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Feminization of Indian Migration: Patterns and Prospects

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Abstract- Migration of women has emerged as an important field of research within the larger domain of Migration Studies and is being, extensively explored under various disciplines. This growing trend can be attributed to some major developments in International migration trends such as rising numbers of women migrants, growth of women-centric occupations, migration of women in an independent capacity, gender-related legislation and developing a perspective on women's issues. These factors together increased the visibility of women in the process of migration and have given rise to what has been termed as the Feminization of Migration. This paper explores the various nuances of the feminization of migration and aspects of female migration with a focus on India. It begins with an overview of the growing numbers of women in the Migratory flows. It goes on to determine that despite the numbers and increased participation of women in the developmental dynamics of migration, they remain increasingly vulnerable and exposed to exploitation. The paper concludes the Feminization of migration has undoubtedly increased the visibility of women in the migration discourse but much more needs to be done in terms of generating appropriate data, highlighting women's role in the developmental process and evolving gender-friendly policies for ensuring their protection security.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The increased visibility and the recognition of women as the new protagonists in the process of migration, and more generally to the issue of gender, has pervaded the academic literature for almost past thirty years. Nevertheless, women constituted a substantial share and were part and parcel of the process of migration and settlement much before this period. Estimates based on United Nations Population Division, confirms that in 1960, female migrants accounted for nearly 47 per cent of the total number of migrants and this proportion has risen, since then, to reach 48 per cent in 1990 and nearly 49 per cent in the year 2000 (UNDP 2017). Overall, during these years, the total number of International migrants also increased, but the increase in the number of women migrants is almost 8 per cent higher than the men (Zlotnic 2003). The UN population data also indicates that in 2019, 202 million international migrants, equivalent to 74 per cent of the global migrant population, were of

working age, i.e. between the ages of 20 and 64. It reflects the increasing participation of women in the labour market.

As far as internal migration or the migration within countries is concerned, which is exceedingly difficult to measure and quantify because people move freely within the borders of a country without restrictions, according to the Human Development Report(2009), the number of internal migrants is almost four times more than the International migrants. As per the ILO, women constitute almost 70-80 per cent of the internal migrants (ILO 2018).

Table 1: Female Migrants as a Percentage of the International Migrant Stock

Year	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Percentage	49.4	49.3	48.9	48.3	48.2	47.9

Source: UN, 2019

Table 2: International migrant stock at mid-year (female)

Year	Numbers
1990	7,53,49,784
1995	7,96,30,779
2000	8,55,59,220
2005	9,37,54,736
2010	10,67,20,229
2015	11,99,97,907
2019	13,01,54,101

Source: UN 2019

In terms of region-wise and country-wise geographical spread, of the international migrants, as per UN data, in 2019 nearly two thirds (around 176 million) resided in high-income countries, around one third (82 million) resided in middle-income countries and about one third (13 million) in the low-income countries. Region-wise, 99.6 million or almost 61 per cent of all migrant workers reside in three subregions: Northern America; the Arab States; and Europe. However, in terms of percentage of female migrants, a striking gender imbalance can be marked as the share of migrant women was highest in Northern America (51.8 per cent) and Europe (51.4 per cent), and lowest in sub-

Saharan Africa (47.5 per cent), along with Northern Africa and Western Asia (35.5 per cent)(UN 2019). However, as the studies point out, the trends in Asian countries is towards increase (Fleury 2016).

Migration is induced by several positive/negative or push and pull factors or a combination of both. Majority of people migrate due to economic reasons wherein people move from places with less economic opportunities to the places with more economic opportunities. Colonialism and its legacy of uneven development play a significant role in shaping today's migration patterns. Migration is also induced by global demographic trends which again attracts people from Asia and Africa to the OECD countries. Other than these, there are also distress situations caused by climate changes, political upheaval or crisis situations that trigger displacement of people turning them into refugees or asylum seekers. Women too migrate largely due to similar reasons, but there are some added factors, such as, escape from gender-based violence, and patriarchal norms of society or the family or one can say women's migration is shaped by a combination of factors like household decisions, societal gender norms in origin and destination countries, labour market conditions, education and skill levels, crisis situations and several other factors (Asis 2003; Crush and Williams 2001; Background paper 2012; Ghib 2018). Gender and gender relations impact migration at every stage, that is, the reasons for migration, the process of integration in the destination country, the continuing links with the home country, the transfer and utilization of remittances and the possibilities of savings and investment. At all these stages, gender, gendered cultural formats and roles affect the migration process and produce a different outcome for women (Fleury 2016; Omelaniuk 2005).

Women are differently impacted by migration and have a different kind of impact on the places of origin and destination. They have a larger impact on the social and cultural trends and are a greater agent of change than men (Handbook 2017; Pedraza 2007). Women are also generally, are more vulnerable towards violence and abuse of migration process and

may get exposed to new forms of discrimination, migration can also provide them with, new opportunities, a vital source of income, greater autonomy, self-confidence, and social status. The United Nations (2003) report on gender and migration says that the impact of migration on women should be analyzed at personal, familial as well as societal level.

II. INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

India continues to be the top source of international migrants since 1990s with one-in-twenty migrants worldwide born in India. The number of international Indian migrants has more than doubled over the past 25 years, growing about twice as fast as the world's total migrant population. According to KNOMAD data, the total stock of Indian emigrants can be estimated as 13,885.1 thousand, which is 1.1 per cent of the total Indian population. In this regard, it is less than the overall share of migrants in the world population, which is 3.4 per cent. Among the top select countries to which Indian people migrate since 1990 are the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Oman, Canada, Qatar. The share of Indians moving to these countries has grown over time. Nevertheless, there is a huge inadequacy in the inaccuracy of data in the case of India. The discrepancies can be seen in the numbers given in the tables below. The three sources used United Nations population Division (UN), International Labour Organisation (ILO and Ministry of External Affairs, India.

Table 3: The outflow of nationals by year from India (thousands)

Year	Numbers in thousands
2010	641
2011	627
2012	747
2013	817
2014	805
2015	781
2016	506
2018	13113

Source: ILOSTAT 2010

Table 4: Top destination countries and share of Indian Migrants 1990-2019

Country	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
UAE	6.92%	9.33	11.55	13.41	22.03	19.99	19.53
USA	6.80	10.43	13.22	14.49	13.49	15.00	15.20
Saudi Arabia	13.69	12.99	12.34	12.68	11.94	12.58	13.94
Oman	2.30	3.95	4.21	3.89	3.58	6.76	7.57
Canada	2.52	3.35	4.02	4.43	3.91	4.16	4.05
Australia	1.06	1.09	1.14	1.55	2.49	2.82	3.25

Source: International Migrant Stock 2019, UN

According to the latest figures of the ministry of external affairs of India, the following are the top destination countries for the Indian migrants in numbers.

Table 5: Top destination countries for Indian Migrants (Numbers)

Country	Total (MEA)	Total (ILO)
UAE	3425144	13100000
USA	4460000	1280000
Saudi Arabia	2594947	2812000
Canada	1689055	
UK	1764000	
Kuwait	1029861	928000
Australia	496000	

Source: MEA

The data on international labour migration in India also lacks the inclusion of gender, which leads to the near-invisibility of women migrants at least in data. While UN, ILO and MEA completely exclude the female share from the data on India, the World Bank gives figures for India only for 2 years, i.e., 2015 and 2017, and it stands at 48.8 per cent (World Bank 2019). However, in the top destinations of the Indian migrants, the share of female migrant stock in 2019 is shown in the following table. It clearly reflects the global trend of the region wise disparity in the share of female migrants. UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have a lesser percentage than the USA, UK, Canada and Australia.

Table 6: Percentage of Female migrants in top destination countries

Country	Percentage of female migrants (2019)
UAE	26.3
USA	51.7
Saudi Arabia	31.4
Canada	52.4
UK	52.0
Kuwait	33.6
Australia	50.4

Source: UN 2019

Although, this paper deals mainly with Indian migrants moving out of India, it will be worth mentioning that India is also 13th largest migrant-receiving country according to the UN migration report.

Table 7: Total Migrant Stock and percentage of Female Migrants in India (1990-2019)

Year	Number of Migrants (in thousands)	Percentage of female Migrants
1990	7 594.8	47.8
1995	6 952.2	48.1
2000	6 411.3	48.5
2005	5 923.9	48.6
2010	5 439.8	48.7
2015	5 241.0	48.8
2019	5 154.7	48.8

Source: UN 2019

III. FEMINIZATION OF MIGRATION: A DEBATE

In recent times a term that has gained currency in the migration discourse is the 'Feminization of Migration'. It is a multi-dimensional, dynamic and ever-growing phenomenon (GHIB 2018; Maymon 2017; Tittensor 2017; Gouws 2007). Hence, interpreting Feminization of Migration only from the perspective of numbers would be misleading as several other factors are at play leading to the growing visibility of women in the migration process. Feminization of the migrant population is only one aspect of this overall phenomenon. There is no doubt that the number of female migrants have increased by around 2-3 percentage points in last thirty years or so (as shown earlier in the paper), which is a substantial increase.

However, even when the share of women in the International migration was at 47 per cent, the numbers would have been large enough to be able to create visibility. However, women mostly remained invisible in the documentation and discourse on migration. In the case of internal migration, too, the percentage of women has remained high traditionally. Yet, migration remained to be considered primarily as a male phenomenon for a very long time with women only as accompanying subjects (A commonly used metaphor in India is Mr Patel + 1. Wherein +1 represented the lady). So, the question arises, what change has taken place in the past couple of decades that has led to the idea of feminization of migration.

During past few decades, what has really changed apart from the numbers is the fact that more and more women have started migrating independently now for work and have become the main income-earners in the family, rather than as 'family dependants' travelling with their husbands or joining them abroad which was the case in the initial days. However, in the present, they themselves have increasingly become primary migrants instead of just following their fathers or husbands. As per IOM half of the total number of

women migrants are now migrating independently or as heads of households (as quoted in Fleury 2016). According to Gouws, "The migration of women independent of men is called the "feminization of migration" (Gouws 2007. P1). Both single and married women are now migrating independently in search of secure jobs redefining traditional gender roles within families and societies.

The rise of women as independent migrants has mostly been as a response to the gender-selective or women-centric demand of labour at the global level (Castles and Miller 2003:67) and the massive demand for cheap female labour from the developing countries. The global demographic and employment patterns have greatly increased the demand for caregivers, domestic workers, nursing and child-rearing skilled where women personnel are preferred much more than the men.

Moreover, since women become employed in low-wage and labour-intensive jobs, their demand has increased in the labour market (Joekes, 1995; Beneria 2003, 80-82).

In addition to these, the other significant change concerns with the awareness among the policy makers about the significance of female migration and the increasingly important role of women in the developmental process. This has led to an increase in gender-specific legislation at the level of international organizations, regional bodies, destination as well as the origin countries. There are regular additions and changes in the legislation regarding women migrants in the UN, ILO, IOM and other such bodies. Gender is one of the agendas of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) under the aegis of the UN.

Along with all the above-mentioned developments, one of the most important elements in the feminization of migration has been the upsurge in the feminist scholarship in the Migration Studies which brought the gendered perspectives on migration from the margins to the forefront and made the scholarly discourse on migration shift towards women. Migration theories were reinvented to incorporate and privilege the issues and experiences of women under the feminist influence (refer Pande 2018). Nevertheless, this shift was gradual and can be divided into three phases. The first phase started from the late 1960s to early 1970s, and it added women in the migration research. Consequently, the documentation of female migration grew, but the issue remained only as a sub-theme in migration studies (Morokvasic 1984; Pande 2018).

During the late 1980s, the discourse on gender and migration moved towards the more radical Feminist Standpoint Theory. Gender became the centre of the analysis with an important to understand how gender relations play into each aspect of the migration cycle, that is, in the pre-migration stage, during the process of migration, and in the process of settlement (Petrozziolo 2013; Pande 2018). During the 1980s, the new

emphasis in the migration research on 'household' as a 'micro-unit for in the analysis of migration also helped highlight the role of women (Chant and Radcliffe 1992). Nevertheless, the underlying assumption of this feminist approach was based on the binary of men versus women and, in a way, essentialized women as a category which is misleading.

Further during the 1990s, under the so-called 'Post-rational Feminism' the essentialization of gender as a theoretical constant was questioned and it was emphasized that other differences such as nationality, class, race, ethnicity, and poverty etc. hold equal if not more important than the gender. As gender permeates through all the micro-and macro-level processes, and institutions of society, the inter-sectionality becomes an important element in the studies of gender and migration (Madonald 2007; Pande 2018).

Therefore, feminization of migration cannot be credited only to the increase in the number of women migrants but to a combination of resultant factors that has led to the growth of gendered perspectives of migration. The migration discourse increasingly became gendered with the growth in the 'gendered patters' of migration which shapes the experience of women and highlight the ways in which women cope with changes due to migration. Nevertheless, these developments are not uniform or show a liner pattern throughout the world.

In the case of India, as discussed earlier, the share of female migrants remain between 48-49 per cent. As far as adding women in the documentation is concerned, India is at the rudimentary stage. It is difficult to get gender-segregated data on any aspect of migration such as related to the proportion of women in the total migrant population over the years, their share in remittances and other contributions towards development. The Indian states, like Kerala, records high levels of labour migration of women, particularly nurses, to West Asia, the documentation is much more gender-inclusive than the national scenario. The state of the state of Andhra Pradesh too witness low-skilled domestic workers, and semi-skilled health-care workers and women are increasingly receiving attention (Bindhulakshmi 2010, Percot 2006). In this regard, migration of women as independent migrants is a fast growing trend in India (Kadoth and Jacob 2013; Walton-Roberts, Margaret and Irudaya Rajan Sebastian. 2013; Madhumati 2013). Indian women as highly skilled migrants and as students to the US is still not large but has shown a growing trend. As per the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Indians, who account for 73.9 per cent of the total H-1B visa holders in the US are 309,986 in numbers. Of these, 20 per cent are women. It is 25 per cent at the global level (Economic Times 2018). As far as other aspects of feminization are concerned, women migrants are receiving much attention the academic discourse and research. At the policy level too, the government of India

introduced significant policy changes to felicitate migration of women and their protection.

Migration can have both positive and negative impact on the wellbeing of the female migrants, and it is crucial to have a deeper understanding in this regard to frame policies for their protection and celebrate their contribution in the migration stimulated development.

IV. WOMEN, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Migration has historically represented a major opportunity for development of individuals as well as the families. In the present globalized world and linkages between development and migration have become increasingly intricate and receiving greater attention. Studies point out that despite the difficulties and constraints, migration does offer new opportunities to women making their role more diversified and significant (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000; Buijs 1993; Levitt et al. 2007; Mayer 2016; Fleury 2016). They witness new opportunities for financial independence in addition to improved status in families and communities. It also leads to improvement in their authority, self-esteem and access to resources and has a positive impact on women in general. They are also now major contributors to their homeland economy through remittances and human capital. These new opportunities have provided new spaces and agency to women to move beyond the fixed notions of femininity and challenge the patriarchal norms of the society. Yet theories and practices that link gender with migration from a developmental perspective are rare.

Remittances are one of the major developmental components of migration, and the gendered aspects of remittances can be seen from the senders' as well as the recipients' perspective. Even when women are not migrating themselves and remain behind when their husbands migrate, their position is very often (though not always) impacted positively. In such cases, women mostly receive remittances and run and own the business and participate in agricultural activities in the absence of their husbands (PIB 2018). The gender roles change, giving more authority to women not only in the household matters but in the family's choices and finances. It is generally pointed out in studies that in the absence of the husbands women not residing in extended families are faced with both higher levels of responsibilities and greater autonomy. In contrast, women who live in extended households do not experience these demands or benefits (Desai and Banarjee 2008).

As the number of women as independent migrants increase, more and more women are involved in sending remittances to home and play a greater role in the developmental process not only of the family but for the home country overall (Maymon 2017). Despite the difficulties female migrants encounter in the labour

market, women tend to remit a higher proportion of their income and are more resilient than their male counterparts. Even though they are generally in low wage jobs, they are more frequent and stable as far as sending remittances are concerned (Le Goff 2016) They also direct their remittances more towards education, health, and family welfare (Omelaniuk 2005). The rising emigration rate of skilled women may have a positive impact on remittances due to higher

Migrant women are also increasingly playing a greater role in poverty reduction though there has been a lack of substantial data on this. They become property owners in their local communities, buying land and housing, and even starting a small business at some point. Mexico, Philippines, Sri Lanka have developed workable models to prepare, train, support and protect their women for migration to different countries, as well as their return and reintegration, and the wellbeing of families remaining behind (IOM, 2005).

In case India, the developmental contribution of women is yet to be recorded fully, be it remittances, investment, philanthropy, or any other aspect of development. Despite the increased presence of women in the international migration, and their immense contribution, women are still struggling to find their visibility and voice in the migrant labour force. The issue has been largely overlooked or neglected in the subregion. However, some Indian states, like Kerala, are showing the way towards gender inclusiveness.

V. MIGRATION AND VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN

While it is true that overall, women's participation in migration and development has increased it is also evident that their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse has also increased. These challenges are at various levels and in various forms so much so that it will be difficult to incorporate the whole discussion in this paper. Migration has the potential for improving the lives of the women migrants, but the inherent existing discriminatory structures in the host or the home country expose them to many disadvantages, discriminations, and vulnerabilities. As Mary Kawar (2003, 72-73), points out, 'during the decision to migrate many women lack proper information and know-how about the migration procedures and financial matters which may lead to exploitative situations. Moreover, employment options for women are generally minimal.

Many studies indicate that a significant number of migrant women perform the type of work that is not related to their qualification and skill. As compared to men, more migrant women end up performing 3D jobs. Women more than men tend to occupy jobs within the informal sector which is not covered by labour legislation or social protection. Women also have limited access to information as they get limited opportunities

to build networks. They lack knowledge of their rights, and in cases of exploitation fail to get the required help. It is also seen that the authorities in the destination countries also do not treat migrant women with respect and dignity'.

While it is also true that migrant women have become primary migrants, instead of dependents which seems to suggest greater freedom and choice, but it has not necessarily led to greater gender equity in the family, community or the opportunities. Pre-existing gender norms act as women accommodate family and childcare responsibilities, that compels them for either not taking jobs or taking only part-time jobs. This impacts their integration in the labour market. In traditional societies of origin, the subordinate role of women has remained intact, despite their new earning power abroad. Moreover, issues like marital disputes, dowry demands; basic rights abuse get perpetuated because of the jurisdictional problems between homeland -host land (Fleury 2016; Kang 2003; Kurien 1999). These vulnerabilities of being an immigrant and female negatively affect the job prospects, wages, job quality, in the host country. Since most migrant women are concentrated at the bottom rung of the occupational hierarchy and work in vulnerable sectors like the domestic workers (especially in the live-in modality). Furthermore, the entertainment sector, which is not covered by labour laws in many countries, they are led to sexual abuse and prostitution. Women of a particular race, class, ethnicity and/or nationality –are especially vulnerable. Thus, 'migrant women face challenges and barriers as both migrants and women; a double disadvantage' (Li 2018).

Feminist inquiries show that sometimes migration can provide new opportunities to improve women's lives and alter oppressive gender relations and patriarchal structures, but at other times migration can also entrench traditional roles and inequalities and expose women to new vulnerabilities as the result of precarious legal status, exclusion and isolation. On the one hand, migration can be liberating and bring about more egalitarianism in the family. However, on the other hand, gender hierarchy can become more rigid as the idea of losing control over women, may results in situations like physical abuse, honour killings and other cruelties ((Fleury 2016; Kang 2003; Kurien 1999; refer Pande 2018; Carling 2005).

Nevertheless, the other challenge that gender and migration face is the homogenization of women as a category. As already discussed, gender crosscuts other variables and thus produce different experiences for different categories of women, that is when they migrate as skilled/ highly skilled, as semi-skilled/unskilled or as displace /refugees/ trafficked migrants. The biggest challenge, therefore for the host societies is to provide for their inclusion into the labour market and ensure their basic rights and protection

considering the context. Thus, both the challenges and the outcomes are varied and show no linear pattern. There is a gender-specific problem at several levels, and it is important that these be incorporated in the discourse and research.

a) *Women as Dependent Migrants*

A large number of women continue to migrate as dependents and family unions. Women's migration across India is primarily driven by marriage, whether it is internal or International migration though a slight change is visible in this trend in the last decade. Nevertheless, even when women migrate as spouses or stay back as left behind wives, they acquire additional roles and agency and create new space to rediscover their roles and identities (Pande 2018; Odotei 2002). In many cases, they do become part of the work force but not necessarily apt to their skill. They often lag in gaining language proficiency, skill acquisition, and other integration measures due to family responsibilities (O'Neil, Fleury, Foresti 2012).

b) *Women as Semi-Skilled/ unskilled Migrants*

Women migration apart from dependent migration is much dominated by unskilled and semi-skilled migration. The occupations involved in this category range from Domestic workers to caregivers and semi-trained medical personnel. Women in such migrations have shown substantial agency in decision making and spending and develop a complementarity with the working women in the host countries by taking responsibilities of housekeeping and child-rearing. However, the low skilled women like DWs and Care Givers CGs are the most vulnerable section of migrants (O'Neil, Tam, Anjali Fleury and Marta Foresti. 2012). Their lack of education and not being aware of their rights lend them into severe exploitative conditions.

They face isolation and may spend years without seeing the children they left back home. In most cases, the state fails to monitor and control this sizeable labour market sector (Ghib 2018). India is a major source of women migrating in this category. Many of them are employed in domestic jobs and hold temporary work contracts attached to employer like the 'Kafala system' in West Asian countries where a majority of women workers migrate.

c) *Highly skilled/Skilled Migrants*

The highly skilled women are the best-placed category to have access to the job market and integrate well in the host society. However, many highly skilled prioritize their domestic responsibilities and either take on part-time or even informal employment. This impacts not only their labour market inclusion but also creates a disparity in integration outcomes between men and women. Women from India are migrating as highly skilled, but the visa restrictions (such as in the US) render these skilled women in a disadvantaged position.

The influence of cultural norms also plays a negative role they carry the family responsibly and the so-called 'honour' at the cost of their own career and job prospects. (Radhakrishnan 2011; Talukdar 2012)

d) *Irregular Migration/ Trafficking/ Refugees/ asylum Seekers*

These categories are in the most vulnerable position and place women at greater risk of abuse during the migration journey as well as at the destinations. Irregular migration continues to pose a big challenge worldwide and could not be controlled by migration also. Apart from Irregular Migration Human trafficking remains a major challenge (O'Neil, Tam, Anjali Fleury and Marta Foresti. 2012). Refugee women and asylum seekers are even worse off in terms of social exclusion and labour market inclusion, given their more precarious status and Lower educational levels etc. leading to long, unproductive and discouraging wait periods before having a clear opportunity to work), As per UNHCR (2018) almost 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide in 2019 as a result of persecution conflict, conflict, violence or human rights violations. Of these, 25.9 million are refugees, 20.4 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate, 5.5 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate, 41.3 million internally displaced people and 3.5 million asylum-seekers. As far as the share of women is concerned, there is a great deal of regional imbalance here also. Europe has the lowest proportion of both women and children with only 44 per cent and 241percent respectively of the refugee population was female, and 41 per cent was under the age of 18. In contrast to this sub-Saharan Africa with 52 per cent a Despite strong UN Resolutions in 2000 on women's full participation in peace processes, females still have been largely excluded as active players in conflict prevention and peacekeeping (IOM, 2005).

VI. INDIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY INITIATIVES REGARDING WOMEN MIGRANTS

The Government of India has come up with many welfare measures and policies for overseas women migrants from time to time taking account the different contexts of female migration. A detailed description of these can be found on the MEA website, and this is based majorly on that.

One of the major complaints that the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs receives regarding women migrants is about harassment/desertion of Indian women married to Indian nationals settled or working abroad. This issue has surfaced in the Parliament also several times. A large number of Indian women get married to overseas Indian men and get into various kinds of problems like desertion, domestic violence, separation, and lack of compensation. Ministry of External Affairs receives regular petitions, grievances

and complaints and makes different efforts to empower women 'by providing them information about legal procedures, filing court cases, issue of summons and many such matters. MEA also takes actions such as 'Look Out Circulars, revoking/impounding passports, obtaining maintenance and child support, providing lawyers' etc. At present, this scheme covers 13 countries which have several empanelled NGOs that are actively engaged in the redressing the grievances of the women in marital distress. For example, the Indian High Commission, London works with NGO named Good Human Foundation, which assisted in 36 cases during 2010-2012 with a cost of Rs 19,65,97 (MEA 2019). Considering the growing instances of marital disputes and to provide a more effective solution, a Bill titled "The Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian Bill, 2019" was introduced in Rajya Sabha on February 11th 2019. This Bill is under the consideration of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (MEA-Rajyasabha).

Apart from the marital distress, another major concern of the GoI is regarding Emigration of Women for Employment in ECR(Emigration Check Required) Countries. The government has fixed the age for the female workers proceeding for Overseas Employment to ECR countries at 30 years. It has been made mandatory that women workers 'holding ECR Passports and going to eighteen ECR countries for overseas employment are bound to emigrate only through State-run recruitment agencies.' The Foreign Employer (FE) directly recruiting a Domestic Service Worker (DSW) are supposed to deposit security of US \$2500 in the form of Bank Guarantee (BG) with the Indian Mission. The FE can also recruit through six Government/State-run RAs Indian Recruiting Agents. The FE is also required to register in the E-migrate system after they are validated by the concerned Indian Mission. From August 2016, recruitment through the six state-run recruitment agencies was made mandatory for Indian nurses and domestic workers (MEA 2019).

An Integrated Nodal Agency, under MWCD, has been set up as an inter-Ministerial body to provide timely solutions to Indian women facing harassment abroad. Indian Missions and Posts abroad provide online consular assistance to Indian nationals in distress, including Indian women, through its portal called MADAD (MEA in Aid of Diaspora in Distress), launched in 2015. Re-integration and Rehabilitation Programs Grievance Redressal Mechanisms MADAD Better use of skills acquired NPS for Migrant Workers Support Services Pre-departure. It has a module on "Marital Disputes" also. The Ministry's grievance redressal mechanism was strengthened with the launch of CPGRAMS Version 7.0 in February 2020. Ministry has been part of the CPGRAMS portal since its inception in 2006. A Consular Helpline is being run in 11 Indian languages, including Hindi and English. Further, Missions and Posts also maintain Helpline for

emergencies. Twitter Sewa @MEAMADAD was launched in March 2017 to monitor and respond to grievances received on Twitter. One of the future concerns of the ministry to observe Women Emigration Procedures and precautions to be taken in future (MEA 2019).

Some of the flagship Schemes working under the Government of India are:

Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2017: It covers maternity expenses to women emigrants up to Rs. 50, 000/-, Legal/financial assistance to Indian women abandoned/cheated/abused by their NRI/PIO or foreign spouses (up to seven years after their marriage).

Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF): It was set up in 2009 to assist overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency (based on 'most deserving cases'), emergency evacuation of Indian nationals from conflict zones, natural disasters and other challenging situations or those in distress while visiting a foreign country.

ICWF is extended to all Indian Missions and Posts abroad. Persons of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizens of India Card Holders are eligible to get help, but it does not provide individual financial support. The ICWF guidelines have been revised further to make them more broad-based, and swift with an expanded scope of welfare measures since September 1st, 2017. Ordinarily, only legally entered migrants in the host country are eligible to receive benefits under this Fund. But 'In cases where it is not so', assistance may be provided based on the satisfaction of the Head of Mission/Head of Post based on the circumstances of the case.

The revised guidelines cover the following three key areas:

- *Assisting Overseas Indian nationals in distress situations:* This includes situations like stranded abroad, fines for minor crimes for illegal stay in the host country, Legal/financial assistance to Indian women abandoned/cheated/abused by their NRI/PIO, Transportation of mortal remains and expenditure on incidentals of deceased Indian national to India or local cremation/burial, emergency medical care, accident etc.
- *Support for Community Welfare activities (Subject to availability of funds):* It includes efforts to promote Indian Culture, organizing cultural programmes by recognized Indian Diaspora organizations, the celebration of Indian festivals, national days, payment of honorarium for teachers/faculty teaching Indian languages, art forms, welfare activities for Indian students, redressal of student's grievances like their visa, residence status, work permit, financial, welfare etc.

- *Improvement in Consular services:* Under these scheme various services are rendered such as hiring of the additional staff pertaining to schemes/welfare measures, providing consular services, hiring vehicles for prisons, hospitals, morgues and to airports on a need basis. Hiring of a local interpreter for consular visits, organizing labour camps / consular camps for interacting with Indian migrant workers and providing information about issues related to overseas employment; labour laws; welfare and protection measures of the government, Setting up 24 x 7 toll-free helplines etc.

VII. INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

In addition to these policy initiative government of India has also collaborated with the UN regarding several issues like on Domestic Service Workers (DSWs) in 2016- 2017. This program intended to implement "Migration of Women Domestic Workers from India: Building Capacities for Safe Mobility" for migration pockets of Andhra Pradesh and the Telangana States. It is a technical collaboration intended at the training videos for Training of Trainers program and 2 refresher training on Gender and Safe Migration, Social awareness campaigns to reach an estimated 5000 aspiring migrant women Domestic workers (DSWs) at the grass-roots level to enhance awareness on safe and legal migration abroad and 'to construct migration cycle of women migrant workers/ housemaids and examine the role of different stakeholders influencing their decision to migrate for work/return in mid-way/resettlement, including the role of middlemen/agents' (MEA 2019). The ILO is another organization which continually promotes social security programs and measures. In 1997, the ILO introduced convention about sexual harassment of women workers at the workplaces which have been accepted by the government of India. The growing informalization or casualization or marginalization of women at workplaces poses a serious threat regarding the ILO convention (ILO 1997).

VIII. CONCLUSION/ ANALYSIS

Feminization of Migration is a frequently discussed but a less understood term. It is also a growing term as the scholars have yet to come out with a clear definition of feminization. Throughout the world, there is a shift in the patterns of women' migration apart from an increase in the numbers. From the traditional role of accompanying family to migrating independently for job opportunities and primary breadwinners of the family, women, has certainly traversed far and progressed immensely. The growing inclusion in the scholarly debate and policy legislation has increased the visibility of women and gender issues in the

migration discourse. It also has major implications on gender roles and gender relations.

Nevertheless, it would be premature and unjustified to relate this hype to the empowerment of women or something that has led to securing their position the process of migration. There is no doubt that the feminization debate has brought the women's issues from the margins to the centre of the migration discourse, but there is much to be done towards their protection and empowerment. Despite these improvements, female migrants still experience double discrimination as both migrants and as women in their host country in comparison to male migrants. Moreover, women's migration remains understudied. The conceptual and empirical complexities involved in evaluating the gender impacts of migration yet to be desegregated. There is a huge paucity of gender-responsive data and tabulation of women in the countries of origin and destination. Migrant women are an untapped and under-utilized source of potential for the development of their families, home countries and host countries and above all for their own empowerment.

The right approach would be to incorporate women and include them at every stage and aspect of migration discourse. It is also important not to homogenize women as one category and rather look into specific categories based on country, community, skill and then look into gender-specific issues. This highlights the need to improve research capacity and the scope of research beyond the current focus on stereotypically gendered issues. Contextually relevant research agendas can be set at the national, regional, and international levels, through consultation with women's groups, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society. There is a requirement for more micro-level, phenomenological studies of the everyday reality of women's mobility. Technology can be an enabler in this. India in this context has taken some significant steps forward in the sense of legislative and policy changes for the protection of migrant women's rights and ensuring their security in the destination countries in terms of employment protection, provision of social security, elimination of sexual harassment. This issue has been discussed in the Indian Parliament several times.

Nevertheless, most of the focus is towards protectionist mode which is important of course, but the policymakers should also recognize the importance of female migrants in the labour market, and remittance-development nexus for which women are a reliable source of remittances.

One of the major steps would be to ensure a comprehensive pre-departure training program for country-specific requirements in terms of language, rules and regulations. Another important step is to upskill them for domestic work, child-rearing etc. and for

all other kinds of jobs to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. There is also a need to certify their skills and look beyond the traditional sectors and train them into digitally-enabled skills as countries around the world are moving towards greater automation. The issue of overseas workers came up in the 3rd PBD conference panel discussion on skill sets of the future for Indians in the Gulf, which emphasized on overseas training of the workers that is in the countries where they are working (MEA). To take this idea further, this can be achieved through a public-private partnership model. Several Indian institutions/schools have their branches/offices in the GCC countries, which may prove extremely beneficial in this regard.

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