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Women and the Urban Economy in India: Insights from the Data on Migration

By

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Abstract

Rates of permanent economic migration by women into urban India have been low and falling, in contrast to other parts of the world where urban capital has drawn upon young, single women as a reserve army of labor. In this paper I use NSS surveys from 1983 to 2008 to investigate the socio-economic correlates of economic, follower and marriage migration by women to urban India. The results indicate that low urban female economic migration rates are not a statistical aberration due to incorrectly designed survey methodology and that a lack of supply of “good” jobs may be reinforcing male breadwinner norms. I argue that both falling economic and rising marriage migration rates for urban Indian women appear to be a result of urban economic inequality and insecurity. This data suggests that it is not the state-market tussle (that economists tend to be preoccupied with) but rather the interaction between family and market, and the continuing resilience of the patriarchal family in that struggle, that is the most remarkable feature of the Indian social and economic landscape.

INTRODUCTION

This paper brings together two disparate strains of literature on Indian economic development. The first is the growing body of literature that examines the causes and consequences of strikingly low and stagnant female labor force participation rates in India, with the debate being over whether particular trajectories of economic growth in India have resulted either in women's exclusion from, or their withdrawal from, the paid labor force. A second strand of literature examines stagnant rates of permanent economic migration within India, once again exploring the extent to which capitalist development in India has resulted in "exclusionary" patterns of urban growth and thus posing a similar set of questions about "push" versus "pull" factors in the Indian economy. This second strand of literature has, however, focused almost entirely on male economic internal migrants. There is very little by way of systematic exploration of women's internal migration patterns in India and the ways in which the latter may be linked to changes in female productive and reproductive labor, male migration and the broader trajectories of Indian economic development.

Historical materialist approaches to capitalist development have long recognized the crucial role of permanent migration (that is coercive to differing degrees) in the creation and maintenance of a labor force that is divorced from the means of production (Breman 1996, De Haan 1999). In areas like East Asia or Latin America, the migration of large numbers of young, single women from rural to urban areas has resulted in some attention to the ways that female migration for employment can serve as the basis for the development of a capitalist labor force (Sassen-Koob 1984, Standing 1999, Piper 2005). Feminist research has also shown how women's unpaid work in Latin America and East Asia can sustain patterns of circular male migration by ensuring social reproduction in rural areas while men undertake economically risky urban migration (Chant 1998). This work has helped us reconceptualize migration as not an individual but a household or community level decision that is predicated upon gender as well as class inequalities. In the case of India, however, these links remain under-researched, perhaps due to the absence of large streams of permanent female economic migration.

However, if we look beyond *economic* migration, or migration driven by the prospect of employment, we find that Indian women's overall rates of migration have risen. In particular, there have been sharp increases in female marriage migration into urban areas over the last few decades¹. According to National Sample Survey(NSS) data, by 2007-08, women migrants comprised 71% of urban, married, working age women, with rural-urban migrants accounting for about 40% of this migrant population. Economic outcomes for these women thus have a large and significant impact on measured gender

¹ 'Marriage' migrants in India refer to women (or men) who migrate at the time of marriage in order to move into their spouse's home. Patrilocality continues to be the dominant tradition in India, with the wife moving into the husband's home after marriage. The husband's home often includes the husband's parents.

inequalities in urban India today. In particular, the labor force participation of female non-economic migrants has dropped by more than that of non-migrants. Learning more about the lives of these women could therefore help us better understand some of the factors driving the declines in urban female labor force participation in India.

This edited volume highlights the importance of seriously considering the causes and consequences of unpaid, reproductive labor, once defined as ‘non-economic’, and still left out of many non-feminist analyses of the economy. I follow this tradition of feminist political economy by examining forms of migration defined as ‘non-economic’ and arguing for serious consideration of the economic impacts of such patterns of migration (Lee 2012). Indian women migrants classify themselves predominantly as “follower” or “marriage” migrants, forms of migration that appear to occur within the family and thus outside the economy. But, as feminist economists have taught us, the family is a site of production and reproduction, and economic change cannot be understood without understanding how household production and reproduction is structured.

In this paper, I trace patterns of female marriage, follower, and economic migration into urban India from 1983 to 2008 using Indian National Sample Survey (NSS) data². Specifically, I use the four most recent rounds of the NSS employment-unemployment survey that have asked detailed questions about migration³. These are the 38th round conducted in 1983, the 43rd round in 1987-88 and, skipping forward a decade and a half, the 55th round conducted in 1999-2000 and the 64th round for 2007-08⁴. Given that Indian economic policy shifted to emphasise privatization and market liberalization in the early 1990s, this data covers both pre- and post-liberalization India.

Since my focus in this paper is on establishing some links between male and female migration patterns, I restrict my sample to married, working age men and women in urban areas. The NSS surveys provide information on household consumption expenditure, the demographic characteristics of the household and occupational details of each household member. NSS data also allows us to categorize ‘principal status’ employment (employment for 183 days or more) as self-employment, regular or salaried wage employment, casual or irregular wage work, or as unpaid help in a family business. Women who

²“Follower” migrants are defined as those who “accompany” the primary migrant or primary earner. The latter is assumed to have made the actual decision to migrate while the “follower” is usually treated as passive and without agency in the migration decision. In this paper I do not analyse educational migrants, who comprise less than 1% of male and female working age migrants. I also exclude international migrants.

³ The NSS employment-unemployment survey is a quinquennial, nationally representative household survey, but the module on migration is only intermittently included.

⁴ The three earlier surveys are ‘thick’ rounds of the quinquennial Employment Unemployment Survey conducted alongside the consumption expenditure surveys, and the latter 2007-08 is a separate additional round conducted to specifically investigate migration. However, unlike other thin rounds, the sample size is similar to those of the ‘thick’ rounds.

report purely domestic work or the free collection of goods for the household are classified as domestic workers (and not counted as ‘employed’). All descriptive statistics are reported using NSS population weights.

It should be noted that this data captures only ‘permanent migration’, defined in India as occurring when migrants stay a year or longer at the destination⁵. Field studies provide compelling evidence that temporary and circular migration has grown tremendously in India over the last few decades, and the inability of NSS surveys to capture such migration is an issue that requires urgent attention (Deshingkar and Akter 2009).

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT AND THE GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR IN URBAN INDIA

There is widespread consensus that the Indian economy experienced a deepening of its urban bias after liberalization. Between 1993 and 2008, the urban economy grew from 45% to 60% of GDP based largely on the growth of services like information technology that employ a relatively narrow group of urban elites. Vakulabharanam(2010) shows that the most significant beneficiaries of post-1993 economic growth have been those in these high skill service occupations in urban areas, with the majority of urban workers actually losing ground over this period. In further evidence of this ‘urban enclave’ model of development, a number of studies find that inequality between rural and urban areas has risen since the 1990s, while urban areas themselves have become more unequal (Sen and Himanshu 2004, Thorat and Dubey 2012, Motiram and Sarma 2013).

While agriculture received some flows of public investment in the 1970s and 1980s, since the 1990s rural economic growth has primarily been the result of growth in extractive sectors such as mining, which tend to have significant negative externalities for local economies, including the displacement and dispossession of large numbers of rural residents (Jackson and Rao 2012). As a result of the stagnation in agriculture, the income share of rural peasants and agricultural labourers has declined in relative and absolute terms as compared to the income share of large farmers and those who are self-employed in non-agriculture (Vakulabharanam 2010). Relatively low- skill informal labor (such as construction work) in nearby towns and peri-urban areas often provide the highest wage options for rural residents. This means

⁵ In each case the NSS asks if the current place of enumeration of each household member differs from the last ‘usual place of residence’ and then the reason for leaving the last ‘usual place of residence’. The answer to the first questions helps us define the category of ‘migrants’ – those who answer ‘yes’ ; while the second helps us classify migrants as “economic”, “marriage” etc. Note that when women report being marriage migrants, they are already in their marital homes. Female marriage migration statistics thus represent in-migration to the marital household and region. Given that the NSS does not ask about the woman’s natal family, we do not have information on the exact location (at the district level) or socio-economic details of the natal home. We are able to use information on the place of last residence to determine which sectoral stream (rural or urban) the migrant is part of.

that rural and urban livelihoods in most parts of the country are highly diversified but also highly precarious, depending upon the ability of household members to move in and out of a number of unstable and low wage economic activities during the course of a single year.

Due to the prevalence of informalized and unstable employment, Indian employment surveys are notoriously unable to capture unemployment as it is defined in traditional economics. In contexts where the meaning of work is constantly changing, self-employment for men or intra-household, domestic work for women often become residual categories that absorb those who would otherwise be counted as unemployed. It is notable then that amongst those who are employed in urban India, self-employment is the only the category of employment that has expanded for urban married men. The share of working age married men with regular or salaried employment for a majority of the year has steadily dropped from 45% to 39% and the share of those with casual wage work has remained relatively stable. Meanwhile, a large and growing share of urban married working age women report that their principal occupation is intra-household work.

The shares of married men in the urban and rural labor force (versus those who may be full time students or otherwise not in the labor force) have both remained stable and high. In fact, labor force participation rates for married men (97% in 2008) are significantly higher than for single men of working age (89% in 2008). On the other hand, urban Indian women have significantly lower labor force participation rates than rural women. Furthermore, married women have about the same labor force participation rates as single women in rural areas, but much lower rates in urban India.

Thus urban India is characterized by an extremely strong form of the male-breadwinner ‘classic patriarchy’ model in which marriage is positively and strongly associated with entry into the labor force for urban men, and equally strongly but negatively associated with labor force participation for women (Kandiyoti 1998). The decreases in urban women’s labor force participation and economic migration would seem to suggest that this model is being even more firmly inscribed over time. As we will see below, some authors interpret this as a sign of rising economic well-being that allows women to withdraw from the labor force. I argue instead that while there is clearly a strong normative emphasis on the ‘male provider’, the data on migration suggests that these norms are being reinforced by India’s urban enclave model of growth and are a result of economic instability and relative dispossession for a majority of urban households, rather than a sign of their growing prosperity.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION IN INDIA

The existence of growing rural-urban inequality creates an interesting puzzle for researchers of economic migration in India. Despite what would seem to be almost overwhelming incentives for large waves of economic migration from rural to urban areas, rates of permanent *economic* migration into urban

India remain stagnant and have even declined slightly. As a share of the working age population, permanent *economic* migrants declined from 13% to 11% of the urban population. Economic migrants declined from 32% to 27% of the urban, male, working age married population and from 3% to 1% of the urban, female, working age married population (Table 1).

According to this data on permanent economic migration, India has lower migration rates than most other Asian countries (Bell and Muhidin 2009). The literature largely explains this as the outcome of the Indian government's hostility to urban in-migrants and the relative under-development of labour intensive formal sector occupations in Indian cities (Kundu 2009). Such studies have found that men from relatively higher castes and those who with relatively more education are more likely to engage in internal economic migration within and to urban areas in India (Dubey et al 2006, Mitra and Murayama 2008, Vakulabharanam and Thakuratha 2012). Kundu and Sarangi(2007) also find that these male urban in-migrants tend to be relatively well-off (although not the very richest) in urban areas. These authors thus suggest that what we see in India is not an unwillingness to move, but an inability to do so in a permanent and stable way. This argument is particularly compelling given the other evidence on the exclusionary nature of urban Indian growth and the existence of very large and growing streams of circular migration (Breman 1996, Deshingkar and Akter 2009, Deshingkar and Farrington 2009).

The studies on economic migration have, however, focussed almost entirely on male migrants who dominate this category of permanent 'economic' migrants, going from 86% to 91% of all economic migrants during this period. While the established story of Indian migration is currently that rates of permanent migration are very low, that is not what emerges when we look at female patterns of migration. If we look beyond just economic migration, permanent migrants *as a whole* have actually risen as a share of the Indian population –going from 23% in 1983 to 29% by 2007-08 with 87% of this increase accounted for by the rising share of female migrants – in particular the 90 million additional women who reported migrating for marriage between 1983 and 2008.

While marriage migrants went from 40% to 52% of working age married women, the share of women migrating to “follow an earning member of the family” edged down from 18% to 17% while (Table 1). Putting these numbers together, the share of non-migrants amongst working age married urban women dropped down to 29% by 2007-08. Of these non-migrants, 53% were never-married and thus perhaps just not yet eligible for “follower” or “marriage” migrant status. Furthermore, rural-urban (rather than urban-urban) migrants comprised a growing share of both female economic and marriage migrants.

The male rate of migration (of all kinds) was stagnant over the same period, falling slightly from 18% to 15% of working age, married men, primarily due to a decline in the share of male economic migrants (Table 1). Male marriage migration was negligible in all rounds (under 1%) and urban follower

migration has been stable at 4% since 1987-88. This means that men have become less likely to permanently migrate, even as women are more likely to do so.

EXPLAINING THE LACK OF FEMALE ECONOMIC MIGRATION IN INDIA

Despite the need to more fully explore the multiple forms of migration that women engage in, it is worth pausing to note that the almost miniscule, shrinking percentage of Indian women who report migrating for economic reasons is unusual when compared to most other developing countries including China, South Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Mexico or even the United States and United Kingdom in the nineteenth centuries. Most developing countries have relied upon migrant female workers in what Elson and Pearson (1981) called the “nimble fingers” phenomenon. In each case, deliberate attempts by state and capital to culturally legitimate the migration of young, single women from rural to urban areas have allowed these female migrants to serve as a docile, reliable, and low-paid reserve army (Bagchi 2011, Standing 1999). The absence of this phenomenon in India is therefore notable (Ghosh 2000).

Disguised economic migration?

One possible explanation for this absence (compared to the historical experience of other countries) is that the much larger streams of female “marriage” and “follower” migration in India are in fact disguised forms of economic migration. It is certainly possible that the NSS surveys are misclassifying some economic migration by women as marriage migration (Krishnaraj 2005). However, as shown elsewhere as well (Rao and Finnoff 2015), the data do not bear out this hypothesis.

First, if the need for employment was indeed driving female marriage and follower migration, we would expect to see higher economic activity rates for female marriage and follower migrants as compared to non-migrants (Krishnaraj 2005). However, follower migrants have much lower shares of economic activity than non-migrants⁶ (Table 2). Marriage migrants do have slightly higher rates of economic activity than non-migrants but their employment shares are several times lower than the rates reported by economic migrants and have fallen considerably over time.

Second, if in fact marriage migration is disguised economic migration, this would mean that married women move with their husbands with the intent of working at the destination point, much as the husband does, but then report their move as a move “for marriage”. Thus husbands must also be migrants and the actual journey made by the man and woman in the household must be identical – they should both, for example, report moving to the same destination. However, in 2007-08 only 18% of spouses of

⁶ We assume here that even if the NSS is failing to capture women’s work and thus underestimating female economic activity rates, it is equally unable to capture the work of female migrants and non-migrants, so that differences between these rates and changes over time are likely to be more accurate than the levels at any given point.

married female marriage migrants of working age were also migrants – as compared to 99% for follower migrants and 90% for economic migrants (Table 3). Furthermore, this share has dropped 10 points over the years.

Even if we assume that every one of these female marriage migrants with migrant spouses is indeed a disguised economic migrant, the overall share of economic migrants would only go up to about 3% of the female, working age, married population in 2007-08, and would not change the narrative of a declining time trend (down from 4% in 1983). At least in this dataset, it does not seem that a substantial share of marriage migrants are disguised economic migrants.

Thus we largely analyse the NSS data as at least internally consistent and focus on using it to understand more about these women migrants. In particular, we use the data to test our two competing hypotheses about the insignificance and further decline in female economic migration: the first that norms of sanskritization that have strengthened across castes and regions, resulting in a “withdrawal” effect; the second that ‘domestic’ work is a residual category that captures increasing female un/underemployment and the growing burdens of social reproduction within the urban precariat.

Withdrawal versus exclusion

If the low level of and decline in migration for employment by women is indeed a real phenomenon, and linked to wider declines in female labor force participation, what explains the lack of interest that Indian capitalists seem to display in exploiting this very large pool of cheap labor?

Ghosh (2000) focuses on the low levels of female workforce participation in the export sector in India, a key sector for female employment and economic migration in other Asian contexts. She argues that Indian manufacturing for export has remained trapped in low value-added sectors, which promotes a cost-cutting, rather than productivity-increasing, mentality. Indian capitalists are thus more interested in finding ways to sub-contract into the low-cost and low-productivity informal sector. As a result production for export in India tends not to rely directly upon female workers. Instead it does so indirectly, to the extent that female workers may be found in the informal sector.

Insofar as migration goes, this kind of urban development mutes the incentive as well as the ability to migrate permanently, by confining workers to an urban ‘precariat’ not so different from the rural one they are intimately familiar with. The fact that male permanent migration has also fallen is evidence in favor of this explanation. Meanwhile, in a context where male livelihoods are fragile, the unpaid labor of social reproduction that women perform is likely to involve considerable ingenuity and time without which the urban precariat, upon which the current model of Indian development is based, would not be able to secure the conditions of its existence. As we will see below, female marriage migrants are now both a majority of the urban female population as well as most likely to be part of this urban precariat,

and the fact that this is the group that has seen the largest increases in female domestic work could be evidence in favor of such an effect.

A different explanation would link low female economic migration and labor force participation to a “withdrawal effect” (Abraham 2012). The greater prevalence of female seclusion amongst higher castes and the fact that symbols of class and caste mobility are deeply intertwined in India, mean that ‘sanskritization’ processes result in women withdrawing from the labor force as household incomes rise (Srinivas 1998). Several studies suggest that as a result, female labor-force participation in India is distress driven and correlated with lower levels of female literacy (Eswaran et al 2011, Neff et al 2012, Abraham 2012), and seen, even within such households, as a failure of masculinity (Qayum and Ray 2011). The absence of female economic migration would thus be an extension of this phenomenon. Its decline over time could even be seen as a sign of the increased economic status of potential ‘sending’ households in India.

In examining these two hypotheses, the main differences lie in the theorized impact of class (in the Weberian sense of a combination of education and income) upon female economic migration. If changes in female migration patterns are being driven by exclusionary urban growth or decreased demand for female workers, we would expect to see higher class status (education, household per capita consumption and spousal employment) become stronger predictors of female economic migration as permanent migrations streams become restricted to ever more narrow groups of the privileged. On the other hand, if female economic migration is being driven by a withdrawal effect, then it is likely to be more educated and better off women who drop out first to signal their higher status. Understanding that marriage and follower migration may also be shaped by these broad economic forces, I examine the changing class correlates of those forms of migration as well.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN MIGRANTS

As prior research has shown, male economic migrants in urban India appear to belong to higher class groups. Almost 32% belonged to the top income quintile as compared to 17% of non-migrants (Table 4) and 70% had some post-primary education as compared to 67% of non-migrants, although these gaps have narrowed over time (Table 6). Interestingly, while economic migrants were more likely to have regular or salaried wage employment than non-migrants, there has been a relatively sharp fall in the share of male migrants with such employment (Table 7) and a corresponding increase in the share of migrant men who are self-employed. Casual wage worker shares have remained low and stable for male economic migrants.

Since 1987-88, there has been an increase in the share of male economic migrants whose spouses report being migrants (Table 3). In particular, a rising share of spouses report being follower migrants.

Thus married male economic migrants are more likely to report making the journey with their spouses, who in turn are less likely to report being economic migrants themselves.

In the case of female migrants, we have three categories of migration to track. Almost 99% female follower migrants reported that their spouses were economic migrants, and largely shared their husbands' relatively privileged socio-economic characteristics, while 82% of marriage migrants reported that their husband was a non-migrant in 2007-08, a percentage that grew from 72% in 1983 (Table 3). To the extent that urban male non-migrants appear to be worse off on average than male migrants to urban areas, female marriage migrants are the most likely to be part of the urban precariat. This hypothesis is borne out by a preliminary analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of these women.

As we can see in Table 6, urban female economic migrants, as well as, over time, non-migrants, had higher shares of post-primary education than marriage migrants. Female economic migrants also had significantly higher shares of households in the top quintile (Table 4). Follower migrants resembled economic migrants in this, while marriage migrants have the lowest shares of top quintile households.

A look at the employment profiles of these women and their spouses helps us understand why. Not surprisingly, female *economic* migrants are overwhelmingly more likely to be employed with the share of employed female economic migrants going from 62% in 1983 to 81% in 2007-08 (Table 6). However, they also had high and growing shares of salaried employment, which come with benefits and are usually relatively stable (Table 7). Follower migrants had the lowest shares of employment, but it was marriage migrants who saw the largest declines in employment over this period. Interestingly, economic migrants and marriage migrants were both comprised of growing shares of rural-urban migrants while follower migrants were increasingly likely to be moving between urban areas.

Female economic migrants were, however, slightly more likely to belong to the lower caste Dalit and Adivasi groups (Table 5). This may reflect the relative absence of a tradition of female seclusion amongst these groups, even though other studies suggest these norms are converging across castes (Deshpande 2012). It is also possible that what we are seeing here (given the very small absolute number of economic migrants) is the effect of state affirmative action policies in employment that might increase the likelihood of Dalit and Adivasi women holding jobs in education or other forms of government service.

With respect to spousal employment, the first thing to note is that the share of female economic migrants who are currently married is lower than the average for all urban women. Amongst single economic migrants, a greater share (20%) were divorced or separated than never married (16%). Overall, about 43% of female economic migrants had no spouses, and a further 15% had spouses who were not currently employed. Thus half of female economic migrants were, to use Raka Ray's terminology,

‘women without men’, either literally or figuratively⁷. Meanwhile those with spouses, as we saw earlier, were a relatively privileged sub-group in every way except their caste status.

Follower migrants were not only the most likely to have employed husbands, but also the most likely to have employed husbands with salaried jobs, a tendency that has strengthened over successive NSS rounds (Table 8 and 9). Follower migrants thus emerged as the most likely to fit the narrative of a genuine “withdrawal effect” –relatively well-off and with spouses in salaried employment.

Female marriage migrants, the only group that actually grew over this period, were the least privileged across these different metrics. Urban-urban marriage migrants were, however, better off than rural-urban marriage migrants with 24% reporting being in the top quintile and 29% reporting husbands with salaried employment, both higher than rural-urban marriage migrants. Rural-urban marriage migrants were in a much more vulnerable situation economically. Only 11% reported being in the top income quintile and only 41% reported having any post-primary education at all. And yet, only 20% reported being employed in 2008.

On almost all metrics non-migrants were close to, but slightly better off than marriage migrants. They were certainly better educated, had slightly higher shares of top quintile households and higher shares of spouses with salaried employment but in the latter two cases they were worse off than follower and economic migrants. They also had lower shares of employed husbands and migrant husbands. Based on our indicators of household standard of living, they appear relatively economically vulnerable, although perhaps not as much as marriage migrants.

Non-migrants were also the only other group that saw a decline in the share of women with employment, although the decline was smaller than in the case of marriage migrants. While follower migrants continued to have the lowest female labor force participation rates during this time period, our preliminary analysis thus suggests that is amongst the two most economically vulnerable groups that we see the greatest declines in female labor force participation.

Looking at categories of female migration separately suggests that while a ‘withdrawal’ story may fit the situation of follower migrants into urban areas, it is less likely to hold up for marriage migrants. Furthermore, given the shrinking socio-economic privilege of male economic migrants, it is quite possible that any socio-economic basis for a withdrawal effect amongst follower migrants is weakening. Meanwhile, female economic migration has become more concentrated amongst the highest class groups of those women who are have a spouse.

There is undoubtedly a very strong ‘male provider’ norm that governs the gender division of labor in urban India. However, this preliminary examination suggests that a lack of supply of good jobs in the

⁷ The Precarious Middle Class: Gender and Migration in India’s New Economy. Lecture by Raka Ray at Boston University, Feb 28, 2014.

urban economy for both women and men, in conjunction with increases in the burden of reproductive labor, may better explain the changing migratory patterns we observe than a withdrawal effect that is driven by rising class status. It would seem useful then to turn to regression analysis to test if these socio-economic correlations hold up to the introduction of controls.

LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Where I report regression results, due to considerable endogeneity between the various independent variables used, I interpret the results as partial correlation coefficients rather than as evidence of causal mechanisms. In the case of the regressions, I do not use weights both because I am combining data across different rounds as well as to avoid problems of inflated standard errors and thus levels of significance. I control for heteroscedasticity by clustering standard errors upon the primary sampling unit, the village.

Table 10 presents odds ratios for a logistic regression with the dependent variables being the probability of being an economic, follower, or marriage migrant respectively, within the sample of all urban, working age, married women. Odds ratios greater than 1 indicate that a unit change in the independent variable increases the likelihood of the dependent variable taking the value 1. The size of the odds ratio (above the value of 1) indicates the size of the increase. Thus an odds ratio of 1.2 indicates that a unit change in the independent variable causes the dependent variable to become 20% more likely, while an odds ratio of 0.8 suggests a 20% decrease in the likelihood of its occurrence.

Amongst the independent variables are age in years and a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the woman has received any post-primary education. I include real monthly per capita household consumption (in 2011-12 Rupees) as well as the square of the real monthly real household per capita consumption to account for any U-shaped effects. I am also interested in the differing impact of caste status upon women's participation in these different migratory streams. I use dummy variables to signify membership in the most historically disadvantaged caste groups, Adivasis and Dalits.

The principal occupation at the household level is the occupational category, either self-employment or wage work, that accounts for the largest share of household income. This is likely to coincide with the primary earner's occupation (usually the husband). As we have seen above, economic and follower migrants are more likely to have spouses who are engaged in regular or casual wage work, while marriage migrant, who tend to marry non-migrants, are more likely to have spouses who are part of the urban self-employed. Time dummies for each of the first three NSS rounds are included to capture changes over time (relative to 2008) that persist after controlling for these variables.

I use the NSS household consumption data to calculate the average urban state-level household per capita consumption. This helps control for the fact that better off states may attract larger streams of

male and female economic migrants. I also include the urban Gini coefficient at the state level. Greater urban inequality, as discussed earlier, may reduce the ability and desire to engage in permanent economic migration. In previous co-authored work, I also found that urban inequality sharply increases marriage migration, a finding that is replicated here as well (Rao and Finnoff 2015).

In Table 11, I add two key characteristics of the spouse: a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the spouse is currently employed, and a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the spouse is a migrant. Based on the preliminary analysis above, married economic migrants are much more likely to report that their spouses are unemployed and thus that they are ‘pushed’ into the labor force due to the absence of a male provider. Also, follower and economic migrants are likely to migrate with spouses, while marriage migrants’ spouses are more likely to be non-migrants. Introducing these variables helps control for the fact that household income in particular may be a function of the man’s characteristics as much as the woman’s. It thus helps to isolate any correlations with income that are specific to the woman herself.

The results largely confirm the preliminary analysis above. Economic and follower migrants are more likely to be older than other women while marriage migrants are younger. Post-primary education increased economic and marriage migration but decreased follower migration. Economic and follower migrant households were more likely to earn a majority of their income from forms of wage work, rather than self-employment.

Household per capita consumption exponentially increased the likelihood of economic migration for women, providing more weight to the exclusion hypothesis. However, being Dalit or Adivasi also increased female economic migration, which suggests that caste based norms about women’s mobility have not entirely converged yet. As expected based on the exclusion hypothesis, urban inequality lowered the likelihood of economic migration for women, but this was not statistically significant.

Follower migrants were, as expected, from upper castes with wage work as the primary source of household income. The inverted U-shaped result for household consumption suggests such migrants’ household are more likely to inhabit the middle of the urban consumption distribution. These are all results that align with what we know about male urban economic migrants, whom these women report following. Controlling for the spouse being employed or a migrant did not change any of these results.

As we had seen earlier, male migrants were slightly more likely over time to report that their spouses were also migrants (rather than perhaps remaining in the village or being urban non-migrants). Once we controlled for spousal characteristics, the results on the time dummies confirm that the likelihood of follower migration has actually increased over the rounds. Thus there is an “unexplained” time trend here that may, as suggested earlier, match the “withdrawal” hypothesis of strengthening norms against women’s workforce participation for this relatively upper caste and class group. On the other

hand, this could also be a result of increasing reproductive work burdens that both require men to bring their spouses with them, and then keep women out of the paid labor force.

The results for marriage migrants echo our prior analysis in almost every respect. They are younger and live in poorer households (the relationship is exponential) whose income comes primarily from self-employment. As with economic migrants, Dalits are also more likely to be marriage migrants. Reminding ourselves that these are also the two primary streams of migration through which rural women move to the city, the broader conclusion may be that it is Dalit women who are increasingly likely to migrate to from village to city. These women are thus very much part of the urban precariat, and controlling for the spouse's employment and migration status does not change any of these results.

We also find that there has been an increase in the likelihood of such marriage migration and, very interestingly, that the likelihood of marriage migration increases in poorer states and is strongly and positively correlated with greater levels of urban inequality. These are results discussed further in other work (Rao and Finnoff 2015). There we argue that for the families of relatively well-educated rural brides, marrying their daughters and sisters to men who live in urban areas provides a very valuable foothold into the urban economy that the highly skewed labor market is unable to afford them. Whether these women's lives are improved by becoming part of the urban precariat is an open question, but for the poorer urban families who receive them, this is not only a much needed and otherwise lacking validation of status in the most unequal urban areas, but also comes with material benefits given the rising levels of dowry that accompany such marriages.

DISCUSSION OF THE REGRESSION RESULTS

Patterns of migration suggest some evidence for a “withdrawal effect” amongst relatively well-off follower migrants, but not for economic migrants or marriage migrants. In particular, the regression results above clearly indicate that marriage migrants are part of the worst off in urban areas. This makes it extremely unlikely that their swelling numbers should signal a “shining India” where increasing economic well-being has made it possible for women to stay home. Instead these migration patterns taken as a whole tell a story of a population responding in complex ways to an exclusionary urban economy where labor market opportunities for men and women are highly restricted. The willingness to look beyond narrow notions of the ‘economic’ reveals that these responses occur through both market as well as family. In the context of migration, through changes in women's marriage and follower as well as economic migration.

It seems likely that many of these women are being shut out of the labor force by a lack of decent work that can accommodate their reproductive work burdens. However, knowing that so many marriage migrants are relatively well-educated, rural-urban marriage migrants also suggests that some normative

status effects may be at work. Field studies show that in rural areas, brides who have a good education and are able to bring large dowries with them are unwilling to perform 'hard labor'. They see their dowries as guaranteeing that they will not have to perform arduous work 'outside' (Ramamurthy 2011). The urban precariat in India has little access to work that is not arduous and thus, as suggested by Deshpande (2012) and Jackson and Rao (2009), the absence of 'good' jobs may reinforce norms of female seclusion, making women's labor force participation even less likely. Indeed one could even argue that women, or rather the family structures that surround them, draw upon these norms to actively resist becoming cheaper, super-exploited replacements for men and machines.

Srinivas' original formulation of sanskritization described not an unchanging tradition making its presence felt but rather a morphing of tradition to accommodate status signalling in a new context of inequality and social churn (Srinivas 1998). Evidence on dramatic changes in gender norms in recent years have been provided by a variety of studies showing that norms amongst the lower castes and in the relatively more gender-progressive southern regions of India have changed to resemble those of the upper castes in northern India, in a patriarchal "race to the bottom" of sorts (Deshpande 2002 and 2012, Kapadia 1995, Basu 1999, Rahman and Rao 2004). Gender norms in India are thus not immutable (Uberoi 2012). This body of work suggests that rather than changing to accommodate greater paid female labor force participation, they have changed to suppress it. I argue here that these changes are a response to heightened inequality and economic instability. Our "missing" female economic migrants in India may thus be as much an outcome of the particular model of capitalist development in India as the rising share of the urban economy in GDP.

In the long term, what we may also have here is a vicious cycle where the failure to create the kinds of decent work that families in India would be willing to allow their women to perform also adversely affects decisions to invest in female education. While Indian parents are more likely to send their daughters to elementary and middle school than before, there has been much less change in rates of *higher* education amongst Indian girls. In the NSS data, only 24% of rural 18-year old girls were in school in 2008, an increase from 1983 but in rural areas, not dramatically so. As Kingdon and Unni(2001) have shown, in India returns to education increase with higher levels of education so that schooling below the middle school level has almost no labor market benefits. These are the young girls who would have been drafted by urban capital in the alternate universe of India-as-China. In India, however, in the absence of employment that can justify permanent economic migration into and across urban areas, they are ever more dependent on marriage as the source of their livelihood.

CONCLUSION

Overall it does appear that the NSS data across these four rounds is fairly internally consistent. That is, we don't see any sharp overlaps or inconsistencies in the data that might suggest that disguised economic migration is high in India, at least when it comes to permanent migration. Instead, economic migration appears restricted to relatively a small and shrinking group of either well-educated and well-off women within Dalit and Adivasi groups, or to women without a male provider. While follower migrants do exhibit some signs of a 'withdrawal effect', marriage migrants appear to occupy such precarious spaces in the urban economy that any such 'withdrawal' is unlikely to be a sign of increased prosperity. Furthermore, the fact that a majority of their husbands are not economic migrants themselves suggests that it is marriage, rather than employment, that is the direct draw to the city for these women. We are left with the sense that there is no significant stream of permanent female employment migration in India, disguised or otherwise.

The absence of a large, labor intensive manufacturing sector in urban India is certainly part of the reason, but so is the complex interplay between 'classic patriarchy' norms about male breadwinners (which promise women economic security through marriage) and a climate of clear and present economic insecurity. Economists tend to be preoccupied with the ways in which market and state reshape each other. But examining patterns of female economic as well as non-economic migration in India remind us yet again that economic change plays out equally dramatically in the interaction between the family and market. Indeed it may be that struggle, and the continuing resilience of patriarchal norms in that struggle, that is one of the most remarkable features of the Indian economic landscape today.

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Tables

Table 1: Share of migrants in the urban, working-age(15-64), married population

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | All migrants | Economic | Follower | Marriage | All migrants | Economic |
| 1983 | 61 | 3 | 18 | 40 | 37 | 32 |
| 1988 | 64 | 2 | 17 | 45 | 36 | 31 |
| 1999 | 67 | 2 | 16 | 49 | 33 | 28 |
| 2008 | 71 | 1 | 17 | 52 | 31 | 27 |

Table 2: Share of those employed(principal and subsidiary status)

| | Women | | | | | Men | | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|-------------|----------|-------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Total | Non-migrant | Economic | Total |
| 1983 | 23 | 62 | 15 | 24 | 23 | 96 | 97 | 96 |
| 1988 | 24 | 66 | 16 | 22 | 23 | 96 | 97 | 96 |
| 1999 | 22 | 63 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 95 | 96 | 95 |
| 2008 | 21 | 81 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 95 | 96 | 95 |

Table 3: Share with a spouse who is a migrant

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Non-migrant | Economic |
| 1983 | 12 | 94 | 98 | 28 | 47 | 92 |
| 1988 | 12 | 94 | 98 | 27 | 53 | 92 |
| 1999 | 11 | 88 | 98 | 23 | 57 | 93 |
| 2008 | 10 | 90 | 99 | 18 | 63 | 94 |

Table 4: Share in the top consumption quintile

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Non-migrant | Economic |
| 1983 | 18 | 34 | 31 | 19 | 17 | 38 |
| 1988 | 21 | 35 | 31 | 17 | 17 | 36 |
| 1999 | 25 | 38 | 31 | 17 | 19 | 34 |
| 2008 | 24 | 39 | 30 | 17 | 17 | 32 |

Table 5: Share who belong to Dalit and Adivasi caste groups

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Non-migrant | Economic |
| 1983 | 15 | 18 | 15 | 17 | 17 | 16 |
| 1988 | 15 | 18 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 15 |
| 1999 | 17 | 23 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 16 |
| 2008 | 17 | 19 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 17 |

Table 6: Share with any post-primary education

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Non-migrant | Economic |
| 1983 | 27 | 31 | 32 | 26 | 44 | 53 |
| 1988 | 32 | 41 | 34 | 29 | 47 | 54 |
| 1999 | 50 | 54 | 48 | 53 | 60 | 66 |
| 2008 | 58 | 59 | 52 | 53 | 67 | 70 |

Table 7: Share of those with regular/salaried wage work

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Non-migrant | Economic |
| 1983 | 5 | 33 | 3 | 4 | 36 | 65 |
| 1988 | 7 | 31 | 3 | 3 | 36 | 62 |
| 1999 | 8 | 38 | 6 | 4 | 34 | 58 |
| 2008 | 7 | 53 | 5 | 4 | 33 | 56 |

Table 8: Share with a spouse who is employed

| | Women | | | | Men | |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage | Non-migrant | Economic |
| 1983 | 89 | 84 | 91 | 91 | 19 | 12 |
| 1988 | 89 | 82 | 93 | 91 | 18 | 13 |
| 1999 | 88 | 83 | 92 | 91 | 17 | 14 |
| 2008 | 88 | 75 | 92 | 90 | 17 | 13 |

Table 9: Share of women whose spouse has a salaried job

| | Non-migrant | Economic | Follower | Marriage |
|------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1983 | 38 | 50 | 62 | 40 |
| 1988 | 41 | 49 | 58 | 38 |
| 1999 | 40 | 50 | 55 | 34 |
| 2008 | 36 | 43 | 51 | 33 |

Table 10: Logistic Regression Analysis: Likelihood of Economic, Follower and Marriage migration for urban, working age, married women (state dummies included but not reported, available upon request)

| | Economic migrant N= 173967 | | Follower migrant N= 173967 | | Marriage migrant N= 173967 | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| | Odds ratio | Std error | Odds ratio | Std error | Odds ratio | Std error |
| Age | 1.015*** | 0.002 | 1.012*** | 0.001 | 0.988*** | 0.001 |
| Post-primary education | 1.226*** | 0.052 | 0.782*** | 0.015 | 1.051*** | 0.016 |
| Adivasi | 2.271*** | 0.202 | 0.954 | 0.048 | 0.699*** | 0.035 |
| Dalit | 1.435*** | 0.092 | 0.931* | 0.027 | 1.081*** | 0.026 |
| Household:Self employed | 0.476*** | 0.022 | 0.531*** | 0.010 | 1.423*** | 0.019 |
| (log)mpce(2011-12 rs) | 0.912 | 0.263 | 40.709*** | 13.430 | 1.053 | 0.116 |
| (log) mpce squared | 1.038* | 0.018 | 0.818*** | 0.017 | 0.976* | 0.007 |
| State average per capita consumption | 1.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.999*** | 0.000 |
| State gini(rural) | 0.493 | 0.470 | 1.664 | 0.806 | 134.111*** | 64.808 |
| Year_1983 | 1.826*** | 0.243 | 1.046 | 0.066 | 0.274*** | 0.018 |
| Year_1988 | 1.559*** | 0.218 | 0.998 | 0.065 | 0.332*** | 0.023 |
| Year_1999 | 1.235* | 0.130 | 0.895* | 0.042 | 0.588*** | 0.029 |

*p<0.05, ** p<0.0, ***p<0.001

Table 11: Logistic Regression Analysis: Likelihood of Economic, Follower and Marriage migration for urban, working age, married women with spousal characteristics included (state dummies included but not reported, available upon request)

| | Economic migrant N= 131110 | | Follower migrant N= 131110 | | Marriage migrant N=128916 | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| | Odds ratio | Std error | Odds ratio | Std error | Odds ratio | Std error |
| Age | 1.009*** | 0.002 | 1.013*** | 0.001 | 0.990*** | 0.001 |
| Post-primary education | 1.288*** | 0.061 | 0.873*** | 0.019 | 0.991 | 0.015 |
| Adivasi | 2.269*** | 0.191 | 0.916 | 0.047 | 0.799*** | 0.027 |
| Dalit | 1.569*** | 0.096 | 0.902*** | 0.028 | 1.091*** | 0.021 |
| Household:Self employed | 0.717*** | 0.035 | 0.768*** | 0.016 | 1.281*** | 0.017 |
| (log)mpce(2011-12 rs) | 0.447*** | 0.067 | 2.446*** | 0.567 | 1.064 | 0.111 |
| (log) mpce squared | 1.059*** | 0.010 | 0.947*** | 0.014 | 0.984* | 0.007 |
| State average per capita consumption | 1.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.999*** | 0.000 |
| State gini(rural) | 0.569 | 0.467 | 2.077 | 0.873 | 55.463*** | 14.723 |
| Spouse_employed | 0.766*** | 0.053 | 1.437*** | 0.053 | 1.117*** | 0.025 |
| Spouse_migrant | 18.174*** | 1.216 | 252.162*** | 13.614 | 0.357*** | 0.005 |
| Year_1983 | 1.821*** | 0.199 | 0.712*** | 0.039 | 0.342*** | 0.012 |
| Year_1988 | 1.448*** | 0.168 | 0.658*** | 0.038 | 0.423*** | 0.015 |
| Year_1999 | 1.293*** | 0.106 | 0.739*** | 0.030 | 0.669 | 0.016 |

*p<0.05, ** p<0.0, ***p<0.001