

Spatio-temporal Analysis of Marriage Migration in India

Sugandh*

Abstract : Marriage is an essential institution for the foundation of families not only in India but across the world. The direct impact of marriage is the migration of women subsequently, after which the population is redistributed. Data on migration reveals marriage to be the most important reason for migration, especially among women. The objective of the paper is to discuss the trends and patterns of marriage migration in India. The present paper is based on data accumulated and analyzed from Census and NSSO and other secondary sources and literature. The data extracted from different sources have been used to show the correlation of demographic factors, namely, age and education, with marriage. First, the trends and patterns of marriage migration, has been discussed. Second, the paper illustrates the streams, nature and extent of vast marriage migration in India and the regional differences in the pattern. Thirdly, an evaluation of the gendered perspective of marriage migration has been done. Marriage migration brings out the picture of dominance of women over men for migration, especially in the rural-to-rural migration stream.

Keywords : Marriage, Marriage migration, Gender, Singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM)

Introduction

Each year millions of women in India move to live with their husband's family after marriage. The largest form of migration perhaps in India is marriage migration and is to a large extent universal for women in rural areas (Fulford, 2015). This paper provides detailed account of largest form of migration and evaluates some of its potential causes. Marriage migration varies substantially across different states in India and appears to remain the same. Based on secondary data and literature the author has attempted to present my view on marriage migration. The objective of the paper is to study the nature and extent of marriage migration in India and to understand its trends and patterns. Also to examine the gendered perspective in marriage migration. Singulate mean age at marriage data has been used to understand the trend in India. Marriage related movement increased very steeply from 62 % to 91 % in rural areas and from 32 % to 61 % in urban areas between 1993 and 2007-2008 (Bhagat, 2016).

Marriage Migration

Marriage migration in India is under played despite its vast size (Fulford, 2015). Rather male

* Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Institute of Science, Banaras Hindu University
e-mail: sugandh9496@gmail.com

labour migration is studied comparatively more. Kaur (2004) opines that migration in low-income countries, especially in rural areas is composed of moves by women for the purpose of marriage. Samuel (1990) indicated in his study that Indian women were primarily short distance migrants moving within the same district or state because of village exogamy in marriage. Men, in contrast, travelled longer distance probably in search of better labour markets. Thadani and Todaro (1984) suggested marriage as a variable for studying the mobility of women, thus treating migrant women as a category distinct from migrant men. They felt that the inducements for women differ from those of men.

Table 1. Percentage internal migrants in India by sex

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1971	30.6	19	43.1
1981	30.3	17.6	43.9
1991	27.4	14.6	41.2
2001	30.6	17.5	44.6
2011	37.64	23.44	52.69

Source: Computed by the author from various census tables

Salient Features of Marriage Migration in India

- a) NSSO has addressed marriage as a non-economic sequential reason of migration.
- b) There are specific rules of marriage and (post-marital) residence, the institution of marriage itself entails female migration.
- c) The system of *gotra* is very important in determining whom a person can marry and whom he cannot.
- d) Rules about Northern India caste endogamy, clan exogamy and the rule that a person must not marry in his patri-family also induces migration (Kaur, 2004). Cross cousin marriage in south India depicts a varied picture from the north while in some parts of north east marriage migration is a phenomenon followed by the male.
- e) Marriage is an important social factor for migration. As observed by Census 2001 and 2011 in case of intra-state migrant's majority of the migration is from one rural area to another, due to marriage in case of females.
- f) "Marriage rules may specify certain principles of territorial exogamy, that is, not only marriage outside a particular kin grouping (such as the lineage or clan), but also outside circumscribed spatial boundaries like the village (Palriwala and Uberoi, 2005).

Nature and Extent of Marriage Migration in India

55% of the marriages in the world and 84% marriages in India are arranged in nature (CSDS, KAS report, 2017) followed by marriage within the caste they belong to. Marriages are ‘virilocal’ in nature which means the wives have to move to their husband’s house. Therefore, marriage migration go hand in hand and migration is followed by marriage (Rao and Finnoff, 2015). This paper is an attempt to answer the question of how geography turns out to be a search variable of marriage and ultimately leads to migration. Data on migration reveals marriage to be the most important reason for migration especially among women. Although this has been neglected and other factors associated with migration has been emphasized more. Marriage migration brings out the picture of dominance of women over men for migration, especially in the rural-to-rural migration stream. An important point of consideration of my present study is that marriage and migration are the decisions made by the parents and not the migrants. However, it is accepted as voluntary form of migration. Although there are significant regional differences, most of India practices some form of patrilocal village exogamy in which women are married outside of their natal village, joining their husband’s family in his village or town (Rao and Finnoff, 2015).

Table 2 depicts the share of marriage migration in 2001 and 2011. It is the largest contributor to the migration percentage in the country. Thus, the real picture of male migration for employment is often camouflaged due to the high percentage.

Table 2. Reason for migration by duration (0-9 years) India 2001 and 2011

Reason for migration	2001(%)	2011(%)
Work/Employment	14.7	10.22
Business	1.2	0.96
Education	3	1.77
Marriage	43.8	49.35
Moved after birth	6.7	10.57
Moved with households	21	15.39
Other	9.7	11.74

Source: Census of India, (2001, 2011)

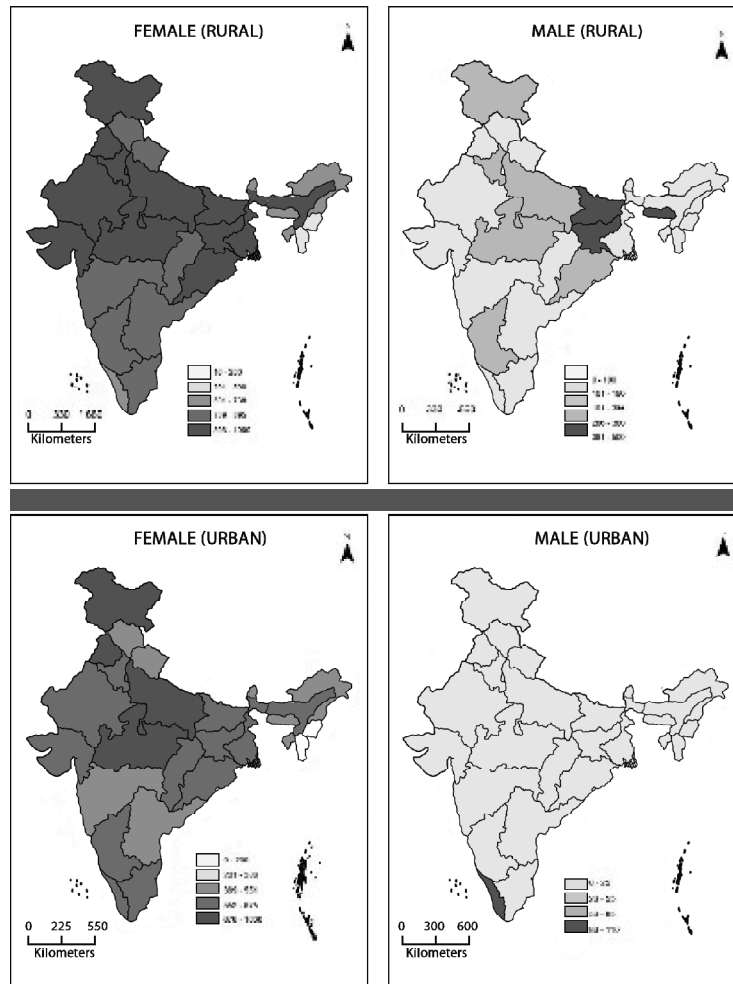
Geographic Variation in Marriage Migration

Regional Variation

In north India village exogamy prevails. While in south India villages and kin endogamous marriage are common. When women are reported as marriage migrants, they are already in their marital home thus, the data represents in migration to the marriage household. Although there are

significant regional differences, most of India practices some form of patrilocal village exogamy, in which females are married outside of their natal village, joining their husband's family in his village or town (Fulford, 2015).

The NSS data helps in understanding the direction and stream of marriage migration data within a state, to a different district in the same district, or to a different state. Migration to a different district in the same state accounts for the largest percentage increase over this period. Cross state migration has seen little change, remaining at about 5-6 percent of the total across the four rounds. Given the interstate variations in language, caste, and customs in India, it is not surprising that migration to a different state has not increased.



Map 1. Marriage migration by place of origin and sex

Trend and pattern of marriage migration in India

Marriage migration varies substantially across the country. It is over 95% in north Indian states, while it is around 60% in the south and much lower in north eastern states. Across the north there is much variation that can be seen even within the states. In order of migration frequency from rural areas 98% women over 25 have migrated from Haryana, 96% in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, 95% in Punjab and 93% in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha 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 it is generally under 30% in the culturally distinct north eastern states (NSS, 64th round).

The increase in female marriage migration rates is responsible for the general picture of increasing migration rates in India. "While increasing rates of marriage migration in rural areas can be confidently asserted the same is not yet possible for urban areas" (Mazumdar, Neetha and Agnihotri, 2013, p.61). The expansion of cross regional marriages may indeed be contributing to enhanced rates of marriage migration. Cross regional marriages alone can explain the phenomenal increase in rural marriage migration rates. Taken together the NSS and Census data shows rising shares of marriage migrants interlinking between individual motivations.

Gender differences of marriage migration

There has not been much focus on the gendered nature of migration followed by marriage. Most of the intra-district migrants are females who customarily change their parental households and join their husband's households after marriage (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003 in Bhagat, 2010). For females in both rural and urban areas, the reason for the bulk of the migrants was marriage. Ravenstein (1889) had summarized the patterns of migration with one of his well-known laws of migration, "Females appear to predominate among short journey migrants". Also, for every migration stream an equally strong counter stream exists to neutralize the population redistribution efficiency of the stream. He also opined that movement of people across different areas involves demographic and economic aspects.

Since marriage is the main reason for female out-migration, there is more permanence in the movement once it has occurred. The economic significance of population movements in India is low especially because of dominance of women among migrants over short distances. For most of these women marriage is the sole reason for migration. Among men the major reason for migration is lack of job opportunities in the villages. Thus, obligatory and non-economic reasons cause females to leave the village, while voluntary and economic reasons are prominent in the out-migration of males from villages. The former constitutes the bulk of the total out-migration from villages. Because of the fundamental differences in the reasons for migration, the characteristics of the out-migrants vary strikingly by sex. There is more permanence in the migration of females, while return migration among males is quite common. Male out-migrants from villages move to more distant places and nearly half of them move towards cities, whereas most of the female migrants find their way only to other villages. Thus because of the preponderance of female migrants moving

within the district or to the neighboring districts on account of marriage, the extent of internal migration in India generally has little economic significance. Movement to urban areas for economic and allied reasons is almost exclusively confined to males (Rele, 1969).

Pattern of stream of marriage migration in India

Table 3. Distribution (per 1000) of migrants by reason for migration during 1993, 1999-2000 and 2007-08

Reason for migration	Migrated in			
	Rural areas		Urban areas	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
49th round (1993)				
employment related reasons	477	83	415	49
studies	41	11	180	70
marriage	23	616	9	317
Movements of parents/earning member	208	237	283	495
Other reasons	251	53	113	69
55th round (1999-2000)				
employment related reasons	303	10	519	30
studies	53	4	62	13
marriage	94	888	16	585
Movements of parents/earning member	260	63	270	310
Other reasons	290	35	133	62
64th round (2007 – 08)				
employment related reasons	286	7	557	27
studies	107	5	68	22
marriage	94	912	14	608
Movements of parents/earning member	221	44	252	294
Other reasons	292	32	109	49

Source: NSS (64th round)

In 1993, 62 per cent of the rural female migrants had migrated for marriage, the share increased to 89 per cent in 1999-00 and further increased to 91 per cent in 2007-2008. While it corresponded to 32 per cent, 59 per cent and 61 per cent respectively for urban female migrants. There has been a

decline in the share in the employment related reasons in the overall female migration for all the three NSS rounds. In case of rural females, it declined to 8 per cent while it was 1 per cent in both 55th and 64th rounds. For urban females it declines to 5 per cent in the 49th round and to 3 per cent in both the 55th and 64th round.

There have been distinct reasons for male migration from rural and urban India. There has been a reduction in rural male migration related to employment reason from 48 per cent in NSS 49th round to 30 per cent and 29 per cent in 55th and 64th round. In case of urban migrants, it increased from 42 per cent in NSS 49th round to 55 per cent and 56 per cent in 55th and 64th round respectively.

Table 3 depicts that the increasing role of marriage as a reason for female migration is associated with a declining incidence of unmarried females moving with their parents or earning members. It has reduced sharply from 23 % to 4 % in rural areas and from 49 % to 29 % in urban areas between 1993 and 2007-2008. "This shows that parents and earning family members leave their unmarried daughters at the place of origin increasingly when they move to the place of destination. If the place of destination is rural areas, parents/earning members hardly took their unmarried daughters in 2007-2008 compared to the situation 15 years ago in 1993"(Bhagat, 16).

A similarity is also found in urban areas but with lesser intensity. Male child accompanying earning member of the family has reduced but not as much as for female child. Data indicates that there is non- preference for giving a girl child an opportunity for migration at household level. In case of male migrants there has been a steep decline in migration to rural areas for employment from 48 per cent in 1993 to 29 per cent in 2007-2008, while it has steadily increased in urban areas from 42 per cent in 1993 to 56 per cent in 2007-2008. There is also a decrease in migration to urban areas for educational purposes, keeping the mind the improvement in education sector this is not surprising. Thus, overall male mobility has witnessed a decline.

Conclusion

Migration in India is thus predominantly a marital phenomenon. Short distance migration is predominantly dominated by females in India is due to village exogamy. Thus, it can be concluded that marriage is the reason for such results. Long distance movements are mostly for employment purposes where male move first and women follow. Migration of wives accompanying migrant spouses is one of the steadily expanding stream of female migration. Marriage is an important correlate of migration especially in India. The share of female migration in the overall migration of the country has been increasing rapidly. Based on the traditional practices that govern the mobility of females after marriage it can be concluded that marriage migration results in population redistribution.

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