

# PANEL I: MULTICULTURALISM IN CONTEMPORARY KOREA

[PAPER 1]

## ***Filipino Korean Marriages: Issues and Challenges in Multiculturalism***

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### **I. Introduction**

The increasing number of foreigners in Korea is transforming Korean society into a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, a trend that maybe irreversible. South Korea, a country that prides itself as a racially homogenous country for many centuries has been experiencing a significant demographic transition in the last two decades. From 1990 to 2007, the number of “foreign residents” in South Korea grew from just under 50,000 to over one million. The largest numbers of foreign residents, about 377,000 (or 32.5 percent), are ethnic Koreans from China (*Joseonjok*) and other migrants coming from Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Mongolia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia, Nepal and India. The largest numbers of foreign migrants are low skilled workers who may have entered Korea without legal papers, more than 46,000 of whom had been living in the country for five years or longer and, of these, almost 21,000 had been in South Korea for at least 10 years. Professional or highly skilled workers also increased in numbers from 2,833 in 1990 to 27,221 in 2006. (Lim, Timothy, 2010) The demand for more foreign migrant

workers will continue to rise given the fact that Korea continues to have a very low birthrate and thus will be unable to produce enough able-bodied Koreans to replenish their workforce and support the welfare systems of their retirees. According to a UN Report, Korea would need about 6.4 million immigrants from 2020 to 2050. (UN, 2001)

The Industrial Trainee system adopted in 1993, paved the way for more foreign workers to augment South Korea's labor force. Under this system migrant workers were considered as "trainees" or apprentices and therefore did not receive the full benefits of legal workers. This practice attracted many foreign workers who were given low wages and more often than not, were subjected to poor working conditions without any fundamental rights that are normally enjoyed by workers (e.g. membership in trade unions, social and health benefits etc). Due to many criticisms, this policy was replaced by the Employment Permit System, a policy passed by the National Assembly on July 2003 (Han, 2007).

The other phenomenon that has received public attention is the increasing number of intermarriages between Koreans and Asian women which began in the 90s. Initially mediated by the "Moonies" (the term refers to the followers of the Reverend Moon who conducted mass weddings via satellite from the Philippines) and more recently, by marriage brokers apparently with the tacit approval of the government. From only 619 intermarriages in 1990, the figure increased dramatically to 43,121 in 2005 which was considered as the peak year. (Lim, citing Korean Immigration Service Figures, 2010). In 2007, intermarriages accounted for 40% of marriages among rural men engaged in agriculture since these areas experienced a serious shortage of "marriageable

women” (Lim, citing the First Basic Plan, 2010). By September 2013, the single largest group of marriage migrants were Vietnamese women numbering about 40,000 with Chinese and Korean Chinese women were second and third. The rest come from Japan, the Philippines and Cambodia (Iglauer, January 29, 2015). The issue of intermarriages between Korean men and foreign wives is a particularly sensitive one as it often gives rise to issues of “racial purity” cultural homogeneity and social cohesion of the Korean people. Even ethnic Koreans returning from various countries are also considered not “pure” Koreans and therefore considered “outsiders” as well. The return migration to Korea of **Joseonjok** (descendants of those who left Korea during the Japanese colonial rule) as well as well as the **Goryeoin** (ethnic Koreans living in Central Asia) and those living in Sakhalin presents a new theme in the multicultural landscape.

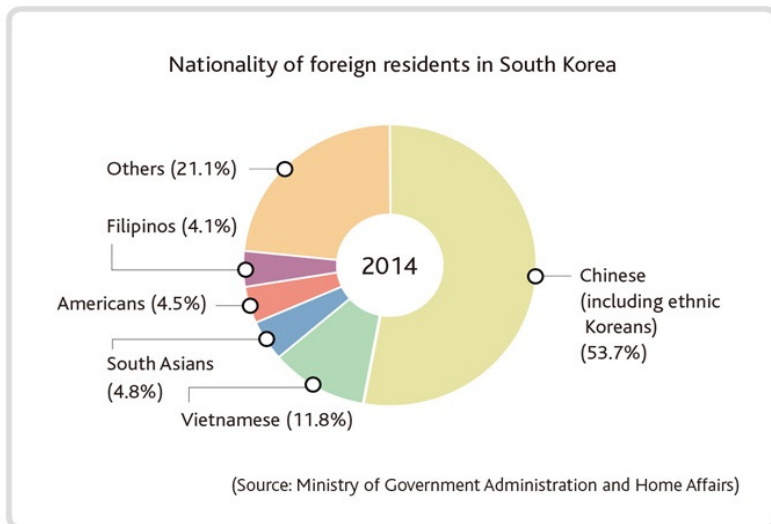


Figure I. Nationality of Foreign Residents in Korea

## Foreign Spouses

Number of Foreigners Married to Korean Citizens

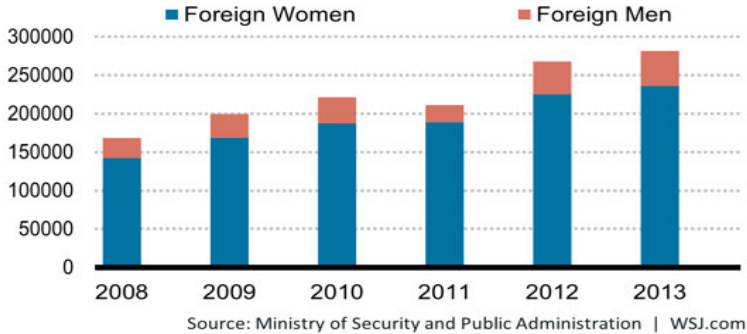


Figure II. Number of Foreigners Married to Korean Citizens

The rapid increase in the number of intermarriages between Korean men and Asian women from 2008 to 2013 happened because of government's policy of increasing such marriages to address the declining birthrate in the country. This statist project is itself a reversal of years of antinatalist policies which saw the fertility decline from 4.53 in 1970 to 1.67 in 1980 1.47 in 2000 and 1.08 in 2005 (Kim, 2008). To strategically address this alarming trend, marriage was viewed by policy makers as a policy that can ensure the biological reproduction of the Korean nation. In addition to this, marriage migrants can ensure much needed stability in rural areas where unwilling rural bachelors can cause serious social problems such as prostitution and gambling. For this policy to be implemented a systematic policy and infrastructure of support had to be introduced such as the Social Support Measures for Mixed Race Immigrants; the amendment of Nationality Law to ease citizenship acquisition requirements in 2004; Marriage Migrants Total Support Program supervised

by the Ministry of Family and Gender Equality and the Marriage Migrant Support Centers. (Kim, 2008, p. 6)

This development has far-ranging implications to Korean society as a whole. The “multiethnicization” of Korean society has resulted not only in demographic changes but also cultural and social changes. The transition from a culturally homogenous society to a multiethnic or “multicultural” one is a long and complex process that may on one hand be positively viewed as diversifying and enriching Korean society requiring social adjustment, accommodation and social acceptance and on the other hand, may cause fissures, divisions and antagonisms on the part of the Korean people.

## **II. Marriage Migration: Growing Global Phenomenon**

Marriage migration can be defined as “*a collective term referring to cross-border marriages which often involves women migrating to the home country of their husbands.*” While marriage matchmaking and marriage arrangements is not a new phenomenon in many cultures, the large scale commercialization of marriages via marriage brokers and cyberspace advertisements, constitute new elements in this phenomenon. In the 80s, the “mail order bride” phenomenon drew much public attention because it was seen as yet another form of exploitation by western men of women from developing countries. Marriage brokers and agencies offered prospective brides for a fee by arranging “vacation tours” in the Philippines, Thailand or other countries in Asia to enable western men to select their brides and bring them home. Due to intense competition among matchmaking agencies for instance, the transactional costs for getting a bride like Filipina bride became very affordable. Web site charges can

cost US\$ 385 for a four-day “tour” in the Philippines, excluding airfare and accommodations. (Charming Filipinas.com) During these tours, foreigners are billeted in hotels where prospective brides are paraded before them (sometimes with accompanying translators) and they get to choose which one they like. They can be married the following day, stay a few more days for the honeymoon and then return to their country while the bride arranges the necessary documents to join him. (Newsbreak, ABS-CBN News, September 14, 2009).

The “Moonies” (the term refers to the followers of Rev. Moon) were the first ones to initiate a campaign to match Korean men with Filipina women in the 80s through mass wedding ceremonies beamed via satellite. This was later followed by marriage brokerage system that was sanctioned by the government to facilitate and hasten the marriage of Korean men with foreign brides. The government itself sponsored “Getting the Rural Bachelors Married Project” intended to help rural bachelors find their brides from abroad with concrete financial support from government. The monetary support given to rural as well as rural-based bachelors many of whom are old or middle-aged men easily paved the way for the commercialization of international marriages, which I term “transactional marriages.” It soon became apparent that there is profit to be had for brokers who can easily manipulate and deceive both parties on the terms and conditions of this type of marriage including by massive misrepresentation of the prospective husbands or wives and vice versa. For instance, Korean men are presented to families of the bride as wealthy person who owns assets and businesses. In many cases, the prospective wife is not even informed about actual

conditions of the men who are often physically and/or mentally disabled and very often are poor (Interview with a Filipina wife, 2008). The inflated expectation and idealization of marriage to a “foreigner” which will bring about the economic upliftment of their families makes women vulnerable to false promises, deception and exploitation by Korean brokers .

The international marriage market has expanded in terms of quantity and diversity of men from different nationalities seeking partners from other countries as well as the channels and modalities used to “advertise” and “market” prospective brides This has been greatly facilitated through new information technologies that offer membership for a fee to those who are seeking their lifetime partner. There are even online books/materials and advertisement on marriage migration available such as:

- **“*Filipina 101 and Filipina 202*”**.  
Filipina 101 (<http://www.filipina101.com>) is an introduction to the Filipina for Western men interested in finding that special Filipina Dream girl! While Filipina 202 (<http://www.filipina202.com>) provides information on “what to do next now that you have found the Filipina of your dreams.” It gives information on what you need to know about getting married in the Philippines and getting her home to begin your new lives together. Both online materials were written by Perry Gamsby, a foreigner who married a Filipina in the Philippines.
- ***Filipina Immigration Links Fiancée & Marriage***  
This website ([http://www.melindaspenspals.com/immigration\\_info.htm](http://www.melindaspenspals.com/immigration_info.htm)) provides links that will help foreigners prepare

their trip to meet their Filipina penpal. It also has a “**Filipina Gallery**” featuring photos and profile of women (<http://www.melindaspenspals.com/penpal-community/index.php?action=gallery>)

- ***IChat Filipina***

An online Filipina dating and personals site which aims to assist Filipina singles, single men and women around the world in finding their perfect match. ([http://www.ichatfilipina.com/?gclid=CPHm\\_c6Gv5YCFQMQswod\\_VWLzA](http://www.ichatfilipina.com/?gclid=CPHm_c6Gv5YCFQMQswod_VWLzA))

- ***Filipina Wives***

This is known as ASAWA website (<http://www.filipinawives.com>) which aims to explore Filipino-West relationships. The site is primarily intended to assist men in Filipino-West relationships specifically to orient them on Philippine culture.

- ***Loving and caring Cebu girls***

Advertising Cebuana girls with their photos and characteristics to attract prospective foreign partners. (<http://www.cebuphilippines.net/cebu-girls.html>)

- ***Find the love of your life***

A matchmaking online service that advertises a happy and fulfilling relationship. ([www.be2.ph](http://www.be2.ph))

- ***Filipinaheart***

Online Filipina dating site where you can find Filipina singles who are looking for their perfect match. ([www.filipinaheart.com](http://www.filipinaheart.com)). It also highlights success stories of couples who met through this online dating.



- ***Senior People Meet***

The largest dating community for single seniors looking for companionship or romance. <http://www.seniorpeoplemeet.com/online-dating/promo.cfm?sid=254&afid=5702>. This site usually sends unsolicited email announcements to anyone who has an email account.

What these marriage matching sites provide are usually idealized and stereotypical images and characteristics of women who appeal to men who are in search of characteristics as subservience, sex appeal and obedience.

### **III. Why Are Filipino Women Marrying Korean Men?**

Filipino women have varying reasons for marrying foreign men in general and Korean men in particular. Many studies have documented the reasons behind Filipino women's willingness to marry foreigners (Du-Re-Bang, 2005). The lack of economic opportunities in the country and the desire to escape from poverty are the most common reasons for marriage migration. Marriage is viewed as a vehicle to improve women's lives and that of their families. Women often fantasize and imagine that all foreign men are better off economically than most Filipino men. Due to strong colonial mentality, some women have a preference for western men particularly Americans but are amenable to marrying Asian men as well. Women who fear spinsterhood particularly those in their 30s and 40s, may consider marriage migration as a viable option to secure their future. Marriage is an option for women escaping unhappy relationships. Some spouses admit that marrying foreigners is the easiest ticket for possible

overseas work and settlement overseas, which is also a convenient way to provide income for families trapped in poverty. International marriage is also an option open to women trying to escape the domestic helper identity – which is the identity commonly associated with Filipinas working in Canada under the Live-in-Caregiver Program (LCP) (Mckay, 2005) as well as in Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries.

An analysis of the recent profile of Filipino married to Korean men is instructive :

<b>Table I. NUMBER OF FILIPINO SPOUSES AND OTHER PARTNERS OF FOREIGN NATIONALS BY COUNTRY (SOUTH KOREA): 2010 – 2014</b>						
<b>South Korea</b>	1,694	1,903	1,754	1,572	1,005	<b>7,928</b>

Source: Commission on Filipinos, 2015

Though Filipino women do not constitute the majority of international marriages in Korea, they are significant enough to form a distinct community of foreign brides in the country. As the number of Koreans staying in the Philippines will be increasing, the prospects of more rather than less marriages is likely.

<b>Table II. NUMBER OF FILIPINO SPOUSES AND OTHER PARTNERS OF FOREIGN NATIONALS BY AGE GROUP: 2010 – 2014</b>						
<b>South Korea</b>						
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
18 - 19	213	178	205	143	90	<b>829</b>
20 - 24	797	952	812	730	417	<b>3,708</b>
25 - 29	434	486	449	440	297	<b>2,106</b>
30 - 34	172	188	187	163	139	<b>849</b>
35 - 39	46	48	61	70	32	<b>257</b>
40 - 44	17	39	28	15	22	<b>121</b>
45 - 49	7	7	11	9	3	<b>37</b>
50 - 54	2	1			5	<b>8</b>
55 - 59	3		1	2		<b>6</b>
60 - 64	1					<b>1</b>
70 - ABOVE	1					<b>1</b>
No Response	1	4				<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>1,903</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>7,928</b>

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), 2015

Most Filipino women marry Korean men at a very young age where ages 20-24 is the highest followed by ages 29-30. At these age ranges, women are more open, adventurous and willing to try their luck even in international marriages. However these are also the ages where they may not be too mature enough to understand the implications into entering a mixed marriages. As indicated in Table III, there are more women rather than men who want to enter into these types of relationships.

<b>Table III. NUMBER OF FILIPINO SPOUSES AND OTHER PARTNERS OF FOREIGN NATIONALS BY GENDER: 2010 - 2014</b>						
<b>South Korea</b>						
<b>Sex</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Female	1,673	1,873	1,707	1,544	985	7,782
Male	21	30	47	28	20	146
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>1,903</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>7,928</b>

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), 2015

<b>Table IV. NUMBER OF FILIPINO SPOUSES AND OTHER PARTNERS OF FOREIGN NATIONALS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: 2010 - 2014</b>						
<b>South Korea</b>						
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
No Formal Education		2	1	3	1	7
Elementary Level	12	7	8	6	4	37
Elementary Graduate	11	13	6	9	8	47
High School Level	149	178	165	151	72	715
High School Graduate	504	602	597	471	300	2,474
Vocational Level	62	80	69	58	32	301
Vocational Graduate	89	146	136	140	82	593
College Level	339	470	410	392	246	1,857
College Graduate	304	350	344	326	245	1,569
Post Graduate Level	12	15	11	10	12	60
Post Graduate	2	6	2	3	3	16
Non-Formal Education	204	31	1	1		237
Not Reported / No Response	6	3	4	2		15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>1,903</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>7,928</b>

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), 2015

Table IV shows that those who are married to Koreans are educated with the highest numbers finishing as either high school or college levels. A significant number is also shown to

have jobs or occupations a total of almost 2,318 out of 7,928 (Table V). More than 3,370 have not reported any job while a good number 2,170 are housewives presumably with no formal employment.

<b>Table V. NUMBER OF FILIPINO SPOUSES AND OTHER PARTNERS OF FOREIGN NATIONALS BY OCCUPATION: 2010 - 2014</b>						
<b>South Korea</b>						
<b>MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>A. EMPLOYED</b>						
Prof'l, Tech'l, & Related Workers	80	103	104	82	90	459
Managerial, Executive, and Administrative Workers	22	21	16	18	16	93
Clerical Workers	62	76	84	72	36	330
Sales Workers	146	147	148	120	73	634
Service Workers	80	123	94	95	64	456
Agri, Animal Husbandry, Forestry						
Workers & Fishermen	2	1		1	1	5
Production Process, Transport						
Equipment Operators, & Laborers	58	88	112	56	27	341
Members of the Armed Forces		1	1		1	3

<b>B. UNEMPLOYED</b>						
Housewives	448	477	260	685	300	2,170
Retirees						
Students	16	16	12	10	13	67
Out of School Youth						
No Occupation Reported	780	850	923	433	384	3,370
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>1,903</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>7,928</b>

<b>Table VI. MANNER OF INTRODUCTION TO KOREAN SPOUSES</b>						
<b>South Korea</b>						
<b>MANNER OF INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Personal Introduction	532	672	597	416	267	2,484
Place of Work	270	224	208	261	207	1,170
Penpal Referred by Relative	488	651	649	652	353	2,793
Penpal Thru Ads/Columns/ Penpal Clubs	6	9	4	6	7	32
Marriage Bureau *	6	18	9	8		41
Thru Internet	126	159	152	143	114	694
Thru Other Entities**	18	26	49	43	38	174

Not Reported / No Response	248	144	86	43	19	540
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>1,903</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>7,928</b>

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), 2015

\* *Republic Act 6955, which made unlawful the matching of Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals on a mail-order basis and other similar practices, was signed into law in June 1990.*

\*\* *Started in 2000*

Referrals by relatives is the most popular form of introduction to Korean men (2,793) as followed by personal introductions (2,484) and introductions in places of work (1,170). Introductions via internet is also a preferred way of introductions. Only 41 introductions via marriage brokers have been recorded from 2010 to 2014. Mail order bride transactions are illegal under Republic Act 6955 so it is not surprising that these arrangements are either hidden under a different category or not reported at all. Though marriage brokers have definitely been used in the case of the Philippines and is the method that is often sensationalized in the media, there are in fact many streams and modalities in realizing international marriages.

#### **IV. Some Issues and Challenges in International Marriages**

The issues and concerns of international marriages must be viewed within the broader context of Korean attitudes and receptiveness to the project of multiculturalism in general. The permanent settlement of foreigners as either migrant workers, migrant wives or Korean returnees from other



countries is a recent reality that Koreans are still grappling with. Due to the aggressive drive to increase the population via intermarriages between Korean men and Asian women, the government foresees a significant increase in the number of children borne of these unions to be about 1.6 million by 2020 (Lim, 2011). The visibility of foreigners in South Korean society and the growing cultural diversity of peoples in communities have generated varying reactions. According to a study by Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF), 41.3% of multicultural families in Korea said that they had experienced discrimination in 2012 which is higher than in 2009 which was 36.4% in 2009. The more prominent a foreigner or a personality from a mixed parentage is, the more vicious the racial attacks are. Jasmine Lee, a wife of Korean man and the first Filipino parliamentarian in Korea received harsh criticisms because she is not considered pure Korean. A 9 year old Hwang Min-woo who became popular as the “Little Psy” in Gangnam Style video received online racial comments because of his multiracial background having a Korean father and Vietnamese mother (Kang, 2013). In an attempt to better understand and measure the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of Koreans toward foreign immigrants and to help in setting policies to deal with prejudices and discriminatory attitudes of Koreans, the government initiated a research project on Korean Multiculturalism Inventory (KMCI) in 2010-2011.

With a sampling of 2,500 respondents, the study revealed that 1,011 respondents felt a stronger sense of social distance toward migrants from developing countries compared with those from developed countries. A second finding showed that Koreans felt more warmth toward those who migrated

for marriage than for North Korean immigrants. To measure sexism (or gender bias against women), the research utilized two concepts namely hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism frowns upon women who challenge the male dominant male gender structure. Benevolent sexism on the other hand, is based on protective fatherhood, complementary division of labor and protection of women who appear to be faithfully adhering to traditional women's roles. Both hostile and benevolent sexism view migrant brides in stereotypical terms because they help to solve the low birthrate of Korea and secure human resources within the family (Sangsu, 2010).

In addition to the population of migrant workers and migrant wives, professional and highly skilled immigrants from the US, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland numbering about 25,000 have added to the diversity of foreign communities in Korea. They are more vocal in raising the issue of discrimination. Bonojit Hussein, a student of Sungkonghoe University who was studying the labor relation in Korea, brought a case of racial discrimination before the National Human Rights Commission after he and his companion Han Ji-sun experienced being shouted at with racial insults, kicked and pushed by a Mr. Park inside a bus. The incident became a landmark case that was projected in the Korean and international press as a case on racial discrimination (The Korea Herald, 2010).

The increasing number of international marriages in Korea has raised serious concern over how women are commodified in transactional arrangements by marriage brokers and evidence of such have been validated. The Trafficking in Persons Report 2015, reports that "some women from China, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia who are

recruited for marriage to South Korean men through international marriage brokers are subjected to forced prostitution or forced labor after their arrival” (US State Department, 2015). An F6 marriage visa which is given to a migrant newly-wed allows women to stay for two years. However, the requirement to renew this visa after two years is the sponsorship of the Korean spouse who may or may not willingly extend this to the foreign spouse and can be used as a tool to control the wife. This renewal is critical for the extension of residency and naturalization process to foreign spouses. This has sometimes led to cases of domestic violence or murders of foreign wives (Iglauer, 2015). The challenges facing foreign spouses like Filipinas are both internal (within the family) and external (discrimination from neighborhoods as well as in public spaces). The discrimination is carried over to children who often experience discrimination from other children in the schools.

Often, the foreign bride has to do with the expectation of the husband as well as the mother-in-law for the foreign bride to bear the entire burden of adaptation to Korean culture language, food, customs and traditions with no effort on the part of the husband to learn something about the wife’s culture and language. Most women are pressured to bear children as her acceptability and assimilation depends primarily on her ability to bear children. Most Korean men who marry foreign women come from low income families from the rural or urban areas, a distinct problem for Filipino women who are expected by their own families in the Philippines to send some money to support their needs and the education of other siblings.

Interviews by counselors from the Commission on Filipinos look at the problems experienced by Filipino wives as part of the continuing process of adjustment. They usually stress to prospective brides that to marry a foreigner needs psychological preparation to adjust to a culture that they barely understand and to a man they cannot effectively communicate with. They point out that one of the difficulties they have to adjust to is the Korean hierarchical system in the family where the mother-in-law exercises decision-making in the family over financial matters as well as in the rearing of children (Interview with CFO, September, October, 2015). To survive, foreign spouses try to find networks of Asian women similarly situated. To reduce the social isolation from the Korean society which is still quite reluctant to fully embrace foreigners as part of their society, migrants create their spatially differentiated spaces through the creation of “diasporic neighborhoods. For instance, there is a Special Multicultural Zone in Wongok-dong, Ansan Gyeonggi-do where migrants from China, India and Pakistan can buy goods from their countries. The Japanese can be found in Incheon-dong, Yongsan-gu in Seoul while the Muslims cluster near the mosque in Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu in Seoul. The French carved their own community in Seorae Village in Banpo-dong, Gangnam-gu while the Vietnamese town is found in Wangsimni and a Nepalese community is in Cahnsingdong all in Seoul (Korea Herald, 2014).

## **V. Policies and Interventions of Korean and Philippine Governments Related to Transnational Marriages**

### **A. Philippine government**

The country passed several laws dealing with migration issues including marriage migration. Among these are: (1) RA 6955 (Anti-Mail Order Bride Law) that prohibits the practice of matching Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals including the advertisement, publication, printing, or distribution of brochures, flyers and other propaganda materials. (2) RA 9208 (Anti-Trafficking Act of 2003) aims to strengthen RA 6955 by organizing an Interagency Council Against Trafficking in Persons to assist in the prevention, protection and rehabilitation of trafficked persons. (3) RA 9225 (Citizenship Retention and Re-Acquisition Act of 2003) allows Filipinos to re-acquire/retain Philippine citizenship even if they are already naturalized citizens of other countries. RA 8042 (Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995) provides assistance and legal services to all migrants including overseas Filipino wives. Since the enactment of the law on Mail Order bride, there has only been one case of conviction of two recruiters- Celia Rumusod Gorospe and Jinalyn “Anne” Jaikten Inao guilty of matching, offering and contracting marriage between Filipinos and foreign nationals for profit by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (Hicap, 2014).

Through the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, pre-marriage counselling sessions and orientation of prospective marriages between Filipino women and foreign husbands are conducted regularly. These sessions provide a venue for couples to understand Philippine culture and social practices as well as the benefits, complexities and challenges of transnational marriages. Although the CFO does not closely monitor marriages over the long term, they normally receive letters and feedback from the Filipino brides.

NGOs from the countries of origin of foreign wives concerned with migration are actively cooperating and collaborating with Korean NGOs in monitoring and documenting human rights violations of foreign brides in Korea as well as in undertaking research and studies on the impacts of such marriages on children.

## **B. Korean government**

Aware of these challenges and in response to the issues relative to transnational marriages the Korean government introduced several policy initiatives under the rubric of “multiculturalism,” the meaning of which has been subjected to a diversity of meanings and interpretations. The Grand Plan of April 26, 2006 was introduced by government specifically to help implement “a social integration of foreign wives and an attainment of a multicultural society” by regulating international marriage agencies and protection of foreign wives before entry to Korea; support and orientation for foreign wives; support for children of international marriages in schools and providing social welfare to foreign wives (Lee, n.d.). The law will enable the government. The Grand Plan

provides substantive and strategic support to facilitate international marriages particularly the provision of Korean nationality after two years of marriage; provision of training in Korean languages and social welfare support and medical care for children of international marriages (Lee, n.d., p.18). This policy is perceived as a significant policy shift initiated by a sympathetic government under Pres. Roh Mae Yun and is believed to have been influenced by NGOs, social movements, migrant groups, and foreign wives association. The visit of Hines Ward, a Korean American football champion and the racial riots in France which occurred at the time, also helped to raise consciousness about the need for racial harmony in Korea.

In the first semester of 2011, the Korean government made it mandatory for Korean nationals to undergo training courses prior to marriage. It provides the Korean spouses information on related laws and policies, cultures and customs of their foreign spouses. Completion of the program is necessary prior to visa application as certificate from program is a requirement for submission to Korean embassies. There are however some exemptions as when the Korean man or spouse has stayed in the country of the foreign partner for more than 45 days; when there has been dating relationship for at least 91 days and for humanitarian reasons such as pregnancy, etc. (CFO Interview, September, 2015).

Two hundred multicultural centers all across Korea provide Korean language service, door to door education service; counselling; parenting education service, children's life service. In coordination with International Organization of Migration (IOM) multicultural center staff engage in discussion with Filipina resource persons to better understand Filipina

cultural values. As a resource person, I have been asked why Filipinas love to sing in karaoke; why they want to have manicure, pedicure and beautify themselves. In addition they wonder why Filipinas send money back home when their primary family should be their Korean family (IOM *Symposium on A Future Multi-Cultural Society Prediction and Educational Correspondence-Focusing on Gender Education* November 7, 2008, Seoul, Korea).

Another initiative of the Korean government is the amendment of the Nationality Act in 2008 and in 2004 extending the eligibility for citizenship and easing the process of citizenship acquisition for women marriage immigrants especially those with children (Kim, Yang and Torneo, 2012). This initiative was followed by the Act on Regulation of Marriage Brokerage in 2007 to regulate marriage agencies and protect foreign spouses. The “Support for Multicultural Families Act of 2008” provides various several services for marriage immigrants and multicultural families. It also provides for cultural and language adaptation and benefits to support the rearing of Korean children (Kim, Yang and Torneo, 2012). To reduce the possibility of sham marriages and trafficking of women, the South Korean Justice Ministry announced that from April, 2014 those applying for resident by marriage visa need to pass a government approved Korean language proficiency and provide proof of an income of more than \$13,750 in the past year. If couples can prove that they can communicate, then the language requirement may not be imposed (Kubo, 2014).



## VI. Understanding the Concept of Multiculturalism, Korean Style

The term “multiculturalism” has drawn different reactions from the Korean people because it often is understood as the “dilution” of the “Koreanness,” that is to say the purity and homogeneity of the Korean nation. UNESCO suggests that multiculturalism can be classified in three ways.

“The **demographic-descriptive** usage occurs where 'multicultural' is used to refer to the existence of ethnically or racially diverse segments in the population of a society or State. It represents a perception that such differences have some social significance-primarily because of perceived cultural differences though these are frequently associated with forms of structural differentiation. The precise ethnic groupings which exist in a State, the significance of ethnicity for social participation in societal institutions and the processes through which ethnic differentiation is constructed and maintained may vary considerably between individual States, and over time” (UNESCO, n.d.).

On another level, the **programmatic-political** usage 'multiculturalism' refers to specific types of programs and policy initiatives designed to respond to and manage ethnic diversity.

The **ideological-normative** constitutes a model for political action based on sociological theorising and ethical-philosophical consideration about the place of those with culturally distinct identities in contemporary society. This model acknowledges the existence of ethnic diversity and ensures the rights of individuals to retain their culture and this should go hand in hand with enjoying full access to,

participation in, and adherence to, constitutional principles and commonly shared values prevailing in the society. Adherents to this type of multiculturalism believes that this policy benefits both individuals and the larger society by reducing pressures for social conflict and tensions based on disadvantage and inequality (UNESCO, n.d.).

At the outset, in framing its marriage migrant policy and mixed-race policy, the Korean government interpretation of the concept of “multiculturalism” is a very gendered one which has been utilized as a practical tool to explain Korea’s policy of incorporation of foreign women in the long term project to ensure and sustain the population growth and human resource of Korea. Multiculturalism as a government policy in Korea constitutes a number of legal, policy and program initiatives to primarily address the issues arising from transnational marriages specifically. In essence, as far as marriage migrants are concerned the aim is to train them to become ideal and traditional Korean wives raising Korean children following traditional norms and practices. To be fully appreciated and valued, women are expected not only to perform biological reproduction but also to participate in perpetuating and reproducing traditional Korean culture at the expense of her own identity.

While well intentioned, the policy has been criticized by citizens and scholars alike for what is perceived as simplistic assumptions particularly in its intended effects of making Korean citizens embrace the presence of an increasing number of foreigners in their midst. Many scholars (Han, 2011; Lim, Kim, 2007) have not sufficiently taken into account the complex dynamics as well as the diverse interpretations and

meanings of multiculturalism from the perspective of native Koreans, migrant workers, women, married to Koreans, etc.

The multicultural phenomena is taking place in “multiple levels depending on the migrants’ placement within the matrix of class and gender” (Han, 2011). It is to be noted that differentiation and hierarchies also exist between and among migrants themselves according to class, gender and ethnicity. For instance, those who are highly skilled and well placed in terms of their professional work in Korea live separately in enclaves and are in a better position to access benefits and services compared to women married to rural farmers who are unable to speak Korean and negotiate for their rights and benefits. To be truly multicultural, Korea’s policy must allow for a more open environment for the promotion of various cultures which are valued and allowed to exist with Korean culture which in the end can only be enhanced and enriched by such interaction.

Foreign brides are not passive victims that are unable to help themselves. These women have agency and the ability to proactively improve their situation. Most of them are aware of the risks of marrying a foreigner from another culture and are willing to learn the culture and language of their husbands. It is important that their voices are heard and that they are consulted in policies that affect them. The Korean government can help facilitate their social integration by initiating activities that inform and raise the awareness of families on communities on the cultures of foreign brides. On the other hand, Philippine government can enhance the preparation of Filipina brides by educating women on the realities of marriage migration.

In the age of migration and globalization, many societies are becoming culturally diverse. The Philippines for example, hosts 120,000 Korean residents in the Philippines who are studying, working and doing their business in the Philippines. Closer to home we have a lot of Korean and other foreign students in Philippine universities and neighbourhoods and we view this as a positive development in educating our students about respecting and learning about other cultures. Korea on the other hand is host to thousands of Filipino workers and other foreign workers who contribute to the economy of Korea. Mixed marriages such as those between Korea and the Philippines are a reality in Korean society now and in the future. This can be viewed as an opportunity to deepen Korean society's appreciation and readiness to acknowledge the growing cultural diversity of the country. Multicultural policies need to veer away from purely assimilationist bias to a more inclusive policy of allowing diverse migrant communities in interaction with citizens to develop and build multicultural communities that embrace human rights, cultural diversity and gender equality as values that are necessary in building humane and multicultural societies.

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