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Women Migration and Security Concerns: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

It has been understood since ages that people move from one place to another in search of livelihood, shelter, for seeking better life or taking refuge due to natural or manmade disasters. The process of moving to and fro within geographical spaces has been termed as Migration. Migration is temporal, location and directional. People migrate from rural to urban or from one state to another which can be understood as internal migration. There is another reality where people move from one nation to another, take up cross country travels in search of aforesaid reasons. This paper specifically addresses the issues of female migration (internal or cross-country) and the whole range of problems that they face.

Keywords: *Migration, Women Migrants, Literary, Security Concerns*

Introduction

At any point in time it is unknown how many unauthorized people are in the country, what countries they are from, where they are living and what their demographic, family and other characteristics are. Convention No. 143, adopted during the 1975 ILO Conference, defines clandestine migration movements as those when migrants find themselves "during their journey, on arrival or during their period of residence and employment (in) conditions contravening relevant international multilateral or bilateral instruments or agreements, or national law or regulations." Faced with such situation renders the migrants into identity crisis where the issue of their belongingness arises.

Georges (1999) places stress on the irregularities, admission to the country, state or city, residence in the host country and the undertaking of occupations by migrants. The smuggling of migrants is not a new phenomenon. Each year, hundreds of thousands of migrants are moved illegally by organized trafficking groups, with the business of human trafficking being valued at several billion dollars a year. Migrants reportedly pay large sums to the traffickers to migrate especially to the US, European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Gulf Countries and newly emerging labor-importing countries in East and South-East Asia- Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea and India.

Anand (2003) explain that women have been increasingly entering occupations and professions in post-independent India. They can be observed being employed in all types of technical, professional, non-professional and non-technical jobs both in private and public sectors. Besides this, women are also seen working in the informal sector where they have been hugely present.

In India, generally the policies and data associated with women's internal migration dismiss their role and only view them as wives who follow their migrating husbands. Women's

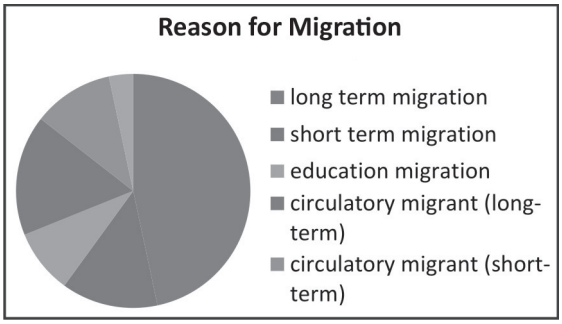
economic role still needs to be recognized and given adequate attention in policy and planning. Women are the most invisible and vulnerable among the migrant population. They contribute positively to society and there is an urgent need to build an awareness and approaches for migrant inclusion in society.

With the euphoria, about the high rates of growth in urban India as well as insulation from the economic crisis, as compared to many other countries of the world, people from different states are pouring into urban spaces to look for profitable business prospects, employment in the multinational companies and for education. Prospects for better employment and the dislike of the local for the manual labor have significantly contributed to the influx of migrants, with women migrants easily finding work, be it in the agricultural fields, in homes, or in service industry and manual laborers.

Human Development Report (2009) highlights that there exists dynamic interrelation between individual decisions and socio-economic context in which they are taken. Poverty and need to support family is strong reason for migrating. Among other reasons is unemployment, limited social and economic opportunities, increasing labor demand. While educated women migrate in search to better utilize their skills and better pay. The social reasons include getting out of a bad and abusive marriage, domestic violence, and the discrimination associated with certain groups of women- single/ unmarried mothers, widows or divorcees. The purpose of marriage in some cultures also lead to migration where women tend to take up jobs, later on, at the place of destination.

Challenges and Security Concerns

Migration in India is categorized primarily into two types: long-term migration that is, relocation of individual or family and short-term migration that is, involving back and forth movement between source and destination. In India, the patriarchal norms restrict the mobility of women and this restriction also varied across region, caste, religion, social group, educational level. Various statistical measures (Census Data 2011 and NSS rounds) clearly project that seasonal women migration is higher than the long-term migration and it also shows that centre-west and southern regions have more migratory mobility than northern and eastern regions. Most of the short term migrants belong to socioeconomically deprived sections, such as Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. These groups have negligible educational attainment, limited assets and are resource deficits. Out of all these, in India, 70.7 percent migrants are women. These women migrants are mostly employed in construction, domestic work, textile, brick-kilns, transportation, mines and agriculture sector. They are excluded from the economic, cultural, social and political lives of society. Since migration involves mobility from one place to another, this geo-spatial mobility often comes with various constraints faced by women migrants. Lack of formal residency rights, lack of identity proof, absence of political representation, low or marginally paid, working in insecure or hazardous conditions, limited or no access to government provided facilities, restricted or no access to basic amenities like hospitals and schools. They also face religion, class and region/ ethnicity based discrimination.



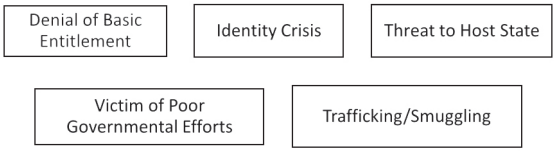
The denial of basic entitlements to this section includes access to subsidized food, housing, drinking water, sanitation, public health facilities and banking services. The reason behind the denial appears to be lack of identity proof and formal residency rights. One societal impact from women migrating into metros is crowded housing. Mumbai and New Delhi households

have been defined as crowded or severely crowded by housing authorities. Because women migrants are most often working in low-paying jobs, they tend to pool housing costs by sharing living quarters. This frequently leads to multiple families in the same apartment or home, garages being rented out as bedrooms and related problems of safety, hygiene and issues that impact on health and related values.

While discoursing on women migration another problem is identity crisis. The identification issue is not new to India as these migrants are pushed into the distinctively identifiable group identities of political, religious, racial caste or any other such identity. The reality is that thousands of false social security cards, birth certificates, religion/ caste certificates and any documentation that can be used for identification is used. This often happens because of the absence of regularized Governmental measures to identify and categorized migrants and issue them direct benefits of rights and services. Even after the Unique Identification Programe, the government has just not been able to include this section into the main society. Thus, many illegal women migrants with fake social security cards are working in just about every kind of employment there is. They are not just picking sugar beets and cleaning toilet bowls, they are in state jobs, public school systems, fast food industry, construction, building trades, restaurant and hotel industry, college, universities and factories. This also poses a threat to the host state. Weiner (1992/93) has been the first author to forcefully advocate and emphasize the illegal migration-security nexus and provided a security-stability framework for the role of states in both creating and responding to migration. According to him, there are five broad categories of situations in which immigration comes to be perceived as a threat to the host or place of destination: 'political threat', 'security risk to the host country/state', 'cultural threat', 'socio-economic problem for the host country/state', and 'as hostages against the country/state of origin'

Some migration policies that claim to defend migrant women's rights, indirectly, create obstacles for women who wish to migrate that they discontinue their efforts towards opportunities for migration. This somehow channels illegal migration flows and further women migrants are pushed into living lives without rights. The migration of highly skilled women professionals is very limited. The occupational categories open to them are generally domestic workers, nurses or caregivers or service sector. All these jobs are temporary, low paid, absent social service regulations, absence of unions, poor working conditions. In such a scenario, even if the migration is legal, women working in these sectors are subjected to discrimination, arbitrary working rules and conditions, abuses, exploitation, trafficking and prostitution.

Women migration to different place also overlaps with trafficking and smuggling. Not all women who wish to migrate have legally sanctioned opportunities and fall into the clutches of profit-seeking criminals and become prey to smuggling. Women migrants end up trafficked by generally deceptive and violent acts placing them in forced labor, slavery or prostitution.[2] They experience confinement, physical and psychological torture. Weak anti- trafficking legislations or corruption amongst law enforcement officials results in further graving the situation. Robert friedman (1996) wrote the red light district in Mumbai generates atleast $400 million per annum in revenue, with 100000 prostitutes serving 365 days a year, at the average rate of 6 customers per day at $2 each.



Interventions

Bayefysky (2007) highlights unauthorized migrants generally receive greater protection under international law than under domestic law. International human rights law tends towards expansive protections with limited accompanying of domestic implementation and

enforcement. Without changes in the social, political and economic policy making, it is impossible to expect that women migration can help bridge the gap between regions and bring about changes in the pattern of unemployment and poverty. The NCEUS (2007; 2009) reports have shown the increase in demand for both skilled and unskilled female workers. It also explicitly shows the concentration of labor into informal and flexible sectors of economy. This trend has been stronger in women migrants as they seek immediate benefits from the employment due to migration. These trends also points to the significant costs borne by the poor families of the migrants. These costs significantly become burdensome as state machineries and enforcement agencies show unwillingness to subsidize the costs through appropriate labor and social policies.

Recently, NCEUS proposed a framework to address issues of labor migrants in lieu of policies and program for informal workers. It is supposed to help informal workers, especially women migrant workers to deal with minimum labor standards and issues specific to women migrants. NCEUS has also proposed minimum social security package for coverage of migrant workers to ensure registration, and payment and receipt of benefits. Securing livelihood, addressing regulations in urban areas and rural and agricultural development are other recommendations proposed by NCEUS.

JNNURM has also achieved the goals of (i) upgradation of quality of infrastructure of cities to provide municipal facilities to its people, (ii) develop new suburban townships to reduce or redistribute the population. Srivastava and Sasikumar (2005) and Srivastava and Dasgupta (2010) in their works have analyzed the roles that Civil society organizations play in securing migrants interests.

Since women migration is primarily associated with economic activities and securing livelihood, there are various provisions made by the law to protect their interests. One interesting fact that needs to be pointed out is that few or none of them specifically pertain to the interests of women. These are general laid down laws that cover all section of labors and not specifically women. Some of the Central Labor and Industry laws can be have been illustrated.

SI. No.	Conditions of Work	Description/Details	Laws/Provisions
1a	Physical conditions of work	Space, ventilation, temperature, hygiene, occupational safety and health	The Dangerous Machines (regulations) Act, (1983), Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act (1979), The Building and Other Construction Workers Act, (1996), The Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, (1966)
1b	Duration and Time of Work	Hours of Work, Hours of Rest, Overtime, hours of work per week, night shift, paid holidays during the week	The Minimum Wages Act, (1948), Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act (1979), The Building and Other Construction Workers Act (1996), Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, (1986), The Bidi and Cigar Workers (conditions of Employment) Act, 1966.
2	Remuneration	Wages, bonus, advances, gratuity, pension, provident fund.	The Minimum Wages Act, (1948), Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979), The Building and Other Construction Workers Act, (1996), The Equal Remuneration Act, (1976), The Payment of Wages Act, (1936), The Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, (1976), The Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966

SI. No.	Conditions of Work	Description/Details	Laws/Provisions
3	Industrial and Labor Relations	Recognition of trade unions, redress of grievances and dispute resolution.	The Trade Union Act (1926), The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, (1976), The Payment of Wages Act, (1936), The Minimum Wages Act, (1948), Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, (1986), The Equal Remuneration Act, (1976), Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979), The Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, (1966), The Building and Other Construction Workers Act, (1996)
4	Conditions of Work of Disadvantaged Workers	Disabled workers, women workers, migrant workers, minority workers, bonded labor, other forms of forced labor, child labor	The Dangerous Machines (Regulation) Act, (1983), , Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979), The Building and Other Construction Workers Act, (1996), The Equal Remuneration Act, (1976), Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, (1986) and The Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, (1976)

In order to resolve disconnect between legal machinery and informal migrant workers, legal counseling cells have been opened up. These are only the economic interventions made by the government. Social security issues still need to be met and resolved. The children of migrant women workers have been provided and secured education through Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, but its implementation is highly deficient. The existing laws are complex and are generally at cross-purposes. These laws do not serve and protect the women migrants in particular and several recommendations by policy makers need to be welcomed in order to secure the rights of migrant women and provide them with safe environment and ensure their healthy participation in development. It has already been discussed that not all women migrants face the same set of vulnerabilities; therefore more attention is needed towards this category.

What needs to be Done?

- The policy documents and Five Year Plans need to prepare comprehensive and focused plans for mainstreaming women migrants.
- All the governmental social protection schemes and public services should incorporate social security packages that cover minimum wages and labor standards.
- Census and survey designs need to be revised to capture sex and age disaggregated data on various forms of women migration and multiple reasons for migration.
- The distress level of women migration need to be solved by policy interventions concentrating on providing sustainable livelihood opportunities, access to land and common resources.
- Revision of Inter-State Migrant Workmen (regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1979) to cover more range of issues pertaining to security of women.
- Since women migrants generally make movements with children the provisions of crèches, education centers for children and day care facilities need to be strengthened.
- Notion of local citizenship or building of local identity with reference to area needs to be strengthened by identity or smart card provisions.
- Organizing skill training and placement services to help rural female youth to fight the competitive market.

UNICEF maintains that inclusion of migrants is necessary for a sustainable development

based on cultural diversity, social cohesion and human rights. What remains the problem is the gap between the theory and the practice. The actual implementation by the states is hindered by the lack of political will. Women migration needs to be encouraged and sources of risk and insecurity needs to be meted out, as it is now a known fact that women participation in labor due to migration goes a long way in development of the economy. The issues discussed in the paper attempts to address the social exclusion of women migrants and point out the security threats at various levels faced by them. Securing women migrants their rights involves higher costs at lower benefits but state need not let them become the victim of the circumstances.

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