



**SEMI-ILLITERATE WOMEN AND MIGRATION: A CASE STUDY OF KUSUMPUR
PAHARI¹ IN SOUTH DELHI- INDIA**

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine the reasons behind migration of semi-illiterates women to a metropolitan city – South Delhi. The study tries to assess the social and economic profile of semi-illiterate migrant women. The study also tries to understand the role of the family during their settlement in an alien environment. The finding of the study shows that semi-illiterate migrant women face tremendous economic & social problems in urban settings.

Keywords: Migration, illiteracy, employment, urban settings, alien environment

Introduction

Migration of semi-illiterate women from other states of India to the capital –Delhi in search of better employment opportunities and family re-unification is not a new phenomenon. In the absence of inadequate wages in the hometown and exploitation at the hands of the landlords or money lenders and prevalence of caste atrocities in the hometown, the families make up their minds to migrate to a metropolitan city. The present case study of semi-illiterate women hailing from Jharkhand, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh demonstrates their occupational engagements. After migration to the city these women usually are found engaged in household work such as maid, house-keeping, baby -sitting, sweepers, daily -wage earners. These semi-illiterate women face

¹ Kusumpur Pahari comes under the category of a Slum Colony or JJ Colony and has had evolved over the years mainly through a process of migration and networking of poor families from the relatively more backward regions of some states in India. (http://www.srtt.org/institutional_grants/pdf/Location_Deprivation.pdf).

tremendous social, economic, and cultural problems in Delhi. Due to stigmatization attached to the work these women often lead a secluded life. Migrants from other states are not welcome with open minds and hearts in a metropolitan city like Delhi.

Objectives of the Study

- To Understand the Reasons for migration to Delhi
- To understand the occupational status
- To understand social and economic challenges
- To Understand the role of the family

Methodology

This paper is based primarily on case study conducted in Kusumpur Pahari, studied in South Delhi. Snow-ball technique was used to locate the respondents. An unstructured and open-ended questionnaire designed to collect information from three participants and schedule interviews was conducted. The identity of the respondents is concealed in order to maintain privacy.

Women Migration: Historical Perspective

Traditionally it is believed that females in India migrate to short distance and mostly due to the reason for marriage purpose. The urbanizations, privatization, globalization of Indian economy may affect the migration of the population in general and female in particular. It is assumed that with these changes in the economy and society, there might be more female migration. It would bring changes in the level and patterns of female migration in India².

Poverty among families could be stated as one of the major reason for migration from rural to urban area. Sekhar notes that rural–urban migration in India involves those from both the low and high socioeconomic strata. For the poor in rural areas, urban-ward migration is a survival strategy against decreasing productivity, whereas for the rich, such migration is a strategy of economic accumulation (Rob Stephenson et.al.2003).Kailash C. Das and Arunananda Murmuⁱ : Migration refers to the movement of persons from the place of origin to another destination with a permanent change in residence for a number of reasons like social, cultural, economic and non-economic factors.

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See

Details:

https://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/FEMALE%20%20MIGRATION%20TO%20MEGA%20CITIES%20%20AND%20DEVELOPMENT%20IN%20INDIA_IUSSP13.pdf

Several Studies conducted by the scholars show that Marriage³ is still the most important factor of female migration in India. But in the recent time due to change in the marriage pattern or modern marriage practices its importance is declining in the urban areas. Marriage migration is the one of the unique feature of Indian society. it is one of the largest form permanent migration in the world and it needs to be study properly. Marriage migration is almost entirely unstudied, despite a growing consensus that women play a crucial role in education, health, and economic development (UNICEF, 2007; World Bank, 2012). Across India two-thirds of all women have migrated for marriage purpose; around 300 million women, on average moving approximately three and a half hours from their place of birth (Fulford, 2013). Till the age of 16 or before marriage male and female is nearly almost identical and driven by the family movements.

Marriage brings a significant change in the female migration in both rural and urban areas where women marry and move to their husband's family cause increase in migration level. Marriage migration does not follow similar pattern in every part of Indian states. In the large populous northern states marriage migration is nearly universal in rural areas: Calculating using the 64th round National Sample Survey, an astounding 98% of women over 25 have migrated for marriage in Haryana, 96% in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, 95% in Punjab, and 93% in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Across the upper Deccan, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa are around 85%, while in the South marriage migration is 63% in Kerala, 50% in Tamil Nadu, and 70% in Karnataka. Marriage migration is 80% in West Bengal, while the culturally very different North Eastern states it is under 30% for most states (NSSO, 64th). Further NSSO 64th report states, the fraction who have migrated stabilizes for women in rural areas after approximately age 22 when most marriages have occurred, with 74% of all women in rural areas having migrated for marriage (79% have migrated for any reason). While the rate of migration is lower for women living in urban areas, overall 66% of women over 22 have migrated for marriage.

Ravenstein's laws of migration state that women are more mobile than men over shorter than over long distance (Ravenstein 1885). In India the Pattern and causes of women migration are changing very fast. It can be seen in terms of increasing proportion of women is moving towards urban areas, particularly to big cities for reasons other than marriage. In the post-independent

³ As per Census 2001 report shows that marriage was cited as the pre-dominant reason for migration among females. About 42.4 million migrants out of total 65.4 million female migrants cited this reason for migration.

India, women who have been earning salaried remunerative occupation and professions are increasing substantially. Women are working in almost all types of jobs such as technical, professional and non-professional in both private and public sectors, residing in rural and urban areas with or without their kith and kin. So, the traditional role of housewife has gradually changed into working and housewife (Anand, 2003). According to Census report (2001), it is found that in Delhi and Mumbai, migrants constitute about 44 percent of the total population in 2001 and it has increased from the earlier figure of 39 percent in Delhi and 35 percent in Mumbai in 1991⁴. Migration increasingly offers women education and career opportunity that may not be available, or be denied them at home, as well as alternatives to marriage, the traditional role of home career and some of the more negative cultural practices regarding women. These opportunities include domestics work in other household (Momsen, 1999). The intensity of female labour migration has generally been accepted to increase over the past few decades, especially with the changes in the economic structure (Neetha, 2004).

As per 2001 Census in 1991-2001, about 5.3 crore persons migrated from one village to another. The census 2011⁵ report says that migration into large metropolises were significant in 1991-2001 with Greater Mumbai UA drawing about 24.9 lakh migrants, Delhi UA about 21.1 lakh migrants, Chennai UA about 4.3 lakh migrants to name the largest three urban destinations in the country. As the trend in migration to large Urban Agglomerations continued, the Census 2011 is likely to show a spurt in population in these places.

According to 2001 Census, of 309 million migrants based on place of last residence, female migrants constitute 218 million while it is 91 million for male. Thus migrants constitute around 30 percent of the total population; whereas male and female migrants constitute 18 percent and 45 percent of their population respectively. Not only in terms of magnitude but also from the perspective of development, internal migration of females is an important factor influencing socio-economic development of the country as it has greater potential for reducing poverty, bringing about social change and also meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Several researchers have concluded that migration of female is largely caused by marriage or as dependents (Bose, 1973; Premi, 1979; Nangia et al, 1990; Rele, 1969). The common assumptions about women in Indian perspectives where women is mainly treated as dependents or associational migrants and their economic significance has been ignored. However it should

⁴ Census report (2001).

⁵ http://censusindia.gov.in/Ad_Campaign/drop_in_articles/08-Migration.pdf

be also view in socio-economic terms like male migration is largely determined by this factor. Connell (1984) stated that female migration is primarily a response to real and perceived spatial inequalities in socio-economic opportunities that are themselves the result of uneven sectoral and regional development. The advent of globalisation and modernisation process in the Indian economy has brought a swift change in the pattern of female migration. It is seen that women from all socio-economic backgrounds migrate from rural to urban centres giving rise to varied trends and patterns and it changing everyday due to changing nature of better opportunity in the city for females. It is evident from various case studies that women's migration is now taking place increasingly for employment purposes (Singh, 1984; Sharma, 1986; Shanti, 1991; Sundari, 2004; Premi, 2001).

Technological advancements in agriculture activities have displaced many women from agricultural sector. Economic hardship laden with poverty and lack of employment opportunities in the rural settings forced women to migrate to city for their survival. Therefore, women may be compelled to migrate owing to their poor economic conditions (Araya, 2005). On the other hand, the emergence of gender segregated labour markets due to globalisation creates demand for females labourers in export processing zones, garment industries (informal labour market) which act as a pull factor for females to migrate (Shanti, 2006). Earlier women were not given importance as active movers, but the rapid urbanisation and demand of female in the job market narrowed the gap which influenced by diverse socio-economic factors in the context of development and reforms occurring in India specially urban part of the country. Hence, there is a demand of a broad analysis of various dimensions of large scale female migration and responsible factors of it. Patterns of migration are gender-specific, she argued, but in writings as recent as the mid-1970s women have largely been excluded (the 'absent woman' approach) or depicted only as wives, mothers or members of families ('migrants and their wives') (Sharpe, 2001).

Review of Literature

Migration is defined as the movements (involving change of permanent residence) from one country to another which takes place through the volition of the individuals or families concerned (Thomas B. , 1954, p. 510)(Thomas 1954: 510). Einstadt define migration as the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition

usually involves abandoning one social setting and entering another and different one (Einstadt 1955:1). A migration means, therefore, not merely a shift of a certain number of undifferentiated persons from one place to another, but also a change in the occupational and population structure of both countries and regions (Peterson 1958: 592).

Gosal (1961) had mentioned that migration is not only a shift of people from one place of abode to another but also it is most fundamental to the understanding of ever changing space content and space relationships in any area(Marsing, 2019: 57). According to Baker, “migration is the act of moving from one spatial unit to another”(Baker, 1978).

Based on Census 2001, one important facet of study on population is the study of migration arising out of various social, cultural, economic or political reasons. For a large country like India, the complexity of movement of population in different parts of the country helps in understanding the dynamics of the society. At this crucial juncture in economic development in our country, study on migration assumes special importance (Census of India, 2001).

McCatty (2004) study focused on developing countries in the context of rural-urban migration and its influence on urbanization. He argues that rural urban migration is an inevitable consequence of both asymmetric policies and economic development favouring urban areas. Consequently, migration should be seen as an equilibrating response to disequilibrium existing in the economy.

The laws of Ravenstein (1885) stated that the primary cause of migration was the best external economic opportunities; the volume of the migration decreases as the distance increases; migration occurs in stages rather than a long movement; population movements are bilateral and migration differentials such as gender, social class, age; they influence the mobility of a person. Migration is a relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity, called migrants, from one geographical location to another, preceded by decision-making on the part of the migrants on the basis of a hierarchically ordered set of values or valued ends and resulting in changes in the interactional system of the migrants (Mangalam & Morgan 1968: 8).

Interview-Appendix-I

Name of the Participant : Doli (48 years)
Occupation : Maid
No. of Family members : 09
Occupation of the Husband: Worker at the Book Shop, Bersari, New Delhi.
Venue : Kusumpur Pahari

I hail from a small village “Godda” located in Boria of District Sahibganj, Jharkhand. I belong to a converted Catholic family. My late parents used to take us to the Church for Sunday prayer. We had a very small dingy house and my parent’s income was not sufficient to meet the daily household expenses. We lived in steep poverty. In the village, our social, economic, and political life was controlled by a Sarpanch without whose permission nobody in the village can even dream but to disrespect him. In the village, atrocities by the landlords against the poor and unarmed tribes are a common affair.

I came to Delhi in 1986. My elder sister, now died, was already settled in Najafgarh with her husband who is a daily wager. I stayed few months with my sister and worked as a daily wager with a private builder. My husband was also a daily wager with me in the same company. One day, an engineer who used to work with my employer asked me to work in his house and take care of the family since his wife was an assistant-professor in the college of University of Delhi, now they have shifted to Gurugram. After three days, I was introduced to neighborer who also wanted my services as a maid. So I also agreed to work in both the house. I started my first job as maid in Munirka Vihar and used to get Rs 1500 from each of the family in 1987. My husband and I moved from Nazafgarh to Kusumpur Pahari and rented a Kholi at monthly Rs 500 rent. My husband also got a salesman job at a book shop at Bersarai and started earning Rs 2500/pm. We had two boys at Kusumpur Pahari. Both are graduates. One elder son has done Hair Saloon course and now earning Rs 25,000/- pm in Kerala. And younger one is working in a computer shop earning Rs 18,000/- pm.

After struggling for almost 30 years I was able to own a two bed room set in Kusumpur Pahari. Now I have television set, washing machine, a cooler at my home. I also brought my brother’s children to Delhi and put them to work. They all are leaving with us and contribute financially to the house. My elder son is engaged to a Christian Nurse from Jharkhand who is currently working in a hospital in Delhi and earning Rs 22,000/pm. I still work in three flats and the owners are very nice people who help me whenever I need. I never felt any caste or class discrimination in their houses. I won their trust and now they treat me as a family member. We

celebrate all festivals such as Diwali, Rakhi, Dusshera. Generally, I work for seven days but on special occasion or emergency I take leave with permission from the house owners. On the eve of Christmas, we celebrate with all the members and relatives of the family and exchange gifts. My husband throws a lavish party to his friends and relatives on Christmas.

I do not belong to any political party since I do not have time to undertake such activities. During election time leaders and workers from all political parties visit Kusumpur Pahari and seek our votes. They also offer us money and gift such as clothes, blankets, liquor etc. We all have our voter ID cards, Pan Numbers, Aadhar Cards etc. I also operate Bank Account. I can sign my cheque book. I procure essential commodities from the Fair Price Shop but the quality is very poor. Our electric bill is very low. Water is supplied by the tankers in the Kusumpur Pahari. There are several slum development and welfare schemes of the government but the officials take bribe to release that amount otherwise they make our life hell by demanding a ton of documents which are sometime not even relevant and necessary. The life is not easy in Delhi. The prices of essential commodities are soaring day by day. It is very difficult to meet both ends. I am satisfied over my social and economic achievements. I bought a small piece of a land back in Jharkhand. My relatives are taking care of my land.

Interview-Appendix-II

Name of the Respondent : Rani(37years)
Venue : Kusumpur Pahari
Number of Family Members : 03
Occupation of the husband : Driver

My father was working at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI), New Delhi as a sweeper. I belong to a very poor family from the Valmiki community. I am forty year old lady. I came from Jind, Haryana in 1980 and married in Delhi and since then I have been living in Kusumpur Pahari. We have one kitchen and one room *Kholi* (Place). I am a housewife. My husband is a driver. His monthly income is Rs 10,000/-. We have 18 year old son who is studying in a government school. Education is the key to success. I wanted my son to go for higher studies. His upward mobility depends upon good education. I am seeking help from my educated relatives to teach him English. The education standard of the government school is very low. Contractual teachers teaching in government schools are hardly well –educated. Not only this, they are also not serious about the future of the poor children.

I wanted to do a job but due to my son`s schooling I could not. Now my son is grown up and I am thinking of doing some job. It is very difficult to run the family with one person salary. Despite Delhi`s government promises to make regular supply of water to Kusumpur Pahari, no concrete steps have been initiated till date. Government officials come and assess the situation but later on nothing happens. Water supply is a major problem. Half of the day goes to take the water from water tanker. Sometimes, I get so much tired. Life in a slum like Kusumpur Pahari is very difficult particularly during the rainy season. Regular electric outage in Kusumpur Pahari makes life more uncomfortable. The life is miserable in a slum. See, everywhere mud on the alleys. The politicians come during elections and make tall promises and get our valuable votes.

We get subsidized ration but now a days the government of Delhi has stopped supplying sugar to the Fair shops. The quantity of the ration per family in a month is meagre. We cannot survive hence we need to buy essential things from a private shopkeeper. I do not have bank account since I do not have money to keep in it. There is no use for Pardhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana(PMJDY) for a poor female like me. What is the fun of opening up bank account with zero balance?

Interview -Appendix III

Name of the Respondent : Sanjan Devi(35 Years)
Venue : Kusumpur Pahari
Number of Family Members : 04
Occupation of the husband : Sweeper in a Private Firm

I came to Delhi with my husband and started living in Kusumpur Pahari, South Delhi. I am a thirty seven year old female. My husband has been working as a sweeper in a private firm and drawing Rs 12,000/- per month. I was also working with my husband but had to discontinue due to back-pain. We have two sons- elder 12 year old and younger 09 year old. Both were studying in a government school but the teacher had struck off their name by alleging that they broke the windows of the school. The teacher wanted him to pay but we did not have that much money with us. It was a great shock to our family. Their academic career has been spoiled by a stroke of a pen. Our hopes were dashed down by the teacher. They have only the option to work and earn some money for the family.

The income of my husband is not sufficient to meet the family needs. The prices of essential commodities are soaring day by day. I also want to work now. In Delhi, one needs a solid social reference to get work. I have spoken to many people but no response till date.

My 68 year old mother-in-law has one kidney. She is a sugar patient. She needs personal care. I need to take her to the government hospital in absence of my husband. As you know the condition of government hospitals are worse in Delhi. Sometimes, I have to wait for the whole day in a long queue to get medicine. As usual most of time, medicine is not available in the hospital so I need to buy from a private chemist. I opened up a Bank account under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) with zero balance but it has no use for me since I do not have extra money to save.

The life is miserable in a slum. Water supply is a major problem in Kusumpur Pahari. There is no fix time for water tankers. During the elections time, Kejriwal government made promises to lay down water pipes in Kusumpur Pahari and shall supply regular water like authorised colonies. But such false promises were simply to get votes from us. We do not have any social or political association which can raise the issues of civic amenities at the government level. We get subsidized ration but now a days the government of Delhi has stopped supplying sugar to the Fair shops. The quantity of the ration per family in a month is meagre. We cannot survive hence we need to buy essential things from a private shopkeeper.

Conclusion

Migration from a village to a city is always beneficial for the marginalised sections of the society. Migration to an urban settings offer myriad opportunities for the working labour class. Challenges and prospects go side by side in an alien environment. Semi-illiterate women face social and economic problems in an alien environment of the urban settings when they do not have extra hand to help them to cope up with the pressures of the urban city. The struggle is painful and exhaustive for such women in the urban cities. Employment opportunities available in the urban cities strengthen their economic position thereby they can afford the luxuries of life. Their strong economic position also helps them to send their children to the best schools and make them skilled to gain high-end jobs. Caste discrimination is quite prevalent in the villages of India. Back in their village semi-illiterate women face caste discrimination at the hands of the village Chief and Sarpanch. In general, people detest lower castes in the village. But in the city a very few face social discrimination at the hands of the owners, landlords. It has been observed that social discrimination vanishes into thin air when a maid servant gains the trust of the house lady. Although the government of Delhi is offering assistance in the shape of subsidized food

material to the marginalised sections of the society yet the quantity of assistance is always meagre. Corruption is the colossal obstacle in the path of these women who want to have all necessary legal documents that would assist them to make access to the welfare schemes of the government. Migration of semi-illiterate women to the cities in search of better economic opportunities can prove more beneficial if the agencies and departments of the government working for their welfare and remove bureaucratic hurdles.

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