

THE GOAN DIASPORA AND THE LEFT BEHIND

WOMEN IN GOA

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This Paper deals with the question what happens to the family when catholic males migrate both on shore and off shore for generations in the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim (Goa). The Paper presents the changes in a family/household by investigation on the question of do women feel empowered? And if yes what is the level of empowerment among women left behind in the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim? (AVC) vis-à-vis Goa. When we tried to review the existing literature, scant attention was paid to the aspect of male migration and the impact on the social life of left behind women. Based on the empirical data collected through interviews, questionnaire and my own empirical observation, the Paper tries to present an analysis of empowerment among the wives of Diasporic husbands. The Paper tries to use the analytical framework of Kabeer (1999) in order to analyze women's empowerment in the context of male migration.

Keywords: Diaspora, International Migration, Women, Empowerment, Village

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Introduction: International migration has tremendous implications on the economic and social development of both the individual and the society at large. These implications have received tremendous attention from varied research bodies and researchers across the globe. The effects of international migration depend on the collections, scale and character of the flow of migration and the contexts that migrants emerge from (Katseli *et al.* 2006: 30-44). In the case of Goa 82% of the emigrant households used the remittances for daily subsistence. One third used it for educational purposes, one fourth deposited the remittances in Bank and one fifth used it for building new house and purchasing land (GMS 2008:6). Even though the economic impact in Goa has been researched upon there is a lack of research on the social impact. Nevertheless, in Goa, the social impact has been studied with specific reference to the problems faced by women in the absence of their men (see GMS: 2008). This question of problems faced by women arises due to the fact that migration among Catholics, especially males has been and still continues to be prevalent, despite the relative improvements in economic condition in Goa. A constant refrain is “there are no jobs in Goa” or “the salaries are low” (Mascarenhas 1987). The Goa Migration study in 2008 also presented that 74% of the emigration was among Christians, to add to this of all the emigrations that took place in Goa till 2008, 80% of the emigrants were male and only 20% were female (GMS 2008: 5-37).

However, whether women felt empowered in the absence of their men lacked the desired attention by the researchers. Though, Mascarenhas-Keys (2011) presents, the women as progressive mother and autonomous women, she falls short to say whether the women are empowered in the absence of their men. Thus, the study in general tends to focus on the lives of catholic women and the level of empowerment they have in the absence of their men, *vis-a-vis* the changes brought about in the family due to this arrangement. As the study focussing on the question of empowerment, we shall try to review the concept of empowerment in 1.1 following below.

1.1: Empowerment and its measurement

The concept of empowerment began to have takers from the field of psychology in the late 1970's, from then on it has been evolving through its continued interest from several social science discipline thereby making ‘empowerment’ a catchphrase (Perkins & Zimmerman (1995:571). There have been several definition of empowerment but in our study we shall make

use Kabeer's (1999) definition of empowerment, which refers to as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability has previously been denied to them" (Kabeer 1999: 435). This definition is of greater relevance as it includes both, the constituent of the process and the human agency and choice (Molhotra *et al* 2002). Another significant aspect of this definition is the importance given to the individual agent in the process of change.

In this study we have not only used Kabeer's (1999) definition but also used her analytical framework in analyzing and measuring empowerment among the wives of Diaspora husbands. Kabeer's analytical frame work has been used as she provides an all encompassing definition of empowerment. This study finds her definition and its usage most suitable as she presents the role of agents in making strategic life choices that enables the agents (women) to bring about a change (Kabeer 1999: 437). Another significant element in her analysis of empowerment is choice and she tries to distinguish between first order and second order choice, she gives greater relevance to first order choice as these choices help people to 'live their lives the way they want' (*ibid*: 437). Further, what Kabeer means by strategic life choices is whether you want to work or not, whether you want to marry or not or whether you want to have children or not. Therefore, when we try to perceive empowerment in this study it should be perceived as the ability to make strategic life choices. Further, in this study we have used Kabeer's (1999) three dimensions of empowerment i.e. resources (pre-condition), agency (process) and achievements (outcomes) in the analysis and measurement of empowerment in the villages of AVC, Goa.

1.1.1: Methodology and Method

In this study we have generated data through the qualitative as well as the quantitative source. The qualitative data was based on the six semi-structured interviews with women having their husband's abroad. Four interviewees belonged to the *Chardo* caste and two belonged to the *Sudhir* caste. All three dimensions were evaluated in terms of measuring women's empowerment. The Group of women interviewed were from diverse backgrounds, who came from different educational, occupational, caste and economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, common to them all is that they live in villages and have the experience of male migration. We have systematically analyzed the interview by following certain procedures. Firstly, the interview was recorded and simultaneously certain points were noted. After the interview, the

recordings were transcribed and efforts were made to look out for the common themes that evolved from the interviews so as to code the data (see Bryman 2008).

The Quantitative data as mentioned in Paper one was gathered by administering questionnaires to 180 households in the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim. The sample size is based on the calculation derived from the GMS (2008). A total of 101 questionnaires were administered and answered by 101 wives in 80 households of the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim in the Salcete Taluka of the South Goa District. The questionnaire was attempted by mainly two caste groups i.e Chardo or Chaddi 52.5 percent and Shudra or Sudhir 47.5 percent. A total of 15.5 percent were found to be working and 84.5 percent non-working women. The questionnaire had a total of fifty questions, all the three interdependent aspects (resources, agency and achievements) in the measurement of empowerment were the unit of analysis and accordingly questions in the questionnaire tried to measure each of the aspects. Thus, in 1.2 we have tried to present an analysis and measurement of empowerment experienced by the left behind wives in AVC, Goa.

1.2: The Analysis and Measurement of Empowerment: Kabeer's Three Dimensional Approach

As we begin analyzing the levels of empowerment in AVC, Goa. It is however, imperative for us to understand that there is no uniform experience of women in the absence of their men. The experiences of women are pluralistic in nature although we have tried to analyze and present the experiences in a uniformed manner with the help of Kabeer's (1999) three dimensional framework. Further, we will also examine if caste and employment status has any role in the empowerment of women left behind.

1.2.1: Resources

Resources relate to the necessary conditions that would contribute towards empowerment and the meaning of resources should not be limited to the economic sense but must also include human and social resources (Kabeer 1999: 437). The right to use the resources by certain actors in the society is based on the rules of various social relationships that are governed by different institutional domains (family, market and community) (*ibid*: 438). The resources and their access determine the prospective of empowerment (*ibid*: 443). In this study, the six interviews presented that the women in the absence of men had access to the resources *i.e.* access to mobility and access to remittances. This free access to movement to any place and the access to

remittances (both social and financial) contributed to the prospective of empowerment. As in a typical Goan family the husband or father plays a greater role in decision making and this access to decision making provides the men to exercise power over the other members in the house. The fact that males are absent in the household, his position and authority got transferred to the women of the house. Thereby making them the new household heads. One of the women namely Olivia (name changed) states:

“Since my husband is not around I go to the bank, I manage the accounts, I invest the excess money, I visit the market and take the children, my in-laws as well as myself to the doctor whenever needed, As I know to ride a bike moving around is not difficult at all, if I have to go to Margao for shopping then I leave my children with my in-laws, the only problem arises when we have to go for weddings or parties in the night. Since my children are small I avoid, but If I have a good company then I take my children along and go by the wedding bus” (Interview No 1: Olivia Gomes 10th September 2014)

Another women Rina Menezes (name changed) states that:

“I go everywhere, as our new house is being constructed. I pay the money to the builder; order the tiles, electrical and bathroom fittings, paint etc. Everything I have to see as my mother in-law has just gone to Dubai and will come only after six months” (Interview No 2: Rina Menezes 7th September 2014)

In the above two cases of interview it is evident that women being without their husbands have to be mobile in order to see that the day to day activities and responsibilities transferred to them are undertaken. The free access to mobility (resources) provides them with the potential for empowerment. It is also interesting to see from the above two interviews that the remittances are systematically managed by the women. One of the women Anne Carvalho (name changed) states that:

“My husband sends me one lakh rupees regularly, I have two accounts one is my individual account and the other is a joint, He sends his full salary to our joint account. I remove fifteen thousand rupees and put it in my account for household expenditure, I remove another ten thousand rupees and give it to my mother-in-law and father-in-law for their expanses. The remaining seventy five thousand is put in fixed deposits and insurance” (Interview No 3: Anne Carvalho 12th September 2014)

As we know the pull factor of migration has been to earn more and improve one’s status. From the interview above it is evident that the remittances are received by the women left behind and are systematically managed by them. This right to use and organize resources is of a great consequence for women’s empowerment, which makes it a prerequisite for empowerment

(Kabeer 1999: 437). The group of women interviewed belongs to diverse social strata, to what extent they spend and how much of the money is spend, is dependent on the husband’s job as well as the freedom they have to spend that money. For example Lyeana Costa (name changed) states that:

“ *Lok makha kod muntai, kityak muge hattin Ielole poishe nach zata, muhniank muge gho tis hazar dadta, tintuntule panchu hazar uttai, pun mug eak bor je, bor nes, soglen bor zoapak zai*” (People call me spendthrift, because money just disappears , every month my husband sends me thirty thousand, from which only five thousand remain at the end of the month, but for me the most important thing is that we should eat and dress well, everything should be well presented. Interview No 4: Lyeana Costa 7th September 2014).

As brought out in the above interview quote, the remittances bring along an improvement in the quality of life due to the increased possibility to earn more money abroad. In the interview number one the women stated that she was working but her husband earned five times more than her, where as in the interview number four the women was not working. In the first case, though she was earning she used her income as well as her husband’s income to buy what she wanted for herself apart from the household expenses. In the fourth case, she used all of her husband’s income to buy all that she needs. It is evident from the two interviews that increased income gave them the freedom to increase their spending even on their personal expenses. From all the above interviews it is clear that women had the access to mobility i.e. to move wherever they wanted as the situation demanded the same, and they also had access and freedom to spend the remittances in a manner which they decided to spend, from high saving of seventy five thousand a month in one case which worked out to 75 percent of the earnings to saving only five thousand a month in another case that worked out to only 16 percent of the earnings. Thus, let us also analyze the questionnaire results. A total of 17 questions tried to measure the access to resources. The scale was low to high, the scale for low access was 1-6, moderate access was 7-12 and high access was 12-1

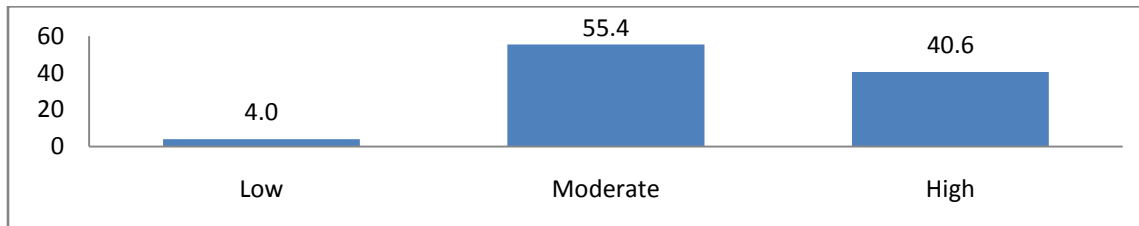


Figure 1.1: Level of empowerment on the basis of resources

From the above graph, what can be analyzed is that only four percent of the women felt that they had very limited access to resources, a vast majority of 55.4 percent felt that they had moderate access to resources; whereas quite a sizeable number of 40.6 percent felt that they had a high access to the resources.

Thus, from the qualitative data resource of interview as well as the quantitative data resource of the questionnaire discussed above, it is evident in Kabeer's terms that the increase in the ability to use and organize resources due to the absence of the men provided the women the prospective of empowering themselves. Let us now deliberate on the aspect of Agency as a contributing factor towards empowerment within the three interdependent aspects of Resources, Agency and Achievement as an indicator of empowerment.

1.2.2: Agency

The element of agency also plays a significant role in the process of empowerment. Agency is defined as 'the ability to define one's goals and act upon them' (Kabeer 1999: 438). However, in our case agency could be viewed in three interdependent aspects i.e. responsibilities, decision making and mobility that will be analyzed here.

a) Responsibility

When the husbands are absent, women gained greater power to make decisions and with this change came greater responsibilities. However, in situations like AVC women had already assumed the power and responsibilities through the experience of their mothers or other senior women in the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim. As see in our case, a total of three women out of the six interviewed had already an experience of their father's working abroad and they were a part of the anticipatory socialization process. The women lived with their mothers and observed and experienced the life of their mother in the absence of their father. The three women interviewed have anticipated before their marriage the various aspects of living without the husband. The questionnaire data through 101 informants presented that a total of 47 percent of women had their fathers working abroad, a total of 78 percent stated that this experience helped them in deciding about their marriage partners and a total of 72 percent got attracted to marry their partner due to love, 7 percent got attracted because of security, 8 percent because of status and 13 percent because of Independence.

The interviews and the questionnaire data presents that taking care of children is a normal duty of the mother, taking care and raising the children singlehandedly is also a normal duty for

these women as they already have the experience. However, what are new for them are the added responsibilities and the decisions one needs to take, apart from the responsibility of taking care of children and the decisions pertaining to them. These added responsibilities involve travelling with children without the husbands accompanying to various celebrations, visit to doctor, management of the remittances (savings, expenditure on household and celebrations, construction, renovations and investments) and decisions to all the above mentioned responsibilities.

In a household with male migration and a husband that is no longer present, women's decision-making agency changes, this was evident from all the six interviews. As one of the interviewees states that;

'My father was a *'shippe'* (working on merchant navy) and when I was a child I had seen my mother living without him, I knew that without the husband taking care of children is such a difficult task, because me and my brother were so naughty you know....(laughing) *ekdom chod mosti* (Extremely mischievous). But, she would manage it and my grand-parents from my father's side were also there. So even now, at present for me it is not difficult but what I found most difficult is to oversee the construction of our new house, my children go to school. My boy is in the 5th standard and my girl is in the 3rd standard and both have different timings. So both of them I only reach as my father-in-law doesn't know to ride a bike, he rides a cycle. I can ride and drive. My mother-in-law and myself manage the cooking and marketing. But managing these workers, contractor.... (in a serious tone) *zann tun kit konn dhavu potta* (you know how you have to be after them to get your work done). To add to it you have to order the raw materials, sometimes there is a delay in sending the money, then you have to wait, then the building contractor makes you to dance. Apart from this I got to decide whose wedding to go, as the others had come for mine I have to go for theirs...' (Interview No 4: Lyeana Costa 7th September 2014)

From the above excerpt of the interview one needs to observe that the power and responsibilities that are already assigned to her through existing gender roles, wherein taking care of children is something that is basic. The interviewee says that taking care of children all by her-self is not difficult, but the added responsibilities and decisions one needs to take with reference to activities i.e. Construction and going for celebrations makes managing these without the husband challenging. However, this challenge gives her the capacity or an opportunity to make strategic life-choices, which was denied to her in the past or would have been denied if her husband was around. Thus, the added responsibilities and the decisions contribute to the process of empowerment. The process of decision making and the added responsibilities was a recurrent theme in most of the other interviews. From the interview it is

also evident that the process to empowerment is not easy, it is a challenge. We also put forth in the interview the question about whether they were working or not, if so why? The main reason to ask this question was to examine the role of employment status in empowerment. To this one of the respondent answered:

‘I don’t have to work if my husband is earning a lakh of rupees in a month, for me what is important is to manage everything at home nicely, especially my children. Giving them all the love and guidance is my utmost aim. If they grow up responsibly then what else we as parents want. Nevertheless this decision of not working was a conscious one. My husband told me to work if I want to but I decided not to work. As for me my children are important and what I would earn would hardly make a big difference. I am enjoying my life as a house wife and all the freedom and responsibilities that I have’ (Interview No 5 Siona Menezes 10th September 2014)

The same question on employment was put forth to another lady, she was a working women and she said that:

‘I decided to work as I like to work and earn for myself, rather than be dependent. My husbands keeps saying that if I want to quit I could, but I enjoy and feel nice, at home I feel bored. I am so used to working. Though my children are there, they are fine with their grandparents (my parents). But yes, at times I feel the guilt that I am not giving enough time to them, because already their father is not there around. But at the same point of time my children understand me....’(Interview No 6 Arila Menezes 15th September 2014)

From the above two interview excerpts one would say that it is quite clear in the case of Siona she is dependent and in the case of Arila she is independent. However, to what extent is this an indicator or contributing factor to empowerment. If we apply Kabeer’s idea of empowerment then it has to do with making strategic life choices. In both these cases the husbands have given them a free hand to decide whether they would like to work or not. In the case of Siona, she decides not to work because for her the priority is her children, where as in the case of Arila her priority lies in being economically independent. Thus, from the above two interview excerpts we can conclude that empowerment cannot be linked purely to employment, but empowerment is strongly related to the strategic life choices one makes. Further, we could go on to say that whether one is employed or not it shouldn’t be looked as a single indicator of empowerment. As the women here are not subject to coercion but have decided to work or not to work by their own choice. Though, there are exceptions to this finding, wherein one of the women stated that ‘my husband says why are you working for peanuts, leave your job and stay at

home, I'll pay you more than that, but I choose to work as I have my own identity and self respect'.

From the above results and findings it is evident that the increased responsibilities that the women of the Diasporic men undertake are due to their own choice. This fact is evident as 100% of the women decided to get married to the Diasporic men by their own choice and all of them also had anticipated before marriage the additional responsibilities. Hence, the added responsibilities shouldn't be looked at as a burden and something that is of injustice to a woman, but should be looked at as an opportunity of empowerment brought in due to the strategic life choice of marrying a Diasporic men. Thus, the women here have consciously weighed the pros and cons of marrying a Diasporic men before entering into an alliance. Further, to what extent do the increased responsibilities hinder or allow the decision making capacity of the women left behind?

b) Decision making

The next theme that was recurrent in most of the interviews was that of the capacity to make decisions. In five out of the six interviews the respondents stated that all decisions relating to their children and household were undertaken independently by themselves. Decisions with reference to children in particular were undertaken on the advice of the elder members in the household, whereas decisions with reference to household expenditure were independently undertaken by the women. The women however, stated that whenever it came to any major decision then they would consult their husbands and jointly decide. The major decisions included investments, building/renovation of house and the buying of various raw materials, buying a new car/bike or costly household appliances, putting their children to a specific school, organizing a celebration for 1st Birthday, Communion, 21st Birthday and going to parents place to stay for a month and so on. All the six respondents stated that all minor decisions were independently undertaken by them. The minor decisions included buying of groceries, clothes and certain things for children or taking in-laws or parents to doctor etc. What is evident here is that all of them had anticipated taking care of their children and deciding for them. But what is new for them is the added decisions one needs to take to the added responsibilities with reference to money management and in-laws health and care. As one of the women stated that:

'I manage the money properly and also decide how much to spend and where to spend, mostly when it comes to marketing of daily things I buy without asking anyone, at times my mother- in-law tells me to buy a particular fish and at times I buy what I want. At

times she says I spend a lot, but she thinks like that because during her days things were cheaper and now they are expensive, but in her days her husband was earning a thousand rupees a month, now you can't compare those prices, but now my husband's salary is also quite high, he earns around fifty thousand. So that's the difference. I however, ask my husband about spending on celebration. Like for instance, last year was my son's first holy communion, so I asked my husband how much we could spend, he said we could spend fifty thousand. So accordingly I tried to fit the expenses within fifty thousand. But it finally came up to sixty five thousand rupees. I then told him, he said it was ok, I also told him why it exceeded. So mostly we jointly decide how much, at times I tell him to buy something abroad and get it and he brings or sometimes he asks what we need. So ultimately spending is left up to me and big spending we decide jointly.' (Interview no 6 Arila Menezes 15th September 2014)

The survey questionnaire also supports the above two interview findings, with reference to the role the absence of men played in increased responsibilities and decision making. Let us examine the survey results to further substantiate this point. The level of empowerment relating to agency was measured on the basis of a total of 11 questions. The scale presented the low level, moderate level and high level, the scale for low was 1-4, moderate was 5-7 and high was 7-11.

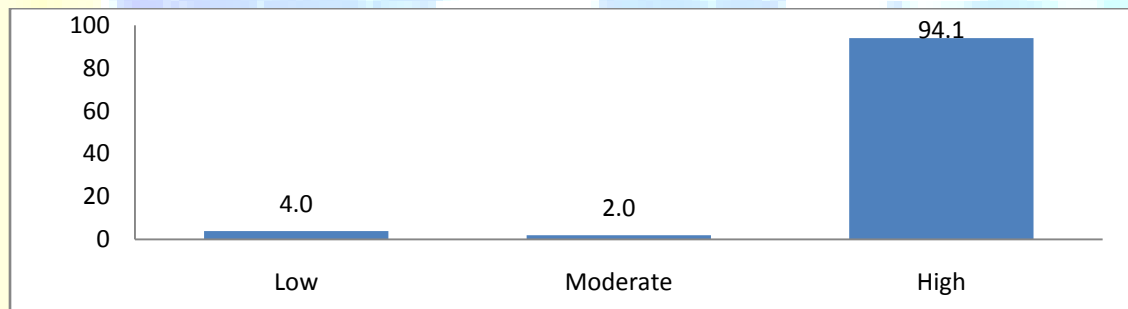


Figure 1.2: Level of empowerment on the basis of Agency

From the figure 1.2 it is evident that only four percent of the women felt low with reference to agency that covered the aspects of responsibilities and decision making, again only two percent felt that they had a moderate role in decision making and the responsibilities that came about due to the absence of their husband, while a vast majority of 94.1 percent felt that they had a great role to play in decision making as well as undertaking the added responsibilities.

Thus, to conclude the physical absence of the husbands contribute women to take greater responsibilities and decisions, thereby contributing to their empowerment and independence (see also Zachariah *et al* 2000: 45, Gulati 1993, Mascranhas-Keyes 2011) Further, could we say that increased mobility contributed in the process of empowerment?

c) Mobility

The element of agency can also be related to mobility, the capacity to move and stay wherever one wants to is of great significance in the process of empowerment. In the case of AVC what we can see is that the several responsibilities that these women have to shoulder both within and outside the house, compel women to be more mobile. The extent of shouldering the responsibilities among these women of migrant households differs from one family to another. In all the six interviews the interviewees stated that there were lots of social compulsions in the villages and as they were the only ones in the home along with their in-laws they had to oblige these social compulsions.

The social compulsions include the various invitations of weddings, birthdays, communions, confirmation, housewarming and christening. Apart from these there were other social compulsions like funerals, 'saibins' (Mother Mary's Litany and procession at each other's homes), cross feast, church feast, novenas, relatives feasts and condolences. There were also family and personal needs that needed to be fulfilled. Family needs include taking children and in-laws to the doctor, reaching children to school, banking, picnics, marketing and dealing with various people when a house is being constructed. Personal needs include going for movies, 'tiatrs' (Drama/Play), parlour, tailor and personal shopping. Two of the women interviewee states that:

'I stay with my mother-in-law and my children, life is so hectic. I go to the market once a week, everyday I reach my daughter who is four to school, my son is twelve so he goes by himself. Sometimes I have to take an appointment for my mother-in-law to visit the doctor in Margao, I go for 'tiatrs' with my children as i like 'tiatrs'. In the morning if there is someones funeral i have to go in the evening during certain months there is 'saibin', so there also i go with my children. For weddings I take the car and i go with my children and mother-in-law. For birthdays and other celebration only me and my children go, so in the villages you see you have to be ready for something or the other, because if you don't go them everybody will make 'shin' (laughs *soglin shin kotolin*: which means everybody will condemn you for not coming for the several occasions that takes place in the village or anything concerning any of the villagers). Because if I don't go they will talk and next time they won't come for our occasions. So i have to go' (Interview no 6 Arila Menezes 15th September 2014)

'I avoid going for weddings or celebrations if there is no transport, as i don't know to drive or ride so it becomes difficult to go for certain occasions especially if they are far away. But if the occasion is in the village or close by I go with my neighbours and far of places only if there is a bus or some transport..... (Interview no 5 Siona Menezes 10th September 2014)

What we see in these two excerpts of the interview is that the women are very much aware of how society will perceive them, and they have to oblige to ways that people and society expects and accepts. In the Villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim vis-à-vis the Catholic Goan society expects the families to be obliging during the various social gatherings, since the husband is not there, the women left behind performs the social function and vis-à-vis becomes mobile. The women also fulfill their personal needs along with the various social needs. Thus, the freedom of mobility contributes towards the process of empowerment.

1.3: Achievements

According to Kabeer (1999) achievements are the outcome of resources and agency and thus the three together constitute empowerment. In our study we have used two important inter-related aspects of Happiness and Role achievement as a measure of achievement within the process of empowerment. The choice of the said indicators is based on the fundamental idea of 'choice'. Since the women in AVC rationally and judiciously decided to marry men who migrated for reasons i.e. love, security, status and independence. We found it logical to link happiness and role achievement as the indicators of achievement. As the previous two aspects of resources and agency together constitute; "What Sen (1985 b) refers to as:

'capabilities: the potential that people have for living their lives the way they want, of achieved valued ways, of being and doing' He uses the idea of 'functionings' of all possible ways of 'being and doing', which are valued by people in the given context and of 'functioning achievements' (cited in Kabeer 1999: 438) .

What we see in the case of AVC (Goa) is that the society values the role of the women i.e. a good daughter, good mother, good wife, good daughter-in-law, good manager, multi-tasking in case of working women etc. The achievements of a women in AVC is not only centred around the family welfare but also personal welfare and interests, which are related to aspects i.e. working as a professional, contributions to the church associations (legion of Mary, Vincent de Paul, Parish Council and Cross committees) Village panchayat and Municipal Counsellor. Through all these association of a women, a women felt happy or content, apart from the happiness derived from the respect that people gave on being a good daughter, wife, mother, daughter-in-law or a professional worker. Further, the alliance to all these association was a matter of choice. However, Kabeer (1999) states that; "a concerns with 'achievements' in the measurement of empowerment draws attention to the need for further qualification to our

understanding of choice as far as empowerment is concerned, we are interested in the possible inequalities in the capacity to make choices, rather than in differences in the choices they make” (Kabeer 1999:438-439).

Hence, though in some studies the ability to be employed is taken as an achievement. In the case of women in AVC to be employed or not is a matter of choice. The women here have a choice to work or not to work. A woman’s employment status is not the only achievement indicator, apart from employment to be able to up bring children and the welfare of the parents and in-laws in the most appropriate way and to be able to contribute to the village, is also an achievement. The Idea of success and achievement in the case of women from AVC is centred on the Sen (1985b) idea of ‘functionings’. Thus, in the case of AVC I have tried to measure Achievements by applying the concepts of ‘functionings’ and operationalizing it to valued aspects in the AVC society with reference to women’s achievement. Thus, let us examine the level of achievement, as a contributing factor to the process of empowerment.

1.3.1: Role fulfilment¹ as an Achievement in the Process of Empowerment

Women in AVC are regarded successful if they have been able to fulfil their various roles as a women. Women are expected to be superwomen, especially if they are working. The roles that women performed were the role of a daughter, wife, mother, daughter-in-law and women. In all these roles women are supposed to be good, by good we mean she should be able to perform all her duties and responsibilities with reference to each of the roles. The roles are to be performed irrespective of working/employed or not. The women’s achievement in the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim is on the basis of their achievements as daughters this is linked to their educational and other extra-curricular achievements and the ability to care for her parents even if she is married, their achievements as a wife in relation to how they manage the household and how they maintain relationships with the in-laws, relatives, neighbours, friends and the husband, their achievement as a daughter-in-law and this is measured in reference to how well one takes care of the in-laws, their achievements as a mother is related to the achievements of their children, their own achievements as a women is measured with reference to her ability to manage public and the private sphere. One of the women in her interview spoke in detail about how she deals with the public and private sphere, she says:

'I am a teachers and I work in Canacona, every day I have to travel from Cuncolim to Canacona, which is a distance of 30 KM. My school starts at 8.00 o clock so everyday i wake up at 5.00 am. I wake up early to prepare lunch and breakfast for me and my children, my children are in 7th and 9th standard. Luckily they are girls so I don't have to worry about whether they have had their lunch or not, as they come home heat and eat. I reach home by 3.00 pm, by the time i come I am quite exhausted. I take rest till 4 pm, i then drop my children to Margoa, that is around 13 km for music classes on every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The music class starts at 4.30 pm and finishes by 5.45 pm. So during those times i shop in the city sometimes or simply wait till they finish. Once a week, mostly on Sunday's I go to Carmona that is my husband's place as my mother-in-law stays there with her elder son, I have no brother and my parents passed away so my husband stay's here in Cuncolim, whenever he comes, you can say he is a 'Ghorzovoin' (son-in-law of the house, a men who lives at his wife's residence is called so). In the evening we say the rosary, and I prepare vegetables and heat the food, we watch serials and have dinner and then go to sleep. This is my everyday routine, except for celebration, parties and other functions. This most difficult part is to go out for functions it disturbs the routine but what to do we have to maintain relations with all, if i don't go for someone's wedding one day my daughter will marry who will come for ours'.

Thus, the women independently perform the expected roles; as if they don't they will be considered not good enough.

1.3.2: Happiness as an indicator of achievement

From all the six interviews another recurrent theme was happiness, the women felt happy if everything in their life was stable and going on peacefully. Women's happiness was based on the economic stability, bearing of children, children's achievements, good relations with in-laws and neighbours, ability to contribute in the private sphere i.e. Legion of Mary, Vincent de Paul, Parish Council, Cross committees, Village panchayat and Municipal Council and employment. The first four aspects of economic stability, bearing of children, children's achievements and good relations with in-laws and neighbours were most important for their happiness.

Let us now examine the survey questionnaire data in order to substantiate the level of happiness and to see how women perceived their achievement with reference to the various roles they play and are expected to pay among the women left behind.

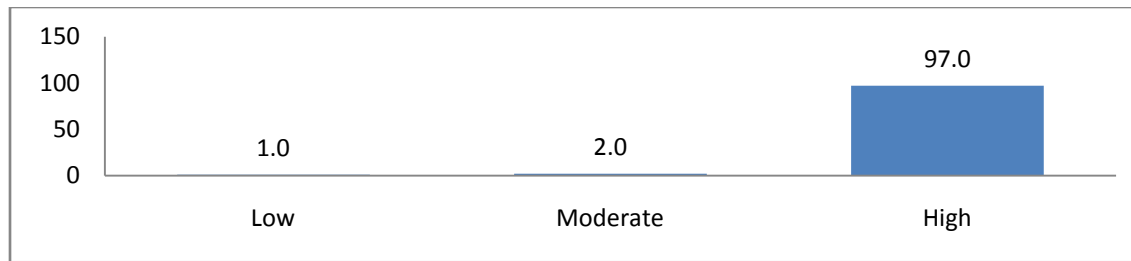


Figure 1.3: Level of empowerment on the basis of Achievement

From the above graph it is clearly evident that a large majority of the women i.e. 97 percent felt that they were high achievers and were happy and content with the contribution they have made to their families and the society at large. They felt good about the roles they played, especially due to the autonomy they enjoyed in fulfilling the expectations that the various roles demanded of them.

Conclusion: Several studies on a similar theme presents that in the absence of the men, women to do tasks that were done by men earlier. The exposure to these task i.e. managing finances and doing all the outdoor work, contributes to emotional disturbances and stress. Women try to channelize the support of other male relatives to initially deal with such task. However, over a period of time women adjust and learn to do all the tasks independently thereby contributing to their independence. Nevertheless, women continue to perform the task that was traditionally meant for women thereby juxtaposing this independence (UNESCO 1984, Gulati 1993, Gorden 1994). Further, the amount of stress and strain is determined by the duration of the husbands' absence, lack of resources, the number of responsibilities and increase in these aspects contributed to stress and strain (Gorden 1994, Menon 1995). Further, other studies in India present that male migration emancipates women from the control of men and women get equipped to face the world due to the exposure to increased responsibilities and power, which in turn contributes to their autonomy (Zachariah and Rajan 2001, Gulati 1993, Mascarenhas-Keyes 2011). Consequently, this may not be true in all the parts of the globe. Mascarenhas-Keyes (2011) also referred to wives of international migrant as progressive mother, she refers to this concept to denote the ideal attributes, skills and modern progressive outlook that a women of a Diaspora household possessed in several household. Thus, women in the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim feel empowered in the absence of their men. The empowerment is indicated through their greater access to resources, their role in decision making, undertaking of the

additional responsibilities previously undertaken by men and the achievements with references to the role they play in their families and the society at large. Not to forget that this empowerment comes at a cost, a cost of absence, emptiness, negotiations, compromise and family disunion.

Notes

1. Based on the researchers' empirical observation of the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim for the last 15 years i.e. since 1999, I have tried to provide the role expectation of women who have their husbands abroad. When we say the women is successful in AVC then it means that she has been an Ideal daughter, wife, mother, daughter-in-law and an Ideal women overall.

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