

## Bangladeshi Migrants, Transnational Families and Contested Reality in the Context of Sweden

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### Abstract

This paper tried to investigate reasons behind conjugal crisis in Bangladeshi migrants' families living in Sweden. Currently, there are about 12,000 Bangladeshi migrants living in Sweden. This paper illustrates briefly history of Bangladeshi migration into Sweden and patterns of women's migration. Marriage is considered as one of the major mediums of women migration and various type of marriage systems have been observed during the fieldwork. The issue of transnationalism and transnational family relate to the patterns of women migration and the diaspora ties of the Bangladeshi families across the world. Bangladeshi men are often found to being abusive husbands during migration period, which lead up to a family crisis later on. Bangladeshi men usually hold onto patriarchal notions they learn earlier in their life and embed those practices into their family life in Sweden. However, the Scandinavian country as a state promotes individualism and facilitates women empowerment, which contradicts '*traditional masculinity*'. Many women enjoy the new cultural setting as it gives them both individual power and space which her husband, with his traditional mindset, cannot consider as "normal" or "our" cultural pattern. Two different cultural ideologies come into an arguing situation during migration time where men cannot perform a role conforming to that of their homeland and women perform differently than the men's conventional expectations. This shifted gendered subjective roles often become a thorny issue in migrant families, as most

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of them face trouble in dealing with it. This paper demonstrates these events with ethnographic examples as well as critically discussing similar issues in different regions across the world.

## 1. Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon but rather has a history as old as human evolution. Transnational Migration is a relatively new phenomenon which is associated with globalization processes and world's current economic flow, which we observe as capitalism. Because of this migration, various trends and patterns have emerged in particular lifestyles, integration of values, family structure and destination flows in different countries and communities. Bangladeshi migration in Sweden started at the time of birth of this nation in 1971. Early Bangladeshi migration (in 1970s and 1980s) to Sweden involved 'onward migration' from other destinations rather than a direct movement from the home country. Among them, a big number of migrants seek political asylum. Nevertheless, those who stayed in Sweden brought their families from Bangladesh, or returned to marry a Bangladeshi woman to conform to their concept of racial 'originality'. Bangladeshi women migration is not frequent in Europe. Rather, in the migratory process, most of the women move as "passive followers"<sup>1</sup> (Grillo 2008:3). In many cases, women's life after migration through "transnational-arranged marriage" (Abraham 2005) is not as beautiful as they expect where many issues rise in conjugal life because of the new cultural settings leading to family crisis, and later to divorce. During conjugal crisis, many women face both verbal and physical abuse. Gossips and rumors within migrant society contribute greatly to misogynistic attitudes and in turn re-enforces male domination. They even cross state borders because of the worldwide transnational connections of Bangladeshis.

This paper tried to explore the reasons behind the family crisis that leads to violence and divorce. The Bangladeshi men in migration period bring native culture and social construction which is often contested in the new cultural settings. Furthermore, this paper explores ways in which Bangladeshi migrant women adopt new cultural traits in their struggle to regain power and social capital (Bourdieu 1990, 1998) through participating in different social spheres (e.g., education and work) and by opposing male domination



in ways that were often not possible in their homeland. Officially, Sweden espouses democratic, liberal and individualistic values which contest the values that these families regard as traditional, especially when it comes to gender roles which are discussed here from different theoretical perspectives. This research used mixed methods including quantitative and qualitative approaches, but qualitative approach was given the highest priority. As it focused on the Bangladeshi migrant families in Sweden and I went to 23 family settings from Bangladesh in Stockholm including single mother families. There I interviewed 18 men, 21 women<sup>2</sup> who were living with their husbands, 6 single mothers and 5 teenagers. Apart from these people, I had informal conversation with some people from Bangladesh in different social gatherings. A few of them do not have a 'family' there, living alone—studying or doing jobs. I also interviewed two migration officers who are working in Swedish Migration Board. Participant observation was one of the main methods of data collection in this research, and it is the methodological hallmark of anthropology (Allu Davies 1999). Physical presence in different families and social gathering helped me to get some clear insights of the family relations, crisis and social situation which were not possible to know through interviews.

## 2. Bangladeshi Migrants in Sweden

Bangladeshi migration to Sweden involved 'onward migration' from other destinations rather than a direct movement from the home country. In recent years many Bangladeshi students came to the Scandinavian country to study taking benefit of the free education provided by Swedish university until 2010. There is no clear-cut information about the total number of Bangladeshi migrants in Sweden, neither from the Bangladeshi Embassy nor from the Swedish Migration Board. According to informants there are more or less 12,000 Bangladeshis including first, second and third generations living in Sweden of which around half live in Stockholm. In this research, I have considered those as Bangladeshi migrants who are from Bangladesh or second and third generations who have Bangladeshi origins. Nevertheless, the transnational connection with Bangladesh is also considered as one of the important indicators to treat them as Bangladeshi migrants.

The 'European circuit' has been an important migratory realm for risk-taking Bangladeshis since the 1970s. Originally limited to Western Europe where, after the halt to the recruitment of labor migrants in 1973, Bangladeshis found entry possible through various clandestine and asylum strategies, this domain was extended to Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism (Knights and King 1998). Eastern Europe became an important area for Bangladeshi transit migration since it was easy to enter and move close to favored border crossings into west European states (including Italy, France, Spain and Germany) (ibid). The history of entry of Bangladeshi migrants in Sweden is not completely different than other European cases. According to informants, some Bangladeshis came in 1971-72 during and just after the liberation war of Bangladesh but the numbers were not remarkable. One elderly informant stated that around five hundred students were moved from the Soviet Union between 1974 and 1985. At the same time, a good number of 'new' students came to Sweden from Bangladesh to study and managed to stay later on. Most of these students had connections with other Bangladeshis who came earlier. They helped the newcomers by providing information from Swedish universities (like admission requirement and invitation letter from the university). Other side of the story, after 1975, a big number of Bangladeshis moved to Sweden without passport. Many of them were fake-seekers<sup>3</sup> sent by a broker called 'Adam Bepari'<sup>4</sup> (human smugglers) who sends them to Sweden without any visa during the 1980s. At that time it was comparatively 'easy' for South Asians to cross the Swedish border without having a visa and a passport. Importantly, repressions during the 1980s military regime in Bangladesh worked as a 'push' factor to many people including politicians, journalists, activists or artists. Sweden also, on humanitarian grounds<sup>5</sup>, gave space to many death-row convicts and political activists (many of them were fake). In recent years, many Bangladeshis have migrated to Sweden with a job permit visa, as well as many of them managed to stay there after completing their education in Swedish universities.

### **3. Transnational Family**

International migration is not a new phenomenon in human history; rather in the contemporary globalized world it is being observed in many differently aspects. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska (2003) acknowledge that contemporary immigrant transnationalism



is not an exact replica of older forms of migrant sociality and, also, that it appears differently in different social realities (ibid: 20). Transnationalism is not only bodily movement from one place to another; rather it is a multiple, complex, messy, cultural, economic and political interconnectedness (Vertovec 2009: 2). Vertovec (2009) states that it “has been variously grounded on distinct conceptual premises” (ibid: 4). However, he proposes transnationalism as “social morphology” (ibid) to understand different kinds, shapes and dynamics of transnationalism such as ethnic diaspora, complex relationship of receiving state and diaspora, social networks, socialization process, communication, etc. (ibid 5). These concepts are not segregated from other social institutions such as marriage and family. Therefore, transnationalism is a complex phenomenon which transforms into new dimensions in everyday practice around the globe (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002).

Transnational families are a new family model which can be characterized by the geographical dispersion of a family because of the migration of one or more of its members who, nevertheless continue to keep tight relationships across borders. According to Bryceson and Vuorela (2002), transnational families require functional transnational links and they tend to have scions or individual members scattered in more than two countries (ibid: 3). However, in *The Transnational Family* (2002), they define the transnational family as: “families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely, ‘familyhood’, even across national borders” (ibid: 3). Bangladeshi families in Sweden are also performing such connections which reflect and constitute their cultural identity. Most of the families which were interviewed in Stockholm, maintain links to their homeland as well as to other countries in the world where their relatives, siblings or cousins are living. In this new cultural setting, family members keep connection with the diasporic community as well as the natal relatives which often have some impact on the ‘family’ abroad. Before going into the discussion of women crisis in new cultural setting, we need to see women migration in Sweden.

#### **4. Family Reunion and Women Migration in Sweden**

All the immigrant receiving countries in Europe defines the family that includes the spouse and the children less than 18 years, but in some cases this was extended to include older relatives and other family members (Bryceson 2002:40). The type of marriage, however, is a thorny issue. Most countries now demand proof that migrants have not contracted a marriage of convenience in order to gain national entry (ibid). In consequence, family reunion is one of the major grounds of women migration in European countries.

The rules and policies for family reunifications are not homorganic within the European Union, rather, that depends on the receiving country. A recent study from The Danish National Center for Social Research (2009) shows that the family reunification laws in Sweden were comparatively 'softer' than in other Scandinavian countries<sup>6</sup>. According to Swedish Migration law (Swedish Aliens Act, Government Bill 2005/06:72, Chapter 5, Section 3, 3a), the spouse/registered partner, cohabiting partner and underage unmarried children of a person living in Sweden should be given the right to a residence permit.<sup>7</sup> Individual woman migration in Sweden is not frequent; rather in most cases, women migrated to Sweden from Bangladesh through marriage or family reunification process.

##### **4.1 Transnational Arrange Marriage**

Marriage and the formation of a family are important for Bangladeshis both in Sweden and in Bangladesh, and the relationship among class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and patriarchy are complex and diverse in both contexts. Bangladeshi society attributes a high value to marriage and has various explicit and implicit criteria that influence societal notions of what constitutes an "ideal family" (Abraham 2005). Similarly, in both societies many images and myths of the family have been constructed, two of them being the notions of 'family unity' and 'family harmony' (ibid). Nevertheless, Bangladeshi diaspora community is not very big in Sweden. Therefore, it is not difficult to get information about members of this connected community. Especially when it comes to matters of 'arranged marriage' people make contacts through personal networks. Usually Bangladeshi men visit their homeland to get married. During the fieldwork, I found some characteristic forms of marriage among Bangladeshi migrants including; (a) transnational



arranged marriage where the groom seeks a bride from Bangladesh; (b) transnational arranged marriage where the bride seeks a groom from Bangladesh; (c) love marriage, whether transnational or among Bangladeshi immigrants within Sweden or Europe; (d) arranged marriage amongst Bangladeshi immigrants within Sweden or Europe; (e) marriage with 'Swedish' bride/groom; (f) transnational arranged marriage where bride or groom seeks partner from another nation state beyond Europe and Bangladesh<sup>8</sup>.

There are many forms of marriages in transnational migrant communities and at this point this paper will focus mainly on transnational arranged marriage. In a transnational arranged marriage, the Bangladeshi man in Sweden returns to Bangladesh to marry a Bangladeshi woman. In some cases, this is not totally 'arranged' as in oldendays when the groom and bride did not know each other. Rather it is a form of 'introduced' or 'modern arranged' (Abraham 2005) marriage where the woman and man go out socially with each other for a while before they decide to marry. For arranged marriage, the man usually takes help of the family members and friends. The reasons of seeking Bangladeshi woman depend on the man's choice as well as the family where the man grew up. Abraham (2005) has showed the picture of arranged marriage of Indians in the United States and how the man usually seeks for an 'ideal' type of 'Indian' woman. Similarly most of my male informants living in Sweden went to Bangladesh to marry 'an "ideal type of Bangladeshi" woman. According to the male informants, a potential wife has to have some qualities which includes the woman will believe in 'Bangladeshi values', caring to husband, children and his family, religious and obviously obedient. By saying 'Bangladeshi wife', usually a Bangladeshi man wants to see his wife as more docile, more passive.<sup>10</sup> Marrying a Bangladeshi woman is a part of identity and a process of keeping 'originality' (ibid) or authenticity in the migrant society.<sup>11</sup>

After marriage, the husband and husband's family evaluate the wife's attitude e.g. how she succeed in keeping the 'honor' of the family or failing by bringing 'shame' to the family or if she is placing the interest of the family before herself. However, as noted, for the Bangladeshi diaspora, marriage and family are also seen as points of difference between the 'Swedish society' and the 'Bangladeshi-Swedish' society. A major difference in the context of

marriage and family is perceived to be the emphasis in Bangladeshi culture on the collective interest, as opposed to the greater emphasis on individual interest in Sweden.

#### **4. Contested Realities**

After marriage, a woman follows her husband and come to Sweden through spouse visa for reunification of the family. It is to be said that many Bangladeshi families are living happily after migration and in contrast many families are having 'problem' or 'crisis' in their family because of the new cultural setting. Following paragraphs will demonstrate some realities of migrant families leading to family crisis.

##### **5.1 'Modern Society' vs 'Traditional masculinity': The Fear of Losing Honor**

The very phrase 'Modern society' is taken from the field where the informants imply it as the Western culture and society in general which is not similar to Bangladesh. On the other hand, a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with boys and men can be defined as masculinity. Katherine Pratt Ewing's *Stolen Honor* (2008) pays close attention to the discourse of Muslim masculinity in Germany. The constructions of Muslim masculinity, Pratt Ewing argues, derive in part from the impact of the stigmatization of Muslim men. Since the Muslim man is constructed against a modern "self," or a German national subject (Ewing 2008: 3), she discusses the idea of 'modern man' and its construction through media in Germany where it signifies 'soul-blooded German man' as opposed to the immigrant Turkish man who is the 'traditional man' (ibid). Thus, the migrants in Sweden, especially from the East, carrying different cultural orientation and practice are considered as traditional man.

The Orientalist concept of *traditional masculinity* subsumes several attributes that stand in contrast to those of the *Western Self*<sup>d2</sup>, the liberal subject underlying Western notions of a democratic state. The masculinity develops at the time of upbringing of a man or boy where the social knowledge and practice become a part of his life style and choice. The notions such as autonomy, freedom, independence, interdependence, equality does not reflect the *Western Self*. In that regard, the 'non-western' masculinity practices the



attributes that reflects modernity-tradition dichotomy in general.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, *traditional masculinity* does not reflect a unique pattern of masculinity which is different that Western or Modern masculinity. Rather, both (Traditional and Western) of them have close similarities at the core. However, the very concept of '*traditional masculinity*' is not the plain or one-dimensional practice of a patriarchal ideology. We can try to understand the underlying base of *traditional masculinity* which develops at the early age of a man. A 42 years old Bangladeshi man said thus:

In my childhood, I saw my father as a 'Man', he was masculine, bold and was never afraid of a woman... My father and my uncles had the power to control their wives... If the wife did not listen to him, he could beat her which was part of family life... I learned that from them, there... I believe in that.

In anthropological discussions honor and shame have been approached from many angles. However, it could be argued that the honor-shame complex is stereotyped in the discipline. Herzfeld argued that such terms of moral values must be understood within specific linguistic and social contexts and suggested that the term of honor as a general analytical category should be replaced by the more neutral concept of reputation (Herzfeld 1980:348). Moreover, honor was described by Bourdieu (1966) as a 'sentiment' and this honor encompasses several distinct categories in a society.<sup>14</sup> The terms of honor (*izzat*) and shame (*lozza*) of Bangladeshi men are not essentially different from the more well-known cases of other societies or regions, such as South Asia or Turkey. Having 'control over a woman' and being 'the household chief' are matters of honor to many Bangladeshi men. Therefore, a divorced or abandoned man, especially in times of migration, is taken for a man who was unable to control his wife. In binary of honor, this becomes a source of shame for a man in the diasporic community. The fear of losing honor and the fear of shame makes a man aggressive and possessive, where the man wants to control his wife in many ways including keeping wife away from information, not allowing her to meet new people and especially divorced women; controlling clothing choices, financial matters, electronic social networking etc. To restore the ultimate control, man often verbally abuse and in many cases physically too. On the other hand, a divorced woman is considered as evil in the connected migratory society. "...these (divorced)

women are guilty as they bring shame on our society”—was a statement uttered in anger by a Bangladeshi migrant man who is strongly against divorce and liberty of women. He believes that women should remain in the domestic sphere and that societal changes are threats to the family.

When a man does resort to violence, the reasons are often far more complex than the straight forward enactment of the code of honor (as argued also by Ewing 2008). The complexity of possible sources of honor, reputation, and self-esteem that those individuals may draw on as they negotiate social relationships in various contexts means that there are no simple formulas for action. And, in the case of *traditional masculinity* these men believe that women have less connection and they have very little to lose after divorce or being socially dishonored, where men are socially connected and as they are living in a ‘modern society,’ certainly they have many transnational connections. Therefore, divorce or ‘disobedient’ wives are considered as shame factor in the diasporic community and are a ‘fear factor’ to many ‘men’ afraid of losing honor. They, in turn, want to establish their sovereign control in the family.

## 5.2 Gendered Subjectivity and the Role of the State

A nation state can give the opportunity of freedom and determine the gender subjectivities in many ways where an individual can live a life in his/her own way. Transnational migration plays an important role in the power relations surrounding gender and status (Vertovec 2001, 2009, Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). Often gender subjectivity is determined by a society which incorporates with *habitus*. This gendered subjectivity defines some special job responsibilities as gender role for both male and female. On the other side, gender relation, however, is not stagnant and rather changes over time and situation (Al-Ali 2002). Transnational family composition in different cultural settings often opposes the patriarchal grip over women which were observed in the fieldwork. Nevertheless gendered subjectivity act differently because of crossing national borders where ‘nation’ and ‘policy’ of the receiving country plays vital role for different gender role.

Some informants shared their thoughts regarding gender role as they perceived. A Bangladeshi man shared his view:

Men (husbands) are responsible for earning money and maintaining the family which I have seen throughout my life...My father worked outside dealing with outer sphere while



my mother was responsible for home, maintaining household, me and my siblings.

This is a common value of Bangladeshi middle class families<sup>15</sup> where men are associated with public sphere and women with domestic sphere. This dichotomy of gender subjectivity threatened in migrant situation where man loses his subjective role of the family and household. Al-Ali's (2002) case study of middle-class Bosnian families, who moved to Britain and the Netherlands, shows the changes of gendered subjectivity. She shows how Bosnian families entail with learning new languages and struggling with unwelcoming labor markets. In such stressed situation, gender roles are transformed and Bosnian women migrants sometimes found themselves in the main role of household head where their husbands are chagrin with their activities (ibid). In a similar way, Bangladeshi men often lose their subjective roles after transnational migration when women get involved in the public spheres and job market; at the same time change of subjectivity affects their *habitus*. According to Bourdieu (1984) *habitus* is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures (ibid: 170). In this sense, *habitus* is created and reproduced unconsciously, "without any deliberate pursuit of coherence... without any conscious concentration" (ibid: 170). From this position, men, who have migrated, want to keep their gender role even in transnational situation which they acquired in pre-migration practice and structure of homeland society; on the other side this *habitus* and practice of masculinity cannot perform in the own way after migration because of new system of social reality.

According to the gendered subjective role, it is believed that, Bangladeshi men have to support financially their natal family in homeland, which is also 'expected' by the natal family. When a man migrates to Sweden, he usually faces a lot of trouble to get access into the job market, especially in 'white-collar' jobs. Therefore, many of them get involved in 'odd' jobs where they earn less. To earn more money, they work a lot and have very little time to spend with his family in Sweden. Meanwhile, the wife is also involved in the economic activities, which the man might not be liking but is forced to allow as the living cost is so high and his income is not

enough. Shafique, a 47-year-old Bangladeshi man has been working in an Indian restaurant for 13 years as a chef. He works for 12 hours per day and six days a week. His first wife divorced him after three years of their marriage life and he is also unhappy with his conjugal life in his second one. He cannot give time to his family and wife, while on the other hand, he does not like his wife spending time with others while he is working. He works a lot to support big natal family, and eventually the pressure of money from the natal family also create crisis in transnational family. He believes that he is working according to his role where he is earning for the family and also supporting the natal family; and his wife should perform her role in the house and be a 'decent' wife.

Sweden as a welfare nation state provides facilities to every single individual where the dichotomy between man and woman are literally almost invisible. Being a welfare state, implication of women's right in every sector might be questioned from a critical perspective, but throughout the fieldwork I have found that the most of the Bangladeshi migrant women are satisfied with the Swedish laws and facilities for women. Although woman and man have similar right in every sector in Bangladesh by law, but in practice, women are often subjugated by male domination. In Sweden, the implication of policy plays an important role. For instance Alam, a 42-year-old Bangladeshi man was complaining about Swedish laws and policies:

I cannot control my wife in my way, if I say something, she threatens me of divorce....how dare she?— Only because of the state, if she wants divorce, no one will hear my point... here (Sweden) police, social organizations—everyone are conscious about women....not about Man.

Alam has lost his masculine power to establish control over women because of the policies of Sweden and he is negotiating with his *traditional masculinity* concepts in family life. He can no longer act in the way of the 'real man' as perceived by *traditional masculinity*.

When a woman comes to Sweden, in most cases, husband wants to keep her away from all kind of information and networks to be her only connection to the outer world. This measure, fueled by the *traditional masculine* man's overprotective and possessive nature, sparks conflicts when the wife starts moving into public sphere. As she acquires academic knowledge, and starts working,



she eventually comes to know various facilities for woman provided by the state and other social organizations. The newly found authority or power ends up being used to resist their husbands' 'abusive' acts. Furthermore, women get involved with the *habitus* of post-migrant situation as she enjoys the honor and dignity that are ensured by the receiving state. On the other hand, man wants to avoid post-migrant *habitus* of gender equality 'sense' or 'structure' where he feels discomfort of losing his masculine power. In such transnational condition, many of Bangladeshi men cannot show their masculinity rather they negotiate with social system as well as with their wife. This negotiation process is not through self willingness but rather they feel forced to negotiate because of the policy and implication of policy of the receiving nation state. Moreover, the Scandinavian countries are more concerned about immigrant's human rights and try to maintain the welfare state's facility through their policies (Hagelund 2009: 80-81).

Darvishpour (2002) shows now the Iranian immigrant women in Sweden challenged the role of men by achieving social and cultural capital. However, these socio-political structures and the "freedom" of women enhanced their capability to argue with their husbands as well as divorce. Moreover, all these facilities provided by the state being a citizen, help women to enhance their social, cultural and economic capital. When a woman learns Swedish language or pursues academic study in Sweden, it increases the opportunity of having a job in the labor market. Not only economic freedom but also some durable networks, moreover, social capital buildup through a membership of a nation-state. For instance, attachment with different kind of social or humanitarian organizations helps women to achieve and practice their legal rights. Therefore, the power structure is not only grounded on the economic freedom rather it is also connected with many other social institutes which apparently empower a woman.

In such welfare state, man is not the only breadwinner or responsible to take care of his wife and children as the state is concerned about every individual. In traditional masculine role, man is responsible for the wellbeing of the family and is the supreme decision maker. When state provides social welfare facilities to every individual, man loses his 'traditional subjective role'. Therefore women's dependencies on men decreases and women get

support from the state which in turn becomes a source of power for women.

### **5. Conclusion**

The stories of migrant women show many who have faced violence and abuse; and many who have divorced their husbands to start a 'new' life. However, for divorcees, life afterwards was not entirely pleasant due to social stigmatization while those trying to negotiate in their marriages are having to compromise on their newly formed identities. In contrast, many women who have grown up in Sweden forced to marry Bangladeshi guy from Bangladesh also having the similar crisis because of their different cultural orientations. In the post-migration period, some people do not want to integrate (or they cannot) with the culture or cultures of their new country of residence, and therefore they want to keep or revive in practice what they remember to be their homeland culture. Many women enjoy (or want to enjoy) their individual freedom which was not possible for them (in the same way) when they were in the homeland. Sweden as a state through its policies are helping migrants women to get empowered and giving them a sense of freedom which often become a cause of conjugal dispute. The state power is becoming the negotiations peg for the migrant women who want a better conjugal life. On the other side, the concepts surrounded by transnational arranged marriage, including traditional notion of a wife (e.g. docile and obedient), is threatened by the reality in post migration period. However, there are some families who are virtually living a happy life, giving us a new platform to study whether they are really living a happy life, or does the husband negotiate with wife and if so, what is the degree of negotiation and what are the mechanism? The answers to these questions might tell us more about the contested reality of migrant families.

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### **End note:**

1. Women are not always the "passive follower" from Bangladesh to all destinations rather gender dimension is context specific. Women migration in some European country context often depends upon the pioneering venture of men. While middle class women are migrating as brides and passive followers in Europe, many working class women are



taking the first step to go abroad especially to the Middle East and are later taking their husbands. According to the estimation of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), 56,400 female workers went abroad from Bangladesh in 2013 as a part of labor market. See detail <http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2014/01/10/13008>

2. One of them was living with her partner without formal 'marriage' relationship.
3. Fake asylum seekers are those who lied about their background, and often used false documents from the homeland to prove his/her life were under threat.
4. The *Adam Bepari* system is the organized human trafficking system as well as a kind of multinational travel agency specializing in clandestine migration. Within this system nobody earns a salary but receives a commission according to the number of migrants they are involved in processing. The harder the journey is to arrange, the higher the fee paid by the migrant. These agencies manage required documents and other networks to send a person to a desired destination. *Adam bepari* was a highly profitable trade during 1980s and 1990s in context of Bangladesh and this has obvious implications for the expansion of migratory activity.
5. Right up until the early 1980s the number of asylum-seekers from all over the world in Sweden was small, at about 5,000 applicants per year. After 1985, however, the number of applications increased, reaching a peak in 1992 with about 84,000 asylum-seekers, mostly attributable to the war in the former Yugoslavia (Mitchell 2001). In light of this increase, the influx of asylum-seekers became a highly politicized topic in Sweden in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The government developed a system for dispersing asylum-seekers within the country (ibid). At present, political asylum-seekers from Bangladesh do not get asylum as the Swedish authority faced a huge number of fake applications. No political asylum from Bangladesh—is an unwritten policy of the Swedish migration board. This information was provided by an immigration officer (asylum section) who was interviewed during the fieldwork in 2012

6. See detail in Schmidt et. al (2009) "New Regulations on Family Reunification, *What have the new regulations meant for patterns in partner selection by ethnic minorities?*".
7. Section 3a (here shortened):  
A residence permit *may* be given to
  1. an alien who intends to marry or enter into a cohabitee relationship with a person who is resident in or who has been granted a residence permit to settle in Sweden, if the relationship appears to be serious and there are no special grounds not to give a permit,
  2. an alien who in some way other than those referred to in Section 3 or in this Section is a close relative of someone who is resident in or who has been granted a residence permit to settle in Sweden, if he or she has been a member of the same household as that person and there exists a special relationship of dependence between the relatives that already existed in the country of origin,
  3. an alien who is to exercise access rights that are not of limited scope to a child that is resident in Sweden and
  4. An alien who is of Swedish origin or has lived in Sweden on a residence permit for a long time.
8. Abraham (2005) noted different kind of marriages in his work among South Asian migrants in the U.S. which are partly similar to these categories. See Abraham 2005.
9. The "ideal type of Bangladeshi" woman is hard to define in a simple way and the concept of "ideal" also varies within the community. In most cases, the "ideal" meant docile, caring, obedient and religious wife.
10. There are some ideas of 'docileness' in the culture which husbands want to establish through controlling women in different spheres of their conjugal life.
11. Women or their families are not inactive agent in this transnational arrange marriage. Some informants said that they were rejected by the potential bride's family as they live abroad and bride's family don't want to send their girl abroad or they do not trust a guy who live abroad. In contrary, many family prefer a potential groom who live abroad, especially in the West, as they believe that their girl/daughter will have a safe, healthy and financially secured life while she migrate to her husband. See detail in Rahman (2013) "Life is not as Beautiful as Wedding Pictures"



12. The term *Western Self* is borrowed from the Ewing (2008) to expose the so called Western thought regarding 'self' and individualism in "modern" and industrialized societies. Anthropologists have noted two types of models of the self: the more interdependent, or "sociocentric," way of experiencing the self (e.g. in terms of one's social role, the group, community, land, family or deities. And the more individualistic, psychologized, independent ego structure of the "West" (also sometimes referred to as the modern, industrial, or Euro-American self. Bipolar characterizations of the self describe, on the one side, the individualistic or egocentric self, and on the other side is a self perceived as as indistinguishable from the group, with the notion that a "person's code and conduct are isomorphic through membership and action in one group" (See detail: Kusserow 1999). The hegemonic Western thoughts are criticized in many anthropological discussions where there is no such fact of "Western" but is rather a construction of identity in a historical process. However, through this term, this paper refers to the European Self at a large and, importantly, does not endorse views which say the Western Self is better in comparison to "non-Western Self" or "Traditional Self".
13. There are a lot of critical discussions regarding the concepts of Modern, Western and Traditional in recent anthropological discussion. Considering the critical thoughts, the concept *traditional masculinity* tried to emphasize the notions those are reflected by the so called "non-western" ideologies.
14. Bourdieu worked on Kabyle society where he showed different categories of honor in apparent defense of one's home and one's women. See Bourdieu (1966). "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society". In *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. Jean G. Peristiany, 191-241.
15. There are differences as well among Bangladeshi families within Bangladesh where women work outside and earn for their family. However, the common notion of male subjectivity that I explored here is based on my informant who defined their subjectivity in this way.

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