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**AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE STATUS OF FEMALE HEADED  
HOUSEHOLDS IN INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Household is usually a group of persons who normally live together and take their meals from a common kitchen unless or otherwise the exigencies of work prevent any of them from doing so. She or he is generally the person who bears the chief responsibility for the maintenance of the household and takes decisions on behalf of the household. Now days in India as elsewhere in the world, Female Headed Households are increasing rapidly for various reasons. The main intension of the study is to analyze the growth of female headed households in India and to examine the various features of female headed households in India. The study has been prepared on the basis of secondary data collected from census of India 2001 and 2011. The study has used simple percentages, growth rates, tables and graphs. The paper concluded that, an in-depth study of the growth and features of the female headed households help in preparing the government budget that is the so called gender budgeting. Gender development, gender main streaming, women empowerment have become the most popular concepts in development policy and governance. In fact, under valuation of invisible work rendered by women has resulted in the underestimation of GDP. Since 1980's, the feminist movement has been fighting for the cause of 'care economy' which produces family and community oriented goods and services. Gender mainstreaming demands not only disaggregated data but also results of empirical studies across various regions in the country. This will facilitate both gender development policies and ensure gender equity.

**Keywords:** Female Headed Household, Growth, Features.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Women play a critical role in all countries around the world. Their roles have not been recognized for a long time but with the several campaigns and movements aimed at fighting for the rights of women, the society is beginning to appreciate the role of women. Women make more than 50% of the world population today. Women population in the rural areas is unusually high because most men are increasingly migrating to cities and towns of the world, in search of employment. The high rates of migration of men to urban areas and absence of adult males has led to most households being headed by a female in developing countries. A female headed household is a family where the primary decision maker is female due to the absence of an adult male person capable of playing this role.

Further, a woman's choice of heading her own household is affected by her own characteristics (such as age, marital status, income, and occupation), the characteristics of the marriage market, socio-economic circumstances of her natal home, and a variety of other factors affecting household formation and dissolution (Kanbur, 1994; Schultz, 2001). Transformation of the household form has positive and negative impact at the aggregate level of a country. Many studies have concluded that these remittances provide better housing, and raise standard of living of the migrant households and has profound influence on the status of left behind wives in the family. (Hugo, 1995; Hadi, 1999, Zachariah et.al (2001), Shylaja 2002, Shind,2008). At the same time women's new roles have created a shift in gender relations, but most women said that they were more "uncomfortable" with, than empowered by, these new roles. Female headed families have to face many problems which male headed or normal families, both of the nuclear or of the joint, absolute types do not have to face. It is widely suspected that the economic and social and cultural vulnerability associated with female headed households without male member resulted in a lot of problems in the family particularly among women heads. They can be economic, psychological, and social and children discipline related, that may cause serious consequences for the growth and development of younger generations.

In recent decades the new form of households emerged. House headed by women have become more significant phenomenon worldwide in the last half of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century (Baros & Fox, 1997, p. 231). In 1960 only 9 percent of families with children in united state were headed by none married women; by 1999 the number was over 20 percent. (Min & Michael, 2003)

In terms of female-headed households in the country, India occupies the 67<sup>th</sup> position worldwide. Belarus (53.9 percent), Ukraine (49.4 percent), Swaziland (47.9 percent), Eritrea (46.7 percent), Cuba ( 46.4 percent) are the top five nations having the highest female-headed households.

This is critically important when considering that female-headed households most of which are headed by lone mothers, are rising in number and proportion in most developing regions, currently constituting an estimated 13% of all households in the Middle East and North Africa, 16% in Asia, 22% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 24% in Latin America.

With this background, the present study tries to analyze the growth and status of female headed households in India and it has also made an attempt to examine the various facilities like; drinking water facilities, assets, access to banking services, cooking fuels and other household amenities of female headed households in India.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Objectives of the present study are;

- To analyze the growth of female headed households in India.
- To examine the various features of female headed households in India.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The present paper has been prepared on the basis of secondary data collected from census of India 2001 and 2011. The study has used simple percentages, growth rates, tables and graphs to present the work scientifically and systematically.

## **4. GROWTH OF FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN INDIA**

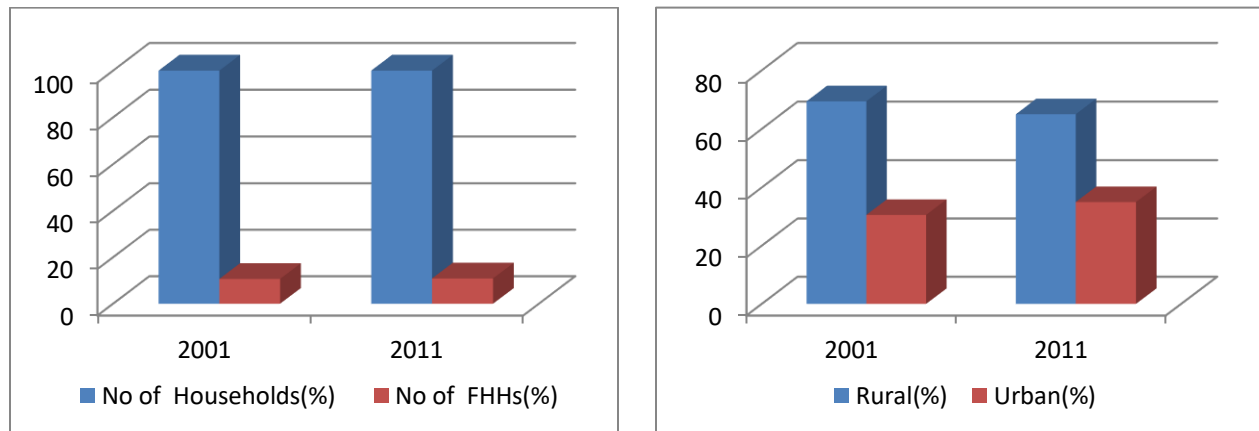
In recent years, India has noticed rapid growth in the emergence of female headed households. According to census of India, 2001 and 2011, One-tenth of the households in India have females as household heads. Growth of Female headed households in India has been discussed in the below table.

**Table 1: Growth of Female Headed Households 2001 & 2011**

<b>Total Households</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
No of Households(%)	100	100
No of FHHs(%)	10.68	10.89
Rural(%)	69.42	65.0
Urban(%)	30.57	35

*Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011*

**Figure 1 and 2: Female Headed households in India and Female headed households in rural and urban areas**



Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011

The table 1 represents the percentage share of female headed households according to 2001 and 2011 census in India. As per the given table, out of total households, 10.68% of the households are female headed households, which has increased to 10.89% in the year 2011.

Where as in rural area, around 69.42% of the households are female headed households, but has been decreased to 65% in the year 2011. The study observed that, in rural area, the growth of FHHs has been decreased according to 2011 census. Because long term migration of men in search of employment has decreased. However, in urban areas there was a drastic increase in the growth of female headed households in India. The percentage share of FHHs in urban was 30.57% in 2001 which has increased to 35% in the year 2011. Because the broad range of domestic situations are typically characterized by the absence of a resident male head in urban area viz widowhood, divorce, separation, and desertion, loss of economic function by resident males due to severe unemployment, disability, illness and male reluctance to accept jobs seen as status reducing, households with no mature sons, sons residing in independent nuclear units.

## 5. FEATURES OF FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN INDIA

A woman's choice of heading her own household is affected by her own characteristics and features (such as age, marital status, income, and occupation), the characteristics and socio-economic circumstances of her natal home, and a variety of other factors affecting household formation and dissolution. The following analysis provides detailed information about various features of FHHs like,

1. Female- headed households having each of the specified Assets
2. Female- headed households by availability of Bathing & Toilet Facility
3. Female-headed households availing of Banking Service
4. Ownership Status of female-headed households
5. Type of Fuel used for Cooking of female- headed households
6. Female-headed households by Type of House Structure
7. Sources of Drinking Water Facility in female-headed households

**Table 2: Female Headed households having each of the specified Assets (%)**

<b>Assets</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Radio/Transistor	16.10	52	48
Television	45.27	45	55
Mobile Phone	44.2	55	45
Scooter/Motor cycle	14	42	58
Car/Jeep/van	3.17	32	68

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 2 clearly illustrates the percentage of female headed households having specified assets in India in 2011. As per the given table, 16.10% of the Female headed household are having radio facility, in rural area 52% of the FHHs and in urban area 48% of the FHHs are having radio facility. It can be observed that the percentage of FHHs having radio is high in rural area when compared to urban area because in rural area radio is very important role in communicating the information needed for individuals everyday lives: from market prices & credit facilities to weather report, music & entertainment etc. Whereas 45.27% of the household are having television facility, in rural and urban area this percentage was 45.23 and 55 respectively.

Likewise 44.2% of the FHHs are having mobile phone facility at national level and in rural and urban area this percentage was 55 and 45 respectively. It can be observed that the percentage of FHHs having mobile phones is very high in rural area when compared to urban area. The mobile phone us by rural women has the benefit of addressing locally relevant information & issues, dissemination of information in the form of employment information, information regarding education, efficiency in agriculture by providing better market information, allow micro-entrepreneurs to expand business contacts and facilitate financial transactions such as processing remittances and obtaining micro credit so these are all reasons having mobile phones is very high in rural area.

Further 14% of the FHHs in India are having scooter/ motor cycle facility, in rural areas 42% of the FHHs and in urban area 58% of the FHHs are having scooter/ motor cycle facility. Whereas 3.17% of the household are having car/jeep/van facility, in rural and urban area this percentage was 32 and 68 respectively.

**Table 3: Female Headed Households by Availability of Bathing & Toilet Facilities (%)**

<b>Bathing Facility</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Bathroom	44	41	59
No Bathroom	41	87	13
Toilet facility within the premise	48	43	57
Not having Toilet facility within the premise	52	85	15

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 3 represents the no. of FHHs by availability of bathing and Latrine facility in India the year 2011. According to the above table 44% of the FHHs in India are having bathing facility. Where as in rural area 41% of the household are having such facility and in urban area this percentage was 59. Similarly, 41% of the household don't have bathroom facility, in rural area 87% of the FHHs and in urban area 13% of the FHHs don't have bathroom facility.

Subsequently, 48% of the FHHs in India are having Toilet facility within the premise , in rural and urban area this percentage was 43 and 57 respectively. Further 52% of the FHHs are not having Toilet facility within the premise, in rural areas, 85% of the FHHs and in urban area 15% of the FHHs are not having Latrine facility within the premise.

It has been noticed from the above table that the percentage of FHHs having Bathing & Toilet facility are very low in rural area compared urban area. Because, especially in rural area most of the FHHs have been facing income problem and another reason is that majority of the FHHs are unaware of about such facility due to illiterate. Hence, rural people are highly depending up on banks through SHGs for these loans of advances.

**Table 4: Female Headed Households Availing of Banking Service (%)**

	<b>India</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
<b>Banking Service</b>	53.34	59.22	41

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 4 represents the no. of FHHs by availability of banking service in India during the year 2011. According to the above table 53.34% of the FHHs are having banking services. Whereas in rural area 59.11% of the FHHs are having banking service and in urban area this percentage was 41.

It has been identified in the above table that, the percentage of FHHs having access to banking services is very high in rural area compared to urban areas. Because SHGs and their bank linkages have been playing a vital role in providing financial assistance to the rural poor.

**Table 5: Ownership Status of Female – Headed households (%)**

	<b>India</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Own	87	70	30
Rented	10	25	75

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 5 clearly exhibits the house ownership status of FHHs in India during 2011. As per the given table, out of the total FHHs 87% of the FHHs are having own houses. Where as in rural areas 70% of the household are own houses and in urban area this percentage was 30. Likewise 10% of the FHHs have been living in rented houses, in rural and urban area this percentage was 25% and 75% respectively.

It can be observed from the above table that, the percentage of FHHs having owned houses is very high in rural area compared to urban area. Because usually rural people are living in their own houses since their birth. But in urban area, majority of the people migrated from rural areas. Hence most of these have been living in rented houses.

**Table 6: Type of Fuel Used for Cooking of Female – Headed households (%)**

<b>Types of Fuel used for Cooking</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Fire-wood	52	82	18
Crop residue	7.2	93	7
Kerosene	3.54	16	84
LPG/PNG	28	28	72
Electricity	0.08	49	51
Biogas	0.33	59.5	40.4

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 6 shows the types of fuel used for cooking in FHHs. As per the given table, 52% of the FHHs have been using fire-wood, where as in rural area 82% of the FHHs and in urban area 18% of the FHHs are using fire-wood as cooking fuel. Likewise 7.2% of the FHHs have been using crop residue as cooking fuel, in rural and in urban area this percentage was 93 and 7 respectively. Whereas 3.54% of the FHHs have been using kerosene as cooking fuel, in rural area 16% of FHHs are kerosene users and in urban area this percentage was 84%. Likewise percentage of FHHs using kerosene as cooking fuel is very high in urban area because most of the urban poor have been using kerosene as cooking fuel which is available in PDS( Public Distribution Shop) system for fair price. Likewise 28% of the FHHs have been using LPG/PNG as cooking fuel in India, in rural and urban areas this percentage was 28 and 72 respectively. The percentage FHHs using LPG/ PNG is very high in urban area because the central government established new scheme for “Ujjwala” this scheme provides a financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL household. The scheme will free the women in urban areas from the curse of smoke while cooking. It will also reduce the time spent on cooking urban people have easily access to this program because they are educated but in rural area, they have less accessed to such program due to illiteracy and lack of awareness.

Similarly, only 0.08% of the FHHs have been using electricity as cooking fuel, in rural area 49% of the FHHs and in urban area 51% of the FHHs have been using electricity as cooking fuel. Likewise, 0.33% of the FHHs have been using Biogas as cooking fuel, in rural area 59.5% of the FHHs and 40.5% of the FHHs have been Biogas as cooking fuel in urban area.

**Table 7: Female Headed Households by Type of House Structure (%)**

Type of Structure	India	Rural	Urban
Permanent	60	54	46
Semi – Permanent	26	80	20

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 7 illustrates the female headed household by type of structure of houses in India during 2011. According to the table around 60% of the FHHs are having permanent houses, in rural area 54% of the houses are permanent and 46% of the FHHs are having permanent houses in urban areas. Similarly, 26% of the FHHs are having semi-permanent houses, 80% of the FHHs are having semi-permanent houses in rural area and in urban area this percentage was 20.



**Table 8: Sources of Drinking Water Facility in Female –Headed households (%)**

Source of Drinking Water	India	Rural	Urban
Tap Water from treated source	35.4	39	60.4
Tap Water from untreated source	13.04	76	24
Covered Well	1.98	61	39
Un- Covered Well	10.59	76	24
Hand Pump	27.65	86	14
Tube Well/ Borehole	7.72	67	33

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The table 8 represents the FHHs by drinking water facilities in India during 2011. As per the given table 35.4% of the FHHs have been using tap water from treated sources in India, 39% of the FHHs in rural area have been also using the same and in urban area this percentage was 60.4%. Whereas 13.04% of the FHHs have been using tap water from untreated sources including in rural and urban areas this percentage were 76 and 24 respectively. Similarly, only 1.98% of the FHHs have been using covered well for drinking water in India. In rural area 61% of the FHHs and in urban area 39% of the FHHs have been using covered well for drinking water. Whereas 10.59% of the FHHs have been using drinking water from uncovered well and in rural and urban areas this percentage was 76 and 24 respectively. Likewise, 27.65% of the FHHs have been using hand pump for drinking water in India and in rural areas majority of 86% of the FHHs have been using hand pump and in urban area only 14% of the FHHs have been using hand pump for drinking water. Whereas 7.72% of the FHHs have been using tube well / borehole for drinking water in India, in rural and urban areas this percentage was 67% and 33% respectively.

It can be identified that majority of the FHHs have been using tap water from treated source in urban area because the ULBs( Urban Local Bodies) provide such facilities properly. Hence the percentage is FHHs which has been using covered and uncovered well, Hand pump & borehole is very less in urban area. But in rural area percentage is FHHs using tap water from treated source is very less. Hence they have depend upon other sources like well, Hand pump and borehole.

## 6. CONCLUSION

It may conclude that, there is a drastic change in the growth of FHHs in India; it means that, India has noticed rapid growth in the emergence of female headed households. According to census of India, 2001 and 2011 One-tenth of the households in India have females as household heads. Further, the feature of female headed households like, banking services, cooking fuel, bathing facilities, drainage and sanitation facilities, status of houses, housing amenities and drinking water facilities have been significantly increasing and helps to improve the socio-economic condition of the female headed households in India. These features help the government in preparing the budget because, gender development, gender mainstreaming, women empowerment, gender budgeting etc. have become the most popular concepts in development policy and governance. There are a number of social indicators India has a lot of work to do and more so with respect to gender parity, equality and independence of women. Government policies has its limits when it comes to social impact & bringing about social changes, it is down to us citizens to give these issues a serious thought and implement it in real lives and bring about change the we all want see.

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