

Rural-Urban Interconnections and Dimensions of Social Mobility Among Women: A Study of BKT Block in Lucknow District

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyse the dimensions of social mobility among women as a consequence of rural-urban interconnections. The paper studies Nandana village of BKT block of Lucknow district. Women in India have always experience restrictions in their mobility because of socio-cultural and economic factors. But in the present context the rural-urban interconnection have facilitated the mobility among women. As a consequence of rural-urban interconnection there are significant changes in rural social structure which is inducing mobility among women.

In this context present paper analyses various socio-economic, educational and cultural factors which are facilitating social mobility among women as a result of rural-urban interconnections in fringe areas. Case studies and in-depth interviews have been used to know various dimensions of social mobility among women. Secondary data have been also used to explore the different aspects of socio-cultural mobility among women. Indian women face structural barriers that hinder their mobility like: societal expectations, gender roles and financial crisis. The paper concludes that the processes of urbanization and industrialisation have accelerated rural-urban interconnections and consequently it has unleashed many new processes of change contributing in women's mobility.

Keywords: Rural- Urban Interconnection, Bakshi ka Talaab (BKT), Socio-Cultural Mobility, Urbanization, Industrialisation.

Introduction :

In today's era of increasing urbanization and industrialization, the internal dependency between villages and cities is significantly rising. This interaction has led to new dimensions of women's mobility. As rural and urban areas become more interconnected, social mobility among women has improved markedly. This increased interaction gives rise to a concept known as the "fringe area," which features both rural and urban characteristics. Due to the growing interdependence between rural and urban regions, women's mobility has changed and increased alongside that of men. Women are now moving toward cities more than ever before. This trend has enhanced their access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, reflecting a shift in their status within households and their decision-making power at home.

In the current context, the rural-urban interconnection has facilitated improved mobility for women. As a result of these connections, there have been significant changes in the rural social structure, which promote women's mobility. Traditionally, women in India have faced restrictions on their mobility due to social, cultural, and economic factors. Additionally, there

are often unspoken constraints that limit women's mobility, preventing them from contributing as much to the economy as their male counterparts (Gera, K. 2020).

Patriarchy is a significant factor affecting women's mobility. Women in cities often reported needing to seek permission from male household members to go to the grocery store or travel short distances via bus or public transport. This restriction limits their mobility, which in turn hinders their access to various opportunities and activities in society (Rahul Goel, 2022). There is a clear connection between women's ability to leave the home and their decision-making power within it. When women venture outside, their mobility increases, granting them access to education and various work opportunities, enabling them to become financially independent and support their families.

Women are typically expected to handle household chores, which further limits their mobility. Occasionally, when they manage to engage in outside work—such as farming or grocery shopping—they experience a slight increase in mobility. Some women navigate patriarchal norms to gain more mobility through what is known as a "patriarchal bargain" (P. Siwach, 2020). This concept refers to women obtaining greater freedom and opportunities through specific strategies within a patriarchal structure. While they do not entirely transform the structure, they seek to mitigate exploitation with minor adjustments.

Another issue is that women do not have equal land rights compared to men. This disparity is a primary reason young women migrate to cities, where they find more economic opportunities. However, male elders in the household often do not support the mobility of young women, despite the fact that women typically contribute a larger portion of their earnings to the family. One reason for this lack of support is that women fulfil essential roles as workers within households and external land work, often without any claim to the land they work. Daughters are expected to provide unpaid labour on the family land without having any rights over it. Young men tend to migrate shorter distances than young women because they possess land rights and responsibilities for farming. In contrast, young women do not have land rights, which allows them greater mobility to distant locations compared to men who have these rights (Tacoli, 2010).

Empowering women and providing them with greater mobility can significantly enhance their family welfare (Andari & Yusuf et al., 2023). There are notable differences in mobility rates between rural and urban areas. In urban settings, women generally have better access to mobility, which in turn offers them increased employment and educational opportunities. Conversely, women in rural areas experience limited mobility due to cultural norms and societal expectations, which are also heavily influenced by their relationship with the head of the household. The mobility of rural women is often restricted to activities such as going to the market and dropping off or picking up children from school and tuition. Their movement is less visible in activities like visiting relatives or attending social gatherings.

Unmarried women tend to have more mobility compared to married women, as they do not bear household responsibilities or childcare duties. This lack of obligations allows them to travel further in search of employment opportunities. In contrast, married women often prefer

jobs close to home due to their domestic responsibilities, which ultimately reduces their mobility (Gera & Hasdell, 2020).

Daughters-in-law are often seen as the least mobile group (V. Mehta & H. Sai, 2021). As Mothers-in-law play a critical role in influencing the social mobility and access to social networks for their daughters-in-law. In households where a daughter-in-law lives with her mother-in-law, the latter may create barriers that restrict the daughter-in-law's social mobility and networking opportunities. This limitation often results in difficulties accessing reproductive health services and family planning resources, as daughters-in-law typically have minimal interaction outside the home (S. Anukriti et al., 2020).

Objectives:

- To explore the various socio-cultural dimensions of mobility among women resulting from rural-urban interconnections.
- To analyze the economic and educational aspects of mobility among women due to rural-urban interconnections.

Methodology:

Research methodology involves systematically and scientifically addressing the research problem. This study aims to analyze the dimensions of social mobility among women as a result of rural-urban interconnections. Therefore, the case study method and focused interviews have been used. Nandana village in Bakshi Ka Talab is serving as the area of study. The BKT block is one of the fastest-growing areas, making it an ideal location to examine changes in women's mobility.

The respondents are women aged 18 to 35 years, as this age group experiences the highest mobility due to education, health, and employment opportunities. Case studies and in-depth interviews have been conducted to understand various dimensions of social mobility among women. Additionally, secondary data also have been used to explore different aspects of socio-cultural mobility among women.

A Brief Profile of the Studied Fringe Village:

Nandana is a Nagar Panchayat fringe village located 16 km from the city of Lucknow. The majority of the population comprises upper-caste individuals, specifically the Chauhans, who make up approximately 70% of the residents, while the remaining population belongs to lower castes. The village's economy primarily relies on agriculture, trade, transportation, and various jobs.

Unlike traditional villages, Nandana is a fringe village that has developed due to increased interaction between the city and surrounding areas. Most houses are constructed from concrete, and the village benefits from good water and electricity facilities. The village's infrastructure supports convenient transportation, making movement between Nandana and Lucknow easy. This accessibility is one of the primary reasons for the notably higher mobility of women in this village.

Rural-Urban Interconnections and Dimensions of Social Mobility Among Women: Discussion and Analysis:

For women in rural fringe areas, access to mobility is an essential factor for achieving economic and social empowerment. Increased mobility brings new dimensions of freedom into their lives, such as opportunities for education, employment, and skill enhancement. However, the percentage of mobile women in rural areas remains low due to various factors, including cultural norms, gender roles, safety concerns, and societal values. In India, only 37% of women in rural areas are mobile, which is significantly lower than the percentage of mobile men (NFHS, 2019-21). This data indicates that women's mobility is still constrained in rural areas for several reasons. Nevertheless, the interconnection between rural and urban areas has introduced new aspects that have enhanced women's mobility, particularly in fringe areas. Despite the enduring roots of patriarchy in many villages in India, the rural-urban linkages have begun to weaken these traditional structures. As a result, there have been notable changes in women's mobility, contributing positively to their social and economic status.

The growing connection between urban and rural areas has accelerated the process of land selling. Families in villages have sold their land at higher prices, using the surplus to improve their living conditions. Consequently, daughters are now being sent to cities for higher education, and land is increasingly being purchased in the name of wives at their maternal homes, significantly enhancing the status of women within the household. Additionally, the design of village houses has evolved to resemble urban structures, featuring concrete and well-furnished homes. This transformation has had a positive impact on women's mobility in rural areas. As families' economic situations improve, women gain better access to education and employment opportunities. This advancement enables them to pursue careers in various fields, such as lekhpal (revenue officer), advocate, doctor, and school teacher.

An additional effect of the interconnection between rural and urban areas has been a notable shift in the mentality of people in rural regions, which has opened up new opportunities for women. These opportunities include higher levels of education, the freedom to travel to cities for jobs and studies while staying in hostels, flexibility in returning home at night, and changes in clothing patterns. Several other effects of this rural-urban interconnection are also evident. For instance, women's agency in decision-making has increased significantly. When land is purchased in the name of women after selling existing land, they experience a greater sense of empowerment, as they now have ownership. This empowerment is often driven by a two percent discount in stamp duties for men, which incentivizes purchasing land in women's names. In households with collective land ownership, women's mobility tends to be greater compared to those where land ownership is solely in the hands of men. In some households, the status of women has improved due to the effects of rural-urban interconnection and the land-selling process. However, in households where patriarchy still prevails, women may be landowners only on paper, while the actual ownership of properties remains with men.

The accessibility and affordability of public transport have greatly facilitated women's mobility in rural fringe areas, as infrastructure plays a significant role in connecting women's

mobility with cities. With this easily accessible transportation, women from villages are increasingly traveling to cities for various activities such as shopping, hospital visits, and leisure.

While it is now easier for daughters to move around in villages, the mobility of daughters-in-law is comparatively restricted for several reasons. These may include household chores, a lack of support from their mothers-in-law, and narrow-mindedness within the family. Daughters-in-law tend to have higher mobility for doctor visits and picking up children from school, while their overall mobility for visiting relatives or going to the market is considerably lower. In households dominated by patriarchy, women's mobility remains limited. For unmarried women, mobility is often possible due to education or employment. When women earn their own income, some social norms and restrictions may be relaxed. Thus, we can conclude that women's mobility and agency are closely tied to their economic independence. Additionally, access to transportation plays a crucial role in determining women's mobility, as those who own private transport (like scooters or cars) can travel longer distances more easily.

Conclusion:

The following changes are visible as a result of rural-urban interconnections on women's mobility in fringe areas. The analysis of the data reveals the following key findings:-

- The rural-urban interconnection has had a significant positive impact on women's mobility in fringe areas. Despite traditional norms, cultural values, and societal expectations, these constraints are frequently weakening.
- Land transactions have brought about significant changes in the socio-economic and cultural mobility of women in fringe areas.
- There have been changes in the traditional forms of marriage. For instance, the concept of love marriage has now reached villages and is increasingly accepted by families. However, caste barriers continue to pose a challenge.
- Traditional ways of celebrating birthdays have changed, and there has been a rise in restaurant culture. Additionally, the age of marriage for women has increased, shifting from the previous maximum of 18 to 25 years to now 28 to 30 years, due to rural-urban interconnection and the opening of new opportunities for education and employment.
- Previously, women's mobility was restricted, allowing them to go to the market only with a male family member. Now, this situation has changed, and women enjoy greater freedom of movement.
- Women are also pursuing technical courses such as NEET and JEE, commuting daily from villages to cities for their coaching.
- Social norms and traditional values are diminishing as a consequence of rural-urban interconnection. Practices such as the curtain system are disappearing in rural areas.
- As a result of rural-urban interconnection, beauty parlours and boutiques are rapidly opening in rural areas, providing employment opportunities for women.
- While this interconnection has many positive effects, it has also led to some negative outcomes, such as conspicuous consumption. This type of consumption is

increasingly evident in rural areas during occasions like weddings and other celebrations.

- With the rise of rural-urban interconnection, online delivery services such as Swiggy, Zomato, Flipkart, and Amazon are becoming more common in rural areas.
- In the current scenario, women are frequently moving to cities, where they feel liberated and gain greater access to the outside world.

Based on the current study, it can be argued that the rural-urban interconnection has significantly impacted women's mobility and contributed to the development of village communities. In this context, social capital plays a crucial role in determining women's mobility. Women with higher social capital are more likely to experience greater mobility. They form various network groups that enhance their mobility through these social connections.

Furthermore, ownership of land and means of production has also aided women in achieving upward mobility. In India, a patriarchal society still prevails; men in rural areas have begun to accept women's mobility primarily because it makes their own lives easier. Traditionally, women's roles were confined to domestic responsibilities and working on family agricultural land, while men took on tasks outside the home. For instance, it was typically the responsibility of men to pick up and drop off children from school. However, as women's mobility has increased, these responsibilities have also shifted to women, including tasks such as shopping in the market and working in agriculture. Although men may give the impression that women are liberated to make their own decisions, the real power often remains in men's hands. They dictate the criteria for women's freedom of movement. Additionally, land transactions have altered the power dynamics in villages. Findings reveal that men employed in government or permanent jobs tend to restrict the mobility of women in their households, while those who are farmers or in private jobs often encourage it. It was also observed that women from higher castes are generally more mobile than those from lower castes. Despite this, there are still unspoken restrictions on women's mobility, especially among lower-caste women, who suffer from a lack of education. Consequently, the rural-urban interconnection has not significantly impacted their lives.

In conclusion, class and caste play crucial roles in determining women's mobility. The rural-urban interconnection is bringing about changes in women's mobility alongside their class status and power dynamics over time.

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