

WHETHER MIGRATION LEADS to EMANCIPATION? A CRITIQUE of WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AMONG the LEFT BEHIND FAMILIES in DOABA REGION of RURAL PUNJAB (INDIA)

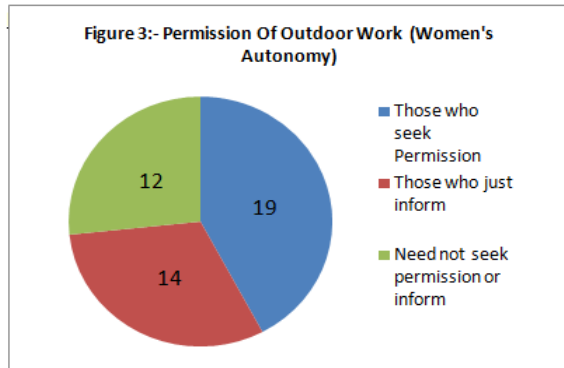
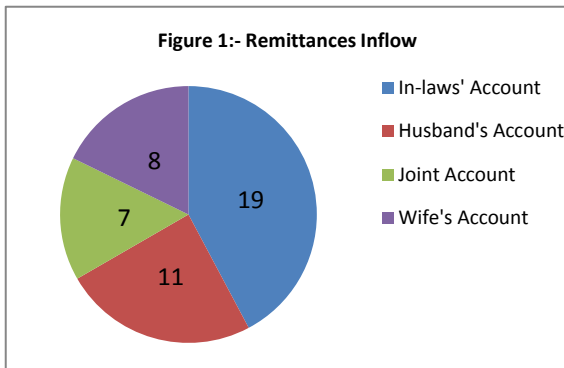
Introduction: - Migrants usually leave their countries of origin with the primary motive of supporting their families. The concept of welfare always becomes prime motive of migration among the left behind families. Hence culture of migration and welfare of family dually influence family members and individual to take the decision of migration. Migration become survival strategy of left behind family members and remittances played a positive role. The migration of individual or male members usually makes changes among the left behind families and especially in women position those are residing without their migrants' husband. No doubt migration is an old phenomenon but transition among the left behind families becomes burning issue and holds a prominent position in social sciences. Women, those are residing without their husbands, often undergo a positional and social change that effect their overall development and status. Many empirical studies emphasis that migration of husbands helps women autonomy and decision making power. Studies showed that female among the "patriarchal societies" especially among the migrant families' forms a part of household strategies such as family reunification, and family formation (Hass & Rooij, 2010). Women have a limited role, emphasis in household chores, rearing and caring of children. Very few studies gives example of gender based equality rather mostly talked about household decisions that were taken unanimously to the advantage of the whole family and groups. Studies have been focusing upon both positive and negative impact of migration on left behind women. By contrast studies in Bangladesh, Mexico, (Hadi, 2001) Morocco (Sadiqi & Ennoji, 2004) Armenia and Guatemala (Menjivar & Agadjanian, 2007) point to greater decision making, management duties and autonomy in women partnered with labor migrants. The autonomy and decision making that created during men's absence may be diluted to other sources as other community members or other members of the family. While other family members were influence the decision making (Abadon-Unat, 1997). Gulati, 1993 founded that the absence of husbands for long periods of time actually helps women to regain their health, as the inter-birth interval is winded and take better care of their children. Zachariah and Rajan, 2015 observed that prolonged, male migration, helps women mobility to outside of home and it gives them exposer to public sphere. However male migration increase women autonomy, decision making and freedom in relation to family sphere but somehow several negative impacts of male migration have also been documented among women who remained left behind. In the absence of men, women become responsible for both their own and their husbands duties and roles (Khalad, 1995). Among Lesotho migrants' wives, who remained behind were found to be in high strain and stress due to increased financial hardships(Nguyen et al, 2007)difficulties with discipline children, as well as loneliness and isolation (Zachariah, Mathew & Rajan, 2001). Yet able to get freedom and power of decision making in household sphere, women still face gender inequality due to over burden among household and societal sphere where decision making is not permissible by other household members and elder male members (Menjivar & Agadjanian, 2007).

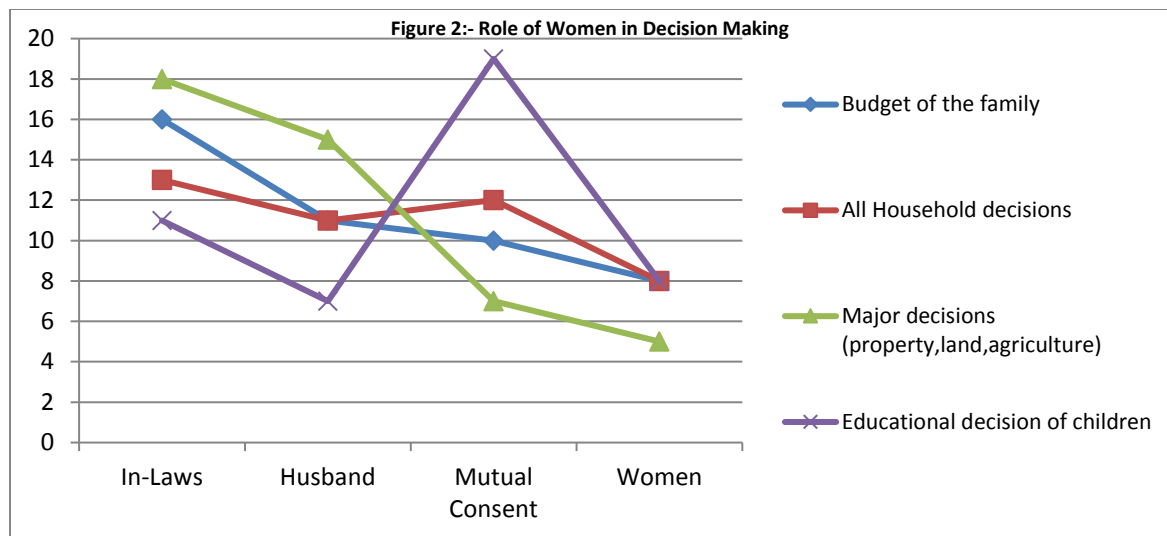
Punjabi Migration and Women's Position in Doaba Villages: - Doaba is basically a land between two rivers, it is Persian language word which means Do- two and Ab means River, because Punjab is known for land of "Five Rivers" Punj- five and Ab-River. Doaba region is blessed with fertile land, where wheat and rice cultivation is prominent. The most of the population that remains behind belongs to old and very young age category group and surprisingly demographic dividend population is totally missing in this area. Most of the middle age group that has working potential is migrating abroad lured by their high standards of living and for economic benefits. Migration from Punjab dates long back to 18th century, when Punjab was under the control of British. Punjabi migration is basically divided into colonial and post colonial period. The first migration during colonial period was from Majha region of Punjab and followed by districts of Malwa. During colonial period most of the migrants work as a indentured and contracted laborers(Singh, 2003) and their important destination identified were Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand(Jayaram, 2011). During 1870 to 1880 Sikhs were settled down in Far East, Malaya, and Hong Kong and worked as policemen. Between 1903 and 1908 Punjabis had entered into North America, Canada, and majority of them were illiterate and semi-illiterate laborers from agricultural background (Desenbery & Tatla, 2009). During post-colonial period most of the migration took place from Doaba region. Most of the migration among Sikhs took place in U.K, U.S.A and also in general across the world. During this period, the migration to the gulf countries also started taking place. In the contemporary time of globalization, migration of the skilled workers has been taking place to Australia and Canada from almost the entire Punjab (Rajan & Percot, 2011). Jats and chamars have been migrated to North Australia, New Zealand, Canada (Juergensmeyer, 1982). During post-colonial period it has marked by a sharp increase in the international migration of Punjabis in which Jat Sikh dominated and it has followed by Ramgrahias, Chamars and Ad-Dharmis (Taylor & Singh, 2013). According to Bertolani, 2008 three major castes Jat, Ravidas and Labana migrate to France, Ramgrahias, sainis to Italy and Sikh Diaspora is staying in Thailand also. However migration among kamboj is a new trend and most of the migration took place towards gulf countries (Ibbeston, 2008). Such migration is mainly dominated by male members of the family. Most of the literature emphasized on male migration and was biased towards it. The Punjabi society is a patriarchal society that is based on patrilineal norm. Married women have to stay at their in-laws' home and have limited autonomy to outdoor world. Still gender inequality is found prevailing among the Punjabi society in relation to public and private sphere. All the household decisions are taken by elder male members of the family and migrant husband. However the participation of women in decision making process especially to property, land purchase, household, agriculture and business is least. She has to look after children and take care of them; she has to handle all domestic chores, cattle rearing to fulfill milk needs of the family. They cook food for the whole family thrice a day. They also do extra cattle rearing, milk and churning milk to produce butter for family consumption. Sometimes they need to go to agricultural fields for cattle fodder and bring back the uncut fodder on their heads. In such conditions women are over-burdened with household chores and comparatively get less freedom to move outside the household. Even gender inequality and gender division of labor implies that women's labor is less visible and not financially considered.

Aim and Methodology:- The gender dimension of migration impacts has received only scant attention in the Punjabi migration and development literature, which is largely focused on economic impacts and the position of the (predominantly male) labor migrants, structural change of household, position of families in economic terms, and (supposedly male) "household needs".

No documentation has been found that emphasis on gender dimension and positional change among the left behind women among the Punjabi society. To fill this research gap data was collected among the Punjabi migrants' families in Doaba region. Doaba region is a part of Punjab that comprises of four districts viz. Hosiarpur, Nawansher, Jalandher and Kapurthala. Data was collected from Kapurthala district purposely because of huge gulf migration being a dominant feature of kapurthala's villages and this trends has lead to many houses without presence of any male in many generations and in most of the houses wives are residing, all by themselves. Villages were chosen purposely were gulf migrants' women were residing and data was collected through qualitative method between 2016 and 2017. Survey was conducted in 2016 among the migrants household and listing was done related to age categories. Qualitative data was collected in Habitpur and Randhirpur villages through semi-structured interviews and participant research in 2017. A total of 45 interviews were conducted with married women. 15 women belong to young age group 20-35, 15 women from middle age 35-45 and 15 women with old group as above 45years. Even case studies were also done from each category to understand the phenomena more deeply. In addition open interviews were also conducted with non-migrant families in particular village and in order to gain insight into recent migration dynamics. To interpret the paper, the content of the interviews conducted were analyzed through content analysis and percentages were calculated based on it. Narrative method was used for the case studies and an effort was made to capture women life experiences.

Results and Discussion:-





Figure(1) shows remittances flow among the left behind families, 19 respondent admit that remittances were under their in-laws' control, they don't have any right on money, in 11 cases husband enjoys freedom on remittances. Only 8 respondents were found those can spend remittances according to their wish and will and mainly belongs to old age category women. It is showed that women don't have autonomy in money matters and it is directly linked to centre of decision making power among the left behind families. Because the one who controls the remittances, that person gets to enjoy most of power and autonomy in relation to decision making. It is clearly showed in figure 2 that out of 45 respondents, majority of them (16) admitted that whole family budget were under their in-laws control because of joint family system and in-laws hold on money matters. In nuclear family household, 24.4% cases family budget is pre-decided by husbands and women have very less participation in decision making process. Even respondent admits that all household decision were taken by their in-laws 28.8% cases or mutual consent bases in 26% because it deals with kitchen work where women still have some control but 11 respondent admits the fact that husband has right to take all household decision because he is bread-earner of the family. In terms of major decisions as property, land and agriculture, women participation is very low (11.1%). Punjabi society believed in male chauvinism more than women, it is clearly shown from graph that mutual consent is 15% that is also in decline trend, mainly dominated by in-laws 40% and husbands in 33% cases. Even though those women are staying in nuclear or extended families have very less control in terms of property. A trend of high mutual consent 42% has seen in the area of children education which shows that women opinion were also considered while taking decision. As women stay in close proximity with their children, it is perceived that they have better opinion regarding their children's upbringing. Hence the male members of the family think that private sphere is the only sphere where women can give their input in better way and they are not aware enough to venture out in public areas. Another interesting fact comes into picture in relation to women autonomy. It is shown in figure 3 that 19 respondents admit that they have to take permission before going outside of house. Surprisingly 14 respondent admit that they have to inform before going outside which means that some kind of coercion still working upon them. Only 12 women admit that

they need not to take permission or inform other. Such cases women belong to old age or middle age group category; those have their own extended families. But in joint families structure women don't have autonomy to go outside without prior permission. One can estimate from such figures that migration doesn't bring women empowerment rather more work burden and less opportunity of freedom. Further paper is divided into sub-themes (a) Family system and women's position (b) Household decision and role of women (c) Power, Authority and Remittances (d) Work for need or Emancipation, which try to explore the false phenomenon of women empowerment with the help of narratives, interviews and observations.

Summary and Conclusion:- It is difficult to make structural changes in patriarchal society, There is no doubt that women's area of work increases and she becomes aware of public sphere but this can't be misinterpreted as their emancipation and rather should be acknowledged as a family changes social and cultural change that occurs due to necessity of time and work load. It will also help researchers and policy makers to do work on more micro level to understand migration and women condition. Government should need to take strong step to uplift women status by opening up small household business with the help of self help groups. Steps need to take towards women entrepreneurship by government that would leads towards women emancipation rather than depend upon husbands remittances.