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Empowerment or exploitation? How international is international marriage migration?

AKM Ahsan Ullah¹

Abstract

Marriage is an ever-evolving institution for human being. Marriage migration has been affected by neo-liberal policies and has increased in magnitude in the last two decades in Asia. The growth of international marriage migration (IMM) has affected significantly the traditional way of wedding. Evidences suggest that IMM has emerged in different patterns in different parts of the world. South-East Asia (SEA) and East – Asia (EA) are such examples where a unique pattern of IMM emerged. However, as an attempt to challenge feminist discourses focusing mainly on negative sides of marriage migrants, this paper examines drivers of such patterns from women’s perspectives. This paper argues that the IMM has provided a regional pattern rather than an international pattern in marriage migration. This paper further goes on to argue that because of myriad reasons people engage in IMM however it may often turn out to be traps of exploitations rather than empowerment. Based on primary and secondary information collected from 33 couples selected on snow-ball sampling, this paper addresses motives of the women in the SEA and East Asia to choose international marriage migration.

Empowerment or exploitation? How international is international marriage migration?

¹ AKM Ahsan Ullah, PhD. Associate Director and Assistant Professor, Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS). The American University in Cairo, 113 El Kasr El Aini St, PO Box 2511, Cairo 11511, Egypt. Email: ahsan722001@yahoo.com

Introduction

In 2008, media gave special treatment to one news that an Egyptian girl flew to Bangladesh to meet her friend living in a rural area who she connected through internet. She flew leaving her parents in anger and anxiety behind to marry him as they promised each other. This created a lot of interest in Bangladesh raising a question: what explains this event? These days however it is no more a surprise when around half a million women globally posted their profiles on several websites 'seeking husbands'. Presumably, many more would have done so given they have access to internet. Around 10 years ago marrying a foreigner was acceptable only for females from a low social class in Asia. In the past few years this trend has shifted dramatically and as a result foreign marriages have become a common practice in today's society (Asian Women in Migration, 1996). However, in upper middle class, foreign marriage is seen to be enjoying freedom of choice.

Marriage migration existed dates back to centuries- merchants, pilgrims and colonizers and invaders remained at the destinations or returned with wives or husbands of other countries and other ethnicities. Ever since this has not put an end rather it went through a substantial burgeoning. Human migration, partly, takes place because of such international marriage arrangements. Today, international marriage migration (IMM) has become an embedded concept in migration literature. However, since the mid eighties, this international marriage migration has taken a specific shape and pattern. Discussion on IMM remains incomplete unless included are cases of Korea. Prehistoric myth in Korea has been that during the period BC42 to BC532, the King's first wife of 'Kumkwan Kaya' came from India. Most international marriages were associated with the invasion of Korea by China and Japan. During the Chung Dynasty in China, Korean women were captured as spoils of war. Some of these women returned home but remained disintegrated in the society and had to move to live in a segregated area. Therefore, there has been a serious prejudice against international marriage in Korea, mainly towards women because of the 'virginity' notions.

During the 1970s, Western Europe and Australia were common destinations for South-East Asian brides (Bonney and John, 1991). In the 1980s and 1990s, migration movements diversified to include women from Latin America, Mexico, China and the Philippines who traveled globally (Kojima, 2001). After the cold war, central Asia gave a fresh height in this trend. Transnational brides are just one segment of the 100 million female migrants of today. Most of what is known about the economic factors fueling bride migration is in accord with findings on female labor migration (Momsen, 1999). Sinke's study of migrant German women reveals parallels and connections of the international marriage market with the better understood international male labor market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the labor market serves to advance capitalism, the marriage market promotes certain social, political and economic aspects of patriarchy (Sinke, 1992). Public objection to international matchmaking hinges on the assumption that marriage agencies are 'selling women.' Proponents of the marriage business are quick to point out that international dating agencies are simply a global

version of singles classified advertising. Therefore argument could be that the dating and marriage agencies are selling a service, not people.

Objectives and methods

This paper argues – considering the remarkable absence of the South Asians from these patterns—that international marriage migration is in fact an inter-ethnic and inter-regional migration which explains that some factors are at work giving this particular shape to this phenomenon. Very little is known due to the fact that this has by far not been explored in the past endeavors. This paper attempts to explore what factors the foreign brides and grooms take into consideration while deciding on the foreign marriage and how appropriate is to call it international marriage migration. This paper further touches upon a debate: if IMM is a way of exploitation or empowerment.

The study, therefore, is based both on primary and secondary information. Primary information was collected through survey of 33 couples selected on snow-ball basis. Distribution and definition of couples are as follows: 6 Filipino couple (Filipina wife and Japanese husband= 4; and Filipina wife and Hong Kong husband=2); 10 Chinese couple (Chinese wife and Vietnamese husband=1; and vice versa =2; Chinese wife and Korean husband=4 and vice versa =3); 7 Korean couples (Korean husband and Japanese wife = 5 and vice versa=2); 6 Taiwan couples (Taiwanese wife and Korean husband= 3 and vice versa=1; Taiwanese wife and Vietnamese husband=1 and vice versa=1); and 4 Thai couples) Thai wife and Western husbands=4). In order to analyze the data, qualitative techniques were used and some descriptive statistics were applied to show the magnitude of the phenomenon.

Regionalization of IMM: A southeast and East Asian phenomenon?

IMM is predominantly a Southeast and East Asian reality. International marriage with a long history, especially in East and Southeast Asia, has been experiencing growth in scale (Jones and Shen, 2008). In Asia, the patterns of IMM are in general, like Vietnamese-Korean, Korean- Chinese- Chinese Japanese; Korean –Taiwanese; Taiwanese-Chinese; Filipinos- Westerners; and Thais-Westerners. Nevertheless, central Asian yet to take any specific shape as their flow has saturated after the cold war economy.

Of the over 175,000 Filipinos engaged or married to foreigners between 1989 and 1999, over 91% involved Filipino women. The geographic distribution of the foreign partners is not surprising when considered the historical, colonial and post-colonial ties between the Philippines and the United States, Spain and Japan (Hashimoto, 2007). Approximately 40% (over 70,000) of the foreign partners are from the United States; 30% (over 53,000) from Japan; 8.8% from Australia; 4.2% each year until 1997, with 1,463 such marriages in 1993; 7,683 in 1995 and over 10,000 in 1996. In 1997, the number dropped to just over 7,000 and in 1998 decreased again to just 6,000, the drop most likely attributable to the Asian Financial Crisis (Freeman, 2005). Other research has used the number of registered Thai-Foreign marriages in Udon Thani to come up with 2003 figure of 2,228 foreigners

(Chan, 1999). This number will likely be very low as other research has found that 44% of Thai foreign marriages in Isaan are not registered (Srichan, 2006).



Map 1. Showing trend in IMM among the countries in the SE and East Asia

Looking at the IMM in Korea, the number of formally registered marriages between foreign females and Korean males was only 620 in 1990 however, it shot up to around 55000 in 2005 which constitute around 13 % of total number of registered marriages (Kim, 2006). After 1992 when the diplomatic relationship between China and Korea opened up marriages between Koreans and Ethnic Korean Chinese started to rise. As of April 2006, the total number of female marriage migrants in the Republic of Korea was 55,408 with 42.5% being Korean-Chinese, 20.7% Chinese and 20.3% from the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam and other South-East Asian countries. The cumulated data of internationally married Korean men was 160,000, from 1990 to 2005 (Lee, 2007).

Presently, the number of multi-cultural families due to marriage immigration is increasing. International marriages in Korea account for 35.9 % of marriages in rural areas. Of the Korean men married to foreign wives, the leading group is Chinese women (110,000); most of them are ethnic Koreans or Korean-Chinese, which is followed by Japanese (17,000), Vietnamese (10,000) and Filipino (6,000) women. The number of foreign men married to Korean women between 1990 and 2005 is 80,000. Among them, the majority is Japanese (44%) and American (24%), so the number of Asian unskilled migrant husbands (Belanger et al, 2007; Lee, 2007). Clearly, China- Japan's political hostility and historical reality have been trivialized in the inter-ethnic marriage decisions. However, 3Cs (colony, culture and Cash) model has to do a lot with this marriage. Here lies the main argument of the paper: that is why perhaps South Asians are not part of this pattern.

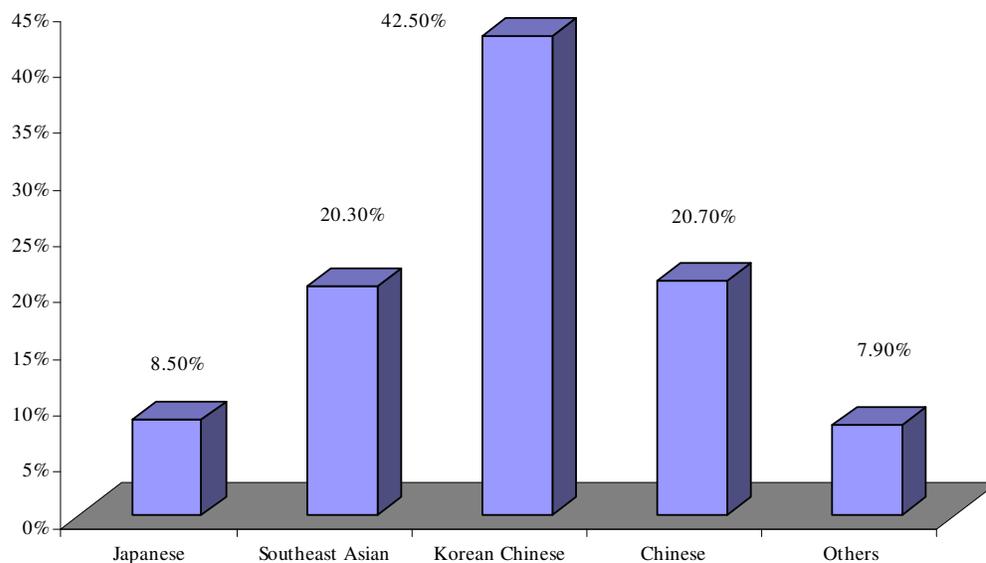


Figure. 1. Nationality of female international marriage migrants, 2007

Source: Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Korea.

Between 1995 and September 2002, there were 58,279 visas issued to Taiwanese men married to Vietnamese wives from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices (TECO)² in Ho Chi Minh City (Yamanaka and Nicola, 2003) and in 2003 officers reported that the running total was in the vicinity of 72,411. The situation in Taiwan is even more dramatic, with international marriages accounting for 32% of all marriages in 2003. International marriage is overwhelmingly Taiwanese men marrying foreign brides – the group of immigrant spouses is 92% female. About two thirds of these foreign brides are from China, and the rest overwhelmingly from Southeast Asia. Among the latter group, Vietnamese constitute 69%, followed by Indonesians (15%), Thais (6.5%), Filipinas (4.8%) and Cambodians (3.5%). There are major differences in the patterns of marriage between Taiwanese men and women from China and Southeast Asia. The Chinese brides tend to be much older than the Southeast Asian brides. However, both the

² Statistics on the marriage of Vietnamese women to Taiwanese men are maintained by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices (TECO) in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

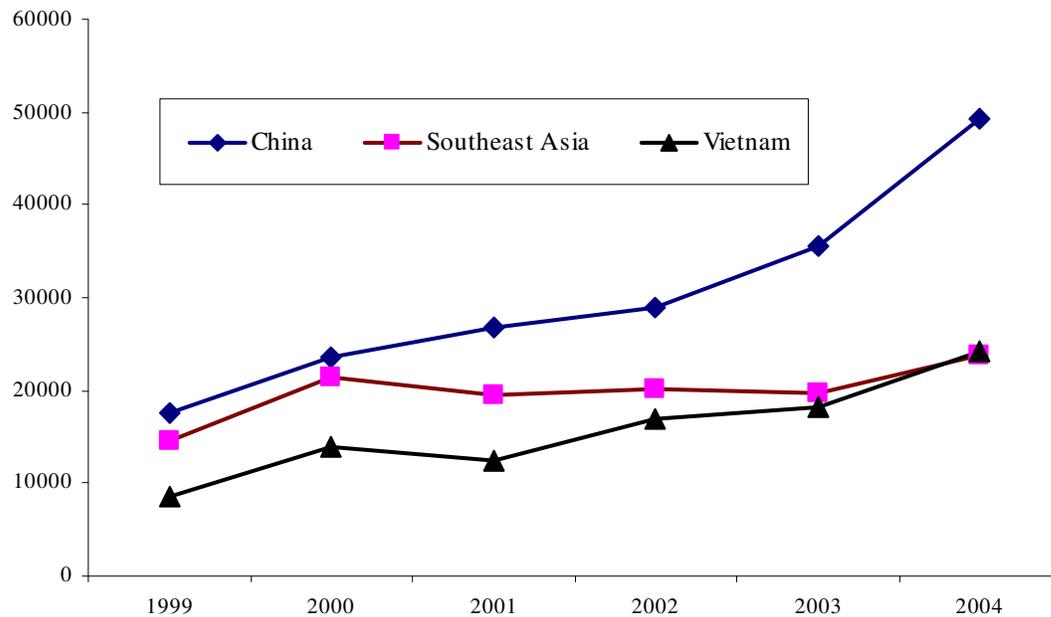


Figure 2. Marriages to foreign spouses in Taiwan
 Source: Wang and Chand 2005

Chinese and Southeast Asian brides were typically marrying men 10 or more years older than themselves – 55% in the case of the Chinese and 67% for the Southeast Asians (Simons, 2001; Tsay, 2004).

International marriages are also on the increase in Singapore either. In 2004, over a quarter of male Singaporeans and permanent residents married foreigners, and 9% of women married foreign males. This was natural, given that more Singaporeans now live and work abroad and many foreigners live and work in Singapore. In 2005, 27% of Singaporean men married foreigners, compared with 7% of Singaporean women.

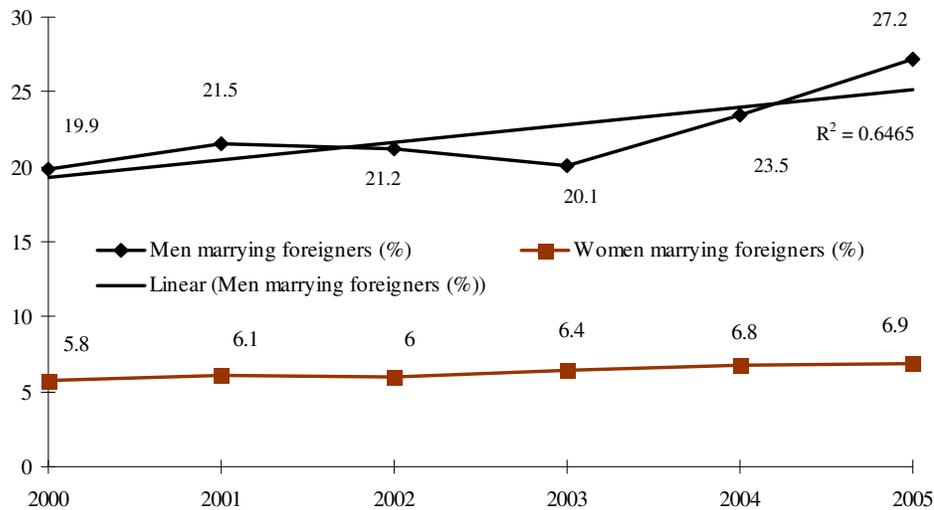


Figure 3: International of Singaporeans (citizens and PRs) in %age of all marriages;
Source: Department of Statistics

International marriages are particularly prevalent in the big cities of Japan (Hashimoto, 2007). In 2000, one in 10 marriages in the Tokyo area were between a Japanese spouse and a foreigner and in Osaka the figure was one in 12 (Curtin, 2002). But there are also certain rural areas of Japan where international marriages are prevalent. This large number of foreign wives of Japanese comes generally from three countries: Korea, China and the Philippines. The Philippines accounted for over one-third of foreign brides in 1995, but this had dropped to a little over one-quarter in 2000, the decline being offset by an increase in brides from China, whose share continued to increase up to 2003. In the case of China, International marriages have increased sharply over the past two decades, and their numbers remain tiny as a proportion of all marriages in China. It has been estimated that at least 150,000 Chinese (90% of them women) have married foreigners over the past two decades (Liu and Liu 2002), which would amount to less than 0.1% of all marriages in China over that period. These marriages are often between Chinese women and men from Japan, overseas Chinese societies of Hong Kong and Taiwan and other Western societies (Liu and Liu 2002).

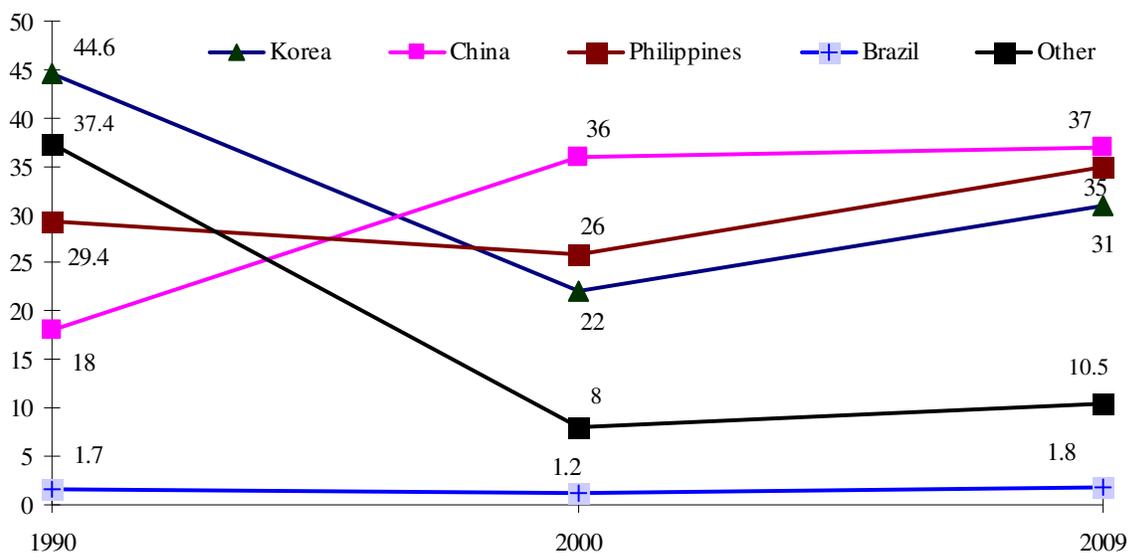


Figure 4: Origin of Foreign wives marrying Japanese men (%)

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan.

Empowerment or Exploitation?

A dichotomy exists within the discourse surrounding the growing phenomenon of marriage migration. Trends show that women in Asia are increasingly migrating for the purpose of marriage, but there are wide variances within the field. Not only are there great disparities among women who migrate, but there are great disparities between the motivations, consequences and risks of women who migrate for marriage. There are two main fields of thoughts on the issue and in many ways they stand in opposition to each other. The feminist argument frames marriage migration through the lens of empowerment, arguing that women are given autonomy and decision making power within the marriage process. Marriage migration is then seen in a positive light; as something that allows women to improve their situation through their own agency. The other field of thought on the issue claims that marriage migration is negative for a number of reasons. These researchers argue that marriage migration is exploitative and has damaging social consequences. However, it is important to look at the issue from many different angles in order to get an understanding of the motivations, consequences and challenges within marriage migration.

Traditionally in most parts of Asia, migration was largely a male phenomenon. Using the case of China, the labor market was unfavorable for women and their status in society and in the labor market created many 'disincentives' to undertaking migration (Ham, 2006:1). However, recent trends show increasing female migration from all over Asia including countries such as South Korea, China, Vietnam and Thailand. Although it used to be a taboo for a woman to travel alone, women are increasingly migrating alone and some numbers show that female migration exceeds that of male migration. However, marriage migration is a process of negotiation, and while some argue that it is empowering to women, other cases would reveal the opposite. Some families are anxious to recruit young brides from abroad as they are a source of labor and yet other families marry off their daughters to be able to afford necessities or even luxuries for male family

members (Ibid:9 and 15). In this way, marriage migration is not necessarily empowering to women. For these reasons scholars have a wide variety of opinions on the subject.

The first school of thought related to marriage migration argues that marriage migration is a positive phenomenon. Marriage migration is more than just an economic phenomenon, but one in which values, cultures and human capital are transmitted (Song, 2007). There are a number of reasons motivating marriage migration within Asia. Some of those reasons include but are not limited to economic benefits, escape from poverty, entry to a desired country, curiosity and to catch up with their age.³ It should be noted that marriage migration occurs through a variety of channels. Some marriages are arranged by brokers or agencies that send women abroad.⁴ In other circumstances, people meet each other because of increased numbers of individuals traveling, working and living abroad. With this increase in mobility and movement of people across cultures, there is also rise in international marriages (Lee, 2007). Furthermore, many men are finding themselves without wives because of women's increased mobility and agency in the marriage process. These men are forced to look outside of their community and sometimes culture in order to secure a wife. For example, there is a shortage of marriageable women in rural China thus forcing men to look elsewhere for their spouse (Chen, 2007). These cross-cultural marriages bring a number of challenges as not only do couples have to work through the normal difficulties of marriage, they also have to negotiate not being familiar with the other's culture.

There is disparity in the demographics of women choosing to migrate for marriage. Some come from well-educated higher classes and marry men they came into contact with through travel, school or work (Jones and Shen, 2008:10). It is only natural that people will enter into cross-cultural relationships in this increasingly globalized world. For example, increased numbers of Filipino women have married men from North America, Europe, Japan and Australia. However, for others, marriage migration is not about migrating for someone you fell in love with, but rather a structured and formal procedure to procure a different livelihood or even migration itself. Some feminists believe that marriage migration is an opportunity for underprivileged women to improve their livelihoods. Along this line, women are empowered decision makers in marriage migration. In a paper presented at the at the 2007 PAK/IPAR Conference on International Marriage Migration in Asia in Seoul, South Korea, Nimfa B. Ogena and colleagues stated the following in support of marriage as empowerment, 'A Filipina who emigrates to join her foreign spouse has made three crucial decisions: first, whether or not to marry; second, whether to marry a foreigner or a Filipino; and finally, whether to emigrate to join her spouse in a foreign country. All three decisions have to be grounded on one's assessment of her social, economic, political and cultural location (Nimfa, 2007:3-8).'

According to these authors' assessment, marriage migration is an opportunity for women to increase their autonomy and close gender gaps. Marriage migration is a process of negotiation to secure not only a better economic future, but to also secure additional

³ Elmer V. Malibiran. 'Filipina Marriage Migrants in Asia.' 3.

⁴ Elmer V. Malibiran. 'Filipina Marriage Migrants in Asia.' 4.

human capital, such as education.⁵ A woman becomes empowered through marriage migration because she resists her cultural norms by moving abroad. It is made clear by many of these arguments, that marriage migrants are not always passive victims in an exploitative industry, but rather they are able to negotiate within the marriage process (Jones and Shen, 2007:13).

Another school of thought argues that marriage migration is not a form of empowerment, but rather that it reinforces gender roles and leads to exploitation. There may be well grounded reason within both schools of thought. Although some authors make sweeping generalizations about gender roles, there may be some truth to their arguments in relation to marriage migration. Edward Jow-Chian Tu postulates that men choose brides for intrinsic reasons and that women tend to value extrinsic attributes (Tu, 2007:10). While this is a somewhat offensive generalization, it can be argued that marriage migration in which men choose women for intrinsic reasons reinforces the gender stereotypes that so many seek to reform. Furthermore, results from various studies may reveal that women are not empowered as certain feminists camps believe. There is a tendency for women who migrate for marriage to be in later ages marrying men much older because she is settling for a poorer match out of fears of being alone. Furthermore, the majority of female marriage migrants are predominantly undereducated. Contrarily, male marriage migrants are usually of the same educational level as that of their wife (Chen, 2007:12). On a policy level, many policies still tend to either victimize the women or reinforce gender inequality. In Korea, various international marriage migration agencies have a 'bride guarantee' policy stating they will replace a bride if she runs away.⁶ Through policies such as these marriage becomes a commodity and women are devalued.

Furthermore, there are a plethora of possible human rights violations that put female marriage migrants at risk. Immigration officials and many NGOs discourage bride migration and cited fraud and exploitation as possible outcomes (Simmons, 2001:152). Marriage migration does bring with it many risks. Bhassorn Limanonda said that at its most dangerous extreme, 'marriage has become a convenient tool for human traffickers (Limanonda, 2007:35).' Many women are also abused by their husbands or sold by their husbands. This reiterates the argument that marriage migration is not always empowering, but sometimes exploitative.

However, possible risks of exploitation are not the only consequence of marriage migration. Marriage migration could be a representation of changing norms within society. In many of the Asian countries explored and studied in the research, traditional values related to marriage were still common place. Women were married off by their families and portrayed as inferior to their husbands. Regardless of women's autonomy within the marriage negotiation, there are community wide consequences of marriage migration. One problem is that large numbers of men of marriageable age are unable to secure a wife. They are then left to look outside their home country for a spouse. Cross-cultural marriages have added difficulties as not only do spouses exchange vows at a

⁵ Nimfa B. Ogena, et. Al. 'Filipina Marriage Migration Streams to Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.' (Paper presented at PAK/IPAR Conference on International Marriage Migration in Asia, Seoul, South Korea, 2007). 8.

⁶ Hye-Kyung Lee. 'International Marriage and the State in South Korea.'

wedding ceremony, but they also exchange cultures (Limanoda, 2007:9).’ Societal changes are evidenced by increased marriage migration, families having fewer children and increasing divorce rates (Chen, 2007:3). Divorce rates among Asian nationals have been increasing at alarming rates. Cross-cultural marriages seem to exasperate divorce rates as the pace of divorce among cross-cultural marriages is much higher than national marriages.⁷ In light of these increased divorce rates some countries such as Taiwan have simplified divorce proceedings to account for rising divorce rates (Jones and Shen, 2004). These impacts are felt across cultures and will have a long standing impact on the way in which individuals perceive marriage and gender roles. However, questions remain about the idea of whether marriage facilitates migration or migration facilitates marriage.

According to the research one could say that both of the above statements could be true. In some ways, migration facilitates marriage as people go abroad and unintentionally fall in love and get married. This initiates the migration process. However, for others, marriage is seen as an opportunity to migrate and improve one’s livelihood. However, exploitation abounds within the industry as both marriage and women are made into commodities in the process. There are deep rooted social consequences of this trend of marriage migration as countries see increased divorce rates, large numbers of unmarried people of marriageable age and so forth. Both schools of the thought on the subject of marriage migration have valid arguments. It is true that women are sometimes afforded more autonomy and agency in the negotiating of marriage migration. Furthermore, some are then able to improve their human capital and economic capital. However, for others even marriage migration maintains gender roles and is viewed as selling the woman for the sake of the rest of the family. Furthermore, risks abound, especially within the field of mail-order brides. It is important the individuals, countries and international bodies seek to not delegitimize the benefits of marriage migration but make efforts to mitigate risks and undesirable consequences.

Drivers for entering into International Marriages

There are various reasons why people choose to marry foreign nationals in general, and especially some particular nationals. Factors that contribute to this phenomenal increasing number of international marriages in East and Southeast Asia vary. The key factor underlying the increase in international marriage in the region is the widened contact between people through travel and developments in communications and match making agencies have been facilitating. In village societies, before rapid urbanization and advances in communications, contacts with other people were typically restricted to the village of residence, nearby villages and perhaps wider contacts through relatives and villagers who had migrated elsewhere. The wedding issue was thus greatly restricted geographically. Respondents pointed out a number of factors why they resorted to cross-national marriages. Though there were differences in the opinions across nationalities. Reasons for the Filipinas are different from those of Japanese. All the factors are broadly

⁷ Doo-Sub Kim Myoung-Jin Lee. ‘Spouse Dissimilarity and Marital Instability: An Analysis of Divorced Couples of International Marriage in Korea.’ (Paper presented at PAK/IPAR Conference on International Marriage Migration in Asia, Seoul, South Korea, 2007:22.

categorized as: Social; Cultural; Emotional; biological; Economic; Political; Geographical; and Historical. Some also said due to their reluctance on native men and women they searched out their partners abroad.

Some studies demonstrate that the women are often influenced by imaginary fantasies about western ideals of freedom and a liberating life style. Personal choices, dreams of freedom and motherhood and love, are motives for migration that are, however, seen in the context of the structural frameworks and limited opportunities inherent in growing up in societies prompt women to transnational marriages (Del Rosario, 1994). Some of those who married Koreans said entry to Korea serves as a passageway to Korea without paying exorbitant placement fees to recruitment agencies. Application for work in a recruitment agency bound for Korea needs a lot of money. Filipinos have to pay from US\$3,000 to 4,000 for factory or industrial work. Through international marriages, it is the Korean men who pay these agencies for them to be married and for the processing of the papers to enter Korea. Some of these women interviewed in the study are getting old and they wanted to have their own families and raise their own children. They found their match through the Unification church or the matching agencies.

Rigid citizenship policies often induce potential incumbents to tie wedding knot with people in the receiving countries to easily obtain citizenship. Some countries grant citizenship after a given period of stint to a particular class. For example, in Hong Kong, after living for seven years, a foreigner can be eligible for citizenship. However domestic helpers are excluded from this policy. Most migrant females wish to obtain citizenship in other countries to secure residency status but, as in other parts of the world, obtaining citizenship through international marriage is not always successful for many migrant females. According to the current Korean Nationality Act, the international marriage migrant can obtain citizenship after at least two years of residence and only with the consent of the spouse, but even those who satisfy the conditions cannot obtain citizenship in many cases. Many female migrants choose international marriage to male citizens of the Republic of Korea expecting better economic opportunities and better living standards in the country that is more developed than their home country (Seol et al., 2006).

Some important obstacles migrant females face in the Republic of Korea are cultural differences in daily lifestyle, language, food, cultural assumptions, gender structure, family relationships, expected roles within the family, interpersonal relationships and more. Cultural and social expectations in the Republic of Korea are alien to the female migrants and they face various small and large hardships. This springs from a dream of fulfilling a role as mother and wife, a dream that the women do not believe they can actualize in their country for fear of violence and alcohol abuse in the marriage. They preferred foreign husbands because they have a reputation among Thai girls for not drinking and beating their wives, as well as for letting their wives play a bigger role in marital decisions. Strikingly, many female migrants have left violent husbands with alcohol abuse. In relation to inter-ethnic marriage, many of the female respondents candidly said they are generally not used to dark colour people. If they marry someone with dark colour (South Asian men) they will easily be noticed in their country. Some

other said that normally relationship does not happen to develop with South Asians (when a South-East or East Asians are there). Many of them did not want to risk having a baby that is not as white as they are. Interestingly, Thai women generally suggest to the family minded husbands and wife battering issues.

Discussions and implications

From the late 1990s to early 2000, most international marriages of males from the Republic of Korea were with Korean-Chinese females through marriage agencies, so called 'marriage brokers', and personal contact; and those with females from Japan, the Philippines and Thailand were arranged through the Unification Church. The more recent trend, however, is a sharp increase in the number of international marriages arranged through marriage agencies. Also, recently there has been an increase in the number of female migrants from Mongolia, Central Asia and areas of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Marriage has been increasingly utilized as a strategy for disadvantaged women to improve their well-being. First, there has been a surge in long-distance marriages, in which the poor inland provinces suffer a net loss of women to the rich coastal ones (Davin, 1997). The 1990 Census data illustrates the imbalance of in-and out-flow of brides between rural and urban areas – marriage accounted for 14% of the inter-provincial migration nationally, but 50% of the out-migration originated from Yunnan and Guizhou, and another 25% from Sichuan and Guangxi. On the other hand, the proportion of in-migration to the respective provinces hovered around 10% even though the volume of in-migration is significantly less than that of out-migration.

The need of men looking for partners brought about the proliferation of recruitment agencies/matching agencies. These agencies and brokers use false promises to deceive the women. In case of Filipino women, there are so many agencies posing recruitment agencies for factory or industrial workers. They use their agencies as a front to recruit innocent and unsuspecting women to be married to Korean men' (Yutani, 2007).

Through common network and friends, Filipinas met their husbands through their common friends at work. Through internet, the couple could meet through the chat room. They talk with each other through the use of high technology. One Filipina interviewed met her Korean husband through this process. The first and largest matching agency is the unification Church. These are arranged marriages where the couples have no knowledge about the person whom they would marry until the day that they attend the public wedding or what they call the 'blessing' (Yutani, 2007).

Marriage migration and the businesses supporting it exemplify an industry that eludes traditional international and intra-national controls by using 'non trade' channels to generate and sustain business. Actual trade of women is not the official business of international matchmaking companies; rather they sell catalogs (of women's pictures) to men. A type of trade does result from the marketing of images of prospective brides:

receiving countries get foreign brides and sending countries get remittances and/or additional benefits (e.g. family-sponsored immigration for relatives).

The husband as sole breadwinner, from this perspective, is not viewed as a form of exploitation. To the respondents, both male and female, the sexual division of labor with the marriage, far from being an externally imposed distorted and denigrating straight-jacket, was viewed as deliberately chosen. To the women, this signified elevated social and economic status that translated into the concrete advantages of remittances to parents and siblings back home as well as personal benefits to the women themselves and their own children. The theme of 'luck' emerged in many interviews as women respondents spoke of their good fortune in finding a foreign husband and gaining immigrant status.

In a globalized world where national-state boundaries seemed blurred, marriage migration tend to become an emerging phenomenon. This blurring of boundaries gives individuals a greater access to information or interaction with other people from other cultures. Based on an initial readings of related literature and interviews, there are four emerging arteries where interactions or information leading to marriage migration are coursed through. These are through marriage brokers and recruitment agencies, common network and friends, the internet/chatrooms and the recruitment of the Moonies. Owing to frequent television and newspaper reporting on international marriages, social awareness has increased. However, negative stereotypes about female migrants also prevail concurrently. The most common stereotypes are, 'she married only for money because her country is poor', 'she is only interested in sending money back home', and 'she can abandon the family and run away anytime'.

Today, mobility is much greater, opening up a greater field of contacts, technological developments such as the internet have opened up possibilities for marriage arrangements between people who have never met each other, and the commercialization of international marriage also elevates the volume of such arrangement. Plausibly that increased contact leads to greater incidence of international marriage if there are no barriers to such marriages. In some cases there exists some barriers based on nationality, ethnicity, social class, and religion; and the intervention of the state to prevent certain kinds of international marriages. Majority respondents irrespective of nationalities come from relatively poor families. Perhaps majority of them talked about a future family life as the important driver for such decisions. Women, especially Filipinas, have notion that foreign men are rich and marrying one of them could help them lift their families from poverty.

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