did not want to let them. In Sri Lanka my consumer habits are different. Yeah, in Sri Lanka, I don't know how I spent...Because, I did not work there. If I wanted something my parents would give some money. I don't know much about money handling but I am so careful about spending, even when my parents gave whatever I ask. Yeah,... generally, as most Sri Lankan young people do not waste money, because they haven't enough. Even if I had I did not waste. And...also things are very expensive. If they gave money, I would buy. But here, I can buy anything, what I want. Also, I have to save some money...for my future. I don't want to depend on my parents' property.

Sanjula:

I am spending my earnings mainly on house maintenance. I have to cover other bills too. I love shopping. I am spending a bit more for my clothes and accessories and other shopping...yeah...We go for something and end with something we don't want to buy. I can't stop it. I think it's a feminine character (she wrapped up a bit of a shy smile). Sometimes, I control my buying habits. Yea,... sometimes (she laughs and says). When I don't have enough money, then I will manage. You know, we need to save for our future needs yeah...The other thing is I have to dress well because of my professional status. I love to dress well always. I love to keep collections of some items like shoes, clothes, handbags, cosmetics and so on...

The women's responses were very open. They feel that they are wasting some of their income but they are also committed to saving for the future. Generally, Sri Lankan children learn from childhood to be careful about money. They have practical experience of how their parents and family members handle money, and they are guided by their ideas about how a professional person manages their own house, car and possessions.

All the women want to have their own home and belongings because they have decided to be in New Zealand whether they are married or single. Two women have gained citizenship in New Zealand, three women have permanent residence visas and one is working on contract. All six choose to live in New Zealand and hope to have a home here. Several have prioritised a home while the others focused on buying a luxury car first. Nimmi wants to invest in a business venture in Australia although plans to return to New Zealand. The young women are concerned about building wealth and are determined to work hard to achieve that goal.

Hiranya's desire is to buy a home while Asanka wants a nice car.

Thanuja:

Well, I am both earning and spending. I am spending for my daily needs like weekly or fought nightly bills, grocery, and some basic spending. This is my own apartment and I have to do bank payment. I have some future plans keeping in my mind I am saving money for my future. Like any young woman in my age I have to do some compulsory spending. Like for fashions-shops, body shops...cosmetics, restaurants, saloons, movies. Yeah, some supermarkets...

As I mentioned a little while ago... my long-term motivation is...yes, I would like to start my own business. In the immediate future, I am collecting qualifications to be a successful boss... (Laughing but her countenance is really determined).

## **The global context**

According to Hymowitz (2007) the globalisation of the single young female phenomenon reflects a series of demographic and economic shifts that point to a new female order with important exceptions including Africa and most of the Middle East. Hymowitz describes the phenomenon of the young women order as conceived and born in the USA in the 1990s. As the first stage of a phenomenon young women started moving into higher education, looking for meaningful work and delaying marriage. It is a phenomenon that has spread to women in Asia and post-communist Europe. Hymowitz (2007) defines the features of the new female order as one characterised by a playful personality centered around fashion for young professionals between 18-34. According to Hymowitz, the women are smartly turned out in pointy-toed pumps, slim-cut jeans with a large brass-studded leather bag and iPhone with an apple iPod fixed to the ear-phone. The young women in their twenties and thirties work their abs, taste cocktails, dance at clubs and talk about their relationships. The fashion trends and star styles from Hollywood celebrities have spread throughout the world with the popularity of everything from high heels to under-wear taken up by the young women. If this the urban culture for young women professional women it is one with consequences described by Hays (2008). Being single, delaying marriage and perhaps not having children in the future are all possible outcomes.

Hays (2008) describes how these trends of delayed marriage, expanded higher education, participation in the labour force and urbanisation with disposable income have created an international lifestyle for such women. Hymowitz (2008) asks, 'Is this just the latest example of American cultural imperialism? Or is it the triumph of planetary feminism?' In comparison to the American new girl order, the young professional women in my study are well-educated middle class professionals who are from a developing country. Their life styles are different from the women in developed countries with more restrained social values, behaviours and thinking patterns. They are less consumer oriented than the women from developed countries described by Hymowitz although consumerism does matter as I showed in this chapter. However, the



Sri Lankan women in New Zealand are more concerned with building wealth and maintaining stable, secure life.

Hymowitz emphasises three demographic facts to support her theory of a 'new girl order'. First, women in the developed world are getting married and having children considerably later than ever before. According to the UN World Fertility Report, the worldwide median age of marriage for women is up two years from 21.2 in the 1970s to 23.2 today. In the developed countries the rise has been significantly steeper from 22.0 to 26.1. Contemporary middle class women are joining in the labour market for most of their adult life. Unlike single women in previous generations they are looking for careers, not jobs. The young women in this study also have similar characteristics. Pursuing career expansion is their main focus. They are the achievers and the beneficiaries of the global outcomes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

According to Hays (2007) Canadian single women are buying homes at twice the rate of single men. This is a dynamic expansion of young women into non-traditional areas. Japan has striking examples of the sudden rise of single young women. Between 1994 and 2004 the number of Japanese women between 25 to 29 who were unmarried rose 40 to 54 per cent. The numbers of unmarried females between 30 to 34 year old who were unmarried, increased significantly from 14 to 27 per cent.

It is difficult to see how closely the young Sri Lankan women in this study fit Hymowitz's 'new girl order'. On the other hand, they show some of the consumerism that Hymowitz describes. On the other hand their commitment to wealth building is part of Sri Lankan culture. They also maintained some of the conservative Sri Lankan values such as recognising the importance of family dignity and high moral standards. However they were also committed to gender equality and the autonomy they found in their lives in New Zealand.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **National belonging**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the findings about the young women's professional lifestyle. In this chapter, my purpose is to illustrate the way in which the women's identities are changing in accordance with the new social, cultural and working environment. The research shows how the women are negotiating their identities and how they are locating themselves into in a new society. The young women were asked how they defined themselves, how they identify as New Zealanders or as Sri Lankans. They all believed it was important to identify as New Zealanders but also to retain a strong sense of being Sri Lankan. They were more inclined to remain as Sri Lankan or in between these two spaces in order to maintain an emotional and spiritual attachment to their home. For them, New Zealand is not a transitional place but their second home. They choose to remain in New Zealand but to keep a Sri Lankan identity too.

#### **Where do I belong?**

In response to 'where to you belong' my question Achini asked a rhetorical question and then evaluated the virtues of New Zealanders.

Achini:

Where am I belonging? I am not completely Sri Lankan or Kiwi. New Zealand is a very nice country, but...because some of the people. There are some really genuine people. They really welcome others, like us. They talk about, really, people in other parts of the world. They want to share and are trying to give what others need. They are really decent, and, that's the interesting thing and there are some narrow minded people too.

Oh...yea...I would say, I am a Sri Lankan. I will never deny my nationality. I love my country, because of my social background, where I grew up and with whom and some western influences. But, for me, some of...not all...like some traditional cultural stuff...you know...I feel bit strange. Yah...I would locate myself, yah, somewhere between western and eastern culture. So, I am...yes!...More close to Sri Lanka.

Nimmi was pleased to say that she is a New Zealander but she too maintains her Sri Lankan identity.

Nimmi:

I call myself a New Zealander of Sri Lankan ethnicity. My roots and some of my values are from Sri Lanka, but New Zealand is where I have lived for more than seven years, so I find myself in New Zealand...I refer to New Zealand as home and Sri Lanka as the country I was born in. I am proud of my cultural heritage as a Sri Lankan born.

Nimmi's wealthy social class background led her to feel Westernised. She does not feel that she is an outsider in New Zealand. Nimmi talked about what she sees as missing from New Zealand's egalitarian social structure. She believes that there are problems bridging the gap between migrants and New Zealanders in developing social collaboration. She appreciates the social solidarity among Sri Lankans.

Nimmi:

Yes, Exactly, Sri Lanka is my home country. There are a lot of good thing, like closeness to anybody, when you are in trouble, people will help you. It's vice versa...but still people are maintaining very good social and cultural relationship and solidarity in the real meaning of the word...I mean...they feel and offer help...like you know...at weddings, funerals, the New Year, in religious celebrations that are inter-connected with the daily life, and they share the joy and happiness with each other. There are good and bad...both together. I think...I

love them and feel sorry for innocent, helpless people because politicians have misled them. Deception is everywhere... That's the worst thing.

Sanjula described her inner feelings in comparing the two places. She has a strong connection to her birth place sensing Sri Lanka as the real home.

Sanjula:

I am a Sri Lankan. I can locate myself in a place with modern educated professionals. Sri Lanka is my home where I was born. New Zealand is a very beautiful and peaceful country, which I think of as my home, I love it. But Sri Lanka is my real home because, sometimes I feel that I am an outsider within this society. But in Sri Lanka I never felt that.

Although Sanjula describes her closeness to Sri Lanka and her family with real feeling she has not established connections with the Sri Lankan community in New Zealand. Her busy lifestyle takes all her time.

Sanjula:

Since my coming here, I didn't visit there. I have been here...ya...I've been here for four years...but I know everything...daily events...most of the things in Sri Lanka. My parents and my sister are calling me every weekend. At the very early stage...daily...they phoned me.

Actually, I did not attend any community event during the last four-year period, because, I am busy with my work and studies. I know some Sri Lankan engineers. We met just in case...once, they invited me...for some of the... community events... but I did not attend...

Nimmi regards home as a place of intimate family relationships and where she feels free and comfortable. She has chosen New Zealand as her home and the place to belong to.

Nimmi:

For me 'home' means...a place where centred the very...intimate relationships...so then...I have had so deep relationship with my family. You know...my mother....my father and my only sister and her family grandparents, aunts and uncles and everything. My school...friends and... there are so many lovely memories in the past. For me New Zealand is a place where you can relax...a peaceful place...and the life here mean you can stay...here...away from tiresome...annoying neighbours. I feel comfortable here as my home. Unlike so many other ethnic groups I have had no hostile experience here.

Asanka also referred to the freedom from interference.

Asanka:

I love New Zealand. This is an ideal place to relax. Nobody care about others. More freedom...here. No interventions in your personal life.

While she views New Zealanders as a resourceful people she is critical of what she sees as their lethargy and lack of ambition.

Asanka:

But people are like icebergs...boring...isolated lifestyle...people like... you know...they have no broad or open mind sets. They think they are the perfect nation and have nothing to get from others. But they are not sharp enough to get educational achievement. Instead they import knowledge from other countries.

When I asked for feedback 'What words do you use to describe different types of New Zealanders?' Asanka's response was a bit critical. Her condemnation is deeply rooted in how each country responded to colonial experiences. Both Sri Lanka and New Zealand have reached a different destiny, even though both were dominated by the same colonial master and liberated from that control. Asanka, as a woman who was born and grown in a

developing country, believes that social upward mobility as natural part of the human life. She blames Maori people for maintaining cultural ways that she that regards as backward though she is wary of being too critical.

Asanka:

People! Most people...they are still in the last century. They want to go back to the colonial period or even further. Like the cave period and want to be an indigenous or tribal group. They have enough resources, technology, and educational provisions, thanks to the British imperialism...but they are very...reluctant to get the profit of what they have...but I do not label them with any word...

Thanuja explained why she chooses New Zealand as her second home. She sees Sri Lanka as her birthplace and New Zealand is her desirable home.

Thanuja:

Yah...for me New Zealand...I think this is my second home. A pretty good place to live and a comfortable lifestyle...I have to work hard here, but I am happy to do so. I am learning many things from it. I am experimenting to find the best opportunity. I am becoming myself.

Thanuja appreciates the new prospects which she can explore in the new environment and also the freedom of choice that benefits her career expectations. That is what she hoped to find in her life in New Zealand. Consequently, she is happy to be a part of the society.

Thanuja:

New Zealand is a good place to enjoy the freedom, relax in the clean environment and peaceful life. You know, people can employ their qualifications, experience and...their skills in the market, in the global economic field. There is much...more demand for skilled labour in the European market. They offer the

highest price for qualified, educated people, you know. Yah..., there are negotiations...conditions for both side...but...yah...I would like to be here... I don't know...at this time...I am happy to be here. I am thinking about getting Permanent Residence Visa soon.

Hiranya defines herself as a Sri Lankan while she is locating herself in the middle of the two cultures. She talked about the difficulties in coming out of her cultural shell. Despite initial difficulties she won't leave and now considers herself as belonging to New Zealand.

Hiranya:

I am a Sri Lankan. I locate myself somewhere in between two countries. Yea, I will find the place where, in the middle, between Sri Lanka and New Zealand. At the very beginning I thought sometimes, 'I am going back'. I mean, I thought to go home. But, I don't have any work experience in Sri Lanka. Sometimes, it's scary, because, again I am thinking to settle down and again...I think of going back home. I am wavering...yeah, a bit reluctant; it's very difficult to make a decision. Because, all the time we are missing everything...or something...you know, things like...that New Year and...like *Vesak* or *Possion* and national festivals, family gatherings, losses of close relatives...and friends. It's, so hard to bear such grievances...you know, I think so. Once, my grandmother's death made me so upset and I thought I should go back. I wanted to re-think about settling in New Zealand...Now, I think I would not go. I have got a Permanent Residence Visa.

Asanka choose to migrate to New Zealand and has decided to settle here as her new home. Her initial plans have been successful.

Asanka:

Yes...so then I came to New Zealand, because I love to be in New Zealand permanently. I will not allow interventions of others or having disturbance from

others...do you think I am very individualistic? Ok... whatever, I love my freedom and privacy. Do you think...you think...'I am? (I nodded my head). Yah...you would...but most Sri Lankan women do not accept the young generation's ideas. Because, as I heard that New Zealand is the best country for the people who love to live peacefully and live the way that...is their own way (she is smiling)...yes.

Both Thanuja and Asanka were attracted to New Zealand by the idea of freedom of choice and unlimited opportunities. Both of them have similar attitudes towards the New Zealand lifestyle - they appreciate it. Asanka's comment shows confidence that even in the midst of the economic downturn, she is valued by her company.

Asanka:

There are more opportunities here in the field of employment and education. I love these job choices here which were not back in Sri Lanka. You have only one chance to get a job there, but here, there are more choices. I have qualified for a job and I got a good job to suit my qualifications. There are a range of jobs. When you got a job, you can get vocational training to improve yourselves. There are no restrictions, if you are qualified to do so. There are so many skill upgrading courses. There are so many choices and variety of foods,...see; clean water, fresh food...Prepared food is wonderful. If you have enough money you can get anything worthy of your spending. But I don't like some cheap clothes in New Zealand. You know, Sri Lankan shops are full of clothes. You can find anything you want. All those are good quality, like in European countries, because of the European garment factories in Sri Lanka. I think that there are no restrictions for me. The recession scares many workers, but I don't think I would be made redundant by my company. They need me. I have to complete some particular projects and programmes. That's something only I can do, because I am the only one expert of that area.



The data indicates that New Zealand is an attractive destination for these Sri Lankan educated migrants a place to live and work, without significant language or cultural barriers and importantly, it is a peaceful country. Their education allows them to be a part of the society relatively easily. However the most enabling factor is the labour market. There are jobs in New Zealand for professionals and the women feel welcome in that they have the skills and qualifications that will contribute to their new home.

In contrast to some western countries, the image of New Zealand in Sri Lanka is of a less threatening, less ethnocentric, and less pretentious country where migrants are welcome. Asanka said that 'I feel that I am at home because I feel no difference. Even back in home I used to be talking in English at home and with friends and families. So, there is no difference from home'. Unlike some other South Asian countries, the Sri Lankans are advantaged by an English speaking colonial heritage. This has helped the women adjust to New Zealand life.

Asanka has been encouraged by the employment stability in New Zealand and by her ability to achieve financially. She has strong leadership potential and believes that this can be recognised in New Zealand.

Nimmi thought this too but also believed that Australia offers more although she too has chosen New Zealand as her home.

Nimmi:

I've been here about seven years and however, I've determined to move to Australia for a while, and it is more than in searching for better opportunities! I would like to continue this profession for another year or so. Then, I am planning to invest somewhere and been joining with business ventures. It's my dream. But New Zealand would be my permanent home.

### **Being independence and enjoying freedom**

Freedom from tradition allows the women the freedom to choose a job, to live the type of life they value and to make choices. In the past they had to choose a job that their parents

or the society permitted. All the six women wanted freedom from cultural constraints. The engineer said that ‘Why did I choose this job for me? I am actually happy. But my fashion is to be a travel guide. Her dream was to be a travel guide but her engineer father’s expectation was his daughter would be an engineer. So despite the appearance of freedom to choose non-traditional careers, in this case the young women were caught in the traditional constraints of personal expectation. Job selection is still for many young Sri Lankans a parents’ choice, and is about family prestige. In this way, while much has changed, little has changed. Traditional practices continue with a modern facade. The women are aware of these paradoxes so find it difficult to return to Sri Lanka. They have grown apart from the Sri Lankan way of life and find that when they return for visits they miss the freedom that they have become accustomed to New Zealand.

The political instability in Sri Lankan society is also a factor in their unwillingness to return home permanently. There were several election campaigns occurring during the time of the interviews. The women commented on the political instability of the post-war development process, saying that these are not well thought out approaches to the country’s future and expressed concern that the country may be moving back to the pre-colonial era of feudalism. Like many expatriates, the women found it difficult to predict the nature of the current political trends in Sri Lanka. Their increasing identification with New Zealand means that they prefer to settle there even though, as well-qualified professionals, they are likely to find work in Sri Lanka.

Hiranya thought that she may find a good job in Sri Lanka because of her international qualifications. She compares the working environment and standards of living in both countries and is reluctant to go back because she doesn’t have experience working in Sri Lanka.

Hiranya:

If I go to Sri Lanka, I could get a better job than my current job. Because now Sri Lanka is more developed in the computer industry. Even one of my friends in Sri Lanka has done the same degree that I did (SLIIT) in Sri Lanka. She is doing a good job now. And they get better salary than I do. They are quicker than in New

Zealand. But I have no work experience in Sri Lanka, so I am scared to go there. I think it's very difficult to deal with them.

These young Sri Lankans are developing a sense of belonging to the New Zealand community and thinking of New Zealand as a second home, one where they enjoy a great deal of freedom. They also feel accepted in New Zealand and do not experience any hostility towards them as migrants. Nimmi talks about her place in New Zealand as 'a tax payer and a citizen I would belong to this society. The qualification I got from Sri Lankan higher educational institutions is accepted by the New Zealand government'. Being well educated makes them extremely mobile and they are aware that there are opportunities elsewhere. However, the freedom and peaceful environment are important factors in their decision to stay in New Zealand. This was in contrast to the Chinese immigrant students studied by Liu (2010) who felt that being a New Zealand citizen would not bring a sense of belonging. The Sri Lankan women in this study were confident about being able to be fully integrated into New Zealand society. At the same time they would retain strong emotional ties to Sri Lanka as the homeland.

Nimmi talked about her connection to both countries.

Nimmi:

I refer to New Zealand as home and Sri Lanka the country I was born in. I am proud of my cultural heritage as a Sri Lankan born. I think about it with nostalgia, but I know the everyday living there can be impossible, unfair and too driven around by politics. So while I am proud of my cultural heritage, it doesn't blind me to the injustices that prevail in the system. Usually, every 2 years, I go back about 3 visits in those years. I kept out of the community, in my studies and work, when I almost accidentally got involved in a Community musical show about 4 years ago. Since then, I've enjoyed the community music events but I don't really take part in anything else...As above only in the musical events.

I am grateful to have been raised there and for all the opportunities I have as a result. New Zealand is a great country, to raise a family, quiet, peaceful and conservative, but boring for young professionals in search of life, excitement and

ambition. I work in a workplace where 90 percent of employees are Kiwis or white Europeans. Nearly, all my best friends are born and bred Kiwis and the network groups I am involved in are made of Kiwis.

Nimmi, like many migrants refer to New Zealand British settler descendants as “Kiwis”. She has had very positive interactions with these “Kiwis” so speaks highly of them although is also aware of some anti-immigrant feelings.

Nimmi:

The good old Kiwis the laid back typical friendly Kiwi who’s grown up seeing the multi-cultural New Zealand, and is completely at home with it as a part of his culture. They make immigrants feel like they are accepted into the ‘Kiwi fold’ with their bbqs and beers and good humour. Then there’s the small minority of white Kiwis who feel immigrants are flooding their country even though immigrants are bringing in the money and the professional experience that New Zealand couldn’t survive without. There is also the native Maori population to whom most, if not all migrants feel a bit hesitant towards. Then there are other ethnicities that have also come to the country to live a better life so identify with other immigrants and make New Zealand a better and a colourful place. There are also a minority of immigrants, Kiwis and Maori who settle for government handouts and menial jobs.

Hiranya:

I have some friends here and most of them are work related colleagues. And, most of them are Indian friends. Because, I think...maybe the cultural similarities...yeah...cultural things yeah... There are some Maori colleagues at work. I don’t use any word for other ethnic groups but I call them New Zealanders. I don’t see remarkable difference between those groups. Because I have no more closer relationships with them. I have just only customer relationships. I don’t mention them as ‘Kiwis’.

Putnam (2007) predicts that the extent of ethnic diversity will continue in all modern societies over the next several decades in part because of migration. Immigration and diversity are likely to have important cultural, economic, fiscal and development benefits if it fosters inter-ethnic tolerance, and social solidarity but it is as likely to challenge that social solidarity if migrants are not successfully integrated (Pearson, 2004; Putnam, 2007). Putnam argues that successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and decrease the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities. He regards the main challenge in modern diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of 'we'. Given the accounts of the young women professionals in the study that inclusion is their experience in New Zealand. However, recent research (Liu, 2010) on Chinese migrants in recent years to New Zealand suggests a less positive account of migrant experience. The study reveals that Chinese students are flocking to New Zealand, but it's only a stopover or stepping stone to get to other Western countries such as Australia. In contrast the Sri Lankan young women feel included in New Zealand.

### **Intercultural sensitivity**

This section discusses how the young women represent themselves within a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. The participants' awareness of their cultural identity seemed to be linked to the development of intercultural sensitivity. The findings show that the immersion in New Zealand culture led to constant re-assessments of each woman's own cultural values and ways of living in terms of the relevance to their new lives. As they explained in the interviews the adjustment process involved adapting to a new normality. Gradually, they accepted the new ways of doing things but have also chosen to maintain some aspects of Sri Lankan culture. This deliberate choice has enabled them to develop a new type of lifestyle relevant to New Zealand and Sri Lankan culture. Culture is the framework and substance of a group (Bennet, 1993, Guptha & Ferguson, 2002) that comprises its activity, traditions, values, rules, identity and beliefs and is fundamental to how we make sense of the world. The young women are not only engaging in new

activities and behaviours but are making conscious choices about almost all areas of their lives. Adler (1998) suggests that “cultural identity is the symbol of one’s essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the worldview, value system, attitudes and beliefs of a group, with such elements as shared” (p. 230). Their experiences in New Zealand has involved such sharing with each woman saying that she feels included in New Zealand life.

Freedom from traditional cultural boundaries was one of the motives of these educated young women moving from their home to settle in New Zealand. Freedom of choice and identity are important for the public good in western, modern societies. It seems to be that these women are developing a broader sense of identity as New Zealanders but this doesn’t mean a rejection of all things Sri Lankan. The young women are taking from the host culture and mixing up with their own culture. Wikan (2002) argues that individuals maintain a particular sense of belonging to the country of origin and considers this is a key character of the migrant identity. This is case with the Sri Lankan women and their negotiated identities that are positioned between the two cultures.

The willingness of Nimmi and Thanuja to marry a man outside their ethnicity is an example of this re-positioning. So is their willingness to try something new as Nimmi says:

Living in a multicultural society, and trying to understand the other cultures, always gives us something new and added new values from other cultures. I thought New Zealand is the place where I could develop my skills, because I could learn several languages...like French, and Spanish. If I were in Sri Lanka, I would not be able to learn easily and properly like in New Zealand. Also, I wanted to upgrade my educational and professional skills. This is the real place to anybody for self-development. If we have different talents there are no opportunities to develop them, because we have some cultural barriers that are preventing us, in doing something that is in-appropriate for women. Here, we can do anything you know. For example, in Sri Lankan culture there are set apart people for different purposes...like dancing for a particular caste, music for

another class technical jobs for men...likewise, so many thing are segregated in our culture. Fortunately, now, it's changing. Coming to New Zealand, I could access so many areas which made me multi-talented person, I think.

Achini spoke about her visit to Sri Lanka, which she found a difficult experience because she had to pay attention to the dress code and be careful about what she wore. Achini talked about how her younger sister was not happy that she behaved about like a 'Kiwi' young woman. Her sister, as a local young woman, has to be bound by the traditional cultural requirements and would not consider crossing such barriers. Achini returned to New Zealand with a strong commitment to the freer ways of the society.

Achini:

When I dressed in a short skirt my younger sister did not recommend doing so. When I am going out somewhere with her, she said that, 'It's embarrassing!' She said that 'You are getting all sorts of attention from the people'. Actually, I saw that people were looking at me. 'I felt that 'where is my freedom'? We are living in a western culture. And so there...when I look back there... I really wanted to be an independent person and that is completely a western philosophy. We are exposed to western culture and we think differently and behave differently. I mean, the whole idea of becoming independent, is a foreign concept to them.

Thanuja criticised the restrictions imposed on women in terms of their dress code. It is a reflection of cultural and generational clash on Sri Lankan women's dress code.

Thanuja:

In the early 70s my mother as a teenager dressed in miniskirts. And my father dressed in 'bell-bottoms' as did many contemporary youths. Now there are so many restrictions for women's dress, even this is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Sometimes Sri Lankan adult generation is pretending to be moral ideal...I know but not my personal experience. They don't allow, I mean some people who are among the leadership level...they do not allow denim jeans for women or young women

because they want to hide the femininity of the women. Such narrow minded opinions or cultural ideologies used to control women. But for men there are no restrictions imposed by the culture. They can break any traditional norms...

Controversy over the transnational clothing choices and practices is one of the generational clashes in terms of cultural norms. Mani (2003) argues that the diasporic clothing practices can effectively push beyond the normative paradigm of multicultural narratives. However, current fashion trends where ethnic commodities have suddenly become emblematic of a new cosmopolitan stylish and the performance of ethnic identity also bring into question the issue of cultural commodification in first world countries. This makes the choice of what to wear a highly strategic practice of migrants. Mani (2003) argues that in a “post-colonial world order, the clothing practices are not only a ‘performance of modernity’ but are also an indication of a gendered and sexualized modernity, modernity produced within an imperialist landscape” (p. 120). Malkki (1997 cited in Mani, 2003:117) emphasises that such clothing practices pulling the third world into the space of the first will disturb the notion of ‘rooted’ cultures. New identities created through professional success challenge the predominant gender and racial discourses. The young women use their professional status to acquire rights and freedom within the host and the home context. The formation of their identity as modern against the traditional one makes them feel comfortable with the host society in terms of sense of belonging. The young women’s direct connection with the knowledge labour market provides authority and power to this identity negotiation.

All the young women in this study were able to identify the new values and ways of living that they had incorporated into their already established values and perspectives. They were very conscious about how they had changed to fit into the new society. Nimmi has been living in New Zealand for eight years. She described how the experience has shaped her behaviours and attitudes in response to the new environment and new circumstances. The more they asserted their ethnic identity, the less they seemed to identify with their host society, together with the strong sense of ethnic identity. It is together with a strong sense of national pride. This may perhaps make it hard for them, in opening up and developing a sense of belonging, in their host society. Therefore, the



women are positioning themselves in between two different cultures, by negotiating what they feel comfortable with and forming a new self-image within their public and private lives.

It is assumed that there is an inseparable link between culture and identity- the idea that culture creates identity. When people think about their identity they think about their language, ethnicity, religion and symbols (e.g., myths, historical monuments and anthems). According to Statistics New Zealand (2005), 'Ethnicity is the ethnic group or groups that people identify with or feel they belong to. Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group. Also, an ethnic group is made up of people who have some or all of the following characteristics:

A common proper name

One or more elements of common culture which need not to be specified, but may include religion, customs, or language.

Unique community of interests, feelings and actions

Shared sense of common origins or ancestry, and

A common geographic origin' (Statistics New Zealand, 2005)

Those particulars bind people to one other by the very fact that they speak the same language, belong to the same ethnic group, and have a common faith, or, they share the same symbols that distinguish them from others. Therefore, culture and identity are not just some abstract notions (Giddens, 2010) but living concepts with real social meaning for people's lives. Identities given, chosen or cherished by individuals must adapt as societies face changes of the identities of their culture. In Sri Lanka changes involving a degree of loss of shared traditions of moral, ethical and aesthetic norms are slowly occurring. Giddens (2010) suggests that these rapid changes in the world stimulated minority intellectuals to upscale their positions in the modern era. The process of culture change may challenge one's sense of self, cultural identity, and world view. This is particularly the case for those who are confronting a new culture for the first time (whereas prior experience of other cultures will often reduce considerably the shock of the new culture). It also brings us to conscious awareness of what effects our culture has

on our behaviour and personality. Giddens suggests that individuals will develop different levels of sophistication on their response to a different culture due to personal factors such as adaptability, self-awareness and previous experience, and cultures will vary in the challenges they present. The educational level and exposure to Western norms already experienced by the young women in the study shows that their heightened degree of awareness about the changes they are experiencing is the result of this early preparation. Their willingness to accept change was one of the reasons for migrating to New Zealand.

Putnam (2007) argues that successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity by reducing the negative effects of diversity and constructing new more encompassing identities. He suggests that the central challenge for modern diversifying societies is to create a new broader sense of 'we'. Immigrants have a fundamental need to be included in the host society in order to feel accepted. Acceptance by the host matters to migrants because it contributes to overcoming the sense of being strangers in another country. Religious institutions and community organisations that are actively involving immigrants contribute to solidarity and social harmony. Although for the young women, inclusion and acquiring a sense of social solidarity with New Zealand society was the result of their professional lives, it was at work that they felt they were like others around them. The closeness to the host cultures they have increases their identification with the adopted society in terms of political loyalty and cultural affinity.

According to Putnam (2007) the practice of marrying only within one's faith has largely faded (in most western cultures) particularly in American culture. This is something demonstrated in this study although two of the young women's accounts showed that their religious devotion would play a crucial role in terms of their choice of marriage. For instance, Buddhism and Catholicism playing a key role becomes a medium for social interaction in some many societies but for contemporary liberal societies, it's less salient. Religion, as a vital factor in defining the identity of a person, plays a significant role within the Sri Lankan society. Two out of six young women of my study are concerned about their religion in terms of their identity and wish to maintain their religious cultural identity. Hiranya and Sanjula's willingness to choose a marriage partner in their faith indicates the role of the religion and its connectivity with the decision

making process. The findings of my research show that the young women were still influenced by the culturally defined differences and maintained some Sri Lankan cultural traits in a foreign country.

The main changes that affected the young women were the gender specific division of roles and the role of women in the society. It was here that the greatest change occurred as they all wanted greater equality with men and were happy to be freed from the more rigid gender role divisions of traditional Sri Lankan society. However, their understanding of freedom and autonomy remain within the Sri Lankan moral framework of the importance of family dignity. Within the host society they enjoy the liberty of a personal life. The use of the English language has enabled them to engage more easily in New Zealand society. Their professional status is probably the key determinant in shaping their lives in New Zealand. They are highly motivated and all have ambitious career plans which provide a dignity and status which the young women value deeply. Overall their preference to live in New Zealand is the culmination of all these factors along with the peace and security available in New Zealand. This does not mean that Sri Lanka will not remain important to them. As Levitt (2004) argues networks of social relation are sustained across the borders. However, she identifies difference between ways of being in a social field and ways of belonging. 'Ways of being' means actual social relations and the practices that individuals engage in rather than the identities associated with their actions. In contrast, 'ways of belonging' refers the practices that signal or enact identities which demonstrate a conscious connection to a particular group. Ways of belonging combine action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies.

For Levitt (2004) transnational attachments are not binary opposites. Instead, it is more useful to think of the migrant experience as a kind of measurement/scale which is not full incorporation but simultaneity of connection. This is the case with the young women. Their experiences support Levitt's argument that full integration of a migrant is a myth if they were not young children or those who are born in the host country the migrant will move along the trajectory of 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging', remaining connected to Sri Lanka but also finding ways to belong to New Zealand.

## **Conclusion**

The women's identities changed as they negotiated response to their living in New Zealand and adapting to the new context. The findings indicate that those who have come for a change of lifestyle were willingly adapting to New Zealand society and held more positive attitudes towards the fact that they were changing. They all felt connected to both Sri Lanka and New Zealand. Some of the women seemingly and saw life in New Zealand as not a 'stopover' but a new beginning. This suggests all six women regard New Zealand as permanent settlement.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Phenomenon of professional migration

#### Introduction

The previous four chapters have presented the study's findings. This chapter discusses those findings and integrates them with the theoretical framework and the approaches that are identified in the literature which were discussed in detail in chapters two and three. The main focus of the research was to investigate the feminised character of the contemporary global migration through study of the experiences of young women who have migrated from Sri Lanka to New Zealand for professional employment. Each of the six case studies of Sri Lankan young women shows the feminised dynamics of migration. The study as a whole contributes to the sociological literature of global culture transmission where young professional women are playing an increasingly significant role in the transformation of modern ways of life.

The women's experiences are within the context of the rapid development of higher education as a globalised market. The expansion of higher education is reinforced by government policies aimed at strengthening the skill base and increasing the quality of human capital. Privatisation and marketisation of higher education sector supports these policies. What is relevant to this study is the increased access to higher education for women which, as the case studies in this research illustrate, lead to upward social mobility, increased social status and economic freedom for women with consequences for both home and host societies. Skilled migration and its increasingly feminised nature predictably lead to new debates about the transformation of gender relationships within traditionally male-dominated societies. The migration of young professional women highlights the 'drain' of skilled individuals from developing countries which is linked to the multi-faced consequences of economic and social mobility. Many sociologists have identified this "brain exchange" as a key feature in modern migration discourse (Tirana, 2006; OECD -2007).

## **Educational achievement as a key factor of transformation**

Educational achievement has played a pivotal role in the transformation experiences of migrating women professionals. Ramji (2003) argues that professionalism provides opportunities for social choreography by reconstructing women's entitlements in the public arena - traditionally the area of restriction for Asian women. Ramji's views are supported by the findings of my study where the women perceived that they are rewarded by higher educational qualifications which enable them to access professional positions. In turn these positions lead to freedom from gendered expectations in terms of women's place in the public life of their culture. The young are not serving as the preservers of the traditional cultural norms. Rather, they are constructing a new identity for themselves away from the traditional social definitions.

My research shows that financial freedom has made the women more independent and drawn them away from the traditional norms of power relations between the genders into a nominally equal relationship between men and women. Raghuram (2001) argues that professionalism has become a part of middle-class femininity. This statement holds true not only for India where Raghuram based her study but for post-colonial Sri Lanka as well. One of the interviewees, Asanka, stated that her graduate mother left her job, (whether or not willingly) after her first child birth to assume her maternal role within the family. She was a woman who came from a wealthy family and was tertiary educated but she had to give up her public role for the sake of the traditional role. Asanka does not plan to follow the footsteps of her mother instead plans to distance herself from traditional cultural practices through her life as a professional single woman. Gugler, (1995) argues that the increasing number of young and ambitious women such as Asanka indicate wider social changes where cultural definitions of women's roles as wives and mothers are modified and women have increased freedom.

The study explored the effects of gender inequality in decision making with the public and private lives of the women. Contrary to the women's position within the Sri Lankan context, the six young women are enjoying the privileges of a more liberal lifestyle in New Zealand as individuals and knowledge workers. However, obstacles remain for professional women. Research by Jayaweera et al. (2008) on gender difference

in upward career mobility provides evidence of gender inequality and to restriction on access to higher positions in management in the public sector. Combining family and work responsibilities is a major dilemma for women employees in Sri Lanka. The young professional women in this study presumed that bridging the gap between personal domain and public domain would be a very difficult task for them. They are prepared to consider being single or postpone marriage as options to enable professional career progression.

Within the Sri Lankan context Jayaweera (2008) points out that Sri Lankan women are restrained from moving upward through the 'glass ceilings' which may be argued to be a universal occurrence. In addition to encountering fewer women in higher rungs of the educational sector, only around 10 to 15 percent of women employees in Sri Lanka have reached decision making positions in the semi-government and statutory boards of the public sector at both national and provincial levels.

### **Daughters and parents relationships negotiation**

One of the main findings of my study is the re-positing of the women's gender relations, particularly the relationships of daughters to their parents and of young women to men. The interviews showed how the women are negotiating major changes in these relations, a situation that may be traced to extensive female participation in the labour market. I found that these changes were initiated by conscious reactions in the form of resistance to traditional social norms, particularly in the area of gender role perspectives. According to the data, three main causes have influenced these changes: first, the personal changes due to the necessities of the work environment which are created by the demands of the global labour market within the context of the host culture. Second, the women made personal adjustments to their lifestyles within the New Zealand social context as part of the process of social adaptation. The third form of change seems to have been driven by a genuine attraction to the emerging global identity of a '21st century woman', an idealised identity type which transcends the cultural identity of New Zealand. A combination of these three areas of change has driven the women in my study to make active decisions as individuals faced with a new reality.

The research shows the relationships between parents and the children is shifting within the contemporary world system. Vidich (1995) locates these changes in the influences of organisational forms of modernity in the private lives of the individuals which have shown significant development within contemporary global capitalism. As Goransson (2006) argues, modernity is changing the traditional social structure as individualism and secularisation caused major breaks between past and present forms of social life. However the findings of this study illustrate the continual construction and re-constitution of a multiplicity of cultural programmes which give rise to unique expressions of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2002) in which the young women re-define their cultural traditions for their new lives rather than breaking with past values and behaviours completely.

By extensively quoting from the interviews I have illustrated the ways in which the negotiation of the gender roles occurs. In chapter four, my main focus was to explore the family dynamics in the parent - daughter relationships as a response to the new realities experienced by the daughters. The study shows that as a result of their migration and lives in a new environment, the women's relationships with their parents have undergone a significant change. Goransson (2006) in her research points out the way in which the Singaporeans reinterpreted their relationships with their parents in terms of the modernisation of the economic-practical functions of the family which generated the erosion of extended families in favor of the emergence of nuclear units. She argued that such a re-direction of family relationships to the advantage of the children in modern societies may trigger off an 'emotional nucleation'.

The advancement of equal opportunity from education has resulted in higher female participation in education and the work force. This has led to the emergence of the 'nuclear family' and the concept of 'small family ideal' in both West and East and in developed and developing countries. Traditional extended families with large numbers of children have been a feature of self-dependent societies where strong bonds and interdependent relationships exist between with family members. The spread of the nuclear family to developing countries had increased the numbers of small family units. Goransson suggests that the 'emotional nucleation' of the family may lead to its



‘economic nucleation’. My research supports Goransson’s observations of the shift to new family dynamics. While her study was of Singaporean families, it is a finding that also occurs with the Sri Lankan families in my study - certainly in terms of ‘emotional nucleation’.

However, because the young women in my study came from relatively prosperous families the daughters’ absence would not significantly affect the economic stability of the family. In terms of the changing nature of family ties and relationships intergenerational obligations are being reformulated for the convenience of the parents as well as for the daughters. I agree with Goransson’s view in this point because social alienation is a feature of the modern societies and individuals are responding accordingly. Usually parents who are left behind hide their emotions at the absence of their daughters for the sake of their success. This is a common story among skilled migrants’ families in Sri Lanka. On the other hand the findings indicate that gap between generations had not created considerable separation because both parties are adjusting themselves to the reality of the daughter’s migration in order to avoid potential conflicts between parents and daughters.

The women are negotiating their emotional, moral and obligatory commitments and the ‘sense of family’ (Baldassar, 2007) towards those left behind and leaving their family obligations to close relatives of the family who remain. This obligation of sharing with their family members means the young women’s familial devotion is still bound strongly to the parents and is a significant feature in the maintenance of the relationships. According to Goransson (2006) this is a new trend where cohabiting is no longer a prerequisite for maintaining one’s family obligations as it is replaced in different ways. Rather these aspiring young independent women who are focused on upward social and economic mobility somehow negotiated their emotional commitments to maintain strong familial bonds and even transmit this into the new environment they are in.

Levitt (2010) suggests that social networking systems play a significant role in bonding and bridging migrants to the source and the destination. The accounts of the young women reveal that living away from parents and other relatives is a crucial decision as it is for any migrant and also for these young women. Perhaps the Sri Lankan parents of these young women in order to cope with the very real emotional cost

somehow negotiated ways to accept the separation. Together these two parties, parents and daughters, maintain a balance between traditional family norms and the personal autonomy of young professional women as they make significant changes to gendered relationships.

The women have decided to live away from their families but they are privileged to have modern communication facilities offered by the contemporary information technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The choice of independence is made less difficult by the increased availability of modern communication technology and the accessibility of information via social networking technology. Vidich (1995) points out that the technology of mass communication that influences society is a symbol of contemporary life. By utilising modern technology, increasing numbers of young women 'stay connected' with the families left behind using any combination of popular modes of communication, such as Skype, Facebook and other social network sites. In addition there are cheap internet telephone networks and SMS message services. Thus the role of technology and its ever-increasing ease of accessibility have contributed to the global trend of the feminised skilled migration phenomenon examined in this study.

### **Perception of marriage and choice of partner**

One of the key themes that came to the surface in my findings was the young migrant women's views towards marriage relationships and transnational criteria involving choice of partner. The interviews shed light on the negotiation process that went into arriving at compromises between the traditional expectations of their parents and their own non-traditional expectations. The compromise reflects the changing times and the formation of new standpoints consisting of elements from both traditional and modern.

The conversation with the young women highlighted what their expectations of relationships and marriage were and how they negotiate these expectations within a new context. The women expressed a range of opinions in terms of the ethnicity and religion of a prospective marriage partner and their views about cross-cultural marriages (See chapter Five). The extracts from the interviews show how the women are repositioning themselves to manage what are at times contradictions between the spheres of public and

personal selfhood. Most notably the women's attitudes towards men and the choice of marriage partner was based on real experiences in everyday life, rather than according to the norms expected and practised within family circles and the wider home culture. Significant shifts in attitudes such as this can lead to further reinterpretation and re-positioning of gender roles. Vidich (1995) identified this trend as the formation of a new cultural rationale towards gender identities. Goransson (2006) also argues that negotiating the cohabiting of the inter-generational contracts involves the reinterpretation of responsibilities within contemporary families. Within the context of newly forming cultural rationales and the reinterpretation of responsibilities, the young professional women in my study provide valuable insights into what I identify as the formation of a new cultural identity, one shaped by non-traditional values driven by professional female economic and professional independence.

I found that the young women are challenging the traditional gender norms by comparing and contrasting those norms with the views of other cultures. This is possible because these women have an understanding of a range of social norms in different societies as a result of their migration experiences. That is the difference between these women and less educated women who maintain traditional practices. In other words those who are exposed to the transformations of contemporary capitalism adapted their self-image to fit with 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations.

Professional employment and ideas about marriage do produce contradictory pressures. In the case of marriage there are no strict arranged marriage systems or dowry claims but some practices which depend on the family background. Finding a spouse for grown up children was a parent's responsibility, but in many cases now both young men and women choose their partners themselves. Nowadays, there are plenty of opportunities for young people to find their own partners. It may be while they are studying at higher educational institutions or in the work place. This may be a relief for the parents.

The group of young women in my study offered valuable insights into the processes of significant change. They said that they did want to marry and some of the responses reflected more conservative and traditional approaches to marriage and choice of partner. These responses placed levels of career advancement of the potential partner, his religion and his proficiency in English or his fluency of Sinhalese as deciding factors.

Two of the young women, one Buddhist, the other Catholic and both of Sinhalese ethnicity strongly maintained that it is very important for the marriage partner to be of the same religion. They also expressed language related preferences. Hiranya, one of the young women was clear in her choice, stating that she would hate to have an English-speaking man as her husband. This indicated a strong preference for natural fluency in Sinhalese something usually associated with the traditional Buddhist Sinhalese values mostly in rural Sri Lanka. Still within the conservative camp, Sanjula expressed a post-colonial traditional view 'he should preferably be from' ... giggles Sanjula, and goes on to list the names of the some of the elite boys' schools back in Sri Lanka, where the language of instruction had been and still is English. This is direct allusion to social status in a postcolonial urban Sri Lankan society. This view and variations of it are often seen as pre-conditions to the career advancement of a potential marriage partner. Both women agreed that their potential partners should ideally be the same level of advancement in his career or higher. Irrespective of the particular religious background or preference in fluency of a particular language in both traditional rural and post-colonial urban contexts, this sub-group of women represented the deeply engraved conservative values concerning social status in Sri Lankan society as a whole despite their considerable autonomy.

However, the ethnicity and caste was not an essential factor to the marriage prospects of the other four women. It may be that caste is not important in the contemporary society in Sri Lanka as it was in the past. Except for Hiranya and Sanjula, the others were flexible about race in terms of marriage or friendships. They were optimistic about how they could negotiate racial and cultural boundaries.

The responses of the remaining four women were intriguing. They had more cosmopolitan social values and these were displayed in their preference for a potential marriage partner. This willingness to consider a husband who is not Sri Lankan represents a marked departure from the traditional selection criteria used a partner selection. That was determined by the highly patriarchal and male dominant view of the marriage institution in Sri Lanka. This distinct departure from previous norms is driven by a number of factors. The women are accustomed to independent decision making, something found in the values of professional environments. They are exposed to the relatively more equal status of women in professional and social environments and by an

active rejection of male dominance and its manifestation with the family. Conservative social environments may contain varying degrees of abuse towards women given the unequal power relations that exist in such environment. For these reasons the women viewed being single is better than the carrying a life-long burden. As Pandurang (2003) argues this may be a “painful struggle” for young women within the two cultural contexts (p. 87).

Male dominant values and norms play a significant role in the Sri Lankan society within the traditional family structure. Both parents share in the overall responsibility of educating the children with the mother given recognition as the first educator and the trainer of the child from its infancy. Eastern culture recognises women as the mirror of the society and classical literature depicts women as the moral guardians. Within such social norms, women have to overcome all kind of disadvantages that are framed by the male dominant social structure. The young women are expected to be morally uncorrupted and to serve as representatives of a ‘good’ society. This primary role of the mother means that it is important that she is well-educated. Yet her higher education nowadays makes it possible for her to have a professional career and move from the traditional family structure.

Research by Ramji (2003) on Gujarati women in London found that the women utilised the achievements in the professional sphere to negotiate a more empowered social position, especially concerning on marriage. In a similar way, the young women in my study displayed a general rejection of the traditional marriage institution and some of the participants questioned traditionally held views on the role of marriage and its function in larger society.

The institution of marriage in a South Asian context extends to larger society and even manifests itself in the political arena. The responsibility that women carry for the good name of the family is illustrated in the examples of late Prime Minister, Sirima Bandaranayake and her daughter Chandrika Kumarathunge and Sonia Gandhi of India. All three women came to power carrying the mantle of their assassinated husbands. While traditional marriage continues to play a powerful role in South Asia generally and Sri Lanka in particular my study suggests changes to the role of marriage in society.

These are initiated by young educated and 'footloose' women who are defining themselves in the new value system of the transnational Sri Lanka.

Behind this change are two driving forces - education and secularisation. The sense of achievement in professional environment and the sense of independence and success were made possible by access to and the availability of higher education. Sanjula's comment reveals an important shift in social values and the view of modern Sri Lanka. '...Before, women didn't need to qualified in education, you only had to have money or land, and you would find an educated man as your husband. Nowadays parents are looking for educated women for their educated son'. The impact of educated women is being felt even in the traditional selection criteria as a result of more and more women acquire higher education qualifications and becoming more competitive in terms of their career ambitions.

Closely tied to this is the general secularisation of society, driven by globalised communication, ease of training and access to information via mass media and the worldwide web. The traditional expectations of women as submissive and humble homemakers, which were maintained largely by religious and cultural values, are now being challenged with the increased secularisation of society. The process of secularisation supports modernised gender roles in the family and the wider society. A new perception of freedom from rigid traditional structures undermines the role of religion in the public sphere.

### **The lifestyle changes of professional women.**

The third category of findings was about the lifestyle of the women. This showed significant changes occurring to the women within the global knowledge labour market. These have led to a change of attitudes towards work, money, leisure and possessions. I found that a complex array of global trends have brought about this change experienced by these young women. They aligned themselves with these trends and based their negotiation of social status and identity as professionals in the public domain and individuals in personal domain in terms of their professional self-image.

Contrary to the view held among the traditional circles the 'footloose' women in my study displayed motivation, drive and direction. Young independent women often risk being perceived as 'rebellious daughters' - a threat to the established traditional order. Far from being mindless consumers, these educated young women showed a commitment to independence in two areas; professional independence and financial independence. The discussions revealed that they placed a paramount importance in investing and protecting their long-term interests in the career of choice. They were also actively taking charge of their financial destinies, many expressing their desire to purchase property, luxury vehicles and valuable assets, while others expressed their interests and plans towards investing in business. With interesting numbers of women actively participating in the global knowledge labour market, change is also felt by and taken on board by young professional migrant women in New Zealand. My research captured a snapshot of this global trend occurring in a New Zealand context.

The study also highlights an interesting comparison of the pace of change between women in Western societies and those of emerging economies, such as Sri Lanka. Professional and financial independence along with the broadening of skills-base have increased the adaptability of young migrant women and made them more capable of moving along with the constantly changing global trends. The claim by Bras (2001) that if twentieth century is that of women's liberation then perhaps twenty first century will be that of her freedom may be illustrated by the group of young women in my study. Due to their unique position in the global knowledge economy as migrant professionals, these women had undergone a far more rapid pace of change compared to their predecessors in Western societies in the previous century.

Behind this face of change are strategies that most of the women in my study seem to have employed. One strategy consists of finding economic and emotional empowerment in order to achieve high levels of self-awareness and confidence. The participants have actively engaged in securing their economic and professional destinies by constantly up-skilling themselves, well-aware of the advantage it gives them, especially the proficiency in English and everyday social skills inside and outside the work environment. This up-skilling process had been identified and well-documented by researchers (Luke, 2001; Hymowitz, 2007, 2008; Hay, 2008) as a global social trend. It

enables many young women to be competitive at the work place, and as observed earlier, this competitiveness translates into increased levels of autonomy at home and in social circles. The second strategy is of emotional empowerment. It involves a process of negotiating the very real emotional costs of migration these of leaving behind and staying away from loved ones by redefining new life goals and priorities. The stress of migration, feelings of alienation, frustration and often depression were part of the these women had to learn to negotiate and put into a new perspective where educational achievement, career advancement, and personal development were seen as gains. These two strategies lead to the formation of energetic individuals with high levels of skill, high levels of self-awareness, and a new sense of autonomy. The women professionals in my study displayed this new found sense of autonomy and offered insights into the formation of the identity of the contemporary young New Zealand women from Sri Lanka.

### **Negotiation of identity**

The changes to identity in these women were a direct consequence of negotiating the realities and conditions of migration. The women who are actively looking for a lifestyle change were more fluid in their adaptation process and tended to have a more positive view on identity reformation. These young women had managed to arrive at varying degrees of compromise between Sri Lankan and New Zealand cultural identities. In this process of negotiation there was a strong element of personal liberation which provided the motivation to move away from the restrictive confines of traditional social structures. Similar to the findings of studies conducted on women from other parts of Asia (Hymowitz, 2007; Sumico, 2009) these women reflected characteristics of a new modern order of women. Rather than being aimless wanderers, they displayed remarkable discipline and commitment to exploring the benefits of the modern global system and continued to be opened minded. Hymowitz (2008) argues that such movements were initiated as responses to American cultural imperialism. However this view captures only a segment of a much larger global trend. The discussion with the group of women in my study revealed that while American culture which had high exposure via global media-remained a factor, many young Sri Lankan women were motivated by long-term benefits



and lifestyle upgrades offered in the transnational world. Sri Lanka's long history of various forms of contact with the world since ancient Greek times may also have contributed to this awareness of a more cosmopolitan view of the world. The modern Sri Lankan young woman with her interests in long-term career progression, change of lifestyle and personal liberation, had found opportunities in an increasingly transnational world.

An outward expression of this negotiation of identity is the choice of dress. In a conservative society such as Sri Lanka the dress code is often viewed as a reflection of a person's moral code, upbringing, and background. Within a New Zealand context many of these young women had to balance several variables such as maintaining professional standards at work place while staying current with the contemporary fashion trends outside work as well as maintaining their unique individuality which is often formed very early in their upbringing in a traditional Sri Lankan context.

Delving deeper in to this particular aspect of traditional upbringing, I found a major deciding factor in these women's identity negotiation. Many of them recalled their childhood as a relentless 'horse race' where both parents and children are inexorably tied into from a very early age for the single purpose of staying ahead of the competition for the best educational achievements. These young adults were constantly looking forward to break free from this 'rat race' (Goransson, 2006) in order to experience freedom and youthfulness which they were not able to as children. Asanka's words illustrate this point well.

She said, 'We have never enjoyed our childhood, like our parents' generation, because of the competition in the education sector. From the morning to evening we are like; go to school...go to tuition class...then music class and swimming classes. I do not want to punish my kids like that...one day (Asanka explained in a distressed tone) that's why I wanted to be here'(and concluded with smile).

Similarly, Thanuja, another young woman from the group responded saying that, 'Now I am free like a bird' expressing the voice of a generation of young Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand and elsewhere.

This research complies the experience of these young women, their perspectives on career progression views on personal autonomy and their past experiences. These

factors are scrutinised throughout the study in order to explore the phenomenon of identity negotiation in the context of integrating into a new society.

Franceica (1998 as cited in Besemeres, 2007, p. 19) proposes that self-discovery disguised is the end result of migration. She argues that although there is a multiple of immediate reasons for modern migration of young people, such as violence in home country, political exile, search of a better lifestyle and the fascination of the new, the end result of migration is self-discovery. Arguable, this view holds true for the group of women in my research. To them the experience of migration was not merely an opportunity to further their chosen fields of study or profession. It was also an opportunity to discover themselves and be active decision-makers, responsible individuals and active contributors to the global economy, an opportunity which enabled them to discover themselves independently of traditional restrictions. To describe this using familiar ‘push-pull’ model of migration; the restrictive conditions that are in place in the home country provided the ‘push’ factor while better career advancement opportunities and opportunity of freedom from restrictive structures provided the ‘pull’ factor for these women.

Within the wide variety of contemporary migration, young women professionals stand out. This participants are reforming their identity to achieve the dual objectives of professional and personal independence, constantly up skilling themselves to better suit global market needs, enabling these high skilled young women to feel secure in terms of employability in any country.

Another interesting aspect of up skilling is the impact of multi-lingualism. The increased capacity to communicate and the ability to relate to a larger variety of people is and always has been, a highly valued skill. To a young woman from a traditional, non-Western society, such as Sri Lanka, gaining this particular skill has implications that go beyond the work place. Learning another language opens the door to that particular culture and to the thoughts and traditions of the people of that culture thus increasing the awareness of the diversity and commonality of cultures. Sharing common linguistic roots and history it is fairly straight forward for most Sri Lankans to display proficiency in English and be competitive in a global market where English is used as the common language of communication.

As the young women came into contact with the diversity in urban New Zealand society they encountered similar individuals from other parts of the world. This exposure brought them to new levels of appreciation for different cultures, value systems, and traditions. In most cases this appreciation leads into a personalised application of tolerance and increased capability for inter cultural communication in their daily lives. The process forms the basis of the contemporary identity of migrant professional women and its development in both New Zealand and global contexts. The young women in my study had developed varying levels of this global consciousness and have a very non-traditional concept of the global citizenship.

The study showed that the women seemed to have developed mechanisms to deal with new challenges and that they have reached varying levels of increased cultural awareness, broadened knowledge and changed attitudes. These mechanisms that enable them to successfully negotiate the modern professional environment and cosmopolitan social environments have also impacted the way in which they negotiate the family and traditional social environment in their daily lives.

The stage in which these new mechanisms were being utilised was the traditional Sri Lankan society which as presented earlier is a very conservative environment despite being multi-ethnic, multi-religious and socially diverse. The traditional family unit is male dominated and patriarchal, where women are expected to take a reverential secondary role to that of men. Even when a woman is better educated than the man, the traditional and unspoken rules expect her to assume a submissive role, which is displayed especially in an extended family context. It is a common sense assumption in both rural and urban Sri Lanka where extended families gather the women, young and old, congregate to the back of the house and societies. With increasing number of emigrants including women professionals in New Zealand and other part of the world, where women engage in much more prominent roles the impact on these traditional structures can be significant. I link this new generation of young women to the new 21<sup>st</sup> century order of women depicted in literature (Luke, 2002, Harvey, 2005, Glassman, 2000). My study, therefore, documents the case of the new emerging identity of Sri Lankan women, facilitated and even led by a generation of young, migrant, professional women.

The general perception within traditional circles, which seems to be reflected in the Sri Lankan literature on young, successful women professionals, has been negative or critical at best. A great deal of politically charged discourse exists about women which reinforces traditional views such as women as mothers of the nation and who reproduce and nourish the traditions of the nation's communities (Yuval-Davis, 1997). These notions often take racialised forms especially within the South Asian context, where women are viewed as carrying the responsibility to be the bearers of what is held as the right family values of their culture (Rathnasiri, 1992, 1994). One of my aims was to explore the impact of the migrant young women professionals on their home society as well as their influence in the host society. I suggest that the 'clash of culture' view has failed to grasp the complex realities of modern South Asian women's everyday lives, by framing questions of culture as dichotomous and oppositional, between traditional and modern, between Eastern or Western. Lynch (2007) identifies this and observes that traditional Sri Lankan society places immense expectations on young women with very little consideration of the changes and challenges surround them. In between the advancing forces of globalisation and the rigidity of traditional structures, these women are struggling to meet their intellectual and emotional needs. Already a generation had come in to maturity facing these dual pressures. My study sheds a little light on their struggle and aims to do some justice to the six bright young women by grasping different facets of their complex reality as migrant professionals in cosmopolitan New Zealand.

Bhopal (2003) observed the significance of education in terms of marriage and employment in the lives of South Asian women. She emphasises that education serves as a lever of agency for women, especially for gaining autonomy in matters pertaining to marriage. However, her research doesn't show how this agency can then be utilised to re-negotiate gendered relations within the domestic realm, with, rather than apart from, families and relatives. This category of women is heterogeneous and has three major axes of differences. The first, centres on origin (region, language and religion), the second is structural (wealth, caste, occupation and education), and the third is what might be called contingent geography (current residence, network clusters, economic enclaves). The 'clash of culture' theory required the adaptation and then the clash of singular identities and the crossing out of other forms of difference. Apart from these views there are more

complex processes whereby women's agency interacts with, and is at the same time is limited by, the structures and ideologies based on ethnicity, gender and class. The young women in my study also have used their own yardsticks to measure the norms of contemporary young women agency. The experience of these women show that more education means decreased marriage prospects. Working in a highly respected profession brings status and a comfortable life but also involves the tresses and tensions of the competitive employment market.

### **Professional class**

Women as cultural reproducers actively 'manufacture' (Fonow, 2000) their identities and modify their cultural systems by engaging with them positively. There is a perception of women as active negotiators of the cultural values. They accept the lifestyles to which they subscribe or their role as innovators and originators of new cultural forms which are influenced by their modern interpretations and are continuously reformulated in the context of their class and local cultures. Unlike the research of Ramji (2003), the young professional women in my research have been born and raised in the context of traditional Sri Lankan culture. However, I have shown that consciously or unconsciously they have assumed the very modern role of cultural entrepreneurs, who are actively engaging with cultural frameworks while continuously transforming their personal and professional identities.

Ramji (2003) argues the women use their identities which are created through employment success to challenge the predominant gender and ethnic discourses. They also contribute to the creation of modern hierarchies within the knowledge labour market. Higher educational achievement and highly paid employment has become crucial markers of identity formation. They maintain distant relationships with their own community, the poorly educated and some of the ethnic groups in the host community which adds a social class division to the phenomenon. The women protect their class status by their assumption of being set apart from the general public.

Asanka suggests that some people within her own community have 'lower standards' are 'bossy' and 'gossiping'. She described the political establishment back

home as ‘Nazi’ and ‘Old Mussolini’ type dictatorships. Her harsh criticism which is by no means uncommon, is well-founded as she explained the reasons for her observations about how the prevailing political regime had fostered an environment of corruption and failed to initiate economic and social reforms while displaying an appearance of democracy. Her response showed political awareness and rationality once the emotions were expressed and set aside. The highly conservative and hawkish political climate of the post-colonial and post-civil war Sri Lanka has reinforced many traditional institutions and even hardened the already politicised religious establishments.

The general responses from the young women in my study are that they displayed a distinct rejection of the traditional ethno-religious and caste culture. They embrace the modern professional class culture, where they could position themselves within the global knowledge labour market, redefine a modern identity and experience new levels of social mobility and personal liberty. The women reject ethnic and caste culture and ascribe to professional class status as the basis of their modern culture within the knowledge labour market, a location that provides their new type of identity. Such an approach towards the transformation of identity suggests the women’s changing awareness of caste to class stratification. The social class has become an identity signifier as women who are accomplished in education and employment experience are more concerned about their personal identity than their place in a culture and a caste. So while status matters to them, it is a personally achieved status within class relations rather than traditional Sri Lankan caste relations.

The women are attracted by more non-traditional employment which is more challenging and provide opportunities for autonomous decision making practices. But these careers can make it difficult to choose marriage and raise a family. All the women viewed marriage and raising children as an obstacle for the professional women’s career, and believed that it was necessary to choose between work and family. These women come from a variety of fields: accountancy, information technology, engineering and other technical fields. Securing their professional longevity by up skilling and managing professional relationships is of primary importance to them. This awareness is tied in with their identity formation which places ethnic and religious consciousness in a secondary position. It may be worthwhile to include a contrast between the Sinhalese and

Tamil communities here. The Sinhalese, even traditionally have been markedly less caste-conscious than their Tamil compatriots. Traditional Tamil society has more pronounced caste structures. This difference may have been resulted from the different Buddhism and Hinduism world views respectively. I highlight this observation as a significant development, especially in the post-civil war era. Whatever the differences are, it is noteworthy that in contemporary Sri Lanka, or more specifically among emigrant ex-pat communities, such as in New Zealand, a new identity is being forged, where professional success and social mobility are becoming important identity signifiers as opposed to class and caste difference within and among the divisions.

As a part of their complex negotiation in the identity formation process, the young women in this study have learnt to prioritise their social commitments and manage time which becomes especially important in social interactions with compatriots. Giving primary importance to managing healthy professional interactions they limit their interactions in the social sphere outside work. This management of their social time also stems from them being visible and acting as representatives of the wider community, especially when current events are brought to attention by the media. Whenever the familiar issues of contemporary politics, migration, conflict of tradition and modernity, and the dark legacy of civil war are discussed, the young Sri Lankan migrants have to get used to shifting perspectives, challenges and questions asked in the wider community questions they themselves are in the process of finding answers to.

The emotional attachment for and affinity with a homeland is a powerful human experience which is universally shared. It has inspired a plethora of artistic expressions on spirituality and political movements since human society began. Sri Lanka, as an ancient island nation, rich in history and tradition has become a part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy characterised by increasingly mobile knowledge and labour capital. Young Sri Lankan women, hitherto seen as preservers of tradition, are now actively assuming new global role as cultural entrepreneurs, some retaining strong bonds with the home culture and internationalising some elements of patriarchal traditions while others, also preserving their strong attachment to Sri Lanka, forge a new transnational identity based on professional success and the social values of the emerging global middle class.

## **Cultural idealism**

The role of women in Sri Lankan society is an issue that had been long debated throughout the post-colonial period. Women were actively involved in the independence movement and nationalist campaigns (De Alwis, 2002). Bourgeois Ceylonese women, De Alwis argues, were seen as the bearers of culture and tradition. Through their beliefs and behaviours women were held as a defense against the onslaught of colonialism and modernism. Interestingly in the post-colonial era the access to education, non-traditional employment, and improved political representation were seen as a potential threats to the same traditional social structure that sought national independence. De Alwis (1998) argues that notions of change and modernity, although not following similar patterns on Sinhalese and Tamil cultural contexts, did impact the two groups differently and helped form one common identity of modern, post-colonial Sri Lankan women. These women now face the second tide of change in the form of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalisation.

My research aimed to map the process linking the conditions present in the Sri Lankan society which gave rise to, or influenced the process of migration of the young single women professionals and showing how they engaged with the process of negotiation in the host society, New Zealand. This mapping begins with the social and economic conditions in Sri Lanka. This is followed by a fluid intermediate state where a distinct group of 'trend setting' young women are still within the home society's rigid structures. The final stage of this process map is in the host society where these enterprising young women are at varying stages of adaptation. The important point is that the adaptation process began in the home society when the women were still in Sri Lanka. The discussion with the women reinforced this point. While moving to New Zealand provided an environment that is conducive for independent decision-making, the women's idea of independence was found in Sri Lanka. New Zealand cosmopolitan society, with its high degree of social and economic liberation provided the young women to express their 'Sri Lankan-made' idea of independence in a unique 'Kiwi' context.



The initial stage of this process comprises of two categories of conditions- social and economic. As discussed earlier, the hierarchical social structure in modern Sri Lanka consists of a complex interplay of the old and new, rural and urban, pre and post-colonial elements and also of structural differences and similarities between the Sinhala and Tamil communities, these being the largest ethno-linguistic grouping in the island. While noting that the young women who participated in this study were of Sinhalese ethnicity, the general observation was that women from different religious backgrounds, but similar class status locale displayed a fairly homogenous overall view of themselves in the context of traditionally male-dominant Sri Lankan society. They all agreed that women had been encouraged to feel inferior to men. This attitude prevails in popular culture and permeates daily social interactions. It is fostered by religious traditions. Therefore, the dominant social discourse in Sri Lanka, as in many other conservative societies, has provided a set of restrictive social conditions that expects women to be subservient - a state often encouraged and reproduced by popular culture and heavily politicised mass media.

Running parallel to the social conditions discussed above are the economic factors that continue to the formation of the process of migration. From a post-civil war viewpoint Sri Lanka had re-entered the modern global economy with a new found determination and a sense of optimism. Recent statements (*Daily News*, 2010, Human Right Watch, 2011) such as 'invitation to expatriates for nation building effort' display Sri Lanka's new drive to become competitive and to become a significant economic player in South Asian region in particular, and in wider Asia. This dynamic however, was already in motion prior to the end of the civil war in 2009. Owing much to a rich legacy of literacy traditions, scholarship and advance learning that pre-dates the modern era, Sri Lanka had always ranked high in literacy per capita rates and education standards in almost every statistical analysis conducted during post-independence years (Central Bank of Ceylon, 1996/97; UGC-2002; ADB -2008; Department of Census and Statistics-2007). Despite this advantage over other regions, Sri Lanka had not been able to realize its full potential even during the relative stability prior to the separatist conflicts which deteriorated into a full-blown civil war in the early 1980s. One reason for this failure may

have been Sri Lanka's highly visible gender inequality and marginalisation of women, specifically in the professional and political arena.

Ranasinhe (2008) argues that women constitute more than half of Sri Lanka's dense population yet only a surprisingly low 35% of them actively participate in the economy (Department of Census and Statistics-DCS 2007, Fourth Quarter: 9). Of the entire employed population, only a 0.6 percent are represented female employers. In a highly educated population such as Sri Lanka, where women should play an important and active role in entrepreneurship, they have been clearly marginalised and their potential contribution largely unrecognised and unrealised. Combining this with other factors such as high competition to gain university access, on average around 22,000 among hundreds of thousands of university entrance candidates every year, and with the disparity of technology between urban and rural areas (BRIDGE, 1998; Jayaweera & Wanasundara, 2002a 2003b; *Daily News*, September 2010) a large number of secondary school graduates (a large proportion of female), are forced to seek tertiary education abroad or other avenues of education or employment. The employment available in garment factories as manual workers is not suitable for those with secondary education. Rankin (2008) observes that the end result of these social and economic factors is that Sri Lanka is placed in the global economy as an exporter of quality brains.

The final stage of the process of mapping introduced earlier is that cultural restrictions coupled with socio-economic marginalisation result in the exodus of highly educated, entrepreneurial young Sri Lankan women who are driven by the opportunities presented to them in a global economy, while embracing a simultaneous journey of self-discovery. The young women I came to know during the course of this study symbolise a significant crossroads in modern Sri Lankan history, namely the end of a decades' long civil war and the subsequent transition into the global political economy. They were actively participating in the economy of the host country of their choice, New Zealand. I could relate to these women well and had the privilege of being an objective and empathising listener to their personal experiences, their struggles and their emotions. The young women in my study displayed a strong commitment to the values that seemed to have been ingrained in them from their childhood. Their respect for traditional Sri Lankan family values and ideals of wealth accumulation and social refinement were

clearly visible in their demeanor. Often guarded in their words and emotions, the young women were quietly aware of the constant presence of their wider compatriot society in New Zealand which is still largely dominated by the same traditional structure they left behind at the beginning of their journey.

What was interesting to observe was the manner in which they had negotiated this commitment and respect for their Sri Lankan values and given them a unique “Kiwi” touch. After each interview, while reflecting on my journal notes, I often wondered about these women and their responses, bright smiles, their somber expressions and their admirable sense of determination and self-reliance. Many of them took an immense risk to pursue success as defined in a Sri Lankan context and found themselves in a path of self-discovery and empowerment made possible by the comparatively less-rigid and much more cosmopolitan social make-up and liberal economic and political regime of New Zealand society.

The literature on professional women’s participation in the global knowledge labour market and subsequent outcomes is relatively small within the contemporary migration literature. The new phenomenon of single young women professionals have been located by a few writers such as Luke (2001), Raghuram & Kofman (2010), Pandurang (2003) and Ramji (2003). I assumed that the researchers are more interested about the issues related to disadvantaged classes rather than the ‘privileged classes’. The scarcity of appropriate research literature on professional women migration caused a huge and tiresome effort to collect the data from different sources with limited information restricting this research. Therefore, I have had to mend with various colour threads and patch the text in the raw materials by digging deeper holes in diverse disciplines to find the existing literature.

### **A solid rock or a rolling stone?**

One important revelation of this study is those who had migrated for a change of lifestyle were willingly adapting to New Zealand society and hold more positive attitudes towards the formation of their identity. Some of the women seemingly have developed mixed identity positions in between New Zealand and Sri Lanka. In such cases, they preferred

adapting to the New Zealand society as their second home. For them, the life in New Zealand is not a 'stopover' (Liu, 2010) but really a new beginning one which can cause a lot of anticipation.

The research revealed that Sri Lanka as a sending country of knowledge workers has negative and positive implications. There is no possibility of returning which means for the sending country a long term loss of social capital. The young women are deciding to make their home in New Zealand and to build the host country instead the country where they were produced and equipped as intellectuals. This is because New Zealand provides the best opportunities for the young women, opportunities which are not available in their country.

For New Zealand as a migrant receiving country the outcome is positive and beneficial. For Sri Lanka it is the loss of abundant human capital source with a significant group of talented and successful students and professionals remaining abroad after finishing university or post-graduate studies or training. The young women who are undertaking higher education contribute to the education market directly and to the labour market by contributing their expertise knowledge to the socio-economic system in New Zealand. Moreover, the young women are not transnational migrants. They are obtaining permanent residency and will become long term social capital in New Zealand as well as contributing to New Zealand's ethnic fluidity.

## CONCLUSION

### BECOMING 'KIWIS'

The study found that significant changes were taking place in the lives of the six young women in terms of their outlook on life and in their sense of personal empowerment. It also revealed how the women are negotiating gender roles and re-posting themselves within the host society. They have experienced significant attitude changes towards occupational and personal circumstances. The women have taken part in a process of reconstructing an identity which fuses the values from both home and host societies, Sri Lanka and New Zealand respectively. This process of negotiation provided insights into the resourcefulness of these young women as they searched for new pathways and opportunities beyond those available in Sri Lankan traditional society.

A combination of restrictive social structures and intensive competition for resources due to high population density coupled with the decades-long Civil War in Sri Lanka, had driven the highly skilled young women to make the life changing decision to migrate to a developed nation. They had experienced the limitation of traditional gendered social norms which prevented them achieving their full potential. This has made them search for alternatives as a form of resistance to the constraints. In doing so, they not only sought a temporary stopover, but a new home and a new lifestyle. This decision, once activated by increasing numbers of Sri Lankan female professionals has considerable social and economic impacts on both Sri Lanka and the developed countries to which they migrate. These effects extend further than the dynamics of the simplistic "brain drain" model. Permanent emigration has multiple effects on the traditional family unit, gender roles, marriage, child rearing and also reaches into the personal spheres of lifestyle and identity formation.

The study has highlighted how the young women showed remarkable resourcefulness in fulfilling two sets of aspirations while ensuring that they gained a new level of control over their professional and personal lives. They achieved the type of success defined in the traditional norms by becoming highly educated professionals

thereby achieving the status valued in Sri Lanka. They also fulfilled their personal aspirations by emigrating and finding considerable personal satisfaction in a broader sense of being individuals in charge of their own destiny.

The six young women displayed varying degrees of adaptation. Some tended to be conservative and retained many of the traditional social norms especially in regards to their choice of marriage partner. Significantly they wanted someone of the same ethnicity and religion. They believed that this would provide greater security and a more stable family. But four of women were more liberal. They preferred a life partner with similar liberal values and similar educational or professional standings. But all the women agreed that cultural traditions must change with time especially in order to fit a new location if they were to remain relevant and valued by forthcoming generations.

Those young migrant women professionals serve as cultural agents with a role in according social change and promoting new perspectives on gender roles and morality. The increasingly large group of resourceful, innovative, highly skilled, multi-cultural and multi-lingual young women in the rapidly globalising labour market is bound to exert such a significant influence. The global extent of this influence does need further research however I would argue that this new global social phenomenon is already shaping the values, outlook and aspirations of a generation. My study isolated one strand of this phenomenon with the migration between Sri Lanka and New Zealand, however, with further research more light may be shed on its effect in other parts of the world.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of this cultural change leverage is the young women's choice of marriage partner. Traditionally marriage was viewed as an institution which reinforced communal bonds by bringing two families together. This view is still prevalent, in not only in rural areas but also among the urban conservative Sri Lankan communities, and within the Sri Lankan diaspora. Through less rigid than the other traditional South Asian practice of 'arranged marriage', the Sri Lankan view is that the purposive of marriage is to bring families and communities together. This has its roots in ancient times where securing alliances among family clans were often carried out in the form of a highly formalised marriage ceremony.

Contemporary globalised professional young women however possess a greater sense of autonomy. Security alliances among clans are not relevant to them. Instead

personal preference and partner compatibility are of primary importance. As the young women in this group clearly expressed, marriage is no longer another duty a woman has to accept and live with. It is a personal choice guided by the woman's judgement preference of the potential marriage partner's social and professional background, his status, and her overall assessment of their compatibility. In this regard, their view runs parallel to the western model of marriage. Several of the women interviewed said that cross-cultural marriage would be a personal option because it provides a definite break from the traditional ways.

The young Sri Lankan migrant women in New Zealand interviewed in the study offer a valuable insight in to what Gugler (1995) identified as a new social phenomenon in the contemporary world, that of wider social changes and modifying cultural definitions of women's roles as wives and mothers to increase their degree of freedom. These young women professionals have shown remarkable tenacity in achieving what would have been unthinkable to their counterparts only a generation ago. They have a greater sense of personal freedom and social mobility while still pursuing the traditional commitment to family oriented professional success. They display a strong commitment to traditional Sri Lankan ideals of social status, wealth accumulation, and family dignity by way of educational and professional accomplishment. However, they took a resolute departure from tradition as they developed the new identity of an empowered, contemporary woman by contextualising those traditional values within a liberal context where they receive the benefits of the status.

If social change is initiated by changes that take place in the personal sphere, it is important to identify the extent of personal change experienced by this group of women. While their individual experiences differed, they all shared a general common theme. All had studied hard. They had sacrificed much of their childhood and youth, endured hardships and challenges associated with settling in new environment by themselves all in order to achieve a common goal to meet their family expectations and bring honour to their families. At least this is the commonly accepted formula for most young contemporary Sri Lankans. However, while following the path of this formula these young women also developed a sense of personal dignity, a sense of achievement and a new awareness of their potential influence and power in the liberal New Zealand context.

They were now more aware of and vocally critical of gender inequality and other restrictive social norms they have left behind. Thus the young women in my study illustrated an interestingly scenario where individuals who have followed the transnational formula of higher education and professional development, in order to gain leverage against the very system that restricted them, suddenly find themselves quickly adapting to the new found capabilities of upward social mobility and individual freedom.

The women show a complex engagement with their new lives. The interviews demonstrated that they are certainly embracing the freedom to make decisions about their own lives and are enjoying the independence of living away from family constraints. On the other hand they also show that they maintain many values from their upbringing in Sri Lanka though have re-contextualised these values in the adaptation to New Zealand life. For example, they maintain a strong commitment to the Sri Lanka's respect for education for social status, for wealth accumulation, and for the idea of family dignity to which all family members contribute. They keep on these values but adapt them for the new context. This is the key aspect of the negotiation of life in a new context. While the values remain more important to them the adjustment to with the new country is equally, if not more, important. Within these complexities the women are reconstructing a new type of identity as autonomous decision makers within the global labour market.

Four significant features were identified in the case studies of the women's experiences. The paramount features that showed that the desire for independence and gender equality was the result of the women's advanced education in Sri Lanka but it took the migration to the liberal New Zealand environment for that independence to be achieved. The first feature concerns the complex negotiation that occurred as the women's relationships with their parents changed. Rather than a rift developing between liberalised young women and traditionally-focused parents, both parties accommodated the changes to the women so that the relationship did not suffer. The second feature concerned the young women's attitudes towards marriage partners and future family life. They consider marrying outside their ethnicity which is a marked departure from the traditional male dominance and its manifestation within the family. Also being single is better than the carrying a lifelong burden as wives and mothers therefore so the women were willing to put a career before children. The third feature was the complex



interaction between traditional Sri Lankan values and the culture of the modern independent professional woman living on her own in a liberal society. This concerns women's attitudes towards their professional identity and lifestyle. The fourth feature was the significant change to the women's identity formation.

### **Implications and recommendation**

This study may be of some use to policy-makers and educators in both New Zealand and Sri Lanka by providing insight into contemporary issues affecting women in developing countries, especially in the rapidly changing South Asia region which is becoming a region of geo-political significance. The highly educated sons and daughters of the South Asian middle class are moving into the globalised professions at a rapid rate. However, it is the reasons for female professional migration that may be of interest to policy makers in liberal countries like New Zealand. These women are attracted by not only the economic benefits of professional employment but also by the liberal environment of gender equality.

Policy makers in Sri Lanka now face the challenge of leading the war-ravaged nation into the future. Some encouraging steps have already been taken in that direction. The post-civil war Sri Lankan economy grew up 8 percent in 2010 assisted by a rising number of foreign investors led by regional giants, China and India in addition to a number of European Union member nations. In this fast-moving environment Sri Lanka needs to initiate what was neglected during the civil war decades, namely education reform creating strong and diverse skills base for new industries and importantly, providing the means for the nation's female population to actively participate in the economy if the country wishes to retain its female professionals. Comparatively speaking as a country emerging from twenty five years long conflicts, Sri Lanka still possesses the rudimentary mechanics of democratic institutions, which is an added advantage over many other countries in the wider Asian region and the Middle East. With strategic reconstructing of economic policy, with the encouragement of higher female participation, Sri Lanka may be able to retain its women professionals if the country responds both to their desire for employment and their desire for equality.

Throughout the course of this research study I had the privilege of getting to know six bright, strong young women who had shown immense spirit and initiative in pursuing their success. They have begun in a traditionally defined path and finished in the non-traditional path of self-discovery and freedom. They display control over their lives and are focused on achieving what they had set their minds to. Contrary to common fears in traditional circles, these young women had undergone a unique process of identity negotiation and retained many of the cherished values from their home culture. They have developed uniquely personal interpretations of the significance of culture, traditional boundaries, and professional aspirations. Personal freedom has not meant the rejection of important moral values. What it has meant is that each woman herself decides to choose which values matter the most and to develop a new way of life within which the values are re-interpreted.

My aim was to capture first-hand account of their experiences in order to illustrate the lives of young Sri Lankan migrant women professionals living in New Zealand. This study aims to contribute to the migrant literature about the phenomenon of professional female migration and to spark interest in further research on this group of individuals. It also encourages research into the experiences of young Sri Lankan migrant men to support the growing knowledge about the women. Such research into the growing professional class of young Sri Lankans will contribute to a greater understanding of the place of the educated young of developing countries in the global knowledge economy.

## Appendix 1

### Indicative lead in interview questions

#### Category One

#### Freedom leading to autonomy and independence

Questions about personal life:

- Why did you decide to leave Sri Lanka?
- Why did you come to New Zealand?
- What was the effect on your family in Sri Lanka?
- What did you expect from your new life in New Zealand?
- Have those expectations been met?
- How would you compare the amount of freedom you had in Sri Lanka with your life here?

Do you enjoy the increased freedom? If the amount of freedom has increased can you describe times when you have enjoyed or not enjoyed the increased freedom?

- What opportunities and restrictions did you encounter in Sri Lanka and in New Zealand?
- What was your parents' reaction to your decision to emigrate? What about other family members?
- Can you compare your life to your mother's, your grandmother's?
- Do you know other young Sri Lankan women who have migrated to developed countries?
- What are your hopes for your future family?
- What is your opinion about marrying a non Sri Lankan man? What would your family say?

## **General Questions**

- Do you think the migration of young professional people is affecting the Sri Lankan way of life?
- Do you think the fact that, many of the young professionals leaving Sri Lanka are women, is changing life in Sri Lanka?
- What do you think is the attitude of your parents' and grandparents' generations to the emigration of young professional women like yourself?
- Do you think that gender roles amongst Sri Lankans, including those in Sri Lanka and migrants, are changing? If so, in what way?

## **Category Two**

### **The global knowledge worker: Higher education and career experiences**

- What is your educational background?
- Are you planning to do further study?
- Why did you decide to take up your profession?
- What opportunities were there to work and advance in your profession in Sri Lanka?
- Describe some of the experiences in your New Zealand workplace that you like/dislike.
- What are your career ambitions in New Zealand? In other countries?

## **Category Three**

### **Life as a consumer**

- What do you do with your income?
- What are your behaviours as a consumer like?
- Do you use your income differently in New Zealand from how you would in Sri Lanka?

- How would you describe your buying habits in New Zealand, in Sri Lanka?
- What possessions would you like to acquire - in the immediate future, in the long term future?
- How would you compare your buying practices with those of your friends in Sri Lanka? With those of New Zealand women of your age and occupational status?

## **Category Four**

### **National and transnational identity: Belonging where?**

- How do you define yourself? A Sri Lankan, New Zealander or anything else?
- Where do you locate yourself between Sri Lanka and New Zealand?
- What do you think about Sri Lanka as your home country? If you think of Sri Lanka as your home country, what are your views and feelings about the nation?
- How often have you visited Sri Lanka since you moved to New Zealand?
- Do you attend any Sri Lankan community events in New Zealand?
- What relationship do you have with the Sri Lankan community in New Zealand? And when you have engaged with the Sri Lankan community?
- What do you think about New Zealand as your new country?
- What sort of involvement do you have with New Zealanders?
- What words do you use to describe different types of New Zealanders?
- If you could choose any country as a best place to settle which country, would you choose?
- Do you think you will settle in New Zealand and become a New Zealand citizen?
- Could you think of New Zealand as home? What does home mean to you?

## Appendix 2

### CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION

(Incorporating Education Studies, Health & Physical Education,  
Pasifika, & Social Sciences)



**THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND**  
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Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street  
Auckland 1150, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

(This Consent Form will be held for a period of six years)

**TITLE: The Feminisation of Global Migration: Professional Sri Lankan Women in  
New Zealand**

RESEARCHER: Mallika Bandara

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research study. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I was fully informed by the researcher about the nature and purpose of the study before agreeing to participate in the interviews and journal keeping.

I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time and that I can review, edit or withdraw any information I have provided until the beginning of data analysis approximately six months from the beginning of the interviews. I can also request the return of my journal at this time.

I agree to the interview being tape-recorded and I understand that I can ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time.

I understand that all collected data will be stored securely in a cabinet in the supervisor's office for six years and then destroyed.

I am aware that the findings of the study may be published in research journals and presented at conferences. My name will not be used in any reports. I am also aware that the researcher will take all possible steps to ensure my privacy but that total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

I agree to participate in this research study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS  
ETHIC COMMITTEE on ..... for a period of .....years,  
From ...../ ...../.....  
Reference...../.....

## Appendix 3

### CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION

(Incorporating Education Studies, Health & Physical Education,  
Pasifika, & Social Sciences)



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Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street  
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### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Title: The Feminisation of Global Migration: Professional Sri Lankan Women in  
New Zealand**

To: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Mallika Bandara. I am doing a research project about migrant Sri Lankan professional women in New Zealand. The research study is for my PhD in Education Degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland. The aim of the study is to investigate the lived experiences of growing numbers of young and independent women who migrate from developing countries for employment as professionals in developing countries.

The research question is: How do young Sri Lankan professional women experience the social effects of the global knowledge market.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project and wish to tell you about the study's methods before you respond to my invitation to that you are able to make a fully informed.

If you agree to participate in the study I would like to interview you three times during a four month period. The first interview will take up to 90 minutes at a date and venue that is convenient to you. At that time we will make arrangements for the second interview. If you agree, the interviews will be tape recorded. You may ask that the tape be turned off



at any time. The interview will be transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy. You may speak in English or Sinhalese.

I would also ask you to keep a journal during those four months where you can reflect on the experiences and views that you discuss in the interviews. If you wish the journal will be returned to you after the data analysis. You may edit, change or withdraw the information you have provided up until I begin analysing the data. This will be approximately six months from the beginning of the interviews. You may also withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.

All the information of our discussion will be stored only in my personal computer. No one will have access to the information except my supervisor, Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata, and my co-supervisor, Dr Allen Bartley. Only we will read the information.

If any conflict or interest arises you can withdraw from the research at any time and edit, change or withdraw the information you have provided up until the beginning of the data analysis. This is approximately six months following the first interview.

No names or personal information about you will be given to anyone else. Pseudonym will be used as to describe the participants. The information will be used only for research purposes. The results of the study will be shared with you. All collected information will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office for six years and then destroyed.

I will make every effort to respect your privacy and maintain confidentiality although I am unable to guarantee this for several reasons. It is possible that you will be identified in the study. The Sri Lankan community in Auckland is small, the study itself has only six participants, and I have acquired your name from another member of the community.

In addition, I intend to publish my research findings in educational journals and at seminars and conferences. Your exact professional status, employers, and other overtly identity details will not be used in any publication but because the study has only six participants such publication may enable your account of your experiences to be linked to you.

For your emotional wellbeing during the study is important. If you request the need of counseling or other appropriate service the Faculty of Education counseling programme is available.

My supervisors' details are:

Dr. Elizabeth Rata,  
Associate Professor,  
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Head of the Department  
Dr. Airini,  
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Yours sincerely,

Mallika Bandara (Mrs.).

For any inquiries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participant Ethic Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Tel: (09) 3737599 ext. 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS  
ETHIC COMMITTEE on 17.09.2009 for a period of 3...years,  
From 17/09./2009.  
Reference...2008. /349...

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## GLOSSARY

**Dana:** The act of charitable giving. Specific usage being the religious ceremonial act where Buddhist laypeople giving to *Sangha* the community of monks. *Dana* specifically includes giving of foods, robes, medicines and accommodation. *Dana* also incorporate promise of positive Karma, comfort during times of sorrow and communal unity channelled through by the blessing of the *Sangha*.

**Esala-Poya:** The full moon day of the month of Esala (July) marks an important religious event on the Buddhist religious calendar. This day is traditionally accepted as the night of the Buddha's first sermon to the five rishis (ascetics) at the garden of Isipathana-Saranath, near modern day Varanasi, India. The sermon is accepted as the declaration of fundamental pillars of the Buddhist philosophy the Four Noble Truths; The truth of suffering or (*dukkha*), the cause of suffering, (*samudaya*), the cessation of the cause of suffering (*nirodha*), and the path negation of suffering (*marga*) which is expanded in to the Noble Eight-fold Path. The traditional literature describes this event as the Sermon of the Wheel of Dharma or Dhammachackka, alluding to a supernatural halo of light said to have emanated from the Buddha at the event.

**New Year:** *Aluth Aurudda* or in more formal Sinhala *Nava-Vasara* is the traditional Sinhala New Year, marks the first day of the Sinhalese calendar on the 14 April. Jointly celebrated by the Tamil of both Sri Lanka and India, as *pudu varsham* (Tamil), this day marks the transition of the sun from the House of Pisces (*Meena rashi*) in to the House of Aries (*Mesha rashi*) an event celebrated across many ancient cultures as the harvest festival and the beginning of the spring season. The modern of the *Aurudu* festival in Sri Lanka was formed during the Kandyan period, with full patronage of the kings to bring the community together. The festival is celebrated with joyous pealing of *raban* drums, fireworks, preparation and sharing of traditional Sinhala meals and symbolic boiling of milk in a fresh clay pot to denote promising and new beginning.

**Pirith** is the collective term given to the rhythmic chanting of Sacred Buddhist *Sutra* or texts written in Pali, a dialect of Sanskrit from the North Eastern India. The chanting of *sutras* in which the teaching of the Buddha was captured and was a part of a rich oral tradition passed down the generations by Buddhist monks. Meditative effect of Pirith chanting is traditionally believed to counter the influence of evil spirits, negative planetary or *graha* influences, and the chanting may be performed by both *bikku* (monks) or lay people. There are superstitious beliefs that the ritualistic chanting of certain *Pali* texts selected from the canonical scriptures will secure the above-mentioned protections.

**Poson-Poya** is the full moon day of the month of Posson (June) in the Buddhist calendar, as this day commemorates the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka with the arrival by Arahata Mahinda some three hundred years before Christ. Son of King Asoka the emperor of India's powerful Mauryan dynasty and who was a patron of Buddhism - Mahinda's mission to the ancient Sinhala kingdom had consequences that were to last down millennia. The hold of Buddhism endured long after the fall of both Mauryan Empire and Sinhala kingdom. Mahinda was said to have met the Sinhala king Tissa at Mihintale a rock formation near the island's ancient capital Anuradhapura.

**Vesak-Poya** is the most important religious holiday of the Buddhists calendar falling on the full moon day of the month of Vesak (May), traditionally designated commemorate the birth, the enlightenment and the passing away of the Buddha. Associated with the theme of light, Vesak is celebrated as a reverent festival of light, marked by exuberantly lit structures called Thorana of lighting the images of Buddha, and depiction of events from his life. These structures demonstrate the streets of Sri Lanka during Vesak festival days, in addition to lighting of coloured lanterns of all shapes and sizes. The temples in both urban and rural areas are filled with worshippers in white attire, lighting coconut oil lamps, offering flowers and burning incense the chanting of *pirith* is the more traditional manner of commemorating this important day.