

INTRODUCTION

Asia, home to a 60 % of the world's population has been a major source of immigrants to countries such as United Kingdom, United States of America and Africa. India is one of the forerunners in this phenomenon of migration since the last century.

On the one hand, more and more younger people are migrating abroad to improve their quality of life. On the other hand, demography shows that the population of above 60 years is growing steadily and will reach to 113 million by the year 2016 (Devi, n.d., PDF 9). Therefore, it is not hard to imagine that very soon, India will face the problem of meeting the social and psychological needs of a large number of elders, most of whose families will have disintegrated, as the younger generation would have gone to urban areas, due to attractive global market factors giving promises of upward mobility in jobs and a better quality of life. The older generation, consisting of the old couple as well as other members from earlier joint families, especially in rural areas, will be left on their own, lonely and dependent on others outside their families for help and support.

An overview of the existing literature shows that the elders lose power and authority because of their advanced age and retirement, and need the help and support of social networks in daily routine and crisis situation. Thus, if their children migrate, the elders will feel the resultant impact on their lives in many ways.

Previous studies and internet search for overseas migration from countries including India, showed up literature on rural and urban migration mostly as census, labour or even archival cases in the foreign immigration office without the psychological and "social implications", being addressed (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 31).

The present study makes a humble effort to fill this gap by providing a descriptive picture of the impact on rural elders due to their children's migration abroad. The psycho-social components form a major part of the study. A case study method using questionnaire and life histories of the elders have been employed. The findings are validated using the theoretical framework from select concepts of different theories / perspectives related to old age and international migration, from available literature.

It is proposed that dissemination of this study will provide informative data to rural communities, students of Gerontology and policy makers to help them address needs of elders whose children have migrated abroad. Knowledge from the present research has the potential to play a vital role in understanding effective support systems, thus helping to tailor a sound curriculum in rural and urban schools and colleges as well as in designing a compatible social policy.

The present study takes off from the study conducted by Burholt, Wenger, Biswas, Dave, Mallya, Sodhi and Shah (2003), on migration and families with sample from the sending communities of Gujarat and Punjab, India, and Sylhet, Bangladesh on a cross section of rural communities; as well as with a sample from the receiving communities comprising the same ethnic groups, in UK