

Zharkevich, Ina. 2019. 'Gender, marriage, and the dynamic of (im)mobility in the mid-Western hills of Nepal,' *Mobilities* early online publication

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2019.1611026>

## **Gender, Marriage, and the Dynamic of (Im)mobility in mid-Western Nepal**

**Ina Zharkevich**

This paper explores the relationship between gender, marriage, and (im)mobility in rural hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal, showing how (1) the mobility of men is predicated on the 'immobility' of women, with marriage being key to the gendered dynamic of (im)mobility, (2) how the construction of hegemonic masculinity, exemplified by a figure of a successful international migrant, is inseparable from an ideal of femininity vested in the figure of a virtuous domesticated housewife. Examining different scales of mobility, the paper cautions against posing a rigid dichotomy between 'mobile men' and 'immobile' women, illustrating that the 'left behind' wives experience an impressive degree of everyday mobility in contrast to their internationally mobile husbands.

**Keywords:** Nepal, Gender, Migration, Mobility, Immobility, Masculinity, Femininity, Marriage

### **Introduction**

After a two-year stay in Qatar, Chandra returned from his journey abroad with a new wife. On his way from the Kathmandu airport, Chandra made a detour to a remote village in the plains of Nepal in order to marry a seventeen-year girl who he got to know over Facebook during long evenings in the Gulf, the region where millions of labour migrants are compelled to live as 'bachelors' in labour camps on the outskirts of urban metropolis (see Bruslé 2012; Gardner 2011). Not only was it the time of marriage, but also the first time that the newly-weds saw each other. Shortly afterwards, Chandra took Tara, his wife, to his village in the mid-Western hills of the Nepali Himalayas, a world totally different, both geographically and culturally, from

the southern plains of Nepal. When Tara arrived in her *ghar*, i.e. the house of her husband, she cried bitterly. Instead of seeing a spacious house that Chandra had shown her through Facebook photos, Tara saw a small one-room newly built house, rustic even for the local standards. To make things worse, Tara got to know that her twenty-six year-old husband had been married before and that he had a son from the previous marriage, who she would now have to care for.

After having come all the way to the hilly village, Tara had no other option, but to make peace with the whole situation: given the dominant gender norms, it would be unthinkable for her to return to her natal place now that her marriage had been consummated. It would imperil not only her *ijjat* (honour), but also that of her family, and make the prospect of a new marriage highly unlikely. Tara started taking care of the child, dutifully cooking meals and tending to the family fields – becoming, what the locals call, a *ghar ghwala*, a herder of the house, an honourable and dutiful housewife who takes care not only of the private but also of the public affairs of the household while their husbands are away. Chandra, in the meanwhile, was preparing for yet another trip abroad.

For Chandra, as well as for thousands of Nepali male migrants, marriage ensured that he could continue going abroad while leaving his household, fields, children, and often ageing parents, in the care of his ‘left behind’ wife. Chandra’s elder brothers were in India; his younger brother was studying in a private school in the plains of Nepal, the educational enterprise, which Chandra contributed to by sending remittances. There was simply no one to take care of Chandra’s modest estate, except for his young wife. For Chandra, marriage solved a problem of how to maintain a household and provide care for his child and brother, with Chandra having little choice but migrate in order to keep life at home going.

This paper explores the relationship between gender, marriage, and (im)mobility in mid-Western Nepal, showing how (1) the mobility of men is predicated on the ‘immobility’ of women, with marriage being key to understanding the gendered dynamic of (im)mobility in mid-Western Nepal, and (2) how the construction of hegemonic masculinity<sup>i</sup> exemplified by the figure of a successful international migrant is inseparable from a distinct ideal of femininity vested in the figure of a

virtuous domesticated housewife or *ghargwala* (herder of the house). By exploring cases of inter-generational/parental pressure put on migrant bachelors to marry, this paper illustrates that the international mobility of men from rural Nepal is enabled by the immobility of their wives who undertake a ‘double burden’ of the productive and reproductive work in the communities of origin. By focusing on the relationship between international male migrants and their ‘left behind’ wives, this paper demonstrates that marriage has starkly different consequences for the mobility of men and women: whereas it enables the international mobility of men, it starkly curtails female mobility, with women who are single and divorced being more likely to migrate for wage labour than happily married women.<sup>ii</sup>

When reading this paper it is important to keep in mind that it is based on research with the Kham Magars, an ethnic group speaking a Tibeto-Burman language, who live mostly in the hilly rural areas of the mid-Western districts of Rolpa and Rukum. Over the last couple decades, the Kham Magars have started moving to the peri-urban areas of Dang district, also in mid-Western Nepal. Because Nepal is an incredibly diverse country, with hundreds of ethnic groups, different patterns of migration are observed in different parts of the country. For instance, in the Terai region, the most urbanized and industrialized part of the country, women are more likely to migrate (see Abramsky et al. 2018, 200) than the Kham Magar women from the rural or peri-urban areas of mid-Western Nepal. Furthermore, the pattern of outmigration among the Kham Magars in mid-Western Nepal is gradually changing, with more and more women considering the possibility of going abroad.

Taking relationality as a starting point of inquiry into understanding the intersection of gender, marriage and (im)mobility in the hilly rural areas of mid-Western Nepal, the paper suggests that unprecedented levels of male outmigration – the situation which forces women to be more active in the public realm and economic life, especially in rural areas (J. Adhikari and Hobley 2015) – does not necessarily lead to more egalitarian gender norms or practices. On the contrary, the combination of traditional gender ideology, which defines successful femininity through marriage, and increased male mobility produces distinct types of hegemonic masculinity and femininity, which are not necessarily liberating or emancipatory, especially for poorer women, living on the margins of society and those not ‘protected’ by men. Thus,

whereas for men becoming a well-to-do international labour migrant becomes an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, for women becoming an international labour migrant, particularly a domestic worker in one of the Gulf States, imperils their honour and is often regarded as a transgression of the norms underlying ideal femininity.

Unlike middle-class or upper middle-class women who can achieve respectability and enhance their social status through getting education or getting a skilled job abroad (Valentin 2015, 329; R. Adhikari 2013), for the majority of women in rural and semi-urban Nepal, at least in mid-Western Nepal, the main route to acquire respectability and prestige is through a successful marriage to a man embodying hegemonic masculinity, with the figure of a British or Indian Gurkha being at the top of the hierarchy, and the figure of a successful international migrant being only slightly below. In contrast to the urban middle-class women who can travel to the so-called 'big countries' 'with honour', taking up skilled jobs, such as nursing (see R. Adhikari 2013), for many women from rural Nepal, certainly in the hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal, independent migration to the Gulf or Malaysia means transgressing the norms of appropriate gender behaviour. As noted by Grossman-Thompson (2016, 43), by being internationally mobile 'young women transgress norms of female domestic exclusion on an international scale'. Quite tellingly, in contrast to men who take pride in their migration histories and construct their masculine identities through international migration, many of the women who migrate for labour to the Middle East keep their mobility secret.<sup>iii</sup> Migrating 'with honour', i.e. for education or skilled labour to one of the so-called 'big countries', remains a middle-class privilege, which few of the women in rural communities can afford, but which is key to consolidating one's social status and middle-classness in present-day Nepal (Liechty 2002, 51; Valentin 2015).

By building on scholars who have worked on the relationship between mobility and immobility (Gaibazzi 2015; Reeves 2011), this paper shows that it is only by thinking relationally about people who are 'mobile' and who are 'sedentary' - in this case about mobile husbands and their allegedly immobile wives - that we can understand what is qualitatively new about mobility in the contemporary world and avoid recreating the 'mobility' bias in understanding movement in the world of today. Thus,

while being internationally mobile, Nepali men who migrate to the Gulf States or Malaysia, often experience everyday immobility while being abroad, with their everyday spatial movement being often confined to the factory shop floor or the labour camp (Bruslé 2012, 13). It reminds us that international mobility in the contemporary world can amount to new forms of confinement and exploitation, not freedom or emancipation (Schiller and Salazar 2013, 8). On the contrary, the ‘left behind’ and allegedly ‘immobile’ wives of Nepali male migrants experience an impressive degree of everyday mobility both in spatial and social terms, ranging from going to the fields/jungle and travelling for business, attending festivals and visiting the kin -- the kind of mundane mobility, which causes a lot of jealousy and ‘remote control’ from suspicious husbands abroad. While crossing international borders, Nepali men in the Gulf experience unrestricted everyday mobility primarily in the virtual space of the internet, which has become the main means of connecting migrants to the kin at home, fostering links to fellow-villagers abroad, and, in some cases, controlling the wives who are ‘left behind’.

By exploring how the international mobility of Nepali labour migrants, both male and female, conceals stark levels of confinement and immobility, this paper calls into question the extent to which the movement of people across borders should be taken at face value as a sign of their mobility and international mobility should be seen as a virtue in itself (see Franquesa 2011; Salazar and Smart 2011). In doing so, the paper calls for examining different scales of mobility and taking everyday forms of mobility, including those of the ‘left behind’ as crucial for understanding people’s experience of movement and substantive, not formal, mobility in the contemporary world.

### **Gender, Mobility, and Relationality**

International labour migration from Nepal is a highly gendered phenomenon. In contrast to other South Asian states, for instance, Sri Lanka that has a high proportion of female migrants (Gamburd 2000), in Nepal, only twelve per cent of international migrants are women (S. Sharma et al. 2014, 33) – and this is quite a generous estimate. Thus, according to the Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment between 2008/9 and 2014/15, only four per cent of labour permits were issued to

female migrants (Government of Nepal, Ministry for Labour and Employment 2016, 7–8).<sup>iv</sup> However, the number of international female migrants is much higher than officially recorded: up to 90 per cent of irregular migrants from Nepal are women (International Labour Organization 2015, 3). According to the International Labour Organization, despite the fact that in 2010 the Government of Nepal banned Lebanon as one of the destinations for Nepali female migrant workers, the Lebanese government issued 3,895 new labour permits to Nepali domestic workers in the same year (*ibid.*, p.9).

A startling gap between the figures of international male and female migrants in Nepal is often attributed to the ‘protective legislation’ of the Nepali state which has a long history of partially or fully banning international migration for women below a certain age (for a history of legislation see International Labour Organization 2015, 5–6). Despite the fact that the discriminatory laws have been abolished, a lot of women are not aware of these changes. As noted by Grossman-Thompson (2016), the legislation regulating female migration, especially to the Middle East, has been changing so swiftly – with blanket bans following age-restricted bans to work in particular destinations – that following the changes in the policy environment has been difficult for policy-makers, let alone for ‘ordinary’ rural women.

Discussing a similar discriminatory legislation regulating female migration in Kerala, Kodoth and Varghese (2012, 57) note that ‘a protectionist approach’ is rooted in gender norms that limit female mobility and constitute marriage as a form of male control over female sexuality and mobility. Indeed, while the main reason for adopting discriminatory laws in Nepal has been to protect women from exploitation and sexual abuse abroad (following a number of harrowing cases in Lebanon and the Gulf), I suggest that the rationale for setting the female migratory age first at 30 and then 24 years old had a lot to do with the fact that by 30 and even 24 a lot of women in Nepal get married. Hence, they are less likely to embark on a trip abroad, with marriage serving as a point of no-departure (see also Grossman-Thompson 2016).

While the past discriminatory legislation might be seen as having been top-down and imposed on women who were banned by the patriarchal state to migrate, in fact the legislation reflected the dominant gender norms about the undesirability of

independent female travel – the view, which was often voiced to me both by my male and female interlocutors in the hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal. For instance, my female interlocutors, who were curious about the possibility of going abroad and, in all fairness, dreamt of experiencing it, nevertheless often referred to women travelling for work with a slight suspicion and disapproval, implying that most migrant women who went abroad either engaged in ‘bad work’, a euphemism used to refer to sex work, or were subjected to sexual abuse. Likewise, some of the returning male migrants, who met Nepali women abroad (mostly from Eastern Nepal), stressed that they would never marry such girls, noting in the passing that they preferred ‘simple’ and ‘honest’ village girls. Unlike the girls from the bazaar areas, who are regarded as being lazy and spoilt, village girls are considered to be hard-working and capable of enduring any hardship in the absence of men. In other words, the popular discourse reflected the existing state legislation, which deemed international female mobility as being dangerous to women’s honour, the view, which has been interiorized by female migrants themselves (see Grossman-Thompson 2016, 32).

As noted by Reeves (2011) in her research on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the gendered nature of international migration should be taken only as a starting point of inquiry into understanding how the mobility of some family members constrains or enables the mobility of others, and how gender ideologies shape and get reshaped by mobility in the contemporary world (Hanson 2010, 9-11). For instance, in the Sokh Valley of Uzbekistan the absence of men in many cases led to the tighter control of the ‘left behind wives’ by the in-laws, while at the same time forced women to take up jobs as casual labourers, often by travelling across the border to Kyrgyzstan (Reeves 2011, 568). In Kyrgyzstan, where women are almost as likely to migrate as men, even when female migrants take on the role of the breadwinner for the family back home, they are still expected to do most of the caring and parenting work, with the failure to do so negatively impacting on their public image (Thieme 2008, 339). In 1990s, in many communities in Sri Lanka women migrated in larger numbers than men. When Sri Lankan women became breadwinners, it often led to the crisis of masculinity of the ‘left-behind’ husbands: men felt ashamed to live on wives’ remittances and many of them took to drinking in order to re-assert their masculinity (Gamburd 1995, 57).

While there has been considerable research on gender and migration in Nepal over the past years, this research has tended to focus either on migrant men (J. R. Sharma 2013; M. Maycock 2017; 2017) or on the ‘left behind’ women (J. Adhikari and Hobley 2015; Gartaula et.al. 2011; Lama et.al. 2017; Maharjan et.al. 2012), without exploring the relationship between the two. Research on the ‘left behind’ women has explored the impact of male outmigration on the ‘status of women’ broadly defined and questioned the thesis about the ‘empowerment’ of women, noting that a lot depends on household structure, caste, and the direction of the flow of remittances (J. Adhikari and Hobley 2015). It has been shown that while women assume new tasks and gender roles they are forced to perform more labour than in the past (J. Adhikari and Hobley 2015; Maharjan et.al. 2012; Gartaula et.al. 2011).

There is a dearth of research on the ways in which the process of male outmigration, even if expanding the repertoire of roles taken on by women, does so while strengthening the patriarchal ideology, which constructs men as sole breadwinners and wives primarily as dependents – the situation which puts an immense pressure on men who cannot conform to the idea of hegemonic masculinity (M. Maycock 2017; J. R. Sharma 2013) and on wives whose husbands return from abroad without any earnings, but rather with an increased debt. While the direct relationship between one’s success abroad, money and hegemonic masculinity is well-accepted by now (Osella and Osella 2000), the extent to which this type of hegemonic masculinity fosters a particular type of femininity is something that has been much less developed in the scholarship on migration in Nepal. <sup>v</sup>

While the equation of ‘gender’ with women has certainly become outdated by now, with research on masculinities having rapidly developed over the past years (Charsley 2005; R. Adhikari 2013; M. Maycock 2017; Pribilsky 2012; Osella and Osella 2000), as noted by Schippers (2007, 86), research on masculinities is marked by a vacuum in broaching the subject of ‘hegemonic femininities’ as relating to ‘hegemonic masculinities’. Thus, research on male migrants in Nepal has focused on understanding how international migration in Nepal has become key to the construction of hegemonic masculinity and how hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to subordinate masculinities (M. Maycock 2017; 2017; J. R. Sharma 2013), without foregrounding the role of women as mothers, wives, and daughters in



maintaining the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and reproducing the gender order. Thus, while a lot has been said about the immense social pressure put on men to migrate, the powerful role of women in encouraging male outmigration and reproducing the ideals underlying hegemonic masculinity has been ignored (X, forthcoming).

What is at stake in understanding gender and migration in Nepal is not only the changing social status of women or the changing gender division of labour, but also the newly arising ideas about what being a successful woman (ideal femininity) and a successful man (hegemonic masculinity) means. Here, I am following Schippers (2007, 90) who argues that it is ‘in the idealized quality content of the categories “man” and “woman” that one finds the hegemonic significance of masculinity and femininity’. Thus, whereas in rural areas of Nepal women still pride themselves on their ability to contribute to the household economy and earn money through an ingenious combination of small business and semi-subsistence activities, the ideal of a successful femininity lies elsewhere. It is vested either in the figure of an independent female professional, often a nurse, or being a housewife who lives away from the hazards of agricultural labour in the bazaar area and most often relies on men and remittances for maintaining life.

Whereas hegemonic masculinity is vested in the figure of an international ‘moneyed’ migrant, successful femininity is exemplified by a figure of a ‘virtuous’ housewife – the kind of lifestyle that few of the women in rural areas can afford. While the notion of hegemonic femininity varies, it is the detachment from the agricultural labour and respite from hard physical labour – be it through professional work and education, successful marriage or, in rare cases, international migration – that seems to be a hallmark of success. In the context where women do not have any opportunity to find employment *or* contribute to the household economy, as is the case in peri-urban areas, ideal femininity is defined through association with a successful male, i.e. international migrant, the association, which becomes possible only through marriage. The situation is drastically different for unmarried women who have no male figure to rely on. They are often forced into the situation of international mobility, in the same way that some of the international male migrants are forced into marriage in order to keep going abroad while leaving their ‘estates’ behind.

## **Nepal as a Nation of Migration: Fieldwork and Methods**

Over the last decade, Nepal has turned into a nation of migration: it is the third largest receiver of remittances as part of the GDP, after Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with migrants' money constituting up to 27.7 per cent of GDP in 2014/2015, a rise from 10.9 per cent in 2003-2004 (Government of Nepal, Ministry for Labour and Employment 2016, 1). The figure of 1,500 men leaving Nepal on a daily basis remains somewhat abstract before one goes to the 'field' and witnesses the situation that as soon as young men reach 16 or 18, they start actively preparing for going abroad: some of them elevating their age when getting a passport, others dropping out of school and starting a long process of soliciting visas through brokers or manpower agencies, yet others searching for money-lenders that would provide a loan at a decent monthly rate. A lot of young people, especially those whose families have some money to spare, start by trying their luck with the British or Indian Gurkha regiments, and, when they fail, they start exploring various options of going abroad. Thus, international migration is no longer considered as one of the livelihood options for young men, but rather as the only tenable option of 'moving forward' in life.

This article is based on fieldwork carried out largely in one of the villages in the district of Rolpa<sup>vi</sup> with research in the districts of Rukum and Dang having been used for analysis but not for the ethnographic description. According to the survey of 100 migrants households that I conducted in the village in 2016, there was not a single international female migrant in these households: all of the 109 international migrants were male, 77.5 per cent of migrants were married the first time they went abroad. 39.6 of international migrants in the sample went to Saudi Arabia the first time they went abroad, 22.5 per cent to Malaysia, 18.9 to Qatar, with other countries such as Bahrain, Japan, Korea, South Africa getting a couple of per cent. In other words, men migrated predominantly to the so-called 'small countries', while women, except for very rare exceptions, did not go abroad at all. Unlike Nepali middle-class women, many of whom successfully migrated to the UK and Australia (R. Adhikari 2013), most of the village women above the age of 40 had never been to school, let alone abroad.

While the core of fieldwork for this research project was carried out in the spring of 2016 and 2017, previous long-term research in 2011 and a shorter stay in 2008 provided me with important insights into the dynamic nature of the migration process. Being able to rely on longitudinal data based on my interaction with the same people over the course of almost ten years, I could observe unexpected changes in people's life-trajectories. Observation, life-histories and unstructured interviews were complemented by a survey of 100 migrant households conducted in 2016. Fieldwork in two other sites, a village in the district of Rukum and a bazaar town in the district of Dang, does not inform the core ethnographic material used for writing this paper. I have chosen to limit the use of data mainly to one of the villages in the district of Rolpa. However, in all of the studied sites the gender dynamic of migration was markedly similar.

### **Forced into Marriage? Male Migrants, Parental Pressure, and Daughters-in-Law**

Among the Kham Magars, women have traditionally been valued for their economic contribution to the household: marriages of older women with younger men were not uncommon in the past, because a woman was valued for her maturity and independence as well as her capacity to contribute to the household and add to it, not use its resources (see Molnar 1981). Nowhere else is the significance of the daughter-in-law more obvious than in the marriage ritual of the Kham Magars – the time when the bride first arrives at the house of her husband. The ritual starts with worshipping the main pillar of the house: the pillar is adorned with a tika made of rice, turmeric, and milk; flowers are offered and a bow of respect is given to it (*dog dine*). The pillar of the house, I was told, symbolizes the daughter-in-law: in the same way that the house can survive all the storms provided that there is a strong pillar upholding its roof, the household can endure all hardship provided that the house is blessed with the presence of a strong daughter-in-law.

One could argue that never has the ritual born more meaning than today when hundreds of Kham Magar men leave their native villages to work in far-away destinations. Women, I was told, have turned into the 'herders of the house', responsible for running all of the productive and reproductive work in the community:

raising children, taking care of the fields, and caring for the in-laws. The expression the 'herder of the house' is somewhat paradoxical, because it points towards the immobility of women who are confined to the domestic realm in contrast to men who move across international borders; it also alludes to the long history of transhumance among the Kham Magars, with men having travelled with flocks of sheep while women remained the guardians of the hearth.

Whilst the majority of labour migrants from Nepal are married (66 per cent), going abroad ostensibly to provide for their households, a smaller number are unmarried youngsters, who enjoy a greater degree of freedom and less pressure to remit home and therefore have more opportunities to enjoy being abroad. Yet, the freedoms the bachelor status has to offer to international migrants becomes problematic when their absence starts weighing heavily on their 'left behind' family. The absence of a son, who is unmarried, does not only mean the absence of a young male who could plough the fields, but also the absence of a hypothetical daughter-in-law, whose duty would be, at least in the first years after the marriage, to work in the in-laws household and perform some of the most arduous tasks. It is hardly surprising therefore that some of the 'left behind' parents put pressure on their returning bachelor sons to get married before embarking on yet another trip abroad.

Consider the case of Anil. In the autumn of 2011, Anil returned from a series of unsuccessful trips abroad, one of them serving in the military base in Iraq and another having been jailed in Singapore for a fake visa. Like many other Nepalis who travelled abroad at the height of conflict, Anil fell prey to unscrupulous contractors: he came back without having earned the money to return the debt to his parents. When news of Anil's return reached me, I decided to pay a visit to his parents' house. By the time I reached the house, the preparations for the marriage of the young returnee migrant were in full swing. Hardly was I aware back then that the marriage that was presented to me as a love marriage by elopement was in fact a marriage by compulsion, something that I found out only in 2016. Anil's father put an ultimatum to the young man: should he want to go abroad again, he had to get married first. Anil's father was despondent, he could no longer take the carefree travelling of his son: 'Only travelling here and there, not studying, going abroad to enjoy, taking the parents' money and not returning a penny'.

Not only was Anil's father afraid of the prospect of financing his son's another risky journey abroad, but also that his son would depart as a bachelor, effectively leaving him and his wife battling with the cows and large tracts of land all on their own. With Anil's sisters studying for BA degrees in a bazaar town in the Terai and visiting their parents only during the harvesting time, there was no one in the household who could help the ageing parents. Anil's father went as far as threaten his son to 'eat medicine', the local term used to denote suicide. On hearing such a threat, Anil made up his mind and eloped with a girl who was studying in class 10 at the time – the occurrence not that rare for the village, where elopements have become all too common for young people under 18. Shortly after marriage, signified more by the fact of the couple's arrival in the *ghar*, i.e. the house of the fiancé, Anil embarked on another trip abroad, his marriage serving as a means that allowed for his unabated international mobility. In the meanwhile, his wife became a sedentarized 'herder of the house'. Supposed to help her ageing in-laws, as many daughters-in-law of her generation, Anil's wife failed to live up to the expectations of her in-laws. In the end, Anil's father devolved the property, because, as he explained to me, he was tired of 'taking care of his son's wife'.

Unlike men who have changed the mobility of a herder to a mobility of an international migrant moving across borders, women kept the role of the 'herder of the house', the lot that many young women are content with, only on condition that they are de-facto heads of the households, rather than subservient daughters-in-law. In the same way that migrant wives in Mexico (Pauli 2008) tried to get emancipated from the demands of their mothers-in-law through building separate houses using husbands' remittances, the young daughters-in-law in Rolpa are no longer happy to conform to the stereotypical image of the daughter-in-law, labouring for her husband's family. Not only do the daughters-in-law dream of establishing separate households in the village, but also of migrating to the peri-urban areas, where they can escape from the back-breaking work in the fields and exemplify the newly arising ideal of a virtuous domesticated housewife.

Whereas in the past the hegemonic femininity among the Kham Magars was associated with the economic independence of women and their ability to earn money

(see Molnar 1981), at present, while these qualities are still desirable for a daughter-in-law, the idea of being a hard-working woman is not something that young women aspire to. The new ideal lies elsewhere. It is envisioned as a woman who has moved away from rural to urban or peri-urban areas and thus managed to shake off the yoke of agricultural work: the compulsion to work long hours in the fields under the scorching sun, to wear heavy loads of firewood from the jungle, and cook on the open hearth. However, this new ideal of femininity – a woman who presides over a sizable concrete house and takes care of the children – is out of reach for most women living in rural areas, because it feeds off and acquires its power through association with hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, as some of the young men told me, young girls ‘melt’ when they see young British or Indian Gurkha soldiers, because marrying them promises a remarkable future for women: a life on full pension in a bazaar town in a huge house of one’s own.

In trying to exemplify the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and successful femininity, which have a complementary character, men and women not only conform to the norms of the dominant gender order but also reproduce it. While women in rural areas in mid-Western Nepal still feel compelled to toil in the fields – for the failure to do so would result in the conflict with the in-laws – most of the younger women dream of going away to live in a bazaar town, thus putting the burden of provision on men. One could argue that migrant men have it as difficult as the ‘left behind’ women, with married male migrants carrying the burden of providing for their families back home, with the failure to do so imperilling male honour. In the meanwhile, migrant wives wait for remittances and sacrifice physical co-presence with their spouses, while hoping for a better future for their families away from the village (x, forthcoming). Whereas many of my young female interlocutors longed for a sedentary life in the bazaar town, *not* the life of everyday mobility and hard work in the village, some of them were forced to go abroad when their husbands failed to provide. What started as a case of involuntary mobility took a life of its own: women, who have tasted life outside the confines of their homes, often opted for migrating again once back home.

### **Forced into International Mobility? Female Migrants, Failed Marriages, and the Pressure to Migrate**

That marriage has starkly different consequences for male and female mobility is a fairly common-sense point. The relationship between marriage, gender, and (im)mobility becomes quite clear when one considers the fact that while being a ‘moneyed’ international migrant for men epitomizes success, being an international labour migrant for women is often read as a sign of the loss of ‘honour’ and marriage failure, with marriage still being key in defining successful femininity in rural and urban Nepal.

Divorce, being single, and unhappy marriages, including issues of debt and domestic violence, were key factors associated with independent female labour migration in my study sites in mid-Western Nepal. As told by the mother of Mohini, a recent female migrant, these were mostly oppressed (*pidit*) girls, i.e. the ones who experienced suffering, abuse or whose families were in debt, who had no other choice but to migrate (*badyatale jane paryo*). ‘Those who live in happiness (*sukhama*)’, she added, ‘stay at home and ‘eat’ their husband’s *sampatti* (property)’. While this might appear to be just anecdotal data, the results of recent quantitative research support this observation. According to Simkhada et al. (2018, 3) who made a survey of 1010 returning female migrants in one NGO, 37 per cent of women in the sample were illiterate, 40 per cent had primary education as the highest level of education, 48 per cent of returning migrants in the sample were married, 24 were unmarried and 20 per cent were divorced or separated – an unusually high proportion for the Nepali society, given the fact that the median age of women in the sample was 31 years (ibid.).

During my fieldwork in the hilly rural areas of mid-Western Nepal, finding women who did migrate, even in the village development committee with 2,358 women (2011 Census data) was not an easy endeavour. In the end, there were two female migrants from the main village, one in Turkey and another in Portugal, who were away during the time of my fieldwork, but most of the villagers, even their neighbours were not aware of this. There were four further female migrants living in a remote hamlet across a high ridge, all of them working in the Gulf. All of the women who travelled were either single or married unhappily, with the husband of one woman having been ‘disappeared’ in India for a long time; another having divorced her husband because of domestic violence. The other two women who went abroad were unmarried well into their 30s – the case quite unusual for the local standards.

While the patterns of female labour migration vary across the country, with some ethnic groups such as Tamangs having a much more sustained and long history of migration (Sato 2016), there is an unspoken taboo against international female labour migration, which is still seen as a transgression of traditional gender norms. Few of the husbands in rural areas would willingly allow their wives to migrate as low-skilled labourers, for it would imperil not only the honour of the woman, but also of the man and put into question his masculinity, i.e. his ability to protect and provide for the family and children. Quite telling is the fact that when having fights with their husbands, women in the village would tell their husbands that they would go abroad, only to cause their husband's anger.

While women who go abroad have to invest a lot of time and effort into making their departure a reality, the few women who migrated to the Gulf States for work were forced into international mobility by a combination of structural, i.e. caste, class, and level of education, and personal factors. Thus, the first time Maya went abroad she was 22, but she made documents that would elevate her age to 24, the age threshold imposed by the government for female labour migrants at the time. Maya took a decision to go abroad after having separated from her husband, who, on having spent two years in Malaysia, returned without having fully repaid his debt. When Maya's husband returned, he took to drinking and would sometimes beat Maya. In the end, Maya decided to divorce her husband and go abroad. Maya's experience of work as a domestic labourer in Lebanon was in many ways typical: while not having been subjected to sexual harassment, she was not allowed to use Facebook, call her family as per her wish, let alone walk on her own or talk with strangers. In other words, not only was Maya's international mobility *initially* enforced on her as a result of failed marriage and the inability of her husband to provide, i.e. conform to the idea of hegemonic masculinity, but also her everyday mobility was strictly limited when she was abroad. In other words, Maya's international mobility was only a tip of an iceberg that hid high levels of everyday immobility, the situation experienced by many male and female migrants from Nepal who work in the Middle East.

### **Remote Control: Everyday Mobility of those who Stay and the Virtual Mobility of those who Go**



Paradoxically, Nepali men and women, who are internationally mobile but who migrate to the Gulf, often experience strong restrictions on their movement while being abroad (see Kathiravelu 2015 ch.5). A lot of migrants from the study village have gone illegal while staying in the Gulf, i.e. left their ‘sponsor’ (*kafeel*), who did not pay any wages, often for more than half a year. Yet, because the state of illegality in the Gulf is fraught with deportation, the newly acquired freedom from the *kafala* system<sup>vii</sup> means that migrants have to be extremely cautious about their everyday mobility in order not to be caught by the police. Yet, international female migrants in the Gulf are in a much worse situation than men, because not only is their physical movement curtailed, with quite a few women not being able to go anywhere without their employees, but also their virtual movement, i.e. the use of Facebook, Skype or a simple mobile phone, is also tightly controlled (see Mahdavi 2016, 12–14). While Nepali male migrants are often confined to the space of labour camps and cannot wander freely around, except for Fridays (Brusle 2012, 13), at least they have a recourse to the virtual space of the internet, which puts them in touch not only with their families back home, but also with the fellow-migrants who are working close-by in the Gulf. As explained by one villager who had gone illegal during the stay in Qatar: ‘We used Facebook during the leisure time. We are not allowed to go outside where we like. If the police see us, they will arrest and send us back. So, we are scared of the police and do not walk around like people working for the companies’.

The virtual mobility allows Nepali migrants in the Gulf to partially compensate for the lack of everyday mobility: it enables them to keep in touch with their fellow villagers while being abroad and plot the schemes of going illegal together – several stories of which I heard from the returnee male migrants. Virtual mobility also enables migrants to stay in touch with the kin in the village and, as the vignette in the introduction shows, forge intimate relations with the girls at home, because forging intimate ties in the Gulf would amount to a criminal offense. For married men, on the other hand, being mobile on the internet allows them to keep abreast with the village rumours and check on their ‘left-behind’ wives.

The density of social networks the ‘left behind’ women can enjoy, the scope of their relationships with others does not go unnoticed by their husbands. Jealousy, locally

referred to as *shanka*, was viewed as one of the main reasons for discord between ‘mobile’ husbands and their ‘immobile’ wives among my interlocutors in mid-Western Nepal. Dreading the rumours about allegedly frequent elopements of migrant wives, some of the men resort to the so-called ‘remote control’.<sup>viii</sup> Even if situated miles away, some men were able to exercise control over their spouses’ everyday mobility: some of them opposed their wives visiting church for fear of conversion, while others sent small sums of money to their wives, specifying how money should be used. For instance, the wife of one migrant described how her husband opposed any initiative that would take her out of the sphere of domesticity:

-I was humiliated a lot by my husband when I learned the skill of tailoring.

So, these days, I refuse to get this work done.

-Why did your husband humiliate your work?

- Although this was the job of my choice, he did not like it, he does not like the work of my choice.

-He might have thought that you should stay at home?

-He did not even let me use the mobile phone. He used to be suspicious. He would snatch it from me ...It has been only one year since I have started using it. When I used to talk over a mobile phone, he used to get suspicious and ask me who I talked with.

Seen from the space of the Gulf, where everyday movement is restrained and where the bonding between friends from the same village can happen mostly via the virtual space of the internet, the ‘left behind’ wives do not seem to be as immobile as it might appear if one views the situation from a Nepali village. In contrast to their husbands living in the Gulf, the typical day of a Kham Magar woman living in a village would involve going to many places, meeting different people, crossing the hills, and taking care of many concerns - something that could bring her to a distant hamlet, to the neighbouring village development committee, or even to Kathmandu.

As noted by Hanson (2010), everyday mobility can be extremely empowering for women, because they have somewhere to go, chores to attend to, relatives to visit and therefore networks to create and maintain. While being allegedly immobile, many of the ‘left behind’ women in Nepal enjoy a density of social networks and a freedom of

everyday movement, which is not accessible to their husbands abroad. As shown by Gaibazzi (2015, 14) in his ethnography of men who remain in Gambia, ‘sitting’ or ‘staying put’ might be an active state, rife with physical movement, emotional exchanges with the kin and neighbours, and a wide range of commitments and responsibilities, which make the ‘left behind’ not only physically but also socially mobile. So if one judges the everyday mobility of the ‘left-behind’ women in rural areas, one would see that they might in fact be more mobile at a substantive level than their husbands or especially many of their female counterparts who cross international borders only to become domestic workers without much control over their everyday mobility.

## **Conclusion**

Drawing on ethnographic research in the hilly rural areas of mid-Western Nepal, a region characterized by high levels of male outmigration, this paper has illustrated that marriage remains key for understanding the intersection of gender and (im)mobility in large parts of contemporary rural Nepal. Showing the complex relationship between men who migrate and their wives who stay, between women who cross international borders and their ‘failed’ married lives, the paper shows how the (im)mobility of men and women in rural Nepal is predicated not only on their gender – the predominant theme in a lot of literature – but also on their marital status, with marital status being enabling for the international mobility of men, and being detrimental for the international mobility of women.

While in the context of Nepal marriage remains a patriarchal institution that allows for the control of female sexuality and mobility, it also places an immense pressure on men to provide while offering a great degree of protection for women. Whereas a successful marriage promises social mobility for women in Nepal, international labour migration to the so-called ‘small countries’ often leads to the loss of respectability in many rural communities. Among my interlocutors in the hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal, international female mobility to the Gulf States was read as a sign that a woman has no husband to rely on and no male kin to give her protection. As this paper has illustrated, at the time when some men were forced by their parents to marry before going abroad, thus ensuring that the elders and family fields would be

taken care of, some of the women were forced to become internationally mobile because of failed marriages or having no marriage at all.

Should the husbands of international female migrants I spoke to had conformed to the norms of hegemonic masculinity, the women would have rather stayed at home, becoming a housewife proper, not a domestic worker in the Gulf or even a migrant labourer in the USA. Speaking to her male Nepali friend, whose wife was living off remittances sent by her husband from the USA, one of the Kham Magar women from Rukum who made it to the USA via a treacherous Latin American route, remarked: 'How lucky (*bhagyamani*) his wife is. Unlike we, she does not need to go through all the suffering, as we [female migrants] do'. The woman would have probably not made such a remark about middle or upper-class Nepali women who migrate for skilled jobs to Europe or the USA. Her comment pointed not only towards the fact that migration 'with honour' remains a middle-class privilege in Nepali society, but also to the fact that there is a whole range of femininities that are beyond the reach of women from rural areas of Nepal.

Looking relationally at gender and mobility in the hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal allows one to problematize the extent to which male outmigration has a transformative positive impact on gender ideology and practice at home, especially if one looks beyond the changing gender division of labour (J. Adhikari and Hobley 2015). Judging by what is happening in rural hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal in the wake of the inflow of remittances, one could argue that the increasing male outmigration leads to the increasing dependence of women on men, across most social classes, with key material resources, such as land and money, being still concentrated in male hands, even in communities where women can use it. It is often by virtue of marriage that women have access to these resources. Such a situation contributes to the hardening of patriarchal ideology, not only because it puts an increased pressure on men to succeed financially, but also because it defines successful femininity through association with hegemonic masculinity.

Similar to India where the liberalization process and upward social mobility have been shown to result in the spreading of patriarchal ideology and female domestication among groups previously known for egalitarian gender relations

(Kapadia 1993; Still 2011), one might argue that in contemporary Nepal more and more women are becoming dependent on men as wage earners. While in the rural hilly areas of mid-Western Nepal a lot of women *in practice* are forced into the double or even triple workload, often toiling away in the fields and trying to repay their husbands debts, *ideologically* it is the image of an urban woman, either a professional or a dependent living on her husband's remittances, but certainly removed from the agricultural world, that comes to define an ideal version of femininity. Not only does this view rank female dependence over independence, but also plays into the hands of the more well-to-do women, who can afford the lifestyle of a 'virtuous domesticated' housewife in a bazaar town through the earnings of a 'successful male' abroad.

In such a context the question about whether wide-scale male outmigration leads to the empowerment of women is slippery, because the meaning of empowerment might drastically differ depending on the cultural frame people use. Thus, while women are forced to undertake additional work in the absence of men and even exercise control over the household budget, this is not necessarily indicative of the rise in the status of women or the transformation of gender norms. As noted by some scholars, the mere idea of 'empowerment', however loosely defined, becomes highly dubious in contexts where, even if de-facto being household heads, women remain financially dependent on their husbands (McEvoy et al. 2012, 384). And, as this article has illustrated, the expansion of female involvement in agricultural activities or their decision-making in non-strategic manners, should not blind us to the fact that more subtle elements of decision-making, such as conversion to Christianity or buying and registering land in their own name, is out of reach for many women in rural and arguably urban Nepal.

While exploring the ways in which marriage facilitates international mobility of Nepali men and curtails the physical mobility of women, the paper has cautioned against posing a rigid dichotomy between 'mobile men' and 'immobile' left behind women, illustrating that it would conceal a much more complex reality on the ground, characterized by different scales of mobility (Cresswell 2010; Hanson 2010). Thus, however immobile the 'left behind' wives are, they remain part of dense social networks, partake in multiple domains of life and move freely about, not being reduced to 'homo economicus' as their spouses, many of whom are forced to work in

conditions that often deny the possibility of free movement, social interaction, and basic humanity.

While mundane forms of mobility, such as walking through the hills, attending community festivals, dropping in one's neighbour's house, are not necessarily valorized in the world of today, it is through the mundane forms of physical mobility, that people get to inhabit the social world and get to expand their reach and social worth in society. Furthermore, as shown by early feminists, it is through mundane forms of mobility, such as bicycle riding (see in Hanson 2010), that women can start pushing the boundaries of gender norms and transform them in the long-term (in Hanson 2010, 6). As shown by Brunson (2014), the arrival of scooter in Kathmandu Valley revolutionized college girls' everyday mobility, allowed them to reach previously inaccessible spaces, and asserted their independence from male kin and friends.<sup>ix</sup> Attending to different scales of mobility, which are not limited to the crossing of international borders, might allow us to overcome the rigid dichotomy between mobility and immobility, between mobile and immobile subjects and show that the valorisation of international mobility as a form of empowerment and freedom is highly exclusionary towards large groups of people in the world of today, who are either forced or *choose* to remain rooted and move locally as part of being a human and being alive.

## Acknowledgements

The research for this paper has been supported by the Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship. The first draft of the paper was presented at the conference 'Ethnographies of Gender and Mobility' at Vrije University Amsterdam, and I am grateful to the participants for their comments. I would like to thank Mimi Sheller and the two anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions on the earlier versions of this paper. I am indebted to my research participants for all the time devoted to sharing their stories and lives with me.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>i</sup> Following Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 832), I am using the term 'hegemonic masculinity' to denote a pattern of practice and a set of discourses, 'which embody the most currently honoured way of being a man' and which ideologically legitimates subordination of women to men.

<sup>ii</sup> See Bhadra (2013) for the discussion of domestic violence as one of the main push factors for female migration 'in Nepal and Simkhada et al. (2018) for an overview of education, caste and marital background of female migrants.

<sup>iii</sup> According to Ahmad, who worked with Nepali domestic workers in Kuwait (2017a), when she visited her interlocutors' homes in Nepal, she realized that many people in the community were not aware about the international mobility of women.

---

<sup>iv</sup> The level of female outmigration varies a lot in different parts of Nepal. Thus, in Dhanusha, Siraha and Jhapa - districts with the highest number of labour permits issued in 2014/15 - only 0.2, 0.1 and 2.23 per cent of labour permits were issued to women. In Sindupalchowk, Makwanpur, Kathmandu and Kavrepalanchowk - districts with the highest proportion of female migrants - 19.4, 10.8, 19.9 and 10.9 per cent of labour permits were issued to women (Government of Nepal, Ministry for Labour and Employment 2016, 73–75).

<sup>v</sup> Almost no in-depth studies have been done with female migrants in the destination countries, i.e. in Malaysia and the Gulf, except for Ahmad (2017). Little work has been done on the plight of the ‘left behind’ elders (but see Speck 2017), with the ‘left behind women’ having been the primary focus so far.

<sup>vi</sup> This article uses the old administrative division of Nepal, because much of the fieldwork was done before the restructuring and because all of the currently available statistical data is based on the old administrative division.

<sup>vii</sup> Kafala is a system of controlling labour migrants mostly in the Gulf States through the use of the so-called sponsors, who provide a work visa to migrant workers. Under this system, migrants can legally work only for their sponsor; they cannot change jobs and cannot even leave the country without a special exit visa.

<sup>viii</sup> For a discussion of how the migration process is linked with the moralizing discourse, see Reeves (2011), Galam (2017), McEvoy (2012) et al.

## Bibliography

- Abramsky, Tanya et.al. 2018. ‘Migration Planning Among Female Prospective Labour Migrants from Nepal: A Comparison of First-Time and Repeat-Migrants’. *International Migration* 56 (4): 197–216.
- Adhikari, Jagannath, and Mary Hobley. 2015. ‘Everyone Is Leaving—who Will Sow Our Fields? The Effects of Migration from Khotang District to the Gulf and Malaysia’. *Himalaya* 35 (1): 11–23.
- Adhikari, Radha. 2013. ‘Empowered Wives and Frustrated Husbands: Nursing, Gender and Migrant Nepali in the UK’. *International Migration* 51 (6): 168–79.
- Ahmad, Attiya. 2017. *Everyday Conversions: Islam, Domestic Work, and South Asian Migrant Women in Kuwait*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bhadra, Chandra. 2013. ‘Final Report on Impact of Foreign Labour Migration to Enhance Economic Security and Address VAW among Nepali Women Migrant Workers and Responsiveness of Local Governance to Ensure Safe Migration’. Submitted to: Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, Government of Nepal.
- Brunson, Jan. 2014. ‘“Scooty Girls”: Mobility and Intimacy at the Margins of Kathmandu’. *Ethnos* 79 (5): 610–29.
- Bruslé, Tristan. 2012. ‘What Kind of Place Is This?. Daily Life, Privacy and the Inmate Metaphor in a Nepalese Workers’ Labour Camp (Qatar)’. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 6: 1–28.
- Charsley, Katharine. 2005. ‘Unhappy Husbands: Masculinity and Migration in Transnational Pakistani Marriages’. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11 (1): 85–105.

- 
- Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept'. *Gender & Society* 19 (6): 829–59.
- Cresswell, Tim. 2010. 'Towards a Politics of Mobility'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (1): 17–31.
- Franquesa, Jaume. 2011. "'We've Lost Our Bearings': Place, Tourism, and the Limits of the 'Mobility Turn'". *Antipode* 43 (4): 1012–33.
- Gaibazzi, Paolo. 2015. *Bush Bound: Young Men and Rural Permanence in Migrant West Africa*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Galam, Roderick G. 2017. 'Women "like Parched Earth in Need of Rain" and Who Relax by Working: Gossip and the Surveillance of Filipino Seafarer Wives' Morality and Mobility'. *Mobilities* 12 (6): 861–874..
- Gamburd, Michele Ruth. 1995. 'Sri Lanka's "Army of Housemaids": Control of Remittances and Gender Transformations'. *Anthropologica* 37 (1): 49–88.
- . 2000. *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids*. Ithaca, N.Y. ; London: Cornell University Press.
- Gardner, Andrew M. 2011. 'Gulf Migration and the Family'. *Journal of Arabian Studies* 1 (1): 3–25.
- Gartaula, Hom Nath, Leontine Visser, and Anke Niehof. 2011. 'Socio-Cultural Dispositions and Wellbeing of the Women Left Behind: A Case of Migrant Households in Nepal'. *Social Indicators Research* 108 (3): 401–20.
- Government of Nepal, Ministry for Labour and Employment. 2016. 'Labour Migration for Employment: A Status Report for Nepal 2014/2015'. Report.
- Grossman-Thompson, Barbara. 2016. 'Protection and Paternalism: Narratives of Nepali Women Migrants and the Gender Politics of Discriminatory Labour Migration Policy'. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 32 (3).
- Hanson, Susan. 2010. 'Gender and Mobility: New Approaches for Informing Sustainability'. *Gender, Place & Culture* 17 (1): 5–23.
- International Labour Organization. 2015. 'No Easy Exit – Migration Bans Affecting Women from Nepal'. Report. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Kapadia, Karin. 1993. 'Marrying Money: Changing Preference and Practice in Tamil Marriage'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 27 (1): 25–51.
- Kathiravelu, Laavanya. 2015. *Migrant Dubai: Low Wage Workers and the Construction of a Global City*. Global Diversities. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kodoth, Praveena, and Vekkal J. Varghese. 2012. 'Protecting Women or Endangering the Emigration Process'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 47 (43): 56–66.
- Lama, Ang Sanu, Sambriddhi Kharel, and Tracy Ghale. 2017. 'When the Men Are Away: Migration and Women's Participation in Nepal's Community Forestry'. *Mountain Research and Development* 37 (3): 263–70.
- Liechty, Mark. 2002. *Suitably Modern. Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. Princeton: University of Princeton Press.
- Maharjan, Amina, Siegfried Bauer, and Beatrice Knerr. 2012. 'Do Rural Women Who Stay Behind Benefit from Male Out-Migration? A Case Study in the Hills of Nepal'. *Gender, Technology and Development* 16 (1): 95–123.



- 
- Mahdavi, Pardis. 2016. *Crossing the Gulf: Love and Family in Migrant Lives*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Maycock, Matthew. 2017. 'Masculinities, Remittances and Failure: Narratives from Far-West Nepal'. *South Asia Research* 37 (2): 179–93.
- . 2017. 'Hegemonic at Home and Subaltern Abroad: Kamaiya Masculinities and Changing Mobility in Nepal'. *Gender, Place & Culture* 24 (6): 812–22.
- McEvoy, Jamie, Peggy Petrzela, Claudia Radel, and Birgit Schmook. 2012. 'Gendered Mobility and Morality in a South-Eastern Mexican Community: Impacts of Male Labour Migration on the Women Left Behind'. *Mobilities* (3): 369–88.
- Molnar, Augusta. 1981. *The Kham Magar Women of Thabang*. Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University.
- Osella, Filippo, and Caroline Osella. 2000. 'Migration, Money and Masculinity in Kerala'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (1): 117–33.
- Pauli, Julia. 2008. 'A House of One's Own: Gender, Migration, and Residence in Rural Mexico'. *American Ethnologist* 35 (1): 171–87.
- Pribilsky, Jason. 2012. 'Consumption Dilemmas: Tracking Masculinity, Money and Transnational Fatherhood Between the Ecuadorian Andes and New York City'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (2): 323–43.
- Reeves, Madeleine. 2011. 'Staying Put? Towards a Relational Politics of Mobility at a Time of Migration'. *Central Asian Survey* 30 (3–4): 555–76.
- Salazar, Noel B., and Alan Smart. 2011. 'Anthropological Takes on (Im)Mobility'. *Identities* 18 (6): i – ix.
- Sato, Seika. 2016. 'Yolmo Women on the Move: Marriage, Migrant Work and Relocation to Kathmandu'. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 47: 69–95.
- Schiller, Nina Glick, and Noel B. Salazar. 2013. 'Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39 (2): 183–200.
- Schippers, Mimi. 2007. 'Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony'. *Theory and Society* 36 (1): 85–102.
- Sharma, Jeevan Raj. 2013. 'Marginal but Modern: Young Nepali Labour Migrants in India'. *Young* 21 (4): 347–62.
- Sharma, Sanjay et.al. 2014. 'State of Migration in Nepal'. *Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility. Kathmandu, Nepal*.
- Simkhada, Padam, Edwin van Teijlingen, Manju Gurung, and Sharada P. Wasti. 2018. 'A Survey of Health Problems of Nepalese Female Migrants Workers in the Middle-East and Malaysia'. *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 18 (January).
- Speck, Sarah. 2017. '"They Moved to City Areas, Abroad": Views of the Elderly on the Implications of Outmigration for the Middle Hills of Western Nepal'. *Mountain Research and Development* 37 (4): 425–35.
- Still, Clarinda. 2011. 'Spoiled Brides and the Fear of Education: Honour and Social Mobility among Dalits in South India'. *Modern Asian Studies* 45 (05): 1119–46.
- Thieme, Susan. 2008. 'Living in Transition: How Kyrgyz Women Juggle Their Different Roles in a Multi-Local Setting'. *Gender, Technology and Development* 12 (3): 325–45.

---

Valentin, Karen. 2015. 'Transnational Education and the Remaking of Social Identity: Nepalese Student Migration to Denmark'. *Identities* 22 (3): 318–32.