

*Research Paper :*

## **Impact of migration on women working as household maids in Jaipur city**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Migration of women along with men in search of employment has great influence on their lives. The present study was conducted in Jaipur city on migrated women who were working as household maids. The objective was to study the perceived impact of migration on their lives. Semi-structured interview schedule was used for data collection. The results were analyzed on the basis of comparison made regarding the perception of women before and after migration about selected parameters. The results showed a mixed impact of migration on their lives.

**Key words :** Women migration, Household maids, Impact of migration

Migration is an age old phenomenon. Internal migration of men from rural to urban areas has been prevalent through the ages. Adverse living conditions in rural areas and the search for employment have been the main reasons for driving thousands of people towards cities. However, of late, a major change in the migration pattern has been that the women have accompanied the men in their march towards the cities. Due to revolution in the area of transportation and communication the migration has become much easier than before. Literature on migration has only recently given appropriate recognition to the gender perspective of migration (Siddique, 2003). Blumberg (1991) suggests that women migrate for two reasons, for either greater empowerment or to increase economic opportunities. Rural areas of India are often more traditional culturally and women's levels of empowerment is lower in these areas than in urban areas. Therefore, a movement can be explained as based on a desire to increase their independence and power that would not be able to achieve in the rural areas.

Women are considered to be the custodian of family. When they accompany the men in migration, it has manifold consequences. They face a number of challenges at different stages of migration. Often, the young children accompany their mothers.

Of late, Jaipur city has become a popular destination of migratory population as it is developing at very fast pace and is well connected to almost all the big cities of the country. It is also offering employment opportunities not only to men but also to women. As men get employment in various skilled and semi-skilled jobs, the women find it most easy to work as household maids.

The present paper is an attempt to study the various

facets of migrated women working as household maids in Jaipur city.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out in Jaipur city which is the capital of Rajasthan. It is situated amidst Aravali hill ranges which girdle the city from three sides. It is directly linked with several big cities in and out of Rajasthan. Climatically, Jaipur is in sub-arid zone of India. Its main characteristics are high temperature, low rainfall and low relative humidity, which are good for health. Jaipur city is famous for its beauty and grandeur. Its tourist attraction and historical past are well known. Jaipur has been coming up as a major centre of trade, education, pilgrimage, industrial growth and state administrative machinery and attracting migration in a big way.

A two-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample. At the first stage, the area of the study was selected while at the second stage, the respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Only those household maids who had migrated to Jaipur were included for the study. A total of 77 household maids constituted the sample for the study.

A self constructed semi-structured interview schedule was used for the data collection, which was validated and pre-tested in advance. The test-retest method was applied to determine the reliability of the tool. The reliability co-efficient was found to be 0.75. Face to face interviews were held with individual respondents for data collection. The data were analyzed through frequency distribution, percentages and rank orders. While interpreting the data, observations made during the data collection were also incorporated.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the present investigation are presented below:

### **Background profile of the respondents:**

All the women working as household maids migrated from rural areas and from outside Rajasthan. All of them were from Cooch Bihar in Eastern India. Interestingly, the late Rajmata of Jaipur dynasty Maharani Gayatri Devi was a Princess of Cooch Bihar. If there is any psychological and emotional connection between these two facts or not, it is yet to be proved through further research. All of them migrated for marriage or with the family and no one had migrated independently for work. The majority of respondents were uneducated, married young adults. About half of them (48 per cent) belonged to the age group of 26-35 years. Nearly one-third (37.7 per cent) were in the age group of 15-25 years and the remaining were above 35 years of age. Among them, nearly three fourths (72.7 per cent) were married and an equal percentage was of unmarried and widowed women (11.7 per cent each). The remaining women were separated and divorced. Nearly all (93.5 per cent) were illiterate.

The nature of ownership of land has far reaching consequences in migration. The data regarding the possession of land holdings at their native place show that respondents possessed very small land holding and pressure of dependent members on it was high. Out of the total respondents, only 60 per cent had land at their native places and the size of land holdings was 1-2 *Bigha* in case of nine out of ten respondents. Out of those who possessed land, just over a half (52 per cent) had 6-10 dependent members on the land. Over four fifth of the respondents (81 per cent) revealed that in their absence, care of land would be taken by in-laws.

### **Period of migration:**

Slightly less than half (48 per cent) of the women working as household maids migrated in the last 5 years and more than a quarter (29 per cent) in the last 10 years. Getting a job at a new place is not easy. Being an outsider amidst local people, they are often seen with mistrust and suspicion. The media reports, which are being reported very often, regarding the misdeeds of servants working in households, work against them. Three fourth of the women (77 per cent) got work through relatives who migrated before them and the remaining got work either through friends or by their own efforts.

### **Impact of migration:**

Migration to the cities from rural areas has been

known to exert its influence on the lives of the migrants. While migrant women sell their domestic labour in the market they remain burdened with gender responsibilities in their own families. In the present study, the perceived impact of migration on the lives of household maids was studied and the results are summarized as follows:

- Migration had increased the trend towards nuclear families. Prior to migration, nearly one third of the respondents came from nuclear families. After migration nine out of ten were residing as nuclear families. The women after migration may find themselves in living in nuclear families than extended family households, providing important economic inputs to their family income and making key economic decisions about themselves and their families.

- Migration had led to employment away from agriculture. Before migration, three fourth of them were engaged in agriculture while none was so engaged after migration. There was remarkable improvement in the family incomes after migration. While less than a third had monthly family income of Rs 5,000 and above prior to migration, a large percentage (83 per cent) reported the same after migration.

- The data suggest that there was significant improvement in the housing conditions after migration. Before migration, none of the women had separate toilet and bathroom in their houses. None of the houses had electricity. Over three fourth of women were residing in *Kaccha* houses without a separate kitchen. Only 18 per cent of the houses had an independent source of water. The remaining had to fetch water from outside sources. After migration, most of the women (93 per cent) were residing in rented *Pucca* houses with separate kitchen and toilets and bathrooms. Piped water connection and electricity were also available at their houses.

- The availability of household amenities, such as furniture, gas, cooker, clock/watch, fan, radio, television, cycle and camera increased after migration in all households. During discussion, it was revealed that some of the articles were given away by their employers. However, it was found that more women were in possession of sewing machine before migration. It may be due the fact that women were working as household maids and not getting free time to do stitching of clothes at home. The detailed position is depicted in Fig 1.

- It was reported that food consumption after migration had improved. Almost all women (99 per cent) stated that they found the meals adequate in the post migration period whereas less than half (47 per cent) considered their meals adequate before migration.

- A marginal improvement in health and significant

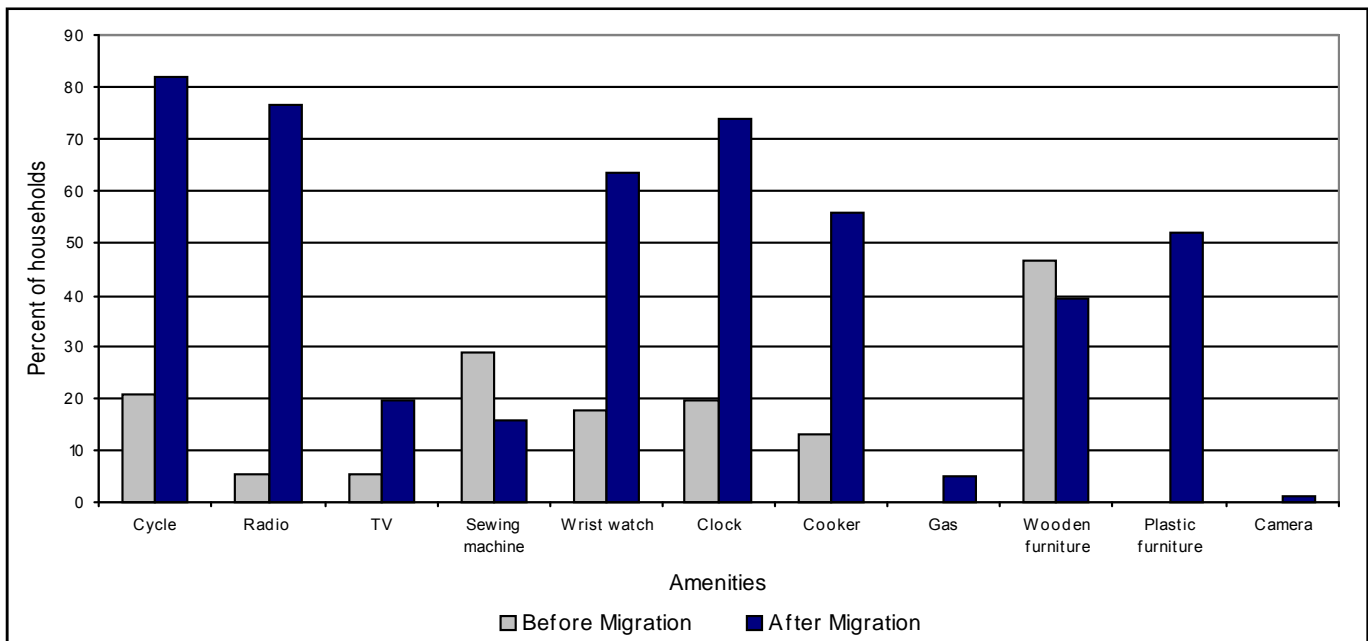


Fig. 1 : Distribution of respondents according to possession of different household amenities

improvement in access to health services was reported. Post migration, eight out of ten women visited doctors for treatment at the time of sickness against one in ten before migration. Unnithan Kumar *et al.* (2008) reported that although the range of health facilities were closer to migrated women but the poor economic circumstances restricted their access to health services.

– There was not much change in the amount of work load of women after migration but the time devoted to family was reduced. Prior to migration, the women were engaged in agriculture and working at home. It was possible to devote more time to the family. After migration, they were totally away from family while at work.

– The biggest negative impact of migration was found in the area of education of children. Nearly two third of children were attending schools before migration whereas only one third were attending schools after migration. As the children back home were studying in government schools and the medium of teaching was in vernacular language, they were unable to continue schooling after migration. Moreover, due to nuclear families, there was no one at home to persuade the children to attend school if they showed reluctance to do so. Rao (2000) also reported that the migration adversely affected the education of children and paved the way for child labor to some extent.

– The social interaction with family members and kith and kin were reduced to some extent. Before migration, three fourth of the women reported social

contact with their relatives while only 60 per cent had such contact after migration. While before migration, women reported celebrating only those festivals that were observed in their native areas, after migration they also reported celebrating other festivals. In away they also became a part of the 'Metro culture'. All of them reported that the frequency to visit native places had reduced with the passing of time.

– The status of women is closely linked to their participation in decision making. Women empowerment is determined by their participation in decision making power related to their lives and family affairs. Before migration about one tenth of respondents were taking decisions independently whereas two third started taking independent decisions after migration. The power of decision making of migrated women increased in areas such as education of children and their marriage, purchasing of household items and expenditure on food. As the women started earning independently and money was directly coming in their hands, this resulted in their empowerment.

– The migration had influenced the lives of the women to such an extent that three fourth of them did not want to go back to their native places. The main reasons were stated to be lack of work at the native place (41.4 per cent) and poverty at the native place (34.5 per cent). Attraction of the city was stated to be the reason by the remaining women.

**Conclusion :**

Although women accompanying in migration has resulted in a bouquet of benefits and losses for the family, yet there is no denying the fact that the benefits for outweigh the losses. Migration of women resulted in their empowerment as well as provision of better economic opportunities to some extent. Sanbergen (1995) also found impact of migration on women was largely positive in the sphere of day to day existence as compared to situation back home. This is clearly evident from the fact that three fourth of the migrated women working as household maids reported their unwillingness to go back to their native places. This trend is not very encouraging as it would lead to extra pressure on the existing sub-optimal facilities available in the cities.

In today's world, due to rapid transit modes and communication links, migration has become much easier than before. When women accompany the men in migration, the chances of their settling in the cities get increased. The solution of the problem lies in "PURA" suggested by our ex-President A.J Abdul Kalam, which propagates provision of urban amenities in rural areas. This would not only curb migration but also lessen the urban-rural divide. Towards this end, the Government of India has recently enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) to provide employment of 100 days per year to one member of the family in rural areas. The outcome of this initiative would be visible in the

coming years. It is yet to see that to what extent NREGA would be helpful in stopping rural-urban migration.

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