



MALE OUT-MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL WOMEN: A STUDY IN COOCH BEHAR, WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Despite the wide research on the impression of migration, slight is known about the impact of the male short term or seasonal out migration on rural females. This study aims to find out migration affects the status of women directly or indirectly. In the rural areas, male partner migration puts extra physical as well as mental pressure on the women. This study also attempts to measure decision making power, empowerment of women, workload and family burden and freedom of choice in families which have unexpectedly move. Migration is a strategy for rural people to securing livelihood and escape from rural poverty. Long term and frequent absence of male members are effects on women's life and change their role. This study shows that male out-migration generated some significant impact on women's premises; they are performing male specific activities and push to veil her loneliness.

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is the process of shifting from a place of residence to destination. People migrate from rural to urban areas mainly due to poverty, unemployment, high population pressure on the land and lack of infrastructural facilities. Beaujeu-Garnier (1966, p. 212), and Smith (1960, p. 419) properly mentioned that area from which people out-migrate, the area which they in-migrate and the migrants themselves never remain the same. Lee (1966, p. 49) remarked migration as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence without distance restrictions. Periodic or impermanent migration is further effective livelihood strategies, accepted among the impoverished group in rural India, pre-dominantly in the form of seasonal mobility of labor (Bremman, 1978; Rao and Rana, 1997). Economic motives constitute the most vital factor that decisively affects the nature of population movement. The obsessed economic conditions in an area produce desire of out-migration. M.S.A. Rao (1986) considered that migrant's laborers support to raise their household's standard of living. E.S. Lee (1966) forwarded migration is selective. Not all people can move. Suchlike rural males are involved in out migration for employment.

Ben Rogaly (mar, 1998) considered Children's Primary education is diminished when they travel with their migrant-parents. Migrant Women's are reports about sexual oppressed from employer, contractor and male migrant workers (Banerjee, 1989-90). It is generally believed that the leave behind female members (wife) take a vital role to household survive in the absence male partners. Migration hold the possibility to change social norms into a society that mean how women take part in agriculture, social groups, household decision making, and so on. Some researcher generalized that men's absence from home and asymmetrical remittances develop situations for fostering women's autonomy, self-esteem and role expansion (Desai and Banerjee, 2008). Madhu Nagla studied in Rohatak city and find out migration as the major reason for female headship as their husband absence. Few research studies remarked male's migration enhance autonomy, liberty and decision-making ability of their wives (Yabiku, Agadjanian, and Sevoyan, 2010). Leave behind wives starting interaction with various people, as like bank, school, and various organizations (Abadan-Unat, 1997). Male migration generates new influence for females, she starting deals with money, goods, ideas, attitude, and behavior etc. (Hugo, 2000). Banerjee, (2000) argue, women from nuclear family experienced migration is differently from joint families.

Bibhutibushan Bandyopadhyay's, (1929) great Bengali novel Patherpachali dealt with the Hindu patriarchal ritualistic traditions and its effect on ordinary women. It shed light on harsh reality of poverty and living a family without presence of husband. The characters Durga and Sarbajaya's struggle for securing household tell us the history of impact of male out-migration on left behind women. The extremely powerful character Sarbajaya take care alone of her son and daughter after her husband migration to Kashi for employment. She may be vulnerable but she hides it well. Women's feels emotional and psychological support less without presence of their husband and nuclear family's women are more independent in case of decision making. The study focuses on two villages of Coochbehar district of West Bengal. West Bengal's hold a long history of migration, as per 2011 census total migrants are 33.35 million and 20.4 million migrants are belonging to rural area. Census data is not enough and inadequate to know about the seasonal and temporary migration. In the districts most available jobs in agriculture are combined with low and hectic earnings, impoverished surety and health conditions, gender inequality in wages and work opportunities. Due to limited access to training, financial and extension services and less technological facilities may be narrow in the area. For this reason, a portion of rural male frequently move out for income generation. An amount of migration duration linked to agricultural calendars and some important religious festivals. The regions migration run towards different state of Indian main territory, like Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamilnadu, some north eastern state is Assam, Sikkim and small independent territory like Bhutan and Nepal.

Coochbehar district comes under Terai zone and almost 85-90% of the total population depends on agriculture. Average size of holding 0.82 Ha (during 2009-10) and principal crop is paddy (Aman) but several obstacles in agriculture like poor soil status, acidity, lack of irrigation facilities and less production output is a responsible factor behind the migration of male worker. At the regional language (Rajbanshi) migrant male are called 'Boidesha' and regional folk music Vaoyaa songs describe about the loneliness and filings of wives by lyrics. Example, O ki O Bondhu kajol Bromora re, kon din asiben Bondhu koyajan koyajan re. Jodi Bondhu jaibarchan, gharergamcha thuyaajan re.... Lyrics written by Kobi (poet) Jasim Uddin ("Oh, dear! O my friend, the wanderer. When will you be back? Do tell me my friend. Leave if you must, my friend, but do leave me a memento.")

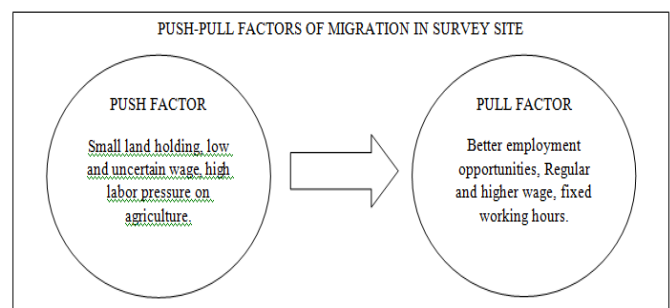
MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper's primary intention was too remarked about the impact of male's absence on women's life. The study portrays on a sudden change in their domestic barrier and shed the light on women empowerment, decision making power, capabilities and her loneliness which she hides carefully. The qualitative case study conducted in a north eastern district Coochbehar in West Bengal because of employment scarcity and less diversity leads male labor out migration vigorously. Two villages were selected from Mekliganj block. Mekliganj is located in western part of Coochbehar and geo-politically hold a peculiar location surrounding Bangladesh border. The samples size 40 were selected and that was collected from two sample villages in one block. Sample households were categorized into migrant's household and non-migrant household. Purposive sampling method was used to select

villages and snowball sampling method also used to select sample house hold from each village. Primary data was gathered through schedule by face to face interview with female respondents and secondary data also used. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used to complete the whole study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Socio-economic profile: The flow of migration is a cause and consequences of economy and opportunities of the society. Survey site migration was an alternative strategy to ensure better quality of life and standard of living. They were not extreme poor and most of them have operational land. Despite this they were chose to migration because it was a strategy to them for generate a fixed capital and improve their quality of life.



Profile of the Respondents: Table-1 it has been found that the profile of the respondent females from both migrants and non-migrant families. Age was considered important factors in that situation. Youth spouse always wanted to go with her husband and they were lessed pensive in relation to household. Survey site 15% migrant and 10% non-migrant family's women's age was below 20 years and 40% migrant respondents age was between 31 to 40 years. 40% non-migrant and 20% migrant respondent's age was above 40 years. 50% and 40% migrant and non-migrant respondents were illiterate and only 10% migrant and 20% non-migrant household respondents' qualification was above higher secondary. Non-migrant household respondent's literacy rate and educational background was as good as migrant respondent. Respondents occupational status was a determinant factor behind male out-migration. Survey site only house wife (in a pure homemaker) was very rare they were more or less involved in own agricultural work. Few cases respondent claimed before husband's migration she was only a house wife but after her husband's absence she faced various financial obstacles that's why she started work for income. Table-1 survey data demonstrated 30% and 60% migrants and non-migrant household respondents were house wife and 40%, 20% migrant and non-migrant household respondent was agriculture labor. 10% migrant household respondent work as a tea labor and only 10 percentages of them was engaged in others work.

Monthly income, expenditure and poverty status: Table-2 exhibits the monthly income of the migrant and non-migrant household. 20% migrant and 10% non-migrant households' monthly income was below 5 thousand and 40% migrant and 35% non-migrant household's monthly income ranging between 5 to 10 thousand.

Table 1. Education and Occupation

Migrant household				Non-migrant household							
Age	Education	Occupation		Age	Education	Occupation					
Below 20	15%	Illiterate	50%	House wife	30%	Below 20	10%	Illiterate	40%	House wife	60%
20 -30	25%	Elementary	20%	Agriculture labor	40%	20 -30	30%	Elementary	30%	Agriculture labor	20%
31 – 40	40%	Secondary	20%	Tea labor	10%	31 – 40	20%	Secondary	10%	Tea labor	10%
Above 40	20%	Higher	10%	Others	20%	Above 40	40%	Higher	20%	Others	10%

Source: survey data, note: migrant household means husband was move from home for employment. Non migrant household refers bread earner (male partner) was live with family.

Table 2. Income status

Monthly income	Migrant household		Non-migrant-household	
Below 5000	4	20%	2	10%
5000- 10,000	8	40%	7	35%
11,000 – 20,000	5	25%	7	35%
Above 20,000	3	15%	4	20%

Source: survey data

Table 3. Duration of Migration

Duration	Migrants (percentage)
Below 6 months	30%
6 to 1year	50%
Above 1 year	20%

Source: survey data

Table 4. Work type

Work type	Migrants (percentage)
Construction labor	40%
Mason	20%
Carpenter	20%
Electrician	10%
Others	10%

Source: survey data

Table-2 shows 25%, 35% migrant and non-migrant households monthly income ranging between above 10 thousand but below 20 thousand and only 15%, 20% migrant and non-migrant households' income was above 20 thousand. Non-migrant families held large size of operational land and some of them have tea garden and other subsidiary source of income, which ensured higher income. After out migration some families were raised their monthly income. Few migrant families' monthly expenditure was high, so only migrant bread earner's income was not sufficient to fulfill children educational and extra desire. That's why female partner started income generating works to support her male partner and family. Family expenditure is depending on family size and desire to consumption. Few joint non-migrant and migrant households claimed their high expenditure. Food, health and education was the main area of expenditure. Small size of operational land was main cause which enlarged the list of food expenditure claimed by migrant households.

Migrant's information

Status before migration: Low and uncertain wage was the principle cause behind their out-migration. 30% migrant male was engaged at their locality as a daily wage based daily labor and agricultural worker but work scarcity and seasonal demand of agriculture labor with low wage push them to others state. Survey site 40% male was worked their own agricultural land but high cost of input and low output pushes them. Some percentage migrant was school dropout, after drop schooling they are decided to go out site and earning income. Few migrant workers were committed same profession but low wage and scarcity of work on the basis of demand push them others state. Respondents claimed 100 days work's man days and wage is too minimum to survive.

Duration and Destination: Duration refers how much time they spent at work place within one trip. Duration depends on distance, family type and marital status. Few migrants work in Bhutan and Assam, they are often come home but those migrant work in Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu, they are spent more than 6 month or more than a year. Unmarried young migrant spent large time period than newly married husband. Joint and nuclear family determined migration duration. Table-3 display 30% migrant spent below 6 month and only 20% migrant spent above 1 year. Survey site, 50% migrant spent period is 6 months to one year.

Nature of work and wage: Respondents were wife or mother of migrant's labor, so they have very less idea about nature of work and work place environment, quality of work. Few respondents have exact information about daily wage but they claimed wage was much higher than locality. Table-4 exhibits 40% migrants are working as a construction labor and their wage is 400 Rs. Per day and opportunities to overtime work, which ensure extra daily income. Data display 20% mason and 20% carpenter and another 20% are electrician and others worker.

Impact on women

Decision making: Migrated people's wife has been remarked, Freedom of decision making and autonomy in regard of decision making was little bit increased day by day. Husbands are living with the women or living in another state women do not gain more freedom and autonomy as long as they living as an extended family (Desai, Banerjee, 2008). Absence of male partner women were taking different type of decisions. Nuclear family's women gain more decision-

making autonomy than joint family's women. Nuclear family's women take own decision but joint family's women were dependent on husbands' parents or other family members. Non-migrant respondents claimed that they are dependent on husband, parents and others. Few non-migrant women took various household decisions in presence of husband.

Household welfare decision: Most of the migrant family's women took household welfare decision but important decisions were taken by husband. Non-migrant respondent state that before taking decision husband consult with her and two joint non-migrant family's respondents assert household welfare decisions were taken at the presence of all-important adult family members.

Agricultural decision: In between two study village one is Rajbanshi (native people) and another is Bhatia (immigrant from East Bengal) majoritarian area. Rajbanshi households have more operational land than Bhatia and Rajbanshi women were more efficient in agriculture field. Migrant Rajbanshi respondent have some knowledge about agriculture and 40% of them take agricultural decision, like labor's payment, input purchasing, thinning, storage and selling the crop. But they have very less idea about production and market price. Survey site 80% non-migrant household women doesn't take any agricultural decision. Female headed non-migrant family's women was efficient to take agricultural decision.

Decision about food preparation: Food preparation is considering a principal duty of Indian rural women under our patriarchal society. Survey sites 90% migrant household women took own decision but when husband returned back, they asked husband in Bengali.... "Ajke Ki Khabe?" rest 10% take order from mother in law or father in law, sometime children suggest menu.

Financial decision fixes up: Male partner send money to wife or his mother (10%). Migrant house hold's female respondent took almost all short run financial decision. Two left behind women took loan from SHG without husband's permission. One woman lending money on the basis of monthly interest (interest rate is monthly 10%). 60% respondent women claimed that they take financial decision but important financial decision was taking by her husband. Non-migrant house wife assert that money or cash related decision were took by husband but few (20%) of them demanded they took financial decision. In my observation migrant house holds' women were more financially empower and independent than non-migrant family's housewife.

Children's care: Children care is too much complex without presence of male partner in a nuclear type family. 3 migrant household respondents claimed that they were faced problem of children illness occurrence and that particular moment they forget what should they did? They take help from their neighbor and relatives. Joint family's female get advantage in case of children care. 50% migrant household respondent claimed that children education was affected by father's absence. Illiterate migrant family's children were vastly affected by this problem. One respondent mother considered; she sends her one son at her maternal house. More than one child care is too difficult for single women. But almost all of the rural families have more than one child and they were victim of inadequate parental care. Elder brother and sister played a role as a guardian and care taker for younger siblings.

Neonatal death: a case study

One migrant household respondent claims her husband was worked in Kerala as a construction labor. Her newborn baby was death within 24 hours of birth. Absence of husband was possibly a reason behind lack of antenatal care.

Taking care of livestock and arrange fuel for cooking: Survey site 60% migrant household have cattle. Women's is care taker of them. 70% female whose have cattle they take care their livestock. But only 30% non-migrant women taking care their livestock when male member is gone outside from the home. 20% migrant household respondent arranges grass and crop leaf for animal feeding and few of them prepared dung cake for cooking. Migrant's wife arranges fuel for cooking. 70% respondent use wood as a source of fuel for cooking and rest 30% have LPG. 50% migrant household respondent claims that they are arrange or buying wood and collect crop waste or prepare dung cake for cooking. But non-migrant family head (male member) do this, only 15% of them female arrange wood and refill LPG.

Perception and sensation of left behind women

Income generating activity: Women's claimed that they were actively participated at income generating activity. 70% migrant and 40% non- migrant respondent worked as an alternative income earner of her family.

Agriculture labor: Survey site 40% migrant's wife was working as an agricultural labor in their own farms or others land and 10% migrant household respondent working at others sector. Survey site I was observed gender wise inequality of payment. Women's are involved in transplanting, hoeing, threshing, thinning, packing and storage type of work. They have no idea about the right of equal remuneration. Male labor out-migration produces seasonal demand of agriculture labor. In agriculture female's activity is limited, soil preparation, spray medicine and loading and unloading is male specific work. Women's have very less knowledge about fertilizer and others output, its effect on production.

Tea labor: In study area 20% migrant household respondent engaged as a tea labor and her wage was 130 Rs. Per day. One respondent has 2 bigha size own tea garden. She nourished that garden with her children's (two sons, one daughter) help.

Communication: Respondent women says communication with husband is awfully demoted. Mobile phone was considered only source to communicate with husband. Few women claimed they were unattainable to use mobile phone properly. They only know how to receive an incoming call but at the time of outgoing they dependent on kids or others. Migrant member calls them daily or weekly basis.

Purchasing power: Survey site women's have very low purchasing power. They purchased cloths for kids and own purpose at the moment of Durga puja or some important occasions. Migrant household respondent demanded that they purchased grocery, kitchen items, utensil and other goods. They were collected goods from PDS center and vegetables item also buying from market. Few women's have power to purchased agricultural input and costly item. Nuclear family

respondent enjoys more power in this consideration. Non-migrant households' females have less purchasing power than migrant household's female. Purchasing power of women's passively assuring freedom of choice and a step towards empowerment of women. Few migrant respondent women say they go urban market to purchase important item.

Community participation: Rural women's participation and leadership in community is significant for rural development. Survey site women were participated in SHG meeting and festival or occasions organized at locality. Male absence negatively or positively impacted on women's participation in community. Few migrant respondent claims after husband migration they are rarely participate in any kind of community meeting. Study area most of the leader was belonged from non-migrant family, they get more male support to achieve a position in society or community.

Workload shifting: Migration of male member put on extra work load on women. Nuclear family women were highly affected by this kind of work burden shifting problem. Joint family respondent claims that they were operate only female specific work, other family member also help them to complete her work. Migrant respondent say before migration her husband help them, household work, caring livestock, supporting children education but after migration she took responsibility to complete extra household or female specific works, like- marketing, payment bill or installment, agriculture related burden etc. in case of joint family male migrant workload or responsibilities shifts to other male family member. Few migrant respondents claim she arranged feed for cattle's and fuel for cooking.

Social obligation: Migrant labor's wife (respondent) feels more social obligation after husband migration. In empirical study consider nuclear family women and income generating (financially empower) women less dependent on society in case of obedience. Non-migrant joint family respondent is dependent on parent in law or other family members subordinate. Patriarchal male dominated society always try to rule on women's, that's why women are still bounded by the door of obligation. In Bengali. ... "Amuker Bou (wife) Aka Aka kothay ji ki j kore.... Swami (husband) barite na thakle ja hoy."

Emotion: loneliness: Male out-migration is emotionally and psychologically effect on women life. They are always worried about her male partner's health condition. 90% migrant household respondent feels unhappy and lonely without presence of her male member. 10% women feel happy with absence of male member because they were jobless and alcoholic at home but after migration, they send money and hold a good working position at migration site. Nuclear family respondent claims more loneliness than joint family respondent. Table-5 data display opinion of the respondents regarding loneliness feeling. 60% migrant respondents feel extremely lonely and 30% respondent feel lonely. 10% respondent does not give any opinion in this regard.

Table 5.

Opinion	Percentages of respondent
Extremely lonely	60%
Lonely	30%
No opinion	10%

Source: survey data

Depend on neighbor and relatives: Male member migration was geared up the dependency on neighbor and relatives. When communication with husband was not possible, they called relatives to gather information about migrant. Few respondents say they were taking financial help and mental support from neighbors and relatives. Survey site 80% respondent claim they were dependent on neighbor and relative but 20% say most of the neighbor and relative wanted to take advantage of the situation, that's why they are try to avoid them. At the time of financial crisis and illness of children or respondent, neighbor and relative support her family.

Impact on aging women

Migrant's wife and mother's relationship was not good in so many cases. Migrant son does not send money separately for his mother's personal expense. Old women argue that her daughter in law takes all household decision and don't think about her treatment. Few aging women's situation is pathetic and more vulnerable.

Conclusion

Male out-migration support women to makes her social and economic front position but enhance workload. Male absence also hampers children education and parental guidance. Women's get autonomy but suffer with insecurity. Male migration generates a relationship obstacles or diversion between husband and wife. Women's become more empowered in decision making with enhancing domestic responsibilities. Male out-migration generates an opportunity for women to local labor market. Male absence brought several changes in women's life. Women's are employed in various incomes generating work to support her family and promote living standard. Male out-migration blends dynamism of women's ordinary life. But at the end of the day they perceive solitude or aloneness without upholding hand.

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