

## Changing Gender Relations and Its Influence on Female Migration Decision in India

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This paper is an attempt to understand the position of Indian women in the family and its influence on their migration decision. The migration-empowerment relation can be explained through relative measures like intra-household decision making indicators, and age and educational differences. The data for the purpose of the study has been drawn from the various rounds of NSSO and NFHS and it has been analysed at the state level due to data limitations for explanatory variables at the household level. The bi-variate findings show economic decision making related to large household purchases, decisions on mobility and spousal educational differences which exhibit a linear relation with the women's migration decision. The empirical findings suggest the women's greater involvement on own health care, spousal age and educational differences significantly influence their migration decision. This suggests that women's empowerment influences their migration decision.

*JEL Classification:* J10, J16

*Keywords:* Empowerment, Migration, Women, India, Relative Measures

### 1. INTRODUCTION

India, like the other South Asian countries, is a patriarchal society, implying that gender relations within a household are determined by patriarchy<sup>1</sup>. The persisting cultural norms and practices which strongly embody the ideology of patriarchy influence the roles, responsibilities and rights of women within a family. Thus, gender relations are unequal and it is the household that determines women's status and their role in decision making aspects. Since, migration is a function of the household decision making process, the relative status of females within the household has a significant influence on it. In this regard, Lim (1993) argues that women's economic and social position relative to men is a crucial determinant of female migration. The patriarchal model of family relations assumes that the true migrants are the males who migrate in search of their economic betterment, leaving women as merely accompanying wives of their husbands and families [Houstounand

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<sup>1</sup>“A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” [Walby (1990)].

Barrett (1984)] and hence, their actual motivations to migrate remain unexplored. Thus, despite its increasing trend over time female migration in the Indian context is largely an understudied aspect in the country's migration studies. However, recent studies on migration and gender do not agree with the assumption that women are mainly the tied movers in the migratory process [Chattopadhyaya (1997); Hiller (2007)] but in fact are independent movers in search of socio-economic betterment.

The progressive development of the country in social and economic spheres is expected to bring a degree of flexibility in patriarchal norms and influence the gender relations within the household. Such transformations enlarge the scope of women for accessing more resources and hence, bring changes in gender relations that are reflected in their decision making aspects including migration.. Studies indicate that women who are more independent, resourceful and have a say in the family decisions are more likely to migrate; thus, the act of migration itself has been described as a challenge to patriarchy [Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992, 1994)]. In this context, it is interesting to look at the intra-household dynamics and its implications for female migration. Although it has been recognised that migration by itself has an empowering impact on the gender relations, the present study seeks to highlight women's position and status within a household and their role in the migration decision making.

The main objective of this paper is to understand the relative position of women in a family and its relation to their role in migration decision making process. In other words, this paper emphasises women's empowerment (as a result of changes in gender relations) and its influence on their migration decision making.

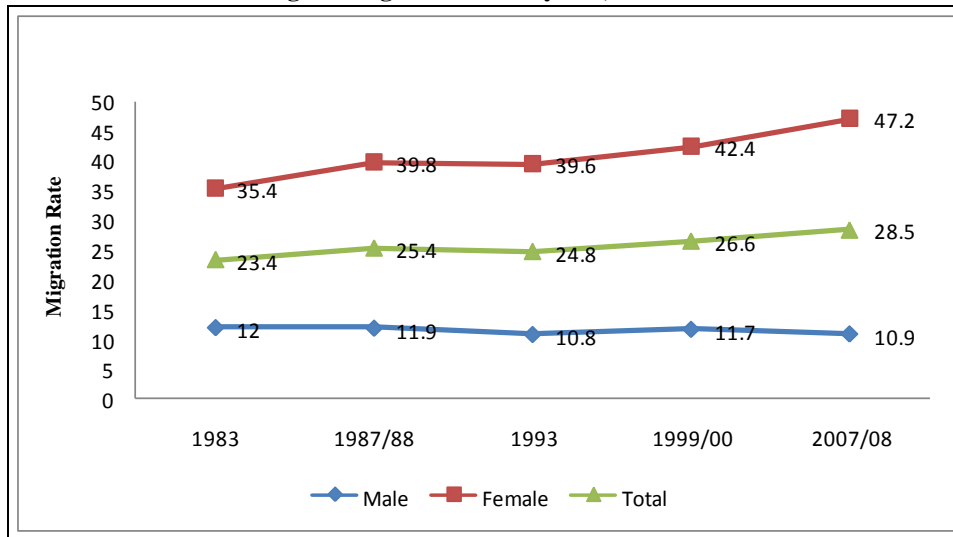
Given this objective, the rest part of the paper is organised in the following manner: The second section discusses trends in female migration, and its dynamics. Perhaps this may help understand and establish how female migration and its changing pattern can explain women empowerment. In the third section, the concept and measurement indicators of women empowerment are explained. The operationalisation of the concept of empowerment (changes in gender relation) and its relation to migration is discussed in section four. Data and methodology used are outlined in section five. The bivariate and econometric results are presented in section six. The last section discusses the summary of findings.

## **2. FEMALE MIGRATION IN INDIA: TREND, FLOW AND REASONS**

This section argues female migration apart from being an economic incentive is a response to the socio-cultural changes. In other words, this section attempts to address like other socio-economic and cultural factors, the changes in women's migration pattern explained through women empowerment.

Estimates drawn from National Sample Survey reveal a continuous increase in migration over the years especially among females. The data presented in Figure 1 depicts that migration rate increased from 23 percent in 1983 to 29 percent in 2007-08 and the increase is mainly due to the increasing share of the women. The figure clearly shows that there is a substantial increase in female mobility from 35 percent in 1983 to 47 percent in 2007-08. This is a reflection of not only increase in female migration but also the persisting gender difference in migration as well.

**Fig. 1. Migration Rate by Sex, 1983–08**



Source: Calculated from NSSO.

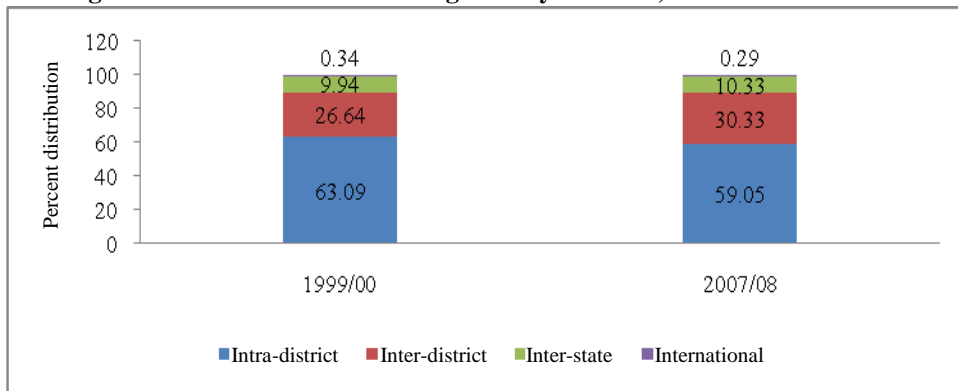
In the Indian context female migration and its increasing trend is mostly attributed to marriage and as associational mover suggesting they have no role in migration decision making. This perception is largely due to the prevailing patriarchal norms that keep a woman’s position subordinate to men with respect to various decision making aspects within a household.

Nevertheless, the socio-economic and cultural transformations that are occurring in the country affect the gender processes. Women migrate not only for marriage but also move for better employment opportunities and for attaining higher education. This can be also be an indication of changes in gender relations in the household and reduction in gender inequalities that persuade women to migrate for reasons other than marriage.

The changing flow of women from short distance to long distance or the increasing mobility of women over time for education perhaps helps in understanding that besides changes in women’s motivations, their role in migration decision making is changing.

**Flow of Female Migration by Distance**

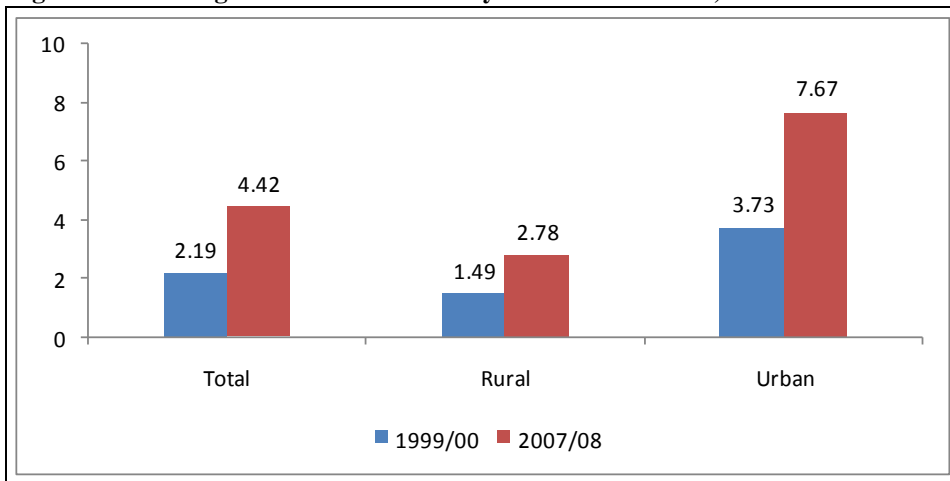
There is overwhelming evidence that internal mobility in India is largely short distance and for women it is mainly identified with marriage. Of late, this pattern is undergoing changes. (Figure 2). An inter-temporal analysis of migrants distance-wise shows a number of changes in the pattern of migration. A decrease in intra-state mobility accompanied by an increase in inter-district and inter-state movements has been observed whereas the share of intra-district migration has declined. Such a change in migration pattern, as pointed out in studies, is occurring due to the opening up of the gender segregated labour market, urbanisation, higher education, changing agricultural practices, environmental hazards etc.[Jayweera, *et al.* (1994); Gracia (2000); Sundari (2005)].

**Fig. 2. Distribution of Female Migrants by Distance, 1999-00 and 2007-08**

Source: Calculated from NSSO.

All these suggest that macro level transformation also brings changes at household level. In order to improve the livelihood conditions, and to enhance the socio-economic status in terms of acquiring higher education, to get employment etc., women decide to migrate independently or with the family. As a result they move out from rural to urban areas of the same or other districts or states.

At this juncture, the increasing mobility of women from short distance to medium or long distance also indicates that with the process of modernisation, the role and responsibilities of women have assumed new definitions and perspectives. In other words, the gender relations within household are slowly changing and are mediated through increasing participation of females in medium or long distance mobility as well. To grab the benefits of higher education and motivated by increasing employment opportunities women are increasingly taking the decision to migrate. The increasing percentage of female migration for education purposes further confirms this. Female reporting education as the major reason for migration is presented in Figure 3 by place of residence.

**Fig. 3. Female Migration for Education by Place of Residence, 1999-00 and 2007-08**

Source: Calculated from NSSO 1999-00 and 2007-08.

From Figure 3 it is clear that there is increasing percentage of female migrants seeking education irrespective of place of residence especially in urban area. For instance, for the year 1999-00 female migrating for education was 3.73 percent while in 2007-08 it increases to 7.6 percent. The increasing percentage of female migrants seeking education is observed irrespective of place of residence. The increasing mobility in recent years for education is an encouraging trend as it reflects a fair degree of supply of future skilled workers, social development and also an indication of the change in the role of women in migration process as associational movers. From this, one can also expect that the role of women in the household is also changing in response to changes in social and economic development of the society. In this connection, studies show changes in the role and status of women as a result of increased participation in formal education are a major causal factor for increased level of female migration in low developed countries [Hugo (2000)].

Earlier, women migrated due to marriage which is now slowly gravitating towards economic pursuit. Women are no longer passive movers, rather they are also actively involved in migration process for employment, education etc. In this process, the gender relations in the household are expected to undergo changes and women should be able to take their own decision for migration. Accordingly studies show that patriarchal norms are getting flexible over time in response to changes in socio-economic structures and are influencing power relations in the household [Kandiyoti (1988); Ray (2006)]. The expansion of the infrastructure like mass communication, education, economics, and healthcare services has elevated the position of women within families by increasing their access to various resources [Orepesa (1997)]. All these changes have enhanced women's ability to make their own choices in their lives and empowered them to take strategic decisions with respect to household matters including migration. In other words, women empowerment at the household level also gives women a say in the matter of migration decision for reasons other than marriage. Hence, it is significant to understand how women's empowerment acts as a significant predictor of female migration.

The following section deals with conceptualisation of empowerment, measurement indicators and their relation to migration.

### **3. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, MEASUREMENT INDICATORS AND THEIR RELATION TO MIGRATION**

Changes in gender relations within the household are analysed in this study through conceptualisation of the empowerment of women. Women's empowerment is a multi-dimensional process and defined differently in literature. Given the challenging nature of the concept, women empowerment in the present paper is conceptualised in terms of their active involvement in decision making in the domestic sphere. Women empowerment in the context of household dynamics can be defined as "the power of females to make as well as participate positively in the decision making process concerning family issues". Recent studies on migration explain that decision-making on migration is more often a household strategy and hence, women empowerment and its relation to migration needs to be understood in terms of gender which plays an important role in this matter. Given the patriarchal structure, it can be presumed that most of the household decisions are a prerogative of men, and hence, prevent women from participating in the household decision making process. Conversely, with social and economic changes, the patriarchal attitudes are also transforming favourably towards the women folk. Therefore, it can be expected that

women over time have become more empowered to have a say in household related decision making including migration. To examine the relationship between empowerment and migration, it is necessary to explain the indicators that measure empowerment and how they are operationalised in the present context.

To capture the different nuances of empowerment, a variety of indicators are identified in the literature. These indicators tend to fall under two broad sets of measures: Absolute and Relative. The absolute resources possessed by women such as education, employment etc., are significant drivers of empowerment as pointed out by many studies [Dighe (1998), Oropesa (1997); UNFPA (2005); Sharma (1983); England (2000)].

On the contrary, in recent years, it has been widely discussed that the relative status of women in the household plays a critical role in bringing about their empowerment. The human capital endowments do not always enhance women's empowerment until and unless they utilise the resources they possess for their own well being [Vijayalakshmi (1997); Balk (1997); Malhotra and Mather (1997); Malhotra (2003)]. Hence, there has been a shift in demographic studies from absolute measures to relative measures of empowerment.

The relative position of women can be understood in terms of their participation at various levels in the household decision making process. Greater involvement of women at different levels in the household decision making process like control over income, health, child care etc., indicates a greater degree of equality in gender relations within the household and hence, reflects their empowerment [Lawrence (1999)]. At the same time, the position of women is likely to be influenced by the status of other members in the household, especially the husband. The age and educational differences between partners reflect a differential command over resources within a family. Having a partner who is much older or much better educated tends to reduce a woman's overall position in the relationship as well as diminishing her bargaining power [Wolf, *et al.* (2000)]. Besides, women's attitude towards their role and rights in the household also determines their status in the household. Women's self-perception of what they are plays a greater role in bringing about their empowerment relative to their economic independence [Sridevi (2005)].

The following section discusses the household level indicators that explain the role of women in the migration decision making process.

#### **4. OPERATIONALISATION OF EMPOWERMENT IN MIGRATION**

The migration-empowerment relationship at the household level can be explained through indicators (relative measures) that reflect women's position in the household. The indicators falling under this category represent the position of females *vis-à-vis* males within a family. All the relative measures that influence women's participation in the household decision making process are classified into two types: Intra-household decision making indicators and proximate indicators.

##### **4.1. Intra-household Decision Making Indicators**

The role of women in household decisions largely reflects the existing gender norms and power structure within a household. The decision making indicators also reflect the existence of power relations within a household. It is, therefore, possible that females having the power to participate in the decision making matters within the family

also play an important role in the migration decision. The increased role of women in the household decision-making enable them to improve their self-determination, bargaining power, control over resources, self-esteem, autonomy, status and power relations within a household context [Shahnaj, *et al.* (2004)].

Studies show that empowerment of women indicates their ability to involve in household decisions like major household purchases, their own health care, purchase of household daily necessities, and visits to family and friends [Desai, *et al.* (2005), Roy, *et al.* (2004)]. Decisions to spend one's own earning indicate not only their economic independence but also their freedom of choice [Sridevi (2005)]. Studies show that women taking decisions with respect to obtaining health care for themselves and their going and staying with parents or siblings are of strategic significance to individual women because these decisions are particular to their own specific needs [Gupta and Kishore (2004)].

Women's decision on economic matters, health care, mobility etc., implies they are able to participate in migration since they have the decision making power over other aspects of their life. Thus, it can be hypothesised here that women who are having decision making power over various household strategic matters may also play an important role in migration decision as well. In the context of migration at least, women's participation in decision making is paramount, and hence, in this study, women who take decisions autonomously or jointly with their husbands are taken into consideration rather than only those women who are the lone final decision makers.

#### **4.2. Proximate Indicators**

The proximate indicators of empowerment explain the relative status of women in a household besides acting as the determinants of direct decision making indicators. Although these indicators do not directly measure empowerment, they influence the gender role and enhance their ability to participate in household decisions. For instance, women's attitude towards wife beating shows the ability to express their opinion with regard to the existing gender inequality and discrimination against them within the household. Studies show that women justifying wife beating by husbands on certain grounds, are less empowered to participate in the household decisions [Sen and Batilwala (1997); United Nations (1995)]. Women justifying wife beating are a classic case of how social norms and values shape the conception of freedom and choice [Mishra and Tripathy (2011)]. While many women may not personally approve of such a controlling behaviour, their acceptance of it or inability to reject indicates that they are not autonomous within marital homes [Visaria (2008)]. Besides, other indicators like spousal age and education difference show the relative status of women in terms of power relations in respect of marital relationship [Dev, *et al.* (2010)]. It is often mentioned in studies that women who are married to men much older or with significant educational differences are likely to be at a greater disadvantage. A study by Sridevi (2005) on PGT teachers in Chennai, India, finds that as age advances, the chances of women getting empowered come down; however, when the educational levels are nearly equal then women empowerment tends to get strengthened.

Taking these household level decision making factors and other proximate indicators as measures of empowerment, in the present paper it is hypothesised that women having greater control over household decision making aspects are more empowered and are able to participate in migration decision-making also.

## 5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data for the purpose of the study is drawn from the National Sample Survey (NSSO) as well as National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The last two rounds of NSSO i.e., 55th (1999-00) and 64th (2007-08) as well as NFHS-II (1998-99) and NFHS-III (2005-06) have been used for the purpose of analysis. The issue of women empowerment and its implications for migration behaviour can be better understood at the household level. The National Sample Survey is the only data source which provides information on migrants at the household level. However, NSSO does not provide information on the household decision making variables which have a greater explanatory power on empowerment. Hence, the study remains handicapped by non-availability of household level data. Due to these data limitations, the explanatory variables (decision making and proximate variable of empowerment) are taken from NFHS. The analysis has had to be carried out at the state level, even though the level of aggregation is too high.

For the regression analysis, the pooled data from two time periods of NSSO (1999-00 and 2007-08) and NFHS (1998-99 and 2005-06) are taken into consideration. The dependent variable is female in-migration rate (after excluding marriage and family moved). Migration has been defined according to NSSO as a “member of the sample household if he/she had stayed continuously for at least six months or more in a place (village/town) other than the village/town where he/she was enumerated”. For the purpose of study migrated females in all streams of migration (Rural-Rural, Rural-Urban, Urban-Rural, Urban-Urban) within the country have been considered except those moving on account of marriage or family movement.

Empowerment in this study is measured on the basis of the proportion of women taking decision on their own or jointly with husband. The direct and proximate indicators of decision making are taken for the purpose of analysis. Out of a number of questions addressed in NFHS to measure empowerment of women, the most important direct indicators of women empowerment that measure the household decision making process include:

- (1) Control over money earned by women.
- (2) Decision on purchasing large household durables.
- (3) Decision regarding women's own health care.
- (4) Decision regarding visits to friends and relatives.

The other decision making indicators relate to what food to be cooked each day and what household items to be purchased. These decisions come largely under the domain of females. Therefore, in the present context, we have excluded this type of decision making indicators from the analysis. The other aforementioned indicators are crucial to determining women's empowerment.

We have considered the most commonly used proxy measures of empowerment for analysis in the present study. They include:

- (1) Attitude towards gender role (wife beating justified).
- (2) Age differences between spouses.
- (3) Educational differences between spouses.



The distribution of women in different autonomy indicators has been analysed (Presented in Appendix I and II). There are a large number of variables that are important for the analysis, but the number of states is few (32), and hence, at first, a correlation matrix has been crafted to see the relationship between female migration and the various empowerment indicators (reference Appendix-III).

On the basis of the significance of the indicators, the states are classified into high, moderate and low empowered states for each of the indicators. Similarly, the states are also classified into high, moderate and low migration states on the basis of variations in the migration rate. The ranking of the states in respect of each of the indicators as well as their migration rates are analysed (presented in Appendix-IV). It is difficult to establish a relationship between migration and empowerment on the basis of this table. Hence, the migration-empowerment relation is established by way of distributing states into (3x3) tables for each of the indicators.

In order to check the consistency of the parameters used in the two data sets, the Chow-test has been carried out. The F-value of Chow test shows that the parameters are consistent for both the time periods, and hence, a pooled OLS regression analysis by combining both the time periods is carried out. The regression model takes on the following form

$$\gamma_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \chi_{1i} + \dots + \beta_k \chi_{ki} + \mu \quad \dots \quad \dots \quad \dots \quad \dots \quad (1)$$

Where,

$\gamma_i$  explains the female migration rate (excluding marriage and family moved) at the state level.

$\chi_1 \dots \chi_k$  are the explanatory variables measuring women empowerment in terms of their migration decision making.

A description of variables used and summary statistics are presented in Appendices V.

**6. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY (FINDINGS FROM BIVARIATE AND REGRESSION RESULTS)**

To examine the potential pathways through which women’s empowerment could influence migration, a correlation analysis is carried out. The Pearson correlation coefficient( $r$ ) shows that, out of many covariates, the mean educational difference between spouses, spousal age difference, decision on mobility, large household purchases are significantly related to female migration. These indicators are used for establishing a relationship between women’s empowerment and their migration behaviour. The magnitude of average spousal age difference does not vary significantly across the states. Hence, this indicator has not been presented in Table1.

The analysis here addresses the question of whether there is a linear relationship between female migration and empowerment across the major states. If a cluster of states falls under High migration-High empowerment, Moderate migration-Moderate empowerment and low migration-low empowerment categories, then it can be said that women’s empowerment plays a major role in explaining their migration decision making. This is because of the expectation that females enjoying a high degree of empowerment

are able to participate in the migration decision making and hence, migrate at a higher rate and so on. The migration-empowerment relation for each of the indicators is explained below.

Table1

*Distribution of States by Migration Rate (Excluding Marriage and Family Moved)  
By Level of Empowerment, 2005-06 and 2007-08*

Empowerment Indicators	Empowerment ↓ Migration	→ High Empowerment(HE)	Moderate Empowerment(ME)	Low Empowerment(LE)
	Range values	(50+)	(40-50)	(<40)
<b>Decision on mobility</b>	High Migration (HM) (2.8+)	Kerala, Maharashtra (2)	AP, Karnataka, HP, Chhattisgarh (4)	0
	Moderate Migration (MM) (1.75-2.75)	Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Haryana(3)	Orissa, Punjab(2)	WB, Uttaranchal(2)
	Low Migration(LM) (1.75)	Jharkhand(1)	Bihar(1)	Rajasthan, MP,UP, J&K (4)
<b>Spousal educational difference</b>	Range values	(<2.5)	(2.5-3.5)	(3.5+)
	High Migration(HM) (2.8+)	Kerala, Karnataka, AP, Maharashtra(4)	HP(1)	Chhattisgarh(1)
	Moderate Migration (MM) (1.75-2.75)	Tamil Nadu, Punjab(2)	WB, Uttaranchal, Orissa, Gujarat, Haryana(5)	0
	Low Migration(LM) (1.75)	0	MP(1)	Rajasthan,UP,Bihar, J&K,Jharkhand(4)
<b>Large HH purchase</b>		(<4.25)	4.25-7.0	7 & above
	High Migration(HM) (2.8+)	Kerala, AP, Karnataka (3)	HP (1)	Maharashtra,Chattisgarh (2)
	Moderate Migration (MM) (1.75-2.75)	Tamil Nadu, WB(2)	Orissa, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttaranchal (4)	Harayana (1)
	Low Migration(LM) (1.75)	Bihar(1)	Rajasthan(1)	MP, UP, Jharkhand, J&K(4)

Source: Calculated from NSSO and NFHS.

### 6.1. Physical Mobility and Migration

Physical mobility in the present study refers to the freedom of women to visit their friends and relatives. Constraints on women's physical mobility in many parts of the world restrict their ability to make independent decisions. Women in countries such as India, Egypt, and Bangladesh are governed by social norms that restrict their physical mobility, and are referred to in the literature as female seclusion. This seclusion involves the veiling of head and face in some instances, as well as restrictions on unaccompanied

travel to such places as shops, pharmacies, or hospitals, and limits on direct contact with unrelated males [Bruce, *et al.* (1995)]. Several studies reveal that the promotion of women's freedom of movement is necessary so as to enable them to make their own choices, to change their attitudes, to improve their social networks and so on [Haque, *et al.* (2011)]. Hence, women who are able to take decisions on their visits to friends and relatives can also be expected to take decisions on migration. The figures presented in Appendix-VII show that, on an average, the decisions taken by women themselves regarding their freedom of movement constitute 10.7 percent. However, there exist considerable variations across the states in this respect. The proportion of women having the ability to take decisions on their own or with husbands with respect to visiting their friends and relatives ranges from 27 percent for Jammu to 57 percent for Kerala. However, the migration-empowerment relationship with respect to decision on mobility shows that an equal number of states fall under each category. Hence, a clear pattern has not emerged from the analysis with respect to this indicator.

### **6.2. Large Household Related Purchases and Migration**

One of the economic decision making indicators to measure the status of women is women's role in the household related purchases. The empowerment of women in respect of domestic financial matters reflects their control over financial resources. Evidence shows that women's control over financial matters leads to greater empowerment, which in turn increases their participation in the household decision making [Safdar, *et al.* (2011)]. The distribution of states as presented in Table 1 reflects that the migration-empowerment relation is direct in the case of large household related purchases. Of the 19 states, 11 states fall under the categories where migration-empowerment relation is direct. Most of the southern states like Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh where the migration rate is found high are able to participate in purchases of household durables. Like other indicators, moderate migration-moderate empowerment holds true for Orissa, Punjab, Uttaranchal and Gujarat. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, the migration rate as well as the level of empowerment are low. From these, it clearly emerges that the economic decision making indicator of a household exerts a significant influence on the migration decision making of women.

### **6.3. Spousal Educational Difference and Migration**

The educational difference between husband and wife determines the relative position of woman within a household. It is believed that if spousal educational differences are high, females have less say in making choices compared to their husbands. Since migration is a household strategy, a higher spousal educational difference is also expected to be a significant predictor of female migration. It is clearly apparent from the table that the relationship between migration and empowerment is linear with respect to this indicator. In this study, the mean educational difference has been estimated to establish the relationship. There is a concentration of most of the states observed where migration and empowerment relation is direct. An equal number of states fall under each of the cells where migration-empowerment relation is direct, that is, high migration-high empowerment, moderate migration-moderate empowerment and low migration-low empowerment as presented in Table 1.

Kerala, Karnataka, AP and Maharashtra are the states falling under high migration-high empowerment category. These are the states where the migration rate is high and the average educational difference between spouses is less than 2.5. Five states namely West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Orissa, Gujarat and Haryana show a moderate migration rate and the spousal educational difference is also moderate (2.5-3.5). Similarly most of the under developed states like Rajasthan, Bihar, UP, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir where the migration rate is low show a high spousal educational difference, that is, more than 3.5. This shows that a substantial number of states are equally distributed where migration-empowerment relationship is found to be linear. On the other hand, there are no states that fall under the category of low migration-high empowerment. Hence, a clear pattern of migration-empowerment relationship has emerged with regard to this indicator.

Moreover, it is noticed from the table that though there is a variation in migration-empowerment relation across the states, there are a few states whose position is consistent in respect of all the indicators of empowerment. The broad findings emerging from the discussion are as follows:

- Kerala ranks first in respect of all the indicators followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka. This finding clearly indicates the empowerment-migration relation holds good for these states. This is so because in terms of socio-economic advancement these states perform well which in turn influences household level variables and brings changes in gender relations. For instance, in terms of literacy, Kerala ranks first which influences their decision making power in the household. Hence, higher migration of women in this state could also be the result of their status in the household.
- Orissa, Uttaranchal and Gujarat are the three states where migration rates as well as the level of empowerment are moderate consistently across all indicators.
- In Rajasthan, UP, MP and J&K, migration and empowerment relation is low for most of the indicators. The result is quite obvious. Low social and economic development of the state provide less scope for women's development and hence keeps women's position low that is reflected in their migration rate as well.
- Tamil Nadu is the state which follows a common pattern in respect of all the indicators in terms of high empowerment and moderate migration relationship.
- Punjab, Haryana and West Bengal sometimes follow moderate migration-moderate empowerment and moderate migration-high empowerment relationship.
- The relationship between migration and empowerment also varies for Bihar and Jharkhand with respect to some of the indicators. Although both the states show low migration rates sometimes, their rankings with regard to empowerment indicators vary from low to moderate to high. For e.g., Bihar, in the case of spousal educational difference, ranks low whereas, in respect of household purchases ranks first.

#### **6.4. Findings from Regression Analysis**

To confirm whether women empowerment is a predictor of female migration an Ordinary Least Square(OLS) regression analysis was carried out taking the state as the

unit of analysis. The findings are presented in Table 2. In this study, it is hypothesised that greater involvement of women at different levels of household decision making reflects their self-confidence and ability to participate in migration decision making as well.

Of all the decision making indicators, the decision on one's own health care has a positive and significant impact on the female migration rate. Studies show that gender based power inequalities restrict open communication between partners about reproductive health decisions as well as women's access to health services which in turn contribute to poor health outcomes [Population Council (2001)]. In such a situation, women taking decisions regarding their own health care either on their own or with their partner show their awareness regarding their rights and their capability to take part in household decisions. Thus, the impact of one's own health care on female migration may be expected to significant. At the same time it can also be possible that after migration women have more access to health care facilities which results in positive impact on female migration. Hence, the relative difference in age and education between spouses can throw more light on the empowerment-migration relationship as explained below:

A significant impact of spousal age difference on female migration indicates that if the spousal age gap is low, it has a positive impact on migration and with an increase in age gap, the migration rate for females declines. Age indicates the experience of both men and women. It has been discussed in studies that the age gap between husbands and wives suggest inequalities of power in marital relationship. If the age difference between spouses is low, women also have an equal voice in the family matters.

Table 2

*Estimates of OLS Results on Female Migration by Different Empowerment Measures, 1998-99, 2005-06, 1999-00 and 2007-08*

Female Migration Rate (Excluding Marriage and Family Moved)			
Indicators	B-coefficient	Standard Error	t-value
Time	1.10*	0.62	1.76
Control over own earning	-0.01	0.05	-0.16
Decision on large household purchase	0.03	0.06	0.43
Decision on own health	0.05***	0.02	2.83
Decision on Mobility	-0.02	0.03	-0.94
Attitude towards independence	0.01	0.02	0.57
Spousal Age difference(5-9) year	0.20***	0.05	3.8
Spousal Age difference at least 10 year	-0.08***	0.05	-1.46
Wives education higher than husband	0.08**	0.04	2.25
Both have same education	-0.13***	0.05	-2.84
Spousal educational difference 5 year	0	0.06	-0.02
Constant	-3.48	2.28	-1.53
F-value	10.14		
R-square	0.78		
VIF	5.31		
N	32		

Source: Estimated from NFHS and NSSO data.

\* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p< 0.01.

On the other hand if the age gap is large, women are not allowed to take major decisions, since they are considered inexperienced with poor knowledge. Studies show that when the husband-wife age gap is large, the greater experience and self confidence of the husband as compared to the wife's deprive her of empowerment [Cain (1993)]. A study on the southern states of India finds that with an increase in the age difference between spouses there is a decrease in the decision making power of wives [Vijayalaxmi (1997)]. Hence, a high age gap shows the patriarchal dominance of the decision making process. The results show that if the age difference between husband and wife is below 10 years, it has a positive and significant impact on the migration rate. On the other hand, a spousal age gap of more than 10 years has a significant and negative impact on the migration rate. Thus, spousal age difference, as an empowerment indicator, has a significant impact on the female migration decision making.

Another decision making indicator that affects women's empowerment is spousal educational difference. The results show that women with more education relative to males show a positively high migration rate. Higher educational attainment of women in the household increases their overall status as they are aware of their own rights, and of the unfair power relations they face. Besides higher education emboldens them to challenge the gender based inequalities. According to Dighe (1998) education has the strength to enable women to think critically and to question their disempowerment in society governed by biases and inequality towards them. Women with higher education relative to their spouses have better opportunities and also their economic contribution may be higher than their spouses. This increases their self-confidence to participate in the migration decision making. However, having equal level of education between spouses has a negative impact on the migration of females. In this regard, it can be argued that the spousal educational difference, as an empowerment indicator has a significant impact on the migration rate of females.

## **7. SUMMARY**

The present discussion is an attempt to understand the relationship between women empowerment and the female migration process. The findings of the study suggest that most of the relative measures of empowerment play a greater role in explaining female migration decision making. Women's migration is interlinked with many of the empowerment indicators like economic decision and educational difference and establishes a linear relationship as evident from the bi-variate findings. The results of the regression analysis highlight that greater involvement of women in their own health care decision making has a significant influence on their migration decision. Similarly, the findings also confirm that the relative status of women measured in terms of age and educational difference is also a significant predictor of female migration. This indicates that women who are empowered in different dimensions of the household decision making aspects also exert a significant influence on their migration decision making.

Over time, improvements in the socio-economic and cultural spheres of human life point towards an enhancement in status of women within the household context and hence, influence gender relations. These changes empower women to take strategic decisions in respect of various household matters including migration. A major implication drawn in this context is that gender plays a critical role in the migration

decision making process. Thus, there is a need for understanding the migration decision making process in the backdrop of the existing gender-based power relations in the context of the household. This is because understanding women's participation in household decisions including migration holds an array of welfare implications for the 'family'. Many researchers argue that women's empowerment is closely linked to the positive outcomes for families and societies [Presser and Sen (2000)]. Following this line of argument, one can observe that migration of women, as an outcome of their empowerment, also holds few implications for the aggregate family well-being besides being an indicator of gender equality.

The Indian society has been undergoing significant structural changes in the post reforms period encompassing gender relations especially the relatively newly emerging feminist oriented concerns-women's empowerment and gender equality- with far-reaching implications for the society as a whole. Empowerment of women, as a developmental indicator, may trigger changes in many other indicators. It reduces the gender gap in all major socio-economic indicators and enhances the status of women. In other words, women empowerment as an agency apart from increasing the socio-economic condition of women itself, also enhances well being of other household members in terms of influencing the health, nutrition, education etc. In this way it helps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals which focus on and stress health and education. Besides it also has economic implications by facilitating migration of females for enhancing their socio-economic status. Thus, empowering women is a crucial pathway for achieving development by reducing gender disparities in human development indicators and hence may ensure the achievement of all-round development of the society.

Although the centrality of women empowerment and its relation to migration can be best understood at the household level, the data limitations have restricted the analysis to the aggregate level, that is the state. Further investigation is required for exploring the causal relationship between women's empowerment and their migration decision making process in greater details.

## APPENDIX-I

### *Percentage of Ever Married Women Aged 15-49 by the Proximate Measures, 2007-08*

Proximate Indicators: Attitude Towards Gender Role (Wife Beating Justified (NO) if she)	
Goes without informing	69.8(86876)
Argues with him	68.1(84651)
Refuses sex	81.7(101584)
<b>Age difference between Spouse</b>	
Wife's Age higher than Husband	2.1(1187)
Both have same Age	2.4(2218)
Age difference(1-5yr)	39.5(37745)
Age difference(5-9yr)	40.5(37899)
Age difference(10+)	12.0(14939)
<b>Educational Difference</b>	
Wife has more education	11.9(14284)
Both have same education	25.8(32092)
Educational difference(1-5yr)	25.1(31194)
Educational difference(5+)	37.2(46276)

Source: Calculated from NFHS-3 data.

## APPENDIX-II

*Distribution of Ever Married Women Age 15-49 in Different Household Decisions, 2005-06*

Decision-making (Direct) Indicators	Respondent Alone	With Husband	Others
Decision on how to spend own earning	24.8(6256)	57.3(14465)	17.9(4516)
Decision on own health	27.1(25246)	35.1(32694)	37.7(35081)
Decision on large household purchase	8.5(7896)	44.4(41330)	47(43797)
Decision on Small household Purchase	32.4(30165)	27.7(25761)	39.9(37094)
Decision on visiting to family or relatives	10.7(9974)	49.8(46332)	39.4(36715)

Source: Calculated from NFHS-3 data.

## APPENDIX-III

*Correlation between Female Migration and Various Empowerment Indicators by Types of Migration, 2005-06*

Variables	Female Migrant Excluding Marriage and Family Moved
Mean Age difference	0.46***
Mean Educational difference	-0.69***
Decision on spending money	0.20
Decision on own health	0.33
Decision on mobility	0.43*
Decision on large household purchase	0.42*
Attitude towards independence	-0.09
Attitude towards voice in family	0.21
Attitude towards control over body	-0.04

\* p< 0.1, \*\*p< 0.05, \*\*\*p< 0.01.

## APPENDIX-IV

*Ranking of States in Different Empowerment Indicators, 1998-99, 2005-06, 1999-00 and 2007-08*

State	Migration Rate	Spousal						Employment	Large Hhld			
		Mean Age Difference	Mean Age Difference	Educational Difference	Mobility	R	Purchase		R			
Kerala	6.66	1	1.89	17	0.74	1	57.53	1	15.29	1	9.55	3
HP	4.41	2	1.59	7	2.89	10	41.55	12	5.55	16	6.45	7
Maharashtra	4.02	3	1.86	15	2.24	5	54.27	2	11.86	3	3.99	15
AP	3.76	4	1.84	13	2.29	6	50.19	7	8.77	8	10.40	2
Karnataka	3.16	5	2.01	19	1.88	4	40.41	13	9.24	6	9.33	4
Chhattisgarh	3.07	6	1.62	8	4.17	17	44.17	10	5.63	15	2.84	19
Tamil Nadu	2.74	7	1.88	16	1.30	2	54.15	3	12.32	2	15.05	1
WB	2.60	8	2.01	18	2.71	7	37.31	17	10.10	5	7.02	6
Uttaranchal	2.38	9	1.63	9	3.26	12	39.42	14	7.10	9	4.90	9
Orissa	2.24	10	1.85	14	3.35	13	46.12	9	5.74	12	4.87	10
Punjab	2.10	11	1.46	1	1.84	3	49.00	8	10.75	4	4.52	11
Gujarat	1.89	12	1.46	2	2.81	8	53.39	4	9.22	7	5.84	8
Haryana	1.81	13	1.51	5	2.88	9	52.84	5	5.70	13	3.28	18
Rajasthan	1.78	14	1.50	3	4.13	15	34.65	18	5.77	11	4.26	13
MP	1.47	15	1.52	6	2.99	11	39.20	15	5.08	17	3.64	17
UP	1.34	16	1.51	4	4.89	18	37.74	16	4.53	18	4.23	14
Bihar	1.33	17	1.69	11	4.15	16	44.05	11	3.36	19	7.93	5
J&K	1.28	18	1.66	10	3.63	14	27.07	19	5.66	14	4.27	12
Jharkhand	0.91	19	1.76	12	5.316	19	51.27	6	6.19	10	3.98	16

Source: Calculated from NFHS & NSSO data.



**APPENDIX-V***Summary Statistics and Description of Variables Used in Regression Model,  
1998-99, 2005-06, 1999-00 and 2007-08*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Female Migration rate (excluding marriage and family moved)	2.74	1.39	0.52	6.66
Time	0.50	0.51	0.00	1.00
Decision on control over own earning (either by respondent or jointly with husband)	16.00	6.66	6.32	30.77
Decision on large household purchases (either by respondent or jointly with husband)	8.32	4.42	3.28	20.71
Decision on own health care (either by respondent or jointly with husband)	46.88	10.08	27.07	67.89
Decision on Physical mobility (either by respondent or jointly with husband)	35.36	14.93	7.90	57.53
Attitude towards independence	67.39	14.77	41.45	95.25
Spousal age difference (5-9 year)	34.57	6.46	22.21	45.86
Spousal age difference (at least ten years)	16.83	8.80	5.18	37.54
Wife's education is higher than husband	17.73	8.95	4.21	37.54
Equal level of education between Spouse	29.30	6.94	18.34	44.84
Spousal educational difference at least 5 year	24.19	5.15	14.43	33.55

*Source:* Calculated from NFHS & NSSO data.

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