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Migration in an Age of Globalisation:

A Study on the Potential of Globalisation for Promoting Decent Work and Skilled Migration for Female Migrants from India

Master`s Theses in International Education and Development –
Power, Inequality and Change

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Abstract

The aim of this theses is to inquire into how India's process of globalisation, most notably the implementation of market-oriented reform policies and privatisation of the labour market in 1991, guided by neoliberalism, has increased the number of highly skilled and educated female labour migrants leaving India for the Global North. I argue that, with growing technological advancement led by India's integration into the global market, the acquisition of decent and recognised work for a certain group of Indian women has been improved. I highlight how the potential to become highly skilled and formally employed is dependent on the basis of caste, class, and gender, and how India's inveterately stratified nature dictates the basis for what is seen as acceptable female activity and unacceptable female activity, as related to the labour market.

Although decent work might be a privilege reserved for a small category of Indian women, the potential for increased empowerment and autonomy through formally recognised work and later, migratory experiences from the Global North, has manifested itself as a powerful tool in increasing the power of migrant women. Additionally, the increasing stream of skilled female migrants coming from India is confronting India's patriarchal nature, with attitudes, desires, knowledge, and aspirations gained from work experience abroad confronting the subjugated position many Indian women face.

Keywords: Globalisation, Labour Migration, Technology, Decent Work, and Empowerment

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Abbreviations

ICT	- Information and Communication Technology
FLFPR	- Female Labour Force Participation Rate
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
FDI	- Foreign Direct Investment
SDG 8	- Sustainable Development Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
UN	- United Nations
IMF	- International Monetary Fund
WTO	- World Trade Organisation
TWB	- The World Bank
SAP	- Structural Adjustment Program
ILO	- International Labour Organization
SND	- Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS *(Norsk senter for forskningsdata)*
NEP	- New Economic Policy
GDPR	- General Data Protection Regulation
IT	- Information Technologies
OECD	- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
MENA	- Middle East and North Africa

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

My theses is a theoretical contribution to the debate on globalisation, migration, decent work, and gender in India. I incorporate the concepts of gender and labour viewed through a feminist lens. By adopting a feminist stance in my analysis regarding the socio-economic reality of Indian middle-class women in the labour force, I wish to understand how India's process of globalisation has opened up the labour market for some, while concurrently impeding, through social and cultural forces, access for other Indian women to partake in the labour force as formally employed and recognised workers.

1.1. Aim of Study

This study aims to discuss how the process of globalisation has, for many Indian women, reduced their ability to partake in parts of the labour market, while for others, it has created new opportunities. Throughout the theses, I inquire into how the potential for decent work can be increased through incorporating Indian women into India's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Industry. By expanding the Indian notion of acceptable "*women's work*", which for the most part today include domestic duties and agricultural labour, one can reduce the growing informality and vulnerability that numerous Indian women experience. By having the opportunity for decent and formally recognised work, India's gender inequality might be reduced.

The discussion on Indian women's gender roles usually occurs within the context of marriage or motherhood. As argued by Lau (2010, p.272) '*Menarche, marriage, and motherhood, in that order, normatively define the various stages in the social status of women'*. However, this theses aims to depart from that tradition, moving away from the perception of Indian women as wives or mothers, and instead examining how their role as skilled professionals competing in a global market can have an impact on their feeling of empowerment and autonomy.

The theses is based on in-depth interviews with fourteen Indian women, who have travelled from India to the Global North as skilled labour migrants. It is comprised of their own stories and

perception regarding their aspiration for migration, desire for formal work, and feelings of enhanced empowerment and autonomy through their experiences of working in the Indian ICT industry.

1.2. Research Questions

The chosen research questions identify my contextual area of focus: globalisation, migration, decent work, and gender in India. My theses consists of one main research question and four supporting sub questions. I inquiry into:

1. How the process of globalisation has affected the international migration of highly skilled female ICT professionals from India:
    1.1. How do social norms and values impact the potential for formal work within ICT for Indian women?
    1.2. How have state- and individual level changes to Indian society regarding acceptable work for Indian women facilitated the increase in skilled and educated female ICT professionals in India?
    1.3. How have both the circumstances of being formally employed and the process of women's migration contributed to enhanced feelings of empowerment for Indian ICT professionals?
    1.4. How is high skilled female labour migration contributing to socio-economic developments in the women's home country?

My research questions reflect my own academic interests and my view on the importance of conducting a gendered analysis on work and empowerment among Indian women. By analysing India's process of globalisation, I wish to illustrate how it has the ability to produce decent and empowering labour opportunities for Indian women, and how this feeling of empowerment is being reproduced and strengthened through the process of migration.

However, I also aim to highlight the segregated nature of Indian society, and how the socioeconomic circumstances which one is brought, largely determines ones future employment potential.

My main research question explores how India's technologically driven economic growth has increased the number of Indian women who choose to travel internationally for labour opportunities within ICT. I inquire into how the ICT industry, normally a heavily male-dominated occupation, has become an acceptable employment opportunity for certain Indian women living in a heavily patriarchal society.

In sub-question one, I discuss how living in a male-dominated environment has produced socially acceptable- and unacceptable employment engagement between men and women: I relate this to Indian women's caste/class belonging. In sub-question one, therefore, I ask, why the potential for decent work within ICT is not an option for every Indian woman?

Sub-question two analyses how India's process of globalisation has been able to create new opportunities within the labour market. I also look at how structural changes at the state-level have been reproduced at the micro-level, making it possible for some Indian women to be formally employed within an industry that is usually seen as being heavily male-dominated.

For those women who have the ability to obtain formal employment and, who are both skilled and educated, their engagement in decently paid and formally recognised labour within ICT has given them the potential to migrate to the Global North. By increasing their normally limited mobility through migration, these women have exercised their potential for increased autonomy and empowerment. In sub-question three, therefore, I discuss, how the process of globalisation, due to new employment opportunities given to Indian women within ICT, has contributed to their enhanced feelings of autonomy and empowerment.

In sub-question four I discuss how, through their migration process, the women bring back a number of social remittances in the context of skills, attitudes, desires, and aspirations that they collect while abroad.

1.3. Why India, Women and Work as My Area of Study?

Since the beginning of India's newest globalisation process in 1991, the Indian economy has grown substantially. India is often referred to as a "*high globaliser*" and the "*poster state for globalisation*" (Arora, 2012, p. 147). Before 1991, the Indian economy was on the brink of

economic collapse. Due to substantial economic growth predominantly attributed to the expansion of the Indian technology industry, India has been described as going from the so-called "*sick man of Asia*" to the poster child of a successful globalised structural transformation (Agarwal, 2016).

However, with such substantial economic growth, how can it be that Indian women's socio-economic standing in society has worsened since the start of India's globalisation process? In times of considerable economic growth, women usually benefit by achieving economic empowerment (UN Women, 2018). When the economy grows, the labour market can offer increased labour opportunities, as market investment expands and the need for productive employment increases (World Bank, 2012). As women gain access to the labour market, there is an increase in their ability to obtain and retain control over productive resources and the opportunity to acquire decent work. When control over their productive resources increases, the ability to control their own lives, bodies, and agency gives women the potential for meaningful and essential participation within economic decision-making processes that affect their own lives (UN Women, 2018). However, this has not been the case in India. In short, India's economic growth has worsened the position in society for the average Indian woman.

In contemporary India, women are less likely to participate in the labour force than men. They are more likely to be unemployed than men. They are overrepresented in the informal work sector, where they are engaged in uncertain and vulnerable labour. They are, on average, paid less than Indian men and, when they do work, they often face discrimination, violence, and harassment in the workplace (UN Women, 2018). Why has India's economic development been insufficient to ensure increased gender equity within the Indian labour force?

India's declining female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) contrast what many scholars have hypothesesed when it comes to the relation between rapid economic growth and a growing female presence in the workforce (See; Kapsos, 2005; Basnett & Sen, 2013; Melamed, Hartwig, & Grant, 2011). Additionally, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is growing fast and has reached a higher percentage than that of other emerging economies (Ahmad, Blum, Gupta, & Jain, 2018, p. 1). It has been theorised that India’s rising GDP should have created more job opportunities as market investment grew, increasing the need for more productive employment.

This, however, has not been the case for Indian women in the workforce (See Osmani, 2002; World Bank, 2013; UNDP, 2015; IMF & ILO, 2010).

Decent work is an essential aspect of female empowerment because, to eradicate the skewed gender wage gap, discrimination in the workplace, and unequal opportunities for many Indian women, well-paid and stable labour is needed. The entire Indian society would benefit from having a large productive female workforce that is employed through decent means. It would contribute to a fairer globalisation process and substantially reduce India's poverty level. The ability to obtain formal and decent work through ICT employment is a mechanism that can be used to promote inclusive economic growth and increased freedom, access, mobility, and equity for Indian women in the workforce (UN DESA, 2021).

I have chosen to focus on the potential of the Indian ICT industry as a pathway for decent work and the empowerment of Indian women due to the industry's rapid growth and substantial impact on society. India's process of globalisation has been directly connected to targeted technological development of the Indian state.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of my study will contribute to the ongoing debate on the importance of decent work for female empowerment. I find it essential to contribute to this area of study, because India is currently experiencing a growing female withdrawal from the Indian labour market, an intensification of female inequality, and a rising gendered discrepancy in their access to resources. India's gender inequalities directly impede Indian women's ability to obtain formal and recognised employment opportunities.

When it comes to access to employment opportunities, Indian women experience institutionalised and systemic barriers at every aspect of the employment process (ILO, 2009, p. viii). This means that Indian women are less likely to be offered opportunities for paid work, full time or part-time, informal, or formal. The type of work they engage in is inherently limited, as social and cultural traditions often exclude Indian women from several labour opportunities due to the lack of support, either in terms of family, childcare, or social.

Moving away from unequal gender divisions in the Indian labour force and targeting equitable labour opportunities not only increases productivity and economic growth, but also ensures inclusive growth and decreased gender inequalities. Ensuring decent work opportunities makes it possible for Indian women to safeguard their future, both for themselves, but also for their families, communities, and society at large (ILO, 2009, p.viii-1). The following is argued by (UNFPA, 2021):

> Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and improved prospects for the next generation.

Achieving gender equality through inclusive economic growth and decent work is not only an important accomplishment, but a necessity. As highlighted by the United Nations (UN), their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call for action for all developed and developing nations to recognise that specific strategies need to be in place to achieve gender equality, economic growth, and decent work (UN DESA, 2021). Decent work is characterised by the UN in SDG Number 8 in the following terms:

> Decent work means opportunities for everyone to get work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. It is also important that all women are given equal opportunities in the workplace.
> (UN DESA, 2021).

By inquiring into how globalisation has affected the increase in skilled female ICT professionals from India, it became clear that there are many societal- and state-led interventions that impede or assist in the type of work in which certain type of Indian women can engage. As stated in the aim of this study, the process of globalisation has, for some, closed off the ability to partake in the labour force, while it has, for others, opened up new opportunities within new emerging markets.

1.5. How my Theses is Structured

In Chapter 1 I have presented my research aim, research questions, the reasoning behind the selection of my chosen area of study and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 introduces the contextual background. This chapter will highlight India's globalisation process, focusing primarily on the country's economic structural transformation. It will then provide insight into India's ICT industry and how it relates to labour migration. Lastly, I will give insights into how India's structural transformation triggered by globalisation has impacted Indian women in the labour market.

Chapter 3 is my methodology chapter. Here I will discuss and present my chosen methodological approach.

Chapter 4 present my theoretical framework. Here concepts and theories related to gender and migration will be analysed and discussed. This chapter presents the chosen theories and concepts, which will be a part of my analysis in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 will present my findings. Here I will discuss, analyse, and present what I have found and answer my research questions.

Chapter 5 presents the issue of Indian women's participation in the labour force. Here I detail India's missing women and how increasing gender disparities and a growing masculinisation of the Indian labour force impede the ability of Indian women to partake in the labour market.

Chapter 6 analyses India's growing number of highly skilled female labour migrants. I account for Indian women's involvement in the labour force in chapter 5 in order to identity the highly skilled and highly educated female ICT migrants in chapter 6.

Chapter 7 inquiries into the Indian women’s view on the connection between migration and empowerment.

Chapter 8 presents the socio-economic developments that the migrant women are bringing home.

In Chapter 9 I summarise my findings and conclude my theses.

Chapter 2 - Contextual Background

This chapter will begin with a brief explanation of the implementation of neoliberalism in India. The Implementation of neoliberal policies laid the basis for India's newest process of globalisation, and opened up India's export market for global integration. I will then explain how this structural change has affected India's growing ICT industry.

Additionally, I will present the current situation regarding women and work in India. How inclusive has India's economic growth been? I highlight the patriarchal nature of Indian society, the importance of Hinduism and traditional gender roles, and how these factors both impede and assist the creation of opportunities for the acquisition of decent work among Indian women.

The contextual background will be frequently drawn upon throughout the analysis of my research questions.

2.1. The Implementation of Neoliberalism

Since 1991, India has been one of the world's fastest-growing economies (Sharma, 2009, p.1). India is a part of BRICS, a G-20 major economy and a major powerhouse within the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Schoettli & Pohlmann, 2017, p. 1).

These developments resulted from the implementation of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which neo-liberalised the Indian economy in accordance with the IMF and The World Bank (TWB) (See; Oza, 2006). When employing the notion of "*neoliberalism*" I make use of the definition *"belonging to the realm of political economy, and regard it as an economic doctrine, a project for the reformation of global capitalism and for the reconstitution of upper-class power"* (Münster & Strümpell, 2014, p.3). Furthermore, the definition of "*globalisation*" which I utilise is closely linked to neoliberalism. When utilising the word "*globalisation*" I am referring to "*the act or process of globalizing: the state of being globalized. The development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets*" (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

After independence in 1947, the focus of the Indian government was on the public sector (Ahluwalia, 2019, p. 46). The country followed a socialist Panchayati Raj licensing-system, where all aspects of the Indian economy were controlled by the Indian government (Anggraeni 2016, p.4). The Indian economy was, in sum, isolated from the rest of the world. Due to high import tariffs and strict control over licensing, both foreign investment and the export of ICT professionals were highly improbable (Ahluwalia, 2019, p. 47). This caused India to be ranked among the poorest countries in the world, and the government faced a number of challenges in regard to economic development (Sharma, 2009, p.13). At the end of the 1980s India's economic situation was so disastrous that the country had to turn to the IMF and TWBs SAP for developing countries in search for loans. The government then implemented a number of regulated measures set by the WTO/IMF in order to be eligible for the above assistance. SAP imposed an international requirement by IMF/TWO on the Indian government to decrease government expenditure, reduce the country's budget deficit and form new policies directed at wage restraints. The main objective of the 1991 SAPs were to reduce the Indian government's public debt and stabilise the country's economy (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 4). The neoliberal ideology of market liberalisation was modelled after and supported by the U.S and organisations such as the IMF, TWB, and the WTO, who all benefitted from the fact that India moved away from socialism to neoliberalism (Anggraeni, 2016, p.5).

After 1991, there was a shift in the government's political end economical practices. It moved away from stern protectionism and regulation to deregulation and increased privatisation. The Indian state withdrew from many areas connected to particular employment modes (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 1). The state was no longer the main employer. Instead, privately owned corporations, many of which were large ICT/technology-based corporations became increasingly more important in the Indian labour market as a mode of employment. Additionally, Bretton Woods Institutions, such as the IMF/WTO/TWB have increasingly gained more influence and control of the institutionalisation of global trade and governance in India (Münster & Strümpell, 2014, p. 5).

It needs to be noted that the Indian economy has been stagnant in the last couple of years. This is in part due to the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, contributing to an implementation of stricter regulations for economic transactions and a closing off domestic and international markets. The

ripple effect on the Indian economy has been lower output growth and a massive withdrawal from the Indian labour market due to a lack of available employment opportunities. Which in turn has led to high stagnation in real wages, in particular in rural India (Nagaraj, 2020, p.2). All these factors will be accounted for and analysed in Chapter 5.

2.2. The Importance of the ICT Industry for the State

India's ICT industry is composed of the Information Technology (IT) industry, which focuses on software development and basic IT services, and the Telecom industry, which includes cell phones, the internet, and similar digital networks. ICT is a vital part of India's economic growth, and an industry that the Indian government and private corporations are entirely dependent upon continuing growing (Anggraeni, 2016, p.2). Between 1991 and 1996, India's software industry grew at a rate that was ten times higher than its Gross National Product (GNP) (Anggraeni, 2016, p. 64). During 2016-2017, ICT enabled services accounted for 63 per cent of India's total exports (DGCIS, 2018, p.11). And even through economically difficult times, the Indian ICT industry has continued to do well (ABDI, OECD, ILO, 2018, p. 83).

The demand and ever-growing need for technological advancement was something the Indian state recognised early in their technology driven structural transformation (Preeg, 2008). Today, India's ICT industry has both recognition and resonance in the global market (Schoettli & Pohlmann, 2017, p.1). And is juxtaposed alongside the U.S, E.U and China in being referred to as technology superstates (Preeg, 2008). The Indian ICT industry plays a large role in their rising economy. In 2017, the ICT sector accounted for eight percent of the entire nation's GDP, and generated 180 billion U.S dollars in annual revenue (Statista, 2020). In 2019, 130 billion dollars of India's annual revenue of 180 billion came from exports within the ICT industry (Statista, 2020). India is massively reliant upon the export of its ICT services, and nearly all of the country's economic development has been driven by the demand for the exporting of such services (ABDI, OECD & ILO, 2018, p.81). The demand for Indian ICT services is also demonstrated by the fact that all of the sectors within the industry have expanded, and the industry's cumulative growth stood at 61 per cent between 2009 and 2016 (OECD, ABDI & ILO, 2018, p.81).

Additionally**,** India has about 55 per cent of the $146 billion global software outsourcing market due to a large and relatively inexpensive talent pool (ABDI, OECD & ILO, 2018, p. 83). As of 2018, the Indian ICT sector is the largest financial contributor to the Indian service industry, and contributes 53 per cent to India's national economy and, is a crucial aspect of India's economic development (Conduira, 2018).

The ability to achieve rapid growth within ICT has enabled India to leapfrog its economic development, and the Indian state is continuing to see ICT as a pathway to rapidly escalate their economic growth. Since 1991, India has been able to compete with other nations in the mass-production and export of ICT products and labourers. India's comparative advantage is, in part, due to government intervention in the education sector, by incentivising ICT education, making it both lucrative and socially preferred, with it often being regarded as a status symbol. Furthermore, the Indian government has been encouraging capital investment into the ICT industry. Not only is the Indian government adamant in developing the sector, but they are also actively shaping and reinforcing India's global comparative advantage in order to be able to compete on a global level (Anggraeni, 2016, p.2).

The Indian state favours developments in ICT, as opposed to other industries, due to the easiness for trade and foreign direct investment making ICT a lot more profitable than agriculture/manufacturing export. Within the ICT sector, the cost of transactions and productions of goods, and often labourers, has been lowered, making it a lot easier to earn more money without increasing the costs. As a result of this, the ICT industry is able to spend less capital in order to run the industry, in contrast to the agricultural- or manufacturing sector. The ICT industry in particularly has benefitted from India's neoliberal reforms, as this sector explicitly benefits from increased privatisation and FDI (Anggraeni, 2016, p.24-25).

2.2.1 Globalisation and ICT

India's process of globalisation is inherently connected to the country's economic development, and, subsequently, the increase in specialised and skilled migration. For the last two decades, skilled migrants from India have entered the increasing stream of international migrants in a substantial amount (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.173). This ever-growing mobile

population leaving India reflects the massive and rapid development process the country has undertaken. There exists a global chain of skilled professionals within ICT that is able to compete due to possessing portable skills that can be implemented anywhere in the world. With the emergence of the global market, this has meant that ICT workers, due to the transferability of their skills, have become eminently mobile (Schoettli & Pohlmann, 2017, p.2)

India's integration into the global labour market, prompted by the implementation of neoliberalism, has meant that there exists a growing transnationalisation of labour (Beneria, 2010, p. 1502). As India opened up for competition in the global labour market, a social, cultural, and structural transformation took place, almost overnight, as a global pool of competent labourers doubled, and India's massive surplus of skilled ICT labourers were suddenly able to compete on a global level. India's state-led technological development meant that India was in the position to offer global ICT companies educated and skilled professionals, who were willing to migrate for work, cheap in contrast to other ICT labourers, and could speak English (Miller, 2016, p.101).

2.2.2 ICT, Women, and the Potential for Work in India

Due to its massive size, and its importance for the government and for private corporations in India, the Indian ICT industry has the potential to offer decent and formally recognised employment opportunities to a large number of Indian women. Increasing gender equality by improving access to employment has been shown to be a powerful tool in redefining and strengthening women's position in society (See; UNESCO, 2020; SADEV, 2011; Sudha, 2018; Wilson, 2003). By focusing on the importance of ICT as a mechanism for formal employment opportunities, ICT can be a powerful mechanism for reducing gender differences in the Indian society (Chen, 2004, p. 23). The importance of ICT for India's economic development means that ICT employment has the ability to produce a continual cycle of positive reinforcement

between decent employment opportunities, economic development, and gender equality (See Figure 2.1) (Chen, 2004, p. 21).

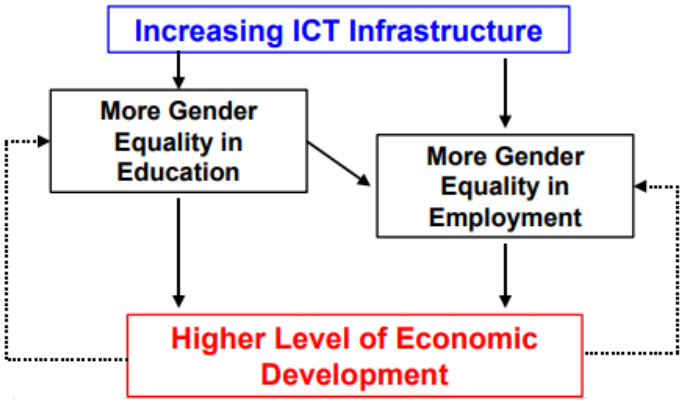

Figure 1.1 The impact ICT can have on gender equality and economic development. Illustration retrieved from Chen (2004, p.21)

Today, the empowerment of Indian women is inherently linked to technology, as technological advancement plays a vital role in enhancing an equitable and egalitarian society. The potential of ICT to be able to transcend political, geographical, economic, and social barriers means that the Indian ICT industry has the potential to be a powerful tool that Indian women can leverage for themselves in order to reassert their place in society (Arrawatia & Meel, 2012, p.102).

2.3. Indian Women's Labour Reality: Post-1991

When discussing the notion of gender, one needs to relate the meaning described to it to the socio-cultural standing of the society being studied. One needs a culture specific investigation of the meaning behind gender (Siddiqi, 2021, p.1). In a society with such strong patriarchal underpinnings as India, traditional gender norms are being intertwined with responsibilities and perceptions of acceptable female participation, in large part determined by Indian men on behalf of Indian women. And while I contribute the declining FLFPR in part due to India's implementation of neoliberalism, opening up new markets, while closing others, it is immensely important to include that India's declining FLFPR is also influenced by social and cultural norms connected to Hinduism, inhibiting the participation of particular Indian women within particular

labour markets. As a Hindu woman you find yourself being a part of a framework, that exists regardless of politics, in which you need to adhere to.

Looking at a glance at India's economic growth, it might seem to have been quite transformative. And for some, it might have been. But with a decreasing ranking on the Human Development Index (HDI), and with 32.7 per cent of the population living below the poverty line of 1.25$/day, and 68 per cent of the population living on less than 2$/day, it seems clear that inequality and marginalisation can coexist in the world largest democracy, which has for the last 30 years seen immense economic growth and increased wealth (Guenther, 2015, p.32)

It is misleading to measure the extent of India's economic success solely in terms of GDP, FDI, FDCI (Foreign Direct Capital Inflows), and trade values (Jain, 2011, p.50). Instead, there is a clear need to question the overall success of India's neoliberalism in terms of gender equality.

With the implementation of neoliberalism in India, it can be argued that there exists a small group of winners, but a staggering number of losers. India's annual GDP growth of eight per cent, since 1991, has been used as the key indicator in showcasing India's prosperity to the rest of the world. Simultaneously, as India has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, the country, as of today still, possesses one of the world's highest income inequality percentages, and gender inequality indexes, and persisting poverty for a large number of Indians. One might argue that the neoliberal reforms have benefitted the already well-off and prosperous high-middle and upper classes of Indian society. It can be argued that India's neo-liberalising process has been a class project, which in turn has benefitted the elites (Martin, 2016, p.1).

2.3.1 Indian Women's Barriers to Decent Work

India's process of globalisation and the implementation of neoliberalism cannot be detached from the concepts of nationalism, ethnicity, religion, gender, and caste (Münster & Strümpell, 2014, p. 11). Indian gender roles are defined both at the macro- and micro-level. They are reinforced by social groups and societal and cultural traditions. They do not only affect Indian women's ability to partake in the labour force, but also shape what type of activities, tasks, and responsibilities that are perceived as appropriate for Indian women to engage in (ILO, 2009, p. 1).

This is clear when one looks at the potential to be highly skilled and educated while simultaneously being formally employed within the ICT industry. There exists a number of impairments in regard to Indian women's ability to be employed as ICT professionals, most of which relate to the notion of caste and class. The Indian Hindu society is stratified into four different hierarchical castes, *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* and *Shudras,* also known as *varnas*. Outside these four classifications there exists a large sub-population of so-called "*untouchables/Dalits*" who are entirely excluded from the system of *varna*. Additionally, within each *varna* and among the *untouchables* there exists thousands of different castes (Jatis) (Munshi, 2016, p.2). This social hierarchy has a profound impact on the segregation of labour in India, as each caste is associated with different types of occupations. The notion of caste is a social hierarchy, combining the segregation of people based on their race and occupational class that is embedded in the everyday life of Hindus (Singh, 2020). It is an imbedded domination by the highest castes in the world's largest democracy, and is in short a hierarchical system based on the ontological distinction between touchables and untouchables, of somebodies and nobodies, morality, and immorality. The caste system is both perpetual and ephemeral, founded in structure and practice, providing people with either emancipation or subjugation (Chandra, Heierstad & Bo Nielsen, 2015, p.2). And while there exist a widening gap of inequality between Indian men and women in the labour market, which is alarming in itself, there is also a widening gap of inequality between Indian women in the labour market, dictated by the women's caste and class belonging.

While we all might belong to different social categories, either by achieving them, such as in the case of a person's profession, or genetics, such as in the case of ones gender, the Indian caste system differs in the sense that it holds inherent characteristics which remain stable throughout a person's life. One's class, potential for education, employment prospect and access/mobility is inherently connected to one's caste affiliation, and upward social mobility is immensely difficult. This means that social roles, such as one's profession, becomes hereditary, resulting in restricting possibilities for social mobility, and creating inveterate status hierarchies (Sankaran, Sekerdej, & von Hecker, 2017, p. 1)

India's social structure and its mechanisms of selection not only strengthens the ruling classes/castes, but also reinforces them (Schoettli & Pohlmann, 2017, p. 17). The state-led

decision to enter the global market by neo-liberalising the economy strengthened the Indian economy overall at a macro-level, however, when diving into what difference India's development process has made for the average Indian woman, little change in terms of employment opportunities and social mobility can be seen at a micro level (Anggraeni, 2016, p.7).

There exists a clear and growing division of labour in India, wherein Indian women often find themselves at the bottom. Women who belong to a particular caste and class are discouraged from partaking in certain type of jobs within certain types of industries. The social stigmatisation connected to paid work for Indian women has kept many entirely out of the labour force. For those who do partake, there exist numerous strict traditional norms and restrictions that dictate, for many, what type of labour in which they are allowed to participate in. The influence the caste system has on a woman's life extends beyond merely private economic activity and into the public sphere, where institutions, the state and individual relations are reinforcing and reshaping caste identities (Munshi, 2016, p.1)

2.4. Concluding Remarks

India's process of globalisation, with the onset of neoliberalism in the 1990s, opened up the Indian market to compete globally in the labour market. With rapid economic growth and substantial investments being injected into the Indian technology industry an immense potential for decent work opportunities for Indian women has arisen. Additionally, a growing propensity for migration has occurred, as the industry is heavily export oriented.

Employment in the ICT industry can be an effective tool for enhanced female empowerment, if there exists a coordinated effort, both at the macro- and micro- level, toward implementing a framework and avenue for capacity- and skill development for the average Indian woman (Arrawatia & Meel, 2012, p. 102).

However, India's class structure, and the occupational segregation that exists has meant that this potential is only open to a small percentage of the population. And it seems quite clear that India's economic growth has resulted in an asymmetrical distribution of wealth, which in turn has created an asymmetrical society where Indian women find themselves in unequal and

discriminatory circumstances (Jain, 2011, p.49). As India's gendered inequalities are continuing to grow, one might argue that the structural reform programs initiated in 1991 have benefitted a small portion of the already rich Indian middle and upper class, while the poor still continue to lag behind.

Without taking into consideration India's discriminatory practices in the labour market, there is a misleading and misdirected effort towards reducing India's inequality in regard to gender discrimination and poverty in the workforce (Jain, 2011, p.49). India's asymmetrical gender norms mean that Indian women are on average experiencing greater inequality than men, and are often poorer, less skilled, and less educated (Jain, 2011, p.50). Instead of increasing the socio-economic standing of the average Indian woman, the implementation of neoliberalism has resulted in increasing inequality and persistent poverty for the majority of (Martin, 2017, p.2).

Chapters 5,6,7 and 8 will analyse India's process of globalisation in regard to the country's occupational segregation, potential for skilled labour migration among Indian women, and the aspects of empowerment and agency connected to decent work and female migratory experiences.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter will present my chosen methodological approach. My methods of data collection, sampling, and data analysis, and any issues concerning trustworthiness connected to ethical consideration within the research process will be discussed.

3.1. Method and Data Collection

The researcher's epistemological approach will inherently shape the project (Lavallée, 2009, p. 22). By mapping out what is being researched, a suitable methodological approach will appear. As my research questions focus on macro- and micro-levels of human behaviour and processes, the use of methodological pluralism will provide insight into the field of study at a national/global level by using quantitative data while simultaneously providing insight at the individual level by utilising a qualitative approach.

3.1.1. Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative data is concerned with inquiring into human behaviour. Qualitative data is collected and defined as non-numerical. It is interpretive and reported in the informants' language (McLeod, 2019). The focus is on discoveries, insights, and understandings from the perspective of those who are being studied. Additionally, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Qualitative data is sensitive to underlying meanings and interpretations. This is an important consideration when analysing fieldwork data. The approach is oriented towards the subjects/informants' interpretation of their own experiences, their worldviews, and the meaning they give to the phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p.5).

My own collected data will be reflected on by using various scholarly resources, in the form of both qualitative research and quantitative studies.

3.1.2. Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

Due to travel restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting fieldwork in India was impossible. Therefore, I had to develop a plan that would make it possible to collect qualitative data about highly skilled female labour migration from India, while in Norway. Therefore, I chose to conduct semi-structured in-depth digital interviews. As Kvale (2007, p.2) argues, "*If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them*?".

Semi-structured in-depth interviews aim to explore the informant's perceptions and opinions regarding complex and sensitive issues (Bird, 2016, p.130). Additionally, by having open-ended and interpretive questions, the informants are able to elaborate in detail. For example, to answer my research questions regarding empowerment, I needed to catch rich data that is more difficult to capture when conducting a quantitative data collection process. Therefore, when implementing semi-structured and in-depth interviews, I could produce thick and detailed descriptions of the informant's values, beliefs, feelings, experiences, and opinions (Rahman, 2016, p.104).

The usefulness of life histories as a methodological tool was evident during the collection of my data. I captured in-depth knowledge and thick descriptions regarding the women's feelings, desires, and aspirations.

Since qualitative methodologies fall within an interactive approach, I used a flexible data collection method, as the structure of the design could be constructed and reconstructed during the data collection period (Rahman, 2016, p.104). p

Furthermore, my chosen methodological approach of semi-structured in-depth digital interviews meant that I had the opportunity to be face- to- face, although digitally, with my informants.

3.1.3. Informant Requirements

The requirements for the type of informants I wished to contact were that they had gone through higher education, were formally employed, and had undertaken work either in the past or present as skilled and formally employed labour migrants in the Global North. I expressed the need to

contact Indian women who had either travelled to the Global North alone as a labour migrant or with her husband/partner for labour opportunities, not Indian women who had come through a family reunification process, or for other reasons.

3.1.4. Sampling

Samples within qualitative studies tend to be smaller in size when compared to those within quantitative research. This is mainly because qualitative research often aims to answer psychosocial questions from the perspectives of the informants, so-called "*why*" and "*how*" questions (Marshall, 1996, p. 522). Therefore, I chose to utilise a nonprobability sampling method where I, as the researcher, selected those informants who could represent the group of women I needed to answer my research questions. These women were Indian women who had migrated for labour reasons to the global North. Even though this sampling method makes it harder to generalise or calculate the error rate in contrast to probability sampling, my method was chosen mainly due to my need to contact a specific group of people and because of the convenience aspect attached to it.

Convenience sampling falls within the realm of nonprobability sampling, and entails recruiting future informants while the data collection period is ongoing (Ghaljaie, Naderifar & Goli, 2017, p.2). Convenience sampling entailed that the informants' sampling continued until I had sufficient rich and detailed data collected through the fieldwork period. The sampling was initiated by creating a social media post, which I posted on my Facebook and LinkedIn profile. In the post, I explained my area of study and expressed a desire to contact Indian women working in Norway.

Due to COVID19, it was difficult for me to go out and personally contact Indian women. Additionally, convenience sampling was an effective method to contact the type of informants I needed, as the response to my social media post was quite immediate. This method made it possible to find informants over the internet and gradually add more and more women to the research.

3.1.5. Number of/Demography of Informants

I was able to interview 14 Indian women. The women interviewed ranged in age from 25 to 62 years of age. The women's places of birth were nine Indian states, mainly from the north of India. Additionally, the women spoke different languages. The women were all born Hindu. Twelve of the 14 were still practising, while the two others were not. All women had gone through some level of higher education, with all of them having finished at least a bachelor's degree, while some of the women also held PhD degrees. The women ranged from being unmarried, to married, with- and without children. They had all migrated for labour to the Global North from India; some were still in Norway while some were currently in India.

A detailed, but anonymised, description of the informants can be found in Appendix A

3.1.6. Limitations regarding my data collection approach

I found the method of semi-structured in-depth interviews to be the most useful, since I was researching questions that needed thick descriptions of a phenomenon. However, it is essential to state that the women gave the answers, and consequently, my analysis of those answers is not an attempt to generalise or state a pattern with my findings. Instead, I wished to give a deeper insight into the field of highly skilled female labour migration. The answers provided by the interviewed women are their opinions and feelings, and are not representative for all Indian women, or every female migrant.

Since my data collection consisted of small sample sizes, there was a higher risk of research bias, making this data collection method weak, as the variability among smaller sample sizes may affect the response biases (Ghaljaie, Naderifar & Goli, 2017, p.2). Larger sample sizes can give more precision and reliable results. However, they are incredibly time-consuming and challenging to conduct within a qualitative approach where the answers needed from the data collection are more oriented towards micro-level responses and experiences.

Even though semi-structured and in-depth interviews are a standard method of collecting data, they have some weaknesses that need to be addressed. Since I had to conduct my interviews digitally, further weaknesses arose. Regarding the quality of the interviews, the information I was able to capture and draw out as a researcher was fundamentally essential to the quality,

rigour, and trustworthiness of the study. Additionally, as Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi (2016, p.2958) argues, these factors would also influence the study results, and it was essential to have a rigorous data collection framework that would help to obtain data that was both trustworthy and relevant. Although this method of data collection gave me the possibility to collect detailed insights into my chosen field, it is inherently subjective, and the interpretations, analysis and discussion presented are my own.

3.1.7. COVID-19 Difficulties

Before I started writing this theses and collecting the data, the initial plan was to travel to the Indian state of Kerala to do fieldwork. The reason for travelling to Kerala was both because it is a large migration hub and because Oslo Met has scholarly associates and colleagues there. However, this plan was halted by the outbreak of Covid-19 and, consequently, by Norway and India's complete shutdown. Had I managed, by some miracle, to travel to India, I would not have been covered by health insurance, and I would have put myself and others at risk of infection. I decided, therefore, to completely digitalise my fieldwork process. This meant recruiting participants digitally, communicating with the participants digitally and conducting the interviews digitally.

Even though I am most content and feel fortunate even to have had the possibility to conduct any fieldwork, completely digitalising the data collection process involved some difficulties that need to be presented here.

Digital interviews are less personal than face-to-face interactions. Because the researcher and interviewee are divided by a screen and not actually situated in the same room, the researcher often loses some critical human factors that reveal something more about the person being interviewed. Even though the option to conduct digital interviews positively impacted my study, it was still affected by physical barriers. In addition to physical barriers, emotional barriers are easier to hide, and critical human factors such as body language can be lost through a digital interview. By physically being with the participants, face- to- face, one receives the value of having a direct emotional connection. This may be lost through a digital sphere. Furthermore, the semantic meanings of words and symbols are more difficult to interpret over the internet.

3.1.8. Interview Guide

The interview guide is a way to guide the researcher during the data collection process. It consists of several topics and questions related to the field of study (Bird, 2016, p.126). My interview guide had three different topics, with several questions for each. Firstly, the interview guide consisted of questions related to the women's demography. Here I inquired about the women's age, date and place of birth, educational level, occupation, and family situation, including their sibling's and parents' educational levels. Secondly, I inquired into their migration processes. This included their migration process, and their view of female labour migration from India in the last 15 years. Thirdly, I asked them about their views on gender and empowerment. This included questions regarding gender differences within the migration process, their opinion on whether or not the migration process was empowering, and their opinions regarding the connection between being financially independent and empowerment.

The Interview guide given to the informants can be found in Appendix B

3.1.9. Quantitative Research Approach

Quantitative research is often connected to the "positivist" way of doing research, usually within the natural sciences. However, quantitative research can be quite valuable in social sciences when analysing research questions that require data collected at a macro-level. By using quantitative data, my own fieldwork findings are reflected, and I can relate my research to a more considerable debate within migration. Quantitative data can capture patterns of large samples and is therefore suitable for evaluating and analysing data intended for macro-level analysis.

While qualitative and quantitative data are often regarded as being contrasting in nature, the usefulness of combining the two is apparent as they can be mutually supportive. One can capture additional insights by combining qualitative and quantitative data (Helle-Valle & Borchgrevink, 2015, p. 192)

Large-scale macro-levels of migration and labour are connected to quantitative methods, as migration/labour statistics at a national/global level can provide objective insight by collecting

and analysing numerical data. Moreover, it can provide generalised results regarding a more significant portion of society (McLeod, 2019).

Additionally, my own collected data is insufficient for answering the research question regarding the development of the flow of female labour migrants in an age of globalisation.

I will not be conducting my own quantitative data collection. Instead, I will use secondary sources in order to reflect on my findings and evaluation. The quantitative sources I will use are large-scale (national and international) statistics on migration patterns, labour force distribution, educational enrolment, GDP, FDI, fertility rates and remittances.

3.2. Data Analysis

3.2.1 Interview Notes

During the interviews, I used field notes to document the contextual information I needed to conduct a thematic analysis. The interview notes consist of the informant's responses to the interview guide.

3.2.2. Thematic Analysis

Since I wished to inquire about the women's views, opinions, and experiences, I chose to do a thematic analysis of my interviews. Thematic analysis is concerned with finding emerging themes from the collected fieldwork data (Rosala, 2019). It is often practical when researching "*how", what",* or *"who*" questions. A thematic analysis of the collected data is a method of research analysis where the data is systematically identified and organised in such a way that it is possible to see specific themes across the different answers provided by the different informants. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to see if there is a common theme, such as a standard answer, opinion, or belief, to some of the questions and make sense of those commonalities (Clark & Braun, 2017, p.297).

By breaking down and organising my collected data, I can interpret and analyse significant emerging themes and topics. Significant themes can be discerned by finding similar answers and

descriptions among my informants regarding their beliefs, practices, desires, or needs during the interviews.

3.2.3. Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes

In order to find common themes and sub-themes from the answers given to me by my informants, I started by gathering my data via semi-structured in-depth digital interviews with the migrant women. Furthermore, I familiarised myself with the data I collected. I chose to re-read my interview notes several times. This made me familiar with the responses and gave me insight into any emerging themes. I then characterised the different themes by coding the responses. Coding was one step in analysing my collected data that helped me organise and make sense of what I had collected. I ended by evaluating my emerging themes and using them in my analysis. For my data analysis, this meant highlighting and categorising the answers given, which directly corresponded to each interview question.

3.2.4. Limitations

When carrying out a thematic analysis of my research findings, I needed to be aware of the challenges I might face. Qualitative research and thematic analysis are inherently intuitive and subjective, and although this allows one to dig deep and uncover opinions and beliefs at the micro-level, this subjective nature might also pose some problems. It is my judgements, understandings, and interpretations that are the basis of the analysis, and it is therefore inherently important to avoid obscuring the findings or inaccurately interpreting answers.

The coding of the different answers developed into broad and narrow themes. These themes will be discussed, presented, and analysed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

3.3. Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

The notion of trustworthiness entails the degree which a study can ensure quality through the collection and interpretation of the data and the methods used (Connelly 2016, p. 435). Hanson, Ju, and Tong (2019, p.1060) argue that one needs "*credibility, reliability, confirmability,* and *transferability*" to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative research.

3.3.1. Credibility

The credibility of the study, that is having confidence that the answers, interpretations, and analysis which are presented are the truth, and therefore also the truth of the findings, is one of the most critical aspects of ensuring trustworthiness in the research project (Connelly, 2016, p. 435).

Having credibility in the research findings ensures internal validity and ensures that the findings interpreted by the researcher are both comprehensive and sensible. As a researcher, I can obtain credibility by giving my informants appropriate questions that allow them to give in-depth descriptions and answers that are relevant to the research questions. Additionally, when analysing the data, I should provide the analysis with thick descriptions, describe in detail the collected, and provide the reader with the contextual background information needed in order to understand the cohesiveness of the answers provided (Hanson, Ju & Tong, 2019, p. 57).

In order to ensure that the notes taken during the interview process reflected the actual truth my informants perceived, I gave them the opportunity to read through and agree/disagree with what I had written. As such, I was able to be ensure that what would be used in the theses was an accurate representation of their reality. Additionally, as noted above, the informants were given an information letter containing the importance of informed consent and anonymity as well as a letter stating that the Oslo Metropolitan University and NSD approved the research project. Therefore, by knowing that their answers and information were closely guarded according to GDPR requirements, I was able to provide security to the women, allowing them to answer the questions as openly as they wished, knowing that their anonymity was being upheld.

The Approval from NSD regarding the Project can be found in Appendix D

3.3.2. Reliability

In contrast to reliability in quantitative research, which entails producing consistent, accurate, predictable, replicable, and concurrent data, reliability in qualitative research entails producing comprehensive, emphatic, respectful, unique, descriptive, fair, and dependant data. This means explicitly stating my role as a researcher, clearly defining my research questions, and checking the emerging themes that come from carefully coding the answers (Jahja, 2017, p. 3). Since I had to do my fieldwork digitally, I chose not to record my interviews. This was entirely due to concerns regarding the privacy of my informants, as the level of digital security in programs such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom can be questioned.

3.3.3. Objectivity

Objectivity in qualitative research is connected to the researcher's attempt to clarify and demonstrate that the data analysis presented is linked to the data collected through the fieldwork process. If this is successful, the data being presented reflects the informants' perspectives. Objectivity is essential because it assures the reader that the results being presented are not based on the researcher's bias, preconceived assumptions, or experiences (Hanson, Ju & Tong, 2019, p. 1016). Even though qualitative research is inherently subjective and interpreted by the researcher, by providing quotes, opinions and expressions in the analysis that supports my findings, I can ensure that the data that is presented actually reflects the informants' perspectives. Additionally, it is essential to be aware of my own role as a researcher in the data collection process, as my own biases, feelings, and personal characteristics may influence the process. Therefore, being aware and managing the extent of influence is a significant component in ensuring confirmability/ objectivity (Jahja, 2018, p.1).

3.3.4. Transferability

In qualitative data, transferability is achieved when focusing on the informants' stories and supporting their stories by giving detailed and in-depth descriptions of the context and the people being studied (Connelly, 2016, p. 436). I did this by writing my informants answers as in-depth as possible, and by not obscuring their answers with my own thoughts. I was able to assure that

the answers given were as close to my informant's reality as possible by letting my informants read through my notes and agree/disagree with that was written down.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

The meaning of "*Ethics*" is rooted in a system that deals with what is deemed right and wrong (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011, p. 4). "*Ethical research should not only do no harm but also have potential to do good to involve empowerment*" (Scheyvens & Storey, 2011, p. 2).

Upholding ethical standards in the collection and data analysis is an integral part of the research process. The ethical principles that guide research must be a part of the entire research process, from the beginning of the data collection and throughout the analysis of the results (Scheyvens & Storey, 2011, p. 2). Upholding ethical standards in the process of collecting data in a foreign setting is about having the ability to build a mutually beneficial connection with my informants and doing so sensitively and respectfully.

The following section of my methodology chapter will discuss ethical considerations regarding informed consent, the importance of confidentiality and anonymity, and the researcher's role.

3.4.1. Informed Consent

To ensure that the informants who are a part of my study have agreed to be a part of my study, I needed to present the ethical and legal requirements of informed consent.

Ensuring that the informants are informed regarding all the aspects of the study and making it clear that taking part is voluntary is a significant aspect of conducting ethical research (Nijhawan et al., 2013, p. 134). Therefore, before conducting my fieldwork, I created an information letter for my informants.

Before any of the interviews took place, I explained that any identifying data would not be used in the theses. Their personal information would not be published anywhere, and would be deleted from my encrypted USB at the end of the project. As a requirement of the NSD, the informants had to read through, agree, and sign the information letter containing their consent before the interviews could occur.

The consent form given to the informants before the interviews can be found in Appendix C

3.4.2. Ensuring Confidentiality and Anonymity

Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality during the research process entails underpinning the principle concerning respect for the informant's autonomy and privacy rights. This means that "*identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research will not be disclosed without permission*" (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles, 2007, p. 417). Additionally, ensuring both anonymity and confidentiality, requires that I do not discuss information provided by an individual with others and that I present findings in ways that guarantee that individuals cannot be identified (chiefly through anonymisation).

Before the interviews, my informants were informed that there would be no notes or documents generated that contain their name or other identifiable information. Instead, they would get a made-up name to be used throughout the data collection period and analysis. Furthermore, the information gathered would be stored in compliance with the NSD and Oslo Metropolitan University requirements for safekeeping regarding informant information.

Throughout my theses, I did not use any identifiable information in regard to my informants. The informants were given fake names and will be referred to by these names in the theses.

3.5. Role of the Researcher

Since my theses consists of data collected by me, I find it necessary to elaborate on my own role as a researcher and the obstacles and considerations that need to be presented before moving forward with the analysis of my findings. When undergoing qualitative research, it is difficult to study an objective truth, since the outlook on social reality and what constitutes the "truth" has changed and will continue to change as time moves forward. Since there is no objective truth within qualitative research, the challenge to remain utterly objective during my research is difficult. Also, since the idea of what constitutes truth within my social reality will differ from that of my informants, this will to some degree affect or determine what kind of truth I discover during my data collection (Fink, 2000, p.2).

In addition to acknowledging that my views will be, to some degree, affected by my worldviews and beliefs about my social reality, it is just as essential to exhibit cultural competence, especially since I am coming into a sphere as a cultural outsider (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013, p.73). Within their sphere, my motivation for conducting research are unknown, and I might experience mistrust or suspicions from my informants. Although I mainly felt from them an overwhelming interest in and appreciation of the fact that a Norwegian female student had a wish to inquire into the sphere of India, women, and work, I had situations where questions I saw as unproblematic became uncomfortable for some of my informants. These questions mainly pertained to the views on money, class, and caste. Those questions that my informants were visibly uncomfortable answering I let slide and I did not dig any deeper into. I might have lost valuable information by doing this, but I did not want to offend or disrespect my informant's choice not to answer questions related to topics that they found uncomfortable.

Exhibiting cultural competence means treating my participants with respect and respecting their values and beliefs. Additionally, having cultural competence means having the ability to be able to navigate through a culture that differs from one's own, and being able to understand details surrounding the participants own culture from their perspective, such as their laws or policies, values and beliefs, norms, customs, and traditions as well as their socio-political climate (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013, p.71).

3.6. Concluding Remarks

Because of the inductive nature of qualitative data and its focus on understanding, meanings, interpretations, and emotions rather than universal generalisations, the elimination of several threats to the validity of the research is possible, in contrast to quantitative data. Thus, for example, researcher bias in social sciences within the data collection process can be looked upon as an opportunity to learn and is, therefore, a part of the data analysis and not a direct threat to the research.

However, several steps, such as those discussed above, must be considered in order to make my findings rigorous and trustworthy.

In the next chapter of my theses, I will present and discuss my chosen theoretical framework. This theoretical framework will present several different theories regarding my fieldwork findings that connect to the women's answers regarding my research questions. Applying multiple theories of migration that substantiate my findings is one way of establishing the trustworthiness of my study.

Chapter 4 - Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a theses is constructed to give the reader an explanation of the chosen theoretical paths that guide the researcher's analysis. In the theoretical framework, the researcher aims to ground the research in theoretical constructs. By grounding the research in relevant theories, one can reflect the findings within a larger picture of migration studies. The theoretical framework regarding migration theories exists because we need to explain, predict, and understand the causes and effects of international labour migration. In order to properly approach the theoretical field of migration and provide insight into the research questions, there needs to be a critical analysis of the previous contributions to the field of migration studies.

These previous contributions will be analysed and discussed to give input into the analysis of the theses.

4.1. Scope and Limitations

The area of focus in this theses is a narrow theme within migration studies. This specific area of study is an inquiry into high-skilled female labour migration from India. There is no single, simple, and coherent theory of migration that can tell us everything we need to know, but there does exist a set of different theories that were developed from one another. My theoretical framework will not exhaust every publication regarding the migration debate, but instead cover a range of the most current and predominant migration literature related to the area of focus of this theses.

4.2. Theories of Migration

Developing theories on the causes and effects of migration provide insight into why people choose to migrate. We can divide the different theories of migration into those that attempt to explain migration, and those that cover the perpetuation of migration once the process of migration has already begun (de Haas, 2011, p.8). Theories which attempts to explain the causes and effects of migration include the theories that look at the connection between large-scale migration patterns, macro-patterns, and small-scale individual migration patterns, micro-patterns.

The macro-level is often studied independently from the individual migrant, and includes the socio-economic background, demographic, or political factors and situations of large-scale migration movements. In contrast, small scale patterns of migration, micro-patterns, includes the migrants' characteristics and attitudes within the process of migration (Castelli, 2018, p.3). The micro-level model of migration calls for an analysis of the migration process by looking at the functions, capabilities, and aspirations of the migrant (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.43). Individual characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, wealth, marital status, religion, and language are all factors that can affect the process of migration (Castelli, 2018, p.3).

In addition to macro-, and micro-level theories of migration, meso-level theories help us explain the perpetuation of migration. Meso-factors of migration include the ICT industry's rise, migrant networks, immigrant communities, and business sectors that are particularly accommodating to specific types of labour and migrant industries (see Figure 4.1) (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.43).

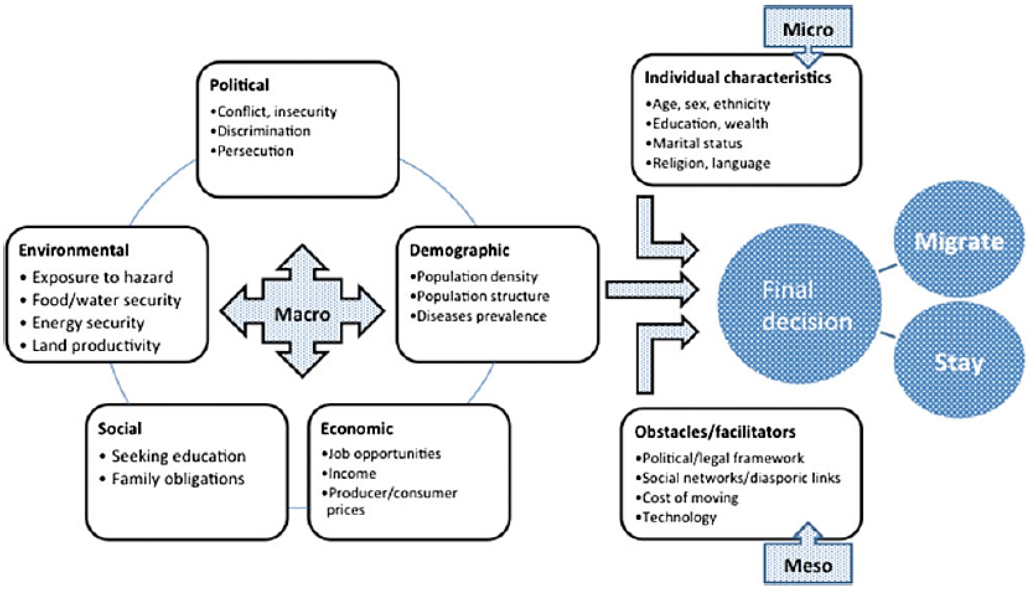

Figure 4.1 Macro, micro and meso drivers/barriers to the migration process.
Illustration retrieved from Castelli (2018, p.1)

All migratory movement can be looked upon as being the result of an interaction between macro, micro- and meso-structures influencing a migrant's decision to migrate and their destination area (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.43). And while macro-, and micro-level theories of migration

are important for understanding why migration desires occurs, meso-level theories help us explain why migration continues.

To better understand the causes and effects of international labour migration and the processes that the migrants themselves go through, there has been an effort made to construct general and descriptive theories and explanations for why migration occurs. The result has been the creation of quite a few different models, approaches, theoretical- and analytical frameworks and empirical generalisations (Arango, 2019, p.107).

My literature review/theoretical framework will discuss how international female labour migration from India is encouraged, incentivised, and obstructed by micro-, macro-, and meso-level factors. These three aspects of migration are combined because of the belief that there is a weakness in separating the causes and consequences of migration. There is a need to look at migration and how it is connected to a broader process of large-scale structures while concurrently inhibiting an individual and internal self-perpetuating dynamic. It is necessary to combine multiple different theories on migration to deepen the comprehension of international labour migration as inherently belonging to a broader process within globalisation and development. Without integrating different views on the causes of and motivations for migration, it will be difficult to answer the research questions, which consider the numerous realities and structures that the female labour migrants from India find themselves living within (de Haas, 2007, p-8-9).

For an extensive and broad inquiry into the field of migration theory, which covers all aspects of the different types of migratory experiences, and the importance of such theories see Skeldon (2011), Massey (1999), Massey et al. (1993), Arango (2019) and de Haas (2010).

4.2.1 International Labour Migration

Contemporary international labour migration can be seen as one of the key factors shaping and defining our modern world since contemporary labour migration is inherently linked to the process of globalisation. People and places are consistently moving closer together. The processes of migration do not only affect the migrants themselves, but their place of origin and destination (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.5). The crucial question and main issue within

migration studies relate to exploring the conditions under which people decide to migrate (Carling & Schewel, 2017, p. 945). Within the migration paradigm, there are numerous compound, different, and complementary theories trying to explain, analyse, and highlight the different reasons behind the migration process. The process of highly skilled international migration is a complex and nuanced phenomenon in which female migrants are driven by relational-, structural- and aspirational factors that directly impact their migration process (Di Martino, Maiztegui & Aristegui, 2020, p. 113).

Before analysing the theories of migration that directly relate to the area of focus, I will briefly distinguish between the most predominant theories of international labour migration that do not directly correlate to my findings, but that I find necessary to discuss within a theoretical discussion on the topic of labour migration.

4.2.2. Functionalism

Within the functionalist paradigm of migration studies, society is seen as existing within a contiguous disequilibrium, a constant imbalance, pushing migrants out of their unsatisfactory place of origin and into satisfactory destination areas (de Haas, 2011, p.8). The socio-economic inequalities between people and places are the centre of discussion. It is assumed that differences in job opportunities cause the forces incentivising labour migration.

Within the functionalist paradigm, there exist numerous theories of migration. Some of the most predominant include neo-classical migration theory, push-pull models, migration systems theories, and migrant networks theories (de Haas & Fokkema, 2011, p.756).

Wage differences and an imbalance in employment opportunities are seen as the key reasons behind migratory processes. It is a paradigm that emphasises rational-cost-benefit calculations regarding labour migration (de Haas, 2011, p.9). It was initially developed as an approach to better explain why labour migration occurs within the bounds of the economically developed world (Porumbescu, 2018, p. 11). It postulates that migration occurs because of differences in income between rural and urban areas (Sridhar, Reddy & Srinath, 2012, p.288). Labour migration is perceived to occur due to demographic and geographical differences between the supply for labour and the demand for labour (Porumbescu, 2018, p.11). As such, the

functionalism hypotheses asserts that people move from low wages to high wages (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2013, p.29). At the macro-level, labour migration occurs due to the growing global market. Countries with a surplus of labour, but a limited market, incentivise migration due to lower costs and the need for labour, due to other countries lacking labourers (Porumbescu, 2018, p.12). At the micro-level, it is hypothesesed that individual motivations and rationales dictate that people migrate to enhance their ability to generate more income and benefit their socio-economic standing in society (Porumbescu, 2018, p.12). International labour migration is seen as an investment in the individual's human capital (Massey et al., 1993, p.434).

Within the paradigm of functionalism, people migrate due to factors "*pushing*" them out of their place of origin and "*pulling*" them into destination areas. Within this paradigm, migratory reasons and motivations are determined by many factors connected to a migrants age, educational attainment, cultural and social belonging, demography, job opportunity and the possibility for economic improvement. In addition, the effect of globalisation, bringing countries and people closer together, has been a powerful "*push*" and "*pull*" factor.

For further inquiry into the field of functionalist migration theories see Lee (1966), Castelli, (2018), Van Hear, Bakewell & Long (2017), Castles (2009), Piché (2013), de Haas, (2014).

4.2.3 Historical-Structuralism

The historical-structural paradigm integrates structural forces that limit and impede the possibility of migration (Fleury, 2016, p. vii).

Within the paradigm of historical-structuralism, there exists several theories of migration, such as the dependency theory (Gunder-Frank, 1966), world-systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974 (2004)), dual labour market theory (Piore, 1978) and critical globalisation theory (Sassen, 2005). These theories are all rooted in the Marxist political economy (de Haas, 2021, p.4). These migration models theorise that the system of global capitalism, in which we are currently living, is draining developing countries of their resources (de Haas, Castles & Miller., 2020, p.49). In addition, labour migration is being driven by inequality in the distribution of power and economic development (de Haas, 2021, p.4). These theories are often referred to as "*conflict theories*", and focus on how the capitalist elite, often the countries who rule the global market,

are exploiting the poorer and "*underdeveloped*" nations, often situated in the global South (de Haas, 2021, p.4). In contrast to functionalist theories, which see development as a path to catching up with the further developed countries, the historical-structural theories of migration see development and global change as a form of imperialism, confronting countries deemed to be exploiting the "*less*" developed countries, thus preventing further development (Hylland Eriksen, 2007, p.2). This has created a mobile population on the periphery that is prone to migrate (Joly, 2000, p.27).

4.2.4. Limitations

As widespread and debated as the functionalist and historical structuralist paradigms of migration are, they inhabit several limitations. The functionalist models of migration are often referred to as "*static models*" and do not consider the structural conditions affecting the process of migration. They are inherently descriptive, and often single out macro-level factors as the only drivers in the migration process. Within the functionalist paradigm, migration is seen purely as a consequence of geographical differences in the possibility of employment (Amaral, 2018, p.14).

Functionalist theories are rooted in the assumption that people migrate purely based on the prospect for income maximisation (de Haas, 2014, p. 7). Within functionalism, the individual's process of migration is more connected to that individual's reaction to macro-level inequalities rather than micro level individual actions. It is a deterministic view of migration as being driven purely out of monetary needs, as argued by Rao (2013, p.873), "*people's lives are driven by more than basic survival needs*".

The historical-structural theories also limit themselves to structural constraints as the overall reason for international migration, and hence leave out, in the same way as thee functionalists do, migrants ability to make choices by themselves. There is an issue in portraying international migrants purely as victims of global capitalism with no free choice, and with no other option than to migrate because of the need to survive, hence ruling out the factor of human agency (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.51).

The process of migration is a social construct and not just a product of inherently natural evolutions due to economic inequality. For the migrant women, the decision to migrate is not a

choice taken within a vacuum, but a choice taken in relation to the women's social ties, emotions, and desires within the discursive dimension in which they are involved in (Meyer, 2018, p. 1033).

4.3. An Integrative Approach to Migration

While the economy (functionalism) and structure (historical structuralism) are essential factors to integrate into an analysis of migratory aspirations, they are not sufficient to understand migrants' specific experiences. There is a complexity and diversity among migrant women which requires researchers to go deeper. This is where the importance of situating the women within a specific context comes into play. How does the migratory experience link to and affect the migrants' economic, social, political, and cultural bonds? (Castles, 2010, p. 1573). The migrant women's abilities and aspirations for migration are embedded in their specific social context (Scheibelhofer, 2018, p.1000)

The theories mentioned above tend to see migrants as purely economic actors who only respond to push factors, such as poverty or unemployment, or pull factors, such as the ability to achieve higher wages or employment opportunities (Bal & Willems, 2014, p. 251). However, they do not explain why women from India who are already formally employed, and who are making enough money to belong to the middle- and upper-middle classes of Indian society, chose to migrate. Additionally, the women who are being contracted to work in Norway through employer-sponsored work visas, receive the same salary in Norway as they would in India. Thus, it seems clear that there exist other reasons deeper than monetary ones that drive the migration process forward, hence the migrant women's aspirations and capabilities they inhabit needs to be incorporated into a study on skilled female labour migration.

In order to understand the connection between female labour migration and migrant aspirations and desires concerning mobility strategies, the use of a theoretical framework highlighting the semantic field of migration aspirations and desires will be implemented (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 919). Indian women's aspirations and desires regarding migration challenge traditional Indian class hierarchies and open up new understandings of the religious, pious, and traditional Indian woman (Rao, 2013, p. 873). Additionally, migration aspirations and desires allow us to

relate the women's present lives to their future or potential life desires and aspirations through the migration process (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 919)

As argued by Oishi (2005, p.8) an integrative approach to studying female labour migration is needed. She argues that a three-level analysis of the drivers behind migration gives an in-depth inquiry into the reasons behind it. As such, the macro-level, notably the state, micro-level, the individual, and meso-level variables, the migrant's surroundings, and society as a whole, need to be incorporated in an analysis of female migratory aspirations and experiences. Oishi's (2005) study on the drivers of female migration highlights the importance of the interconnectedness between macro-and micro-level drivers of migration. She argues that the state, both the sending- and receiving-state, plays a crucial role in how female labour migration is patterned. As such, macro-level policies can help explain the development and patterns of female labour migration. In addition to an analysis of macro and micro-level variables, analysing meso level variables is necessary. When inhabiting a social environment in which female labour migration is encouraged and not ostracised, larger labour migration patterns will exist. Being able to feel comfortable when leaving the country, and being certain that you will not be looked down upon when returning, incentivises female movement. For a society to be comfortable with the idea of women migrating for labour, Oishi has hypothesesed that the country needs to be a part of the global economy (p.8)

4.3.1 Incorporating Gender in Migration Processes

The functionalist and historical-structuralist theories of migration discussed earlier, in addition to being deterministic and unable to adapt to a globalised world, also see migrants as genderless agents. Hoang (2014, p.1442) claims, that numerous studies have shown that gender identity and social norms surrounding gender are a crucial factor in shaping that migrants migratory experience. Additionally, it is essential to incorporate gender into the discussion since economic factors do not have a gender-neutral impact. Economic development has different effects on effects on the economic roles of men and women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.2). Historically, there has been a prevalent male bias within the field of migration studies, for example, through the practice of fieldwork, interviews, and statistical data, which in large part only incorporated male points of view and experiences, assuming the process would be the same for women. Today we

know that this is not the case; the process of migration is highly gendered (Curran, Shafer, Donato & Garip, 2006, p.201).

The migration decision is made within the bounds of socially recognised expectations that reflect the different dimensions within gender relations, such as decisions made between individuals, families, or social institutions. By considering the migrants as men and women and not as genderless agents, it is possible to understand who the migrants are and why they are migrating. As such, gender must be looked upon within a theoretical basis and not a control variable in descriptive migration analyses (Kanaiaupuni, 2000, p.1312). When looking at gender within migration, the task is to understand how gender relations affect the migration cycle. This is salient because, traditional migration theories are often based on economy or structure, and do not include a social interpretation of the causes and effects of migration that are often rooted in specific gender norms and cultural characteristics influencing the migratory experiences (Fleury, 2016, p.1). As argued by Kanaiaupuni (2000), "*Migration is a profoundly gendered process, and the conventional explanations of men's migration in many cases do not apply to women*." (p.1312).

It is especially salient to incorporate these specific gender norms and cultural characteristics in an Indian context. There is a widespread and far-reaching continuity regarding the contrasting view on men/women, masculinity/femininity, and economic valued labour/domestic valued labour in India (Gupta, 2020, p.252). The migration process is highly gendered in nature, and the aspirations and desires among Indian female migrants differ from Indian men, but they also differs between Indian women. Although it is necessary to look at the gendered dimension of migration and labour from India, it is equally important to incorporate the social context that the women find themselves within, such as perspectives of class and caste (Smith, 2016, p.130). The process of skilled migration is inherently dependent upon the women's socio-economic background, class and caste, age, and family dynamic.

Perceived gender roles and appropriate behaviour regarding gender are rooted in a patriarchal power structure where society and the family both differentiate and express an ideology that determines appropriate female behaviour (Gupta, 2020, p. 252). This has led to strict control over Indian women's freedom of movement and interaction, restricting the potential for migration for many Indian women. As argued by Nancy Fraser (1999), the concept of a "*three-dimensional*

social justice" means that Indian women in the labour market, and through their migration process, needs redistribution, recognition, and representation. Fraser (1999) argues that there is a real struggle for recognition among women, especially for those women who live within subjugated societies that do not see the beneficial outcome of equal participation among men and women (p.26). By living in a society without female recognition, Indian women experience two kinds of injustice: socio-economic- and cultural/symbolic injustice (Fraser, 1995, p.71). The socio-economic injustice of women manifests itself in the economic structure of society. In India, this includes the lack of women in the workforce and the lack of women's to have financial independence. Additionally, cultural/symbolic injustice is rooted in the social patterns of representation. This includes cultural/symbolic subjugation, nonrecognition, being invisible in decision-making processes, and disrespect, being routinely marginalised or excluded from representation (Fraser, 1995, p.71):

> Nonrecognition or misrecognition... can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need.
> (Fraser, 1995, p.71)

When talking about the notion of gender, I follow Fleury (2016) and make use of the social construction of the words "*male*" and "*female*" and how the construction of these two words shape gendered roles and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity (p.1). These gendered norms which women and men live within can both incentivise and inhibit rights and opportunities. Also, the implementation of a gendered analysis on the causes- and effects of migration can give insight into how gender conditions access to resources, and how gender itself differs in access to power and equality, both economically, socially, and legally (Fleury, 2016, p.1). In addition to an increase in the overall migration of women, more and more women are independently migrating for work (Gottardo & Cyment, 2019, p.68). Studies have shown that the number of female migrants can make up 70 to 80 per cent of the migrant population in some countries (Fleury, 2016, p.vi). This highlights that the demand for labour is excessively gender specific in some countries and within some sectors (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p. 2).

4.3.2 Aspirations and Capabilities

As argued by Amartya Sen (1999), women's capabilities (defined as freedom) to decide where they wish to migrate, or what they wish to do with their lives are massively influenced by their individual aspirations. Within Amartya Sen's capability framework, freedom is both the primary end, and the primary means of achieving inclusive development (p.3). Additionally, freedom can only be achieved through the free agency of people (Sen, 1999, p.10). By depriving people of their capabilities (freedoms), such as women's mobility, economic independence, social opportunities, education, and employment, inclusive development will not occur (Sen, 1999, p.11). The principal argument behind Sen's capability framework is to enhance "*our capability to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value" (*Sen, 1999, p.6). In order to realise their potential capabilities, people need access to specific resources. Similarly, de Haas (2021, p.1) argues that human mobility is a part of a broader process of social change, and that individual agency and aspirations can affect structures that impede migration behaviours.

For the type of women who are the area of focus in my theses, their most essential capability were their capacity for increased mobility, high educational attainment, large social network, and modern family dynamic in regard to many other Indian women. I use Sen's framework to highlight how his different dimensions of freedom of choice can be connected to Indian women's aspirations for migration. Although it can be argued that highly skilled and highly educated female Indian ICT professionals are in a better socio-economic position than other female migrants from other developing countries, they still find themselves living within social- and cultural gender norms who routinely classify women as second-class citizens. Even for women who are seen as belonging to higher castes/classes, their aspiration for migration has become a powerful adaption option for achieving enhanced autonomy and empowerment, which would be difficult to achieve within India without experiencing the migration process. By integrating women's capabilities and aspirations in the migration process, a more nuanced and realistic comprehensive view of the process of human mobility can be realised (de Haas, 2014, p.4).

As argued by Carling and Schewel (2018), "*Migration is the combined result of two factors: the aspiration to migrate and the ability to migrate*" (p.945). In Carling's (2002) original model of migration, the term "*aspiration*" is used when the decision to migrate is more preferable than not to migrate (p.12). Within the group of people who aspire to migrate, some will have the ability to

do so, while others will not. Those who cannot migrate but wish to do so fall within the group of migrants referred to as involuntary non-migrants. The aspiration and ability model identifies three different categories of migratory processes (See Figure 4.2).

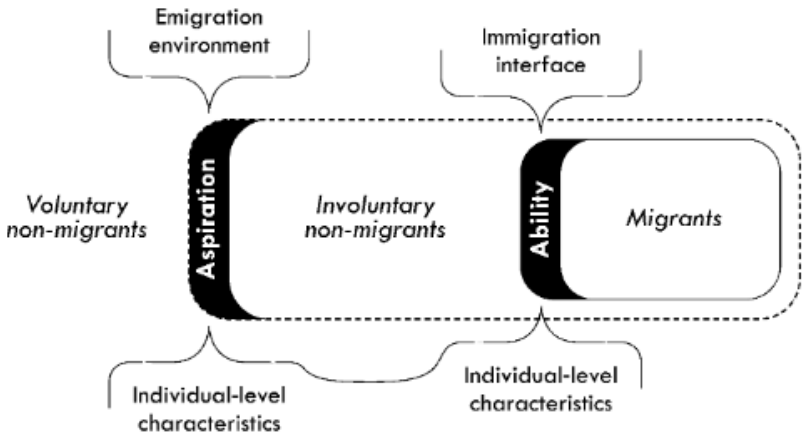

Figure 4.2 The aspiration/ability model of migration. Illustration retrieved from Carling (2002, p.12)

With the process of globalisation, people's aspirations for what constitutes a good life, and their aspirations regarding the awareness of opportunities and abilities elsewhere, has meant that aspirations for migration have increased following rising levels of education and access to information about places and people abroad. Variations in structural differences have increased female migrant's aspirations to migrate and their migratory experience can be seen as an attempt to fulfil their life aspirations and capabilities (de Haas, 2011, p. 18-21).

Migration aspirations and abilities can be analysed at both the macro- and micro-level. Firstly, one needs to analyse at a macro-level why people wish to migrate (Carling, 2002, p.13). Does there exist a particular migration environment in which the process of migration is socially, economically, and politically legitimate? Regarding India, the macro-level incentive is a powerful driver of skilled migration. Due to India's export-driven service industry, both the Indian State and multi-national privately owned corporations are inherently dependent upon the continuation of highly skilled labour migration. These highly skilled migrants are highly "*wanted migrants*", and their ability to migrate is exceptionally uncomplicated compared to other groups of migrants, notably refugees and asylum seekers.

Secondly, micro-level analysis of the type of people who choose to migrate is just as critical. Who are the people who wish to migrate, and who are the people who have to stay behind? According to Carling (2002, p.13), the micro-level factors include gender, age, family dynamic, previous migration history and their social status. This is particularly connected to the women's caste affiliation, their level of education, and their personality traits. It has become clear that, in order to be a highly skilled female labour migrant from India, individual characteristics, most notably their family dynamic, caste/class belonging, and level of education, play a significant role. As socially stratified as the Indian society is, the experience of becoming a highly skilled female labour migrant will differ between people in relation to the type of/scale of barriers they encounter in their migration process.

As argued by Wang and Chen (2020), de Haas (2011) and Cai et al. (2014), emotions and aspirations play a significant role in the decision-making processes regarding migration. They argue that migrant's aspirations to move are rooted in their belief that life will be better abroad However, the factors concerning their aspirations for mobility do not need to be rooted in financial circumstances, but can be the desires for a better quality of life or an opportunity to break free from structural forces (Wang & Chen, 2020, p. 3). Furthermore, de Haas (2011. p.18) argues that the process of migration can have an innate wellbeing-enhancing dimension to it. The process of migrating in itself can enhance migrants' well-being and is an intrinsic part of the migration process. Similarly, Cai et al. (2014) found that the relationship between subjective well-being and migration was more robust than the relationship between migration and income (p. 1).

4.3.3. Reshaping of Identities

The migrant women's involvement within different social relations, notably the household, extended family, and networks abroad, is essential for the continuation and strengthening of the migration processes (Carling, 2002, p. 13). Thus, women's migration aspirations are connected to different types of relations. These relations are firstly, the women's relation to their current migration possibilities. Secondly, the women's relations to their potential social transformation within their migration context, and thirdly, their relation to other migrant women through networks (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 916).

Many scholars have inquired into the socially and culturally embedded realities migrant women face in the process of migration. However, there is also a need to analyse the migration process within the specific contexts the migrant women are embedded in. It is necessary to look at the women's local realities in which they are socially embedded, and their global interconnectedness (Bal & Willems, 2011, p.249). The ability for and the strength of the migration process depends to a large extent on the women's position in society; those with a large network of connections, financial security and human capital are more likely to find themselves in a migratory process that is not exploitative, informal, or unorganised (Alpes, 2013, p.264). While the choice to migrate is a highly subjective one, and is inherently related to the women's wishes, desires, and dreams, it is simultaneously being driven and influenced by society. Their migration decision is therefore not entirely individual, but rather the accumulation of the women's embeddedness in their wider social and cultural context (Meyer, 2018, p. 1046).

As argued by Rao (2014, p.872), the migration processes, particularly for those who are skilled and educated and are travelling to the Global North, also acts as a negotiator regarding women's position in the hierarchy of power and social status in society. For many migrant women, the migration process is both a physical and psychological process, conceptualised within a dynamic process where the renegotiation of power relations, female agency, and the ability to reshape identities, aspirations and social- and cultural relations regarding class status and traditional gender roles are occurring. Highly skilled migrant women can compete in a global market of professionals on the same basis as their male counterparts. Similarly, de Haas, Castles & Miller (2020, p.346) argues in their book, for instance, that among Ethiopian women temporarily migrating to the Gulf, their process of migration was seen as a significant factor in their financial independence and hence, increased autonomy and ability to partake in decision-making processes. This is in large what my findings illustrates as well, these findings will be laid forward in Chapters 5,6,7 and 8.

By migrating to a different country, and experiencing a different culture and social norms, the migrant women are reshaping their identity to challenge imposed power hierarchies and the inveterate view on the traditional Indian woman as a homemaker and stay at home wife. Their agency is actively exercised throughout the migration process and is noticeable in their desires

and actions to pursue enhanced autonomy, empowerment, and financial independence (Rao, 2013, p. 873).

The migration process is not about going from point A to point B, but is rather an essential part of the observed women's social transformation regarding their class hierarchy and presumed gender roles concerning home. By considering the importance of the women's room for agency when working abroad, there is a direct relation between the micro- and macro-level understanding of how the migratory experience affects women's social life (Van Hear, 2010, p.1531).

4.5. Are Aspirations Enough?

However, the women are not entirely free from structural forces, and their use of agency is, to some extent, limited. There is always, to some degree, a dialectic relationship between structure and agency within the women's migration process (Van Hear, 2010, p. 1536). Even though the female labour migrants are migrating under different circumstances than refugees and asylum seekers, they are still bound within a migratory process affected by inequality, discrimination, and control compared to their highly skilled and educated male counterparts (Castles, 2010, p. 1567).

The extent to which they can exert their agency (capability) in the migration process depends on the structural conditions within they find themselves living. These structural conditions can also limit or assist the women in making independent choices and the extent to which they can freely manoeuvre in a global world (de Haas, 2011, p. 18).

Aspiration and desires are not enough on its own to drive the migration process forward. These drivers are also not enough to explain the act migrating it itself (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 921). Migration drivers, such as desires and aspirations, are concepts that can either facilitate or constrain the migrant women's agency and describes external factors that impact their potential for mobility (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 921). Migrant women's aspirations and desires are a significant factor influencing their migration decision, but that decision is not taken without external forces impeding or facilitating their migration ability.

4.5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has investigated the importance of understanding the complex realities surrounding highly skilled female migrants from India. In order to understand the reasons behind their migration desire, one needs to see the migrant's aspirations for migration as a function of their spatial opportunity differentials. This means moving away from static theories that only incorporate income or wage differences, and instead move towards the migrant's life aspirations. Furthermore, I have argued that the women's aspirations and abilities in large determine the female migrant's propensity for migration- and capability to migrate. There is, therefore, a need to integrate both economic and non-economic hypotheses theorising migration. This means overcoming a category-based theory of migration and moving away from income differentials and towards the women's notion of opportunity. By doing so, one can incorporate micro- and macro-theories of migration. These two play a part in the women's migratory experience as macro-level factors shape the women's opportunity for migration while simultaneously enabling or constraining their decision for and capabilities within their migration process (de Haas, 2011, p. 17).

Within the semantic field of migration aspirations and abilities, there is a need to incorporate the drivers of migration that include individuals' decisions and the role of social/global structures and transitional social networks (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 921).

The theories and arguments for this chapter will be presented and analysed throughout the analysis in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Chapter 5 - India's "*Missing Working Women*" in an Era of Economic Development

"*Women talk about all the things they want to do in life, but the most important thing for them is to look after their family and kids*."
(BJP Minister Tirath Singh Rawat, in Misra, 2021)

This chapter will analyse factors associated with the Indian government, Indian society, and Indian households in connection to India's declining female labour force. I have chosen to account for Indian women's involvement in the labour market due to the socially- and culturally-gendered occupational segregation. Additionally, to account for the increase in female ICT professionals migrating abroad, which I will discuss in Chapter 6, I find it necessary to account for Indian women's involvement in the labour force, as this issue directly impact upon my findings regarding the increase in skilled female ICT professionals abroad.

5.1. Indian Women's Labour Reality

The particulars of the involvement of women in the workforce are a telling indicator of the type of social status held by women in a specific country. While India has improved, in terms of its economic standard and human development, the status for the average Indian woman in the workforce has not. Feelings of shame and indignity, of having a "*working wife*" are for many Indian households still a reality (Andres et al., 2017, p.2).

India's female labour force (20 per cent) is considerably lower than the country's neighbouring states of Sri Lanka (33.5 per cent) and Bangladesh (36 per cent) (see Figure 5.1) (WorldBank Data, 2021). This low FLFPR indicates that India's economic development, discussed in Chapter 2, has been insufficient in changing the macro- and micro- views on acceptable female participation in the workforce. India's social composition and cultural values and norms are still

inherently connected with what kind of labour and to what extent Indian women participate in the Indian labour market.

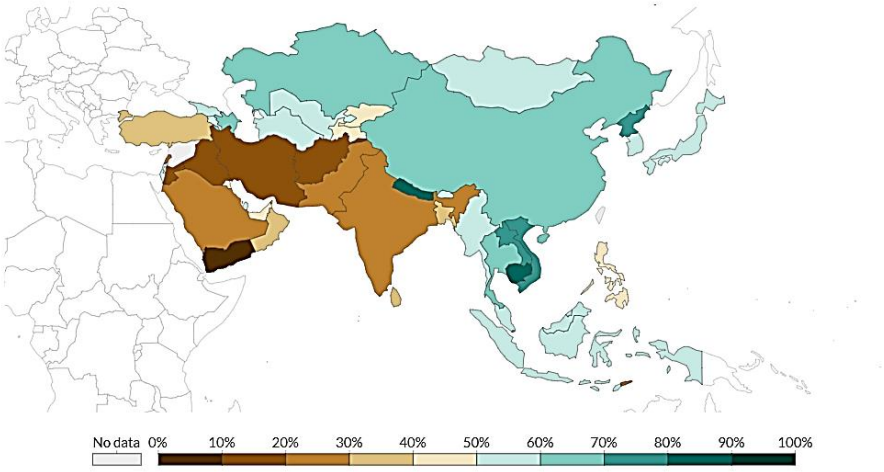

Figure 5.1 FLFPR in selected Asian countries (2017)

Illustration retrieved from Ortiz-Ospina, Tzvetkova & Roser (2018)

Perceived gender social roles in India are defined both at the macro- and micro- level. They are reinforced by social groups and societal and cultural traditions. They affect Indian women's ability to partake in the labour force and shape what type of activities, tasks, and responsibilities are perceived as appropriate for Indian women to engage in (ILO, 2009, p.1). There exists a clear and growing division of labour in India, whereby Indian women often find themselves at the bottom.

Throughout this chapter, I will analyse how India's gender inequality has become a significant factor that permeates Indian women's opportunity for employment, education, and independent income. Furthermore, the patriarchal nature of Indian society reproduces and strengthens these gender inequalities through state institutions, culture, societal attitudes towards Indian women, and traditional norms and perceptions towards women and paid work.

5.2. Plummeting FLFPR amidst Economic Growth

Numerous studies account for the relationship between a growing GDP, economic development, and a rising female labour force (See; Kapsos, 2005; Khan, 2007; Basnett & Sen, 2013; Melamed, Hartwig & Grant, 2011; OECD, 2019). Economic growth and growing market investment are preconditions for increased productive employment (ILO, 2018). The hypothesesed outcome of economic development is often argued to be increased participation among men and women in the labour market (See; Bassanini & Duval, 2009; Mourre, 2004; Massa, 2013). This is due to a growing need for productive employment and an increase in labour productivity (ILO, 2018). However, the observable decreasing rate of working women in India is evidence that India's process of globalisation, led by the neo-liberalisation of the Indian labour market, has not led to increased work opportunities for the average Indian woman.

While the process of globalisation has, for some skilled middle-class urban women, opened up labour opportunities abroad due to a growing ICT industry (see Chapter 6) the FLFPR among average Indian women is rapidly decreasing (See Figure 5.2) (see also Kapsos, Bourmpoula & Silberman, 2014; Desai & Joshi, 2019; Singh & Garces-Ozanne, 2017).

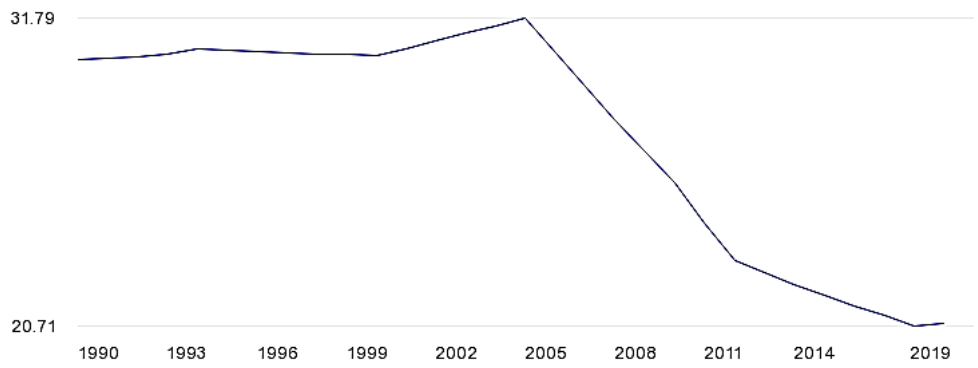

Figure 5.2 Female labour force participation rate, India, 1990 – 2019.

Illustration retrieved from WorldBank Data (2021)

The Indian FLFPR has been decreasing since the implementation of neoliberalism in the early 1990s, but experienced a significant drop from 2005 and until the present day. India simultaneously experienced an annual GDP growth of eight per cent; such a massive GDP

growth should, in theory, incentivise the creation of several new jobs, hence increase the FLFPR (Kapsos, Silberman & Bourmpoula, 2014, p.1). In contrast, the reality of the Indian female labour force is that it has one of the world's lowest female labour force participation rates (Nikore, 2019).

India finds itself located in the same female labour sphere as Somalia (22%), Saudi-Arabia (22%) and Pakistan (21%) (WorldBank Data, 2021). These are countries that generally would not be associated with the largest democracy in the world. Today, India's FLFPR is at its lowest point since India gained its independence in 1947 (Nikore, 2019). As the FLFPR is continuing to decrease, the gender wage gap and female inequality in the Indian labour market is continuing to increase (Singh, 2020)

5.2.1. Decreasing Fertility Rates and Poverty Percentage

In addition to a growing economy and a reduction in the overall poverty percentage since the implementation of neoliberalism, India's fertility rates have dropped, from an average of four births per woman in 1990 to two births per woman in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). A decline in fertility rates usually indicates a higher percentage of women in the labour force (See; Van den Broeck & Maertens, 2015; Adserà, 2004; Da Rocha & Fuster, 2006). Women from societies where it is perceived that they should stay at home and look after the children should have a higher chance of participating in the labour market if the average number of children per woman declined (Verick, 2014, p.2).

Lower fertility rates have been hypothesesed to reduce the dependency ratio for women in societies where domestic duties make up a large part of their responsibilities, and hence increase the supply savings in the economy (Kabeer et al., 2013, p.9). This, however, does not seem to be the case for Indian women.

India's declining FLFPR is in contrast to the economic development the country has seen since the implementation of its neo-liberalisation process in the early 1990s. With economic progress, one would assume that the percentage of women taking part as individual agents involved in

economic activities would increase rather than decrease, due to an increasing need for capable labourers to take part in a growing labour market.

5.2.2. Growing Government Intervention in the Labour Market

In addition to high economic growth and a drop in poverty and fertility rates, numerous public programmes, initiated by the Indian government has been implemented to increase the number of Indian women in the workforce (Kapsos, Silberman & Bourmpoula, 2014, p.1). Since 2005 and as of 2019, 53 gender-exclusive policies and pieces of legislation targeted at improving India's FLFPR have been introduced (Menon, Tomy & Kumar, 2019, p.26).

Figure 5.3 lists the different programme components, this illustrates the number of times the different components are recorded in the different policies (Menon, Tomy & Kumar, 2019, p.25). We see that there has been an extensive focus on financial support and capacity building for Indian women. However, almost none of the 53 policies/regulations focus on recognising women in the workforce, maternity benefits, women's safety, or the representation of women. In fact, the least recorded programme component is female representation and recognition in the labour force.

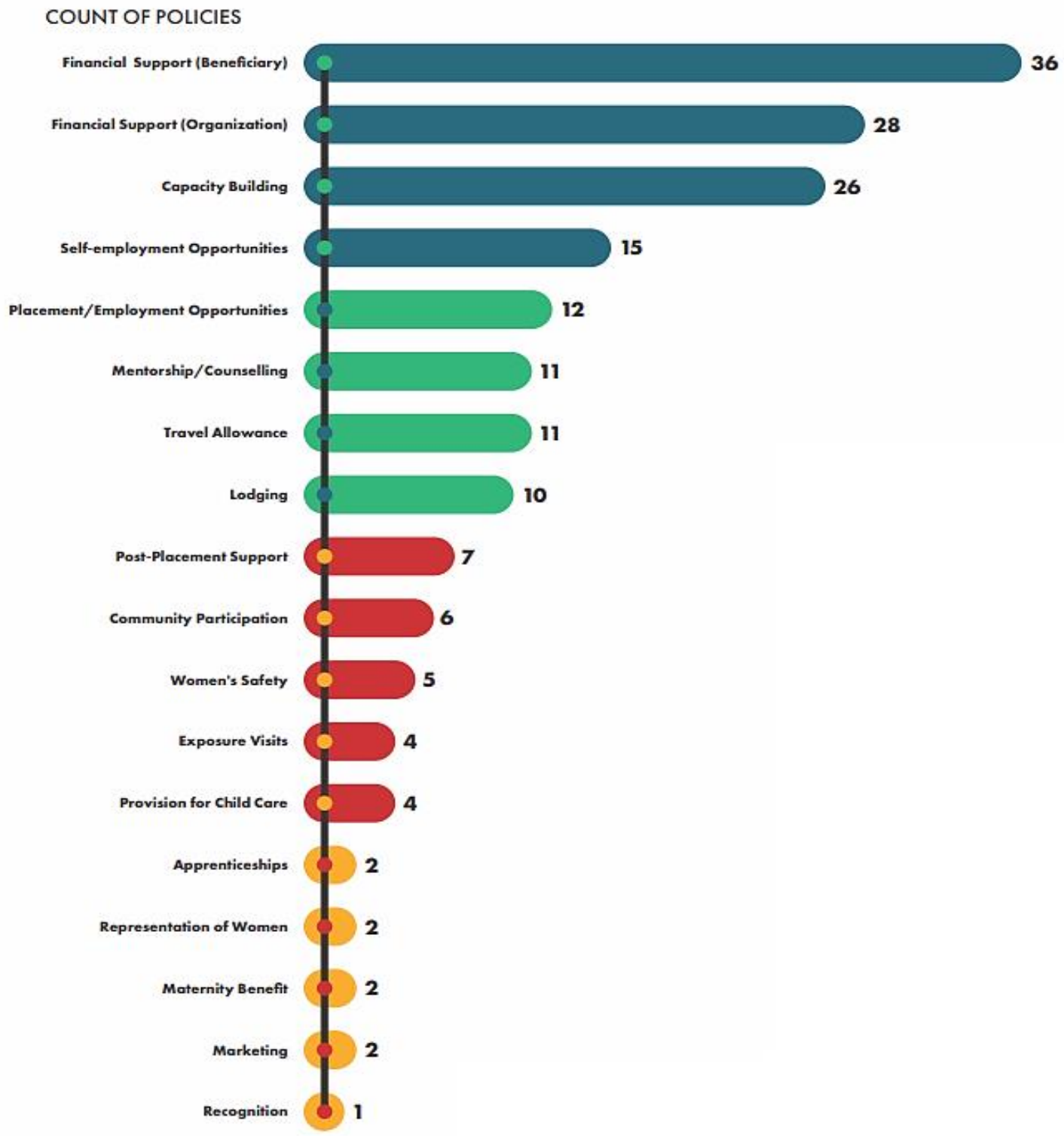

Figure 5.3 Count of policies for each programme component.

Illustration retrieved from Menon, Tomy & Kumar (2019, p.25)

As argued by Fraser (1995, p.73), and discussed in Chapter 4, without recognition and representation in the labour market, there will be no redistribution of resources, employment opportunities or access for Indian women. Without representation, recognition, and redistribution there can be no participatory parity in the Indian labour market.

5.2.3. Growing Enrolment in Higher Education

In 2018, the International Labour Organization wrote that "*The level of education is a key factor affecting the level of informality. Globally, when the level of education increases the level of informality decreases*" (ILO, 2018). More women are enrolling in higher education in India. In just ten years, India saw a growth in the number of enrolled students in higher education from 2.75 million in 2010 to 37.4 million in 2019 (AISHE, 2019). In 2010, women accounted for approximately 1,2 million, while accounting for 18.2 million or 48.6 per cent in 2019 (see figure 5.4) (AISHE, 2019). States such as Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka saw for the first time, a higher enrolment of women than of men (Gohain, 2021).

Figure 5.4 Enrolment in Higher Education for Indian women, 1995-2020

Retrieved from WorldBank Data (2020).

The substantial growth in the number of women entering higher education could be a factor in the declining rate of women in the Indian labour force. On average, Indian women are spending more time on education, and, hence, not currently actively looking for employment

opportunities. Furthermore, due to a declining poverty percentage, more families can afford, and see the beneficial kickback from sending their female children to school. Although the percentage of women in the workforce is low, the likelihood of being employed is increased by the level of education the women have attained, and enrolment in higher education have become a powerful tool in leveraging future opportunities for Indian women (See; OECD, 2012; Ali & Jalal, 2018; Ciburiene et al., 2019)

A study by Bhalla & Kaur (2011, p.23) redefined the FLFPR to include those who were attending school. When using this definition of working women, they foreshadowed that India could approach the global norm of 50 to 60 per cent of women working by 2021. This, however, has not happened. The FLFPR is continuing to decline as of 2021. Their study rested on the positive connection between a rising FLFPR and higher education. This connection has, in many other countries, created an increase in the female labour force. Additionally, they expected that if not all the educated women would enter the workforce, then at least most of them would, and considering the high levels of growth in enrolled female students, the percentage should have increased.

The dichotomy of a declining female labour force but, a massive increase in the enrolment percentage of female students, becomes additionally clear when we account for the fact that the gross enrolment ratio for Indian women in higher education increased exponentially faster in India than other parts of the world, with an increase of 90 per cent between 1997 and 2014. This percentage is higher than average middle-income countries, and higher than the world average (Malhotra, 2017, p. 2).

5.3. Moving Beyond Economic Development

The factors accounting for the above, should have increased India's FLFPR substantially. However, India's rising GDP, economic development, decreasing poverty percentage, fertility rates, enrolment in higher education and government intervention seem to have done little to offer decent work opportunities to Indian women. It seems clear that there exists other reasons, mainly social and cultural constraints, that impede these women's ability to have formally recognised work. Without recognition or representation, increasing the Indian FLFPR is unthinkable. As argued by Kabeer et al. (2013, p.79), "*While the highly capital-intensive, import-*

substituting industrialisation phase did lead to rising growth rates for varying periods of time, it did not generate many jobs, and the jobs it did generate went largely to men". Indian women's opportunity to obtain formal and well-paid employment opportunities and access to skill development that can heighten their chance for formal employment is exceptionally skewed in relation to their male counterparts as Indian men continue to obtain most of the available jobs and spots in skill development programs (Kothari, 2014, p.237).

Cultural and societal assumptions regarding women and paid labour are still frowned upon by many in India. The potential for decent work and economic independence among Indian women needs to be seen in relation to national development. However, it seems that Indian women are continuously being left behind in the development process, and that the power of patriarchy, and its renouncement of increasing women's autonomy is persistent.

Usually when one focuses on the notion of "*development*" one focuses on identifying developments in connection to a growing GNP/GDP, a rise in personal income or with growing industrialisation or technological advancements. These are also the characteristics that are being laid forward when people discuss India's "*successful*" neo-liberalising process. However, it seems clear, when looking at the economic growth of India that an expansion of real freedoms for the average Indian woman has not materialised. And while the factors stated above might be an important *means* to expand individuals' freedoms, the success rate of that expansion relies heavily on other determinants, such as social, economic, political, and civil rights. What about equal access to education, the labour market, decent work, and fairly paid wages for all Indian women? The process of inclusive development relies on the removal of major sources of unfreedom, such as poverty, skewed economic opportunities between men and women, and systematic social deprivation based on the notion of gender, class, and caste. And while India has seen an unprecedented increase in prosperity for a number of Indians, elementary freedoms are still being denied to a vast number of individuals, and most often, Indian women (Sen, 1999, p.3-4).

What follows is an analysis of the barriers to Indian women's participation in the Indian labour market, and an account of why economic development has not been enough to increase this percentage.

5.4. Indian Women's Pressure to Conform to Tradition

5.4.1. The Power of Patriarchy

The notion of patriarchy in its literal meaning is "*the rule of the father*" (Sultana, 2012, p.2) Today it is used to describe public and private male domination, the power-relationship where men dominate women, and the systematic gender discrimination whereby women are continuously being kept subordinate to men in a number of different ways (Sultana, 2012, p. 2).

Discriminatory gender practices in the labour market has become a vast and far-reaching characterisation of modern India, and is in many ways connected to the traditional view on upholding the patriarchal nature of Hinduism. Sultana (2012, p.12) describes the manifestation of male domination from birth in India, "*people mostly prefer newborn male children to female. When a woman gives birth to a girl her husband and other members of the family start to oppress and undermine her and the child*". The systematic oppression of women in India has been going on for centuries. Indian women today are still deliberately being denied access and opportunities for economic and social growth in the name of religious and socio-cultural practices (Nirola, 2018). As laid forward by Ee Lyn (2011), but spoken by an Indian Hindu family on the prevalence of gender selective abortions in India "*If nature gives us a first boy, then we don't do anything. But if nature gives a first girl, then perhaps, we would consider ultrasound testing and selective abortion for the subsequent children*".

Being a Hindu in India brings with it a number of cultural and social characterisations that I find important to integrate into my analysis, mainly how Hinduism, caste-belonging and patriarchy intersect modern India in regard to access and mobility within the labour market, educational attainment, and the economy. When a Hindu woman is compared to another Hindu women, by their caste status, which derives from birth, they are either born socially advantaged or disadvantaged in regard to each other. But, in relation to an Indian man, their position in society will, to some extent, always be limited by their gender.

The ability to obtain decent and formal work is, for many Hindu women inherently linked to their memberships in high castes. And for many, to be able to obtain any sort of job, they need to rely on their caste networks. This not only perpetuates the system but also reinforces it, since the most desirable jobs are kept within the higher circles of the Indian caste hierarchy (Evans, 2021).

5.4.2. Indian Women: Born Disadvantaged

The manifestation of India's gender inequality is seen in the unequal distribution of sex ratios. On a global scale, female infants have a greater survival percentage than male infants at birth. However, this is not the case for India (UNFPA, 2011). There exists an excess female infant mortality rate in India, coupled with an excessive and devastating son-preference (Drèze & Murthi, 1999, p.45) This means that women in India are already, from birth, placed in a disadvantaged position. Figure 5.5 shows the female to male sex ratio as of 2011 (this is the newest and most updated version from Census India). When accounting for the number of female infants that have died from the 1990s until today, as well as female-foetus abortions, India has 40 million "*missing women*", the second highest number in the world, only slightly beaten by China with 41 million (Hassan, 2014, p.2). In India, this has meant that the likelihood of dying in infancy is 40-50 per cent greater for Indian girls than for Indian boys (Jensen, 2010, p.1).

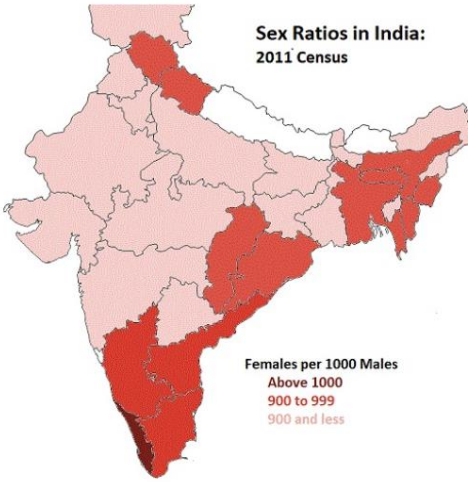

Figure 5.5 Female to male sex ratio in India as of 2011.

Illustration retrieved from Hassan (2014, p.11)

Kerala is the only Indian state which poses as an anomaly. In Kerala, the female to male ratio can be explained partly by the large number of migrants leaving the state, as well as a declining death rate among elderly women in Kerala. On average, Indian women in Kerala greatly outlive their husbands (Mohan & Waghmare, 2017). The other red states are approximately equal to the global norm, and this can be explained by the fact that there are born on average more boys than

girls, and that there is a somewhat higher percentage of child mortality among boys on average. The states which are light pink in colour are the ones that faces an issue, and where the skewed gender gap first manifests itself. The light pink states in the North are also those that follows the strictest Hindu practices/traditions.

Furthermore, the practice of female-foetus abortions is higher among women who have completed 10 or more years of schooling, in comparison to mothers with no education. Additionally, the wealthier the family is, the higher the likelihood of female-foetus abortions is. Evidence showed that between 2001 and 2011 the disparities in sex ratios increased due to an increase in selective-female abortions in the predominantly strict Northern Hindu regions, and in urban centres in the North that experienced higher economic growth than in the South (Hassan, 2014, p.2). This does not mean that the preference for having boys is higher among the rich and more educated, but that these are the ones who can afford ultrasound testing and selective abortions (Ee Lyn, 2011).

A gender bias in regard to mortality rates has resulted in an Indian society where men greatly outnumber women. In a patriarchal society, where women are already disadvantaged, accepted social and economic inequalities have resulted in a cultural pattern that has made it a social norm to discriminate based on gender. Additionally, the Indian government, according to the country's democratic constitution, states that India is "*a gender, class and caste-equal democracy"* (Guenther, 2015, p.39). This, however, is far from the truth. When there exists a view from above that there exist no class, gendered or caste inequality, an effort to reduce those inequalities will not exist.

5.4.3. Menarche, Marriage, and Motherhood

India's system of patriarchy is being reproduced through social, political, economic, religious, and cultural spheres that keep differentiating between men and women, and re-establish a male dominate society. This system of patriarchy is most easily identified by the use of "*patrilineal descent*", the importance of men reproducing the family line, and "*patrilocal residence*", the practice of women living with their husband's relatives/family after marriage (Sultana, 2012, p. 11).

In patrilocal societies, when their daughters get married, they are "*married away*". This means that women move out of their parents' home and into their husband's home along with his family, often the parents, but it can also be extended family (Sonawat, 2001, p.180).

Due to the patrilineal nature of Indian society, the Indian household has become a place of subjugation, as the family structure is looked upon as more important than the individual, such that it is argued that the individual is nothing if she is not a part of a family (Lau, 2010, p.272). Furthermore, it is the task of Hindu men to maintain and add to the social networks upon which the family and life itself depends on, as is argued by Lau (2010, p.281):

> It [the family] …. is the major, if not primary site of women's oppression. For it is within the family that girl-children experience their first feelings of rejection or discrimination on account of their sex, where they may be required to perform hard domestic labour, denied the freedom to come and go, married off, frequently without their consent and on payment of dowry, and then subjected to the vicissitudes of married life, which would include harassment by in-laws, marital discord, unwanted pregnancies, domestic drudgery, and the continuing cycle of the burden of girl-children of their own.

Upon marriage, the daughters family must pay a *dowry*. A dowry was originally meant as a voluntary gift given to the family in which the woman was marrying into. It was originally confined to the higher castes and classes situated in Northern India, but is today something that is practiced all over India, regardless of caste or class affiliation. Dowry payment has also developed into a mandatory and assumed payment from the women's family to the family of the husband. Today, the imposed dowry includes modern consumer goods such as cars or other motor vehicles, cash, or splurging on a large and lavish wedding. Furthermore, the amount of dowry that is payable is determined by the groom's caste, class, and socio-economic standing. This is also why the percentage of inter-caste marriages are so low, as marrying "*down*" is severely looked down upon among many Hindu groups (Soni, 2020, p.2-5).

Hindu families are obligated and expected to find a spouse for their children who is suitable in terms of caste and class affiliation, since it is their sons who will be the ones to bring wealth and status to the family, as he is the one who is not being "*married away*". Because the Indian Hindu society is patrilocal in nature, it is the sons who are the carriers of the family lineage, hence the

ones who will bring forward the family name. Indian women, once married, are often looked upon as "*others property*" (Sonawat, 2001, p.180).

The notion of caste was especially difficult to explore during my fieldwork process. While every Hindu in India is acutely aware of the stratified and segregated nature of the caste system, getting them to talk about it was immensely difficult. Out of the 14 women interviewed, I was able to have a conversation regarding the effect of the caste system on Indian women with one, an educated woman from the Brahmin caste. She had been living in Norway since 2006 and attributed this as the reason why she was able to talk about the caste system more freely:

> The caste system in India is in the rules, you cannot take them away. I am from Bengal. It is the province of India that is most liberal. I think that is why I am even more open. But when it comes to marriage, it does not matter if you are upper caste, medium caste or lower caste, every family want their kid to be married to higher castes. Brahmin is my caste; my parents would only find a man that is also Brahmin. My husband has the same mother tongue, the same caste. Till date the problem is still there.
> (Sarah, personal communication, September 29, 2020)

Once Hindu women in India reach a certain age, or are married away, becoming "*others property*", many Indian girls experience massive limitations in their capacity to freely move around, and constraints in regard to their ability to partake in a decision-making process affecting their own life. These decisions can evolve around their ability to enrol in higher education, who the women should marry, what kind of work/career is suitable for that kind of woman, and what kind of social relationships in which she can engage (UNICEF, 2021). The inequality between boys and girls only continues as they grow older, as Indian boys experience greater freedom while growing up, while girls experience greater restriction in regard to their own mobility.

There is an alarming but growing trend in Indian society, namely the cultural and social acceptance of imbalanced and inequality experienced by Indian women. This inequality is seen to be rising in part due to a growth in the public, political and economic support for Hindu nationalist parties, especially in the northern and western states of India, which is in part contributing to creating a society where families prefer sons over daughters (Hassan, 2014, p.11). As India has become a highly masculine society, this has resulted in low possibilities for human

capital development, and the women's potential for economic contribution to society has become very low (Jensen, 2010, p.1).

As male children are viewed as a form of social- and economic security, Indian woman continues to inhabit a subordinate position. Due to unequal power relations between males and females, Indian women continue to experience gender discrimination which is being reinforced through the patriarchal nature of society, and the continuation of economic dependency on Indian men. This leads to low participation in decision making processes and low participation in the labour force (Nirola, 2017).

India's occupational stratification boils down to the fact that many believe that gender roles are constructed because of biological differences between men and women. These innate differences are presumed to make men and women more suitable to do different tasks, for example, the socially accepted view that "*A women can better handle the kitchen*" (Siddiqi, 2021, p.3). As long as these biological factors keep interfering with Indian women's possibilities, these presumed roles and traditions will remain (Siddiqi, 2021, p.3).

5.5. Macro and Micro Barriers to Female Employment

5.5.1. Hindu Women's Restricted Possibility for Mobility

The creation of a society that is massively skewed in terms gender-based opportunities, has meant that the notion of access and mobility is inherently gendered and rooted in the patriarchal nature of society. When using the word "*mobility*" I mean both physical, in terms of mobility when commuting to work, navigating buildings, public transport, and social in terms of rights, opportunities, and possibilities within education, work, and skill development. A lack of freedom and mobility for Indian women means that their potential for unrestricted mobility does not exist (Sultana, 2012, p.12). The idea of being able to freely move and participate in what is being offered, is for many Indian women, not a straightforward proposition.

In India, women's physical and social mobility and access is linked to a complex hierarchical web, where age, sex, caste, and class impact the type of opportunities one has access to (see Figure 5.6). Even something as fundamental as the physical access to decent transport

infrastructure that caters to all inhabitants, such as buses, trains, and cars, and furthermore, ensuring that these modes of transportation are available, safe, and usable restricts the Indian FLFPR (Priya, 2011, p. 7). For many Indian women, their physical and social access and mobility are inherently connected to their social and cultural position. This includes their caste- and class affiliation and family dynamic. Hindu women from different economic classes experience varied types and degrees of patriarchal control over access mobility (Paul, 1992, p. 5). The household and family dynamic is important because the impact of the women's education, their ability to earn an independent income, and the women's extent of their participation in the labour market is influenced and often decided by within-household bargaining, and by the extent traditional and patriarchal social norms affect their family (Kabeer, Deshpande & Assaad, 2019, p.5).

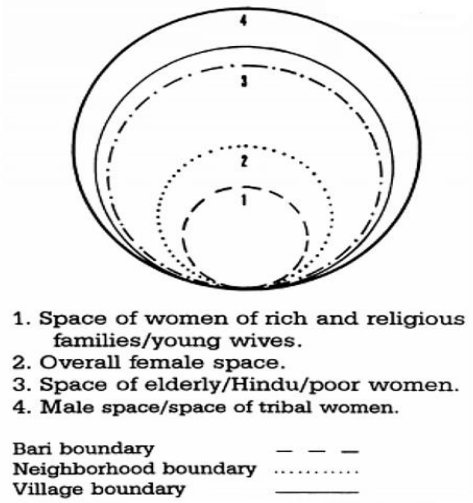

Figure 5.6 Illustration of Hindu women's constrained mobility.

Figure retrieved from Paul (1992, p.6)

Living in an environment that does not see the benefits of women taking part in the labour force as individual agents, constrains their possibilities for skill- and economic development, and hence the ability to climb the economic and social ladder.

5.5.2. The Shame of Having a Working Wife

Social norms and the perception of what is culturally and socially appropriate for men and women when it comes to assigned gender roles is a factor in India that affects the percentage of women who partake in the labour force (Piper, 2008, p. 1292). Many women face hurdles in the quest to gain work due to these specific gender roles. This is in part due to the importance of belonging to respectable and highly viewed caste/class groups. In the maintenance of the family's socio-economic standing in these groups there are a number of requirements, many of which are linked to a woman's social respectability and honour, that need to be followed. Particularly the widespread segregation of gender specific activities related to the economy. This is where India, with its strong Hindu ties, stands out in comparison to other Asian countries that have gone through similar liberalising political and economic developments, such as the Philippines and Thailand.

In the first stage of development in countries like the Philippines and Thailand, which occurred roughly at the same time as India, early 1990s, a large number of women left rural cities and engaged in employment opportunities in urban centres. In this way they were to some extent able to escape patriarchal constrains, by being able to earn their own money, live away from their parents while simultaneously supporting them through wages, and gain more independence. What sets these developments apart from India's developments in regard to their view on working women is their view on honour versus income. Culturally and socially, India is to a larger extent still concerned with maintaining female honour by restricting female independence. In contrast, numerous east Asian countries have seen the positive implications for their economic development of having a large female workforce. And while many women in east Asia work under exploitative conditions, the state and society view women in the workforce as a socially acceptable phenomenon. In India, female seclusion and the sustaining of specific gender norms related to economic activity is still the social ideal (Evans, 2021).

This is why I, in part, attribute the declining rate of women in the workforce to India's deep-rooted and seemingly inveterate cultural and social attitudes concerning their view of a "*good Indian woman*", and the contrasted activity of "*paid work*". The Indian society's patriarchal standard has meant, that for many, permission needs to be asked in order to enrol in higher

education, to apply for jobs, and whether or not to accept those jobs. This is explained by Siddiqi (2021, p.3):

> If girls are told [that] you are just a showpiece…that you are only made to do household chores, they also start thinking what the point is of getting educated", "It is because of the socialization that women are supposed to be more caring", "Some women perceive themselves as weak…it is because they have been socialized like that.

Furthermore, as discussed in Lau (2010, p.284) "*'good daughters' always deferred to the authority of patriarchal family*". The importance of conforming to the patriarchy in order to uphold family honour was evident among my informants as well, as discussed by one woman in her 30s with a degree in Computer Engineering, her decision to work and later migrate for work had to go through her father or her husband:

> If I were applying to work in a country outside of India, I am sure my father would not have said yes if I was not married. They worry more about their daughters than their boys. Everything will be generally easier for men.
> (Pari, personal communication, September 29, 2020)

In contrast, a man is expected to be employed and does not need to ask permission in order to pursue a career. India's cultural and social attitudes towards women have produced a massive gender gap between acceptable work, if they are allowed to work at all, and appropriate behaviour. For many, a woman's responsibility is to devote her time to domestic care, while a man's responsibility is to secure household income through employment (Das, 2006). These social norms have led to women in India on average being less skilled and less educated than Indian men, hence less likely to partake in the Indian labour force as they are less likely to receive adequate employment opportunities (Chaudhary & Verick, 2014, p.2).

5.5.3. Domestic Duties and the "Double Burden" of Indian Women

Domestic duties and unpaid care work are some of the biggest obstacles to Indian women's participation in the labour force. With the divergence from multi-generational family models and with the convergence of the nuclear family in India this has meant that the obstacles Indian women face in regard to their perceived responsibilities at home have increased. These

responsibilities are, however, being reinforced by the Indian state, as the government is dependent upon Indian women's unpaid domestic work in order to reduce the government's financial burden by supporting the view of women's domestic duties as being a replacement for their inability to provide public services (ILO, 2009, p.125). As discussed by Sultana (2012, p.12) "*The burden of household work is mostly on the women and young girls, while men are executed on the plea of their economic activities*." Indian women's domestic work is not considered "*work*" in the conventional meaning, but rather duties, in contrast to their male counterparts who engage in economically valued labour (Soma & Audichaya, 2020, p.4).

In contrast to "*economic value work*", a label which is mainly assigned to men, as they are perceived to be first in line regarding economic income gains through wage labour, Indian women's work is often classified as "*subsistence value work*", which is work that is assigned to Indian women who pursue the work, mainly domestic duties, from their conviction of the value it brings to them and the household (Soma & Audichaya, 2020, p.4). As this system of labour based on gender has continued to grow, a stark male/female hierarchy has been established, with economic value work being rewarded and given a higher value than women's subsistence work (Soma & Audichaya, 2020, p.4). This is explained in Siddiqi (2021, p.3)

> "Around 90% of farmers are females but their names are not highlighted because they are women", "*Women's work is looked down upon. People say oh you only do dusting and cleaning*". They are made to feel that their work is less important".

In addition to being "women's work", the time spent on family and household responsibilities have become so time-consuming that they are factors that for many women come before work obligations. A study by Fletcher, Pande and Moore (2017, p.8) found that many Indian women do not accept jobs, or quit, because family obligations become too much of a responsibility for them to be able to manoeuvre a demanding career in tandem with being a mother or housewife.

The topic of traditional gender roles in regard to labour that is undertaken by among men and women in India was also discussed by my informants. The following was noted by one, a software engineer, in her mid-30s, currently in Norway:

> My father was working, and my mother was a homemaker, that is what the typical family roles were like at that time. To some degree they are like that for many still. They are not expecting anything of the women to work and make money. Because they have a lot of responsibility back home. They cannot spend time away because they have work to do at home, it was like that for my mother for example.
> (Saanvi, personal communication, August 18, 2020).

Another woman accounted for the importance of upholding the traditional view on the importance of domestic work for Indian women:

> Indian women take on a lot of responsibilities. It is the way they are brought up. If you do not learn how to do household chores what will your mother-in-law say? I would be ashamed; my family would be ashamed, and my husband would be ashamed. There are many good things with Indian culture, but the difference between men and women hurts.
> (Sarah, personal communication, September 29, 2020)

Many of the women I interviewed told me that they knew numerous women who had a university degree within ICT, even finishing both a bachelors' and a master's degree, but would never put that degree to use because their preconceived responsibility and engagement as a mother or wife who stays at home and takes care of the children were too demanding. The difficulty of the "*double burden*" of Indian women, in juggling a demanding career as well as domestic duties is for most Indian women difficult. This is also found to be the case when analysing the number of married versus unmarried women in the workforce. The chance of being employed is higher if you are not married or do not have children across all age-groups. In contrast, your chances are a lot lower if you are married or do have children (see Figure 5.7). This is especially disastrous for the Indian FLFPR because 95 per cent of Indian women who are 25 or older are married, or have been married, and, as such, if the trend continues, a decreasing FLFPR in India will continue to dominate (Fletcher, Pande & Moore, 2017, p.7). Indian states that have a higher level of patriarchy, this includes female to male sex ratio, the limited extent to which Indian women partake in household decisions, time spent on unpaid domestic work and household violence, have a higher percentage of women with graduate and postgraduate degrees out of the labour force (Ghai, 2019). The Indian State of Haryana in the northern part of India, with a high patriarchy index, has 70 per cent of the women with graduate degrees out of the

labour force. In contrast, in the Northeast, the Indian State of Nagaland, with a low score on the patriarchy index, has 29 per cent of the women with graduate degrees out of the labour force (Ghai, 2019)

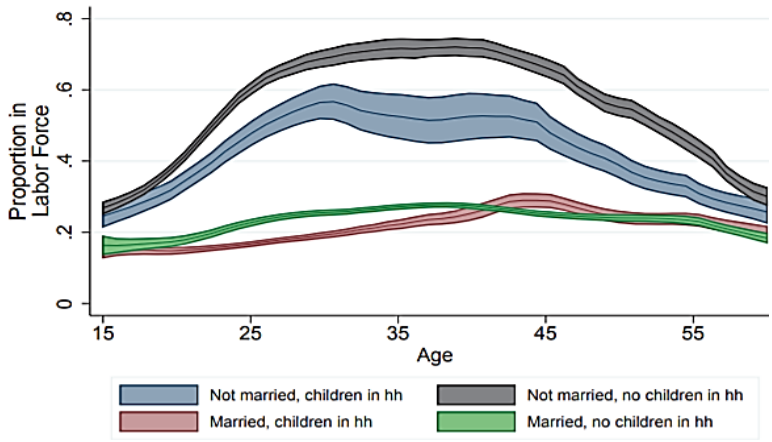

Figure 5.7 Proportion of women in the labour force by marital status, children, and age.

Illustration retrieved from Fletcher, Pande & Moore (2018, p.7)

Due to the unlikeliness of participating in the labour force within organised and decent employment, many Indian women, in order to safeguard their future, has come to view the act marriage as the ultimate form of securing their future. This is discussed by Rao (2014, p.882):

> Despite considerable investment in girls' secondary education, women's educational success has not translated into economic advantage. Gender wage gaps remain high, with women on average earning 60% of what men earn. In such a context of low wages, difficult working conditions, and weak social security provisioning, women find themselves consider marriage rather than a career as the ultimate form of future security.

Furthermore, gender differences in related to assumptions regarding what men and women can do continues to be an obstacle for Indian women. When discussing the factor of traveling for work or working overtime, it became clear that there are a number of additional questions in the recruitment process for Indian women. My informants, especially those who are married, highlighted that they were often asked if they were certain of the fact that they would be able to travel for work. The women needed to assure their employer that their domestic duties at home,

or their role as a mother, would not impede their work. A woman whom I interviewed stated "*There are a lot of unconscious biases when a decision has to be made between giving a woman or a man a work opportunity*" (Myra, personal communication, August 5, 2020). Every woman I interviewed said that questions related to their responsibilities at home would never have been asked to an Indian man, as it is not assumed that he would need to partake in domestic duties that would disrupt his ability to work. In support of this, Myra said "*Many women choose to drop out of their careers as they move up the ladder. Mostly due to higher pressure of these jobs, high demand of time to be devoted, maternity being the most major reasons for dropouts*" (Myra, personal communication, March 30, 2021).

It is evident that the preconceived gender roles in India are being reproduced both at the macro- and micro-level. Within the household, as well as by government policies favouring men and discriminating women's opportunities to partake in the labour market (Ram, Strohschein, & Gaur, 2014, p. 11). For many Indian women there exist vigorous social injunctions against partaking in labour that takes place outside of the home. This means that the social costs, in terms of loss of honour and respectability, outweigh the potential economic gains the women might obtain through work (Jensen, 2010, p.1).

Although the percentage of unemployed Indians has been increasing for both men and women, men are often the first to claim the jobs that become available. Society's view of the Indian man as the primary breadwinner has produced a labour market where it is taken as a given that the man will be the first to claim the jobs that become available (see Figure 5.8)

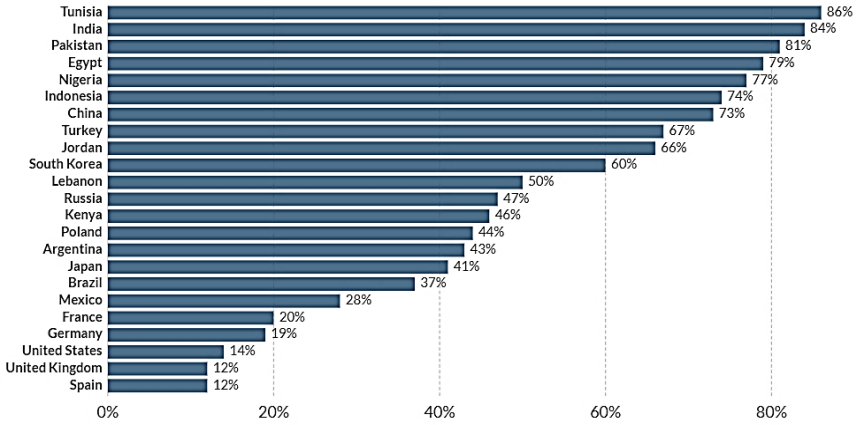

Figure 5.8 Percentage of people who agree with the statement:
"*When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"*
Figure retrieved from Ortiz-Ospina, Tzvetkova & Roser (2018)

One of my informants elaborated on her view of the difference in gender roles in India. She was young, in her 20s, unmarried and did not have children. She came from a middle-class family in a large metropolitan city in India. Additionally, she had travelled abroad for her education before settling in Norway as an IT consultant:

> I think it is a lot easier for men to both travel and take the jobs they want. As most things are in India. There is a lot of pressure on Indian women. Some of my Indian cousins, once they finished their bachelors and master's degree, they had a lot of pressure on them to find a husband, but I do not think that pressure is on men. They can move around as they wish, and its generally looked upon as a status symbol if a guy gets a job both in India and abroad. But for the girls the parents may worry if she gets a job in a metropolitan city or overseas. I remember some of my friends parents said, "*I hope she doesn't get spoiled*", "*I hope she doesn't get on those western values*" "*I hope she doesn't go out at night*". You know, going out in the evening time for Indian women is considered a bad thing.
>
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

She further elaborated on the connection between India's gender disparities in the types of responsibility men and women have, and how the perceived responsibility for many women hinders their possibility to partake in the labour force:

> My mom was actually a banker, and was doing very well, but that was because she had the support of the whole family. A lot of women in India are getting an education and jobs, but they end up quitting their jobs and demanding career because they have to take care of the kids at home. For many women there is no other way, they cannot trust anybody apart from maybe the grandparents to take care of the children. Today I have seen some changes in the possibility for childcare facilities, at least in the cosmopolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai, this might enable them to have sort of a work and life balance, but I still think it is very difficult for many.
>
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

From early on, both from outside voices, as well as within the household, many Indian girls are told that their rightful place is in the home, that their most important role in life takes place there. This entails fulfilling their domestic duties as housewives and mothers, as well as catering to what their men, be it their husband, brother, or father needs (Ram, Strohschein & Gaur, 2014, p. 2).

India's traditional gender roles, and the divide between what constitutes "*women's work*", and "*men's work*", are exceptional persistent. As D'Lima, Solotaroff and Pande (2020, p.24) write in their study regarding India and the view on honour, "*a woman's public presence is tied to the honour of the household and caste group",* and maintaining family honour and respectability is for many Indian families their key factor in keeping their societal standing. Work opportunities, educational enrolment, societal belonging, and socio-economic prospect are all tied up in the notion of honour. There seems to exist, for many, an obsessive notion regarding the importance of keeping women away from activities that are deemed socially unacceptable, in order to maintain the household and society's perception of a "*good woman*". This is mainly rooted in her ability to uphold the notions of honour and purity. Economically independent women are for many households incompatible with honour, seclusion, and purity. The importance of being perceived as a "*good woman*" is tied up in the notion of a number of social roles as a dutiful and modest daughter, wife, and mother. Many women are discouraged from making or even expressing independent choices or wishes, and are often excluded from decision making processes. For many, being valued as a "*good woman*" boils down to the effect of their labour contribution to the household (see Figure 5.9) (D'Lima, Solotaroff & Pande, 2020, p.24).

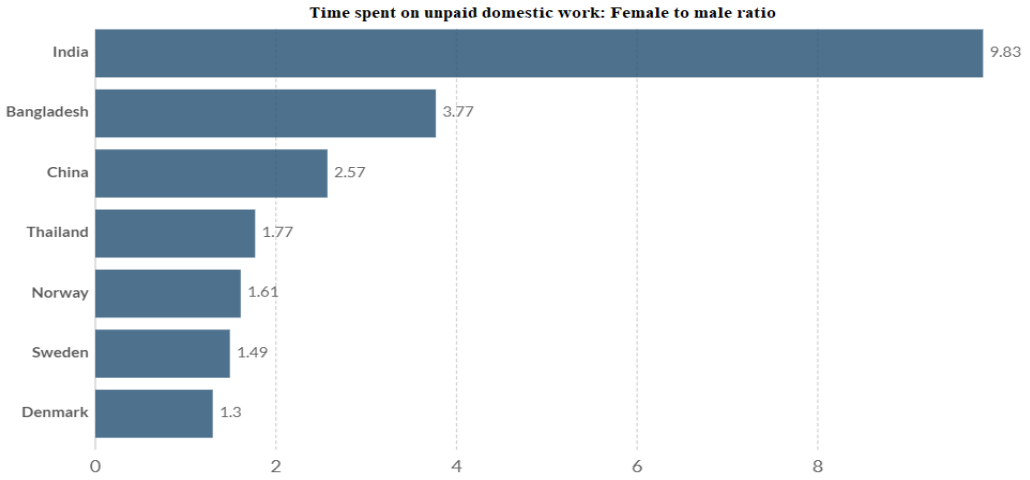

Figure 5.9 Female-to-male ratio of time devoted to unpaid domestic work (2014)

Figure retrieved from OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (2014)

Indian women strive for the potential to engage in the labour market without having to engage in typical "*women's work*", but rather work that is fundamental to their own development, and the development of society (Soma & Audichaya, 2020, p.9). As argued by Sen (1999, p.18) freedom is viewed as an "*expansion of the -capabilities- of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value*". Sen argues that a person's capabilities can be enhanced by public policy. There needs to be state intervention regarding female involvement in the labour market, but also by participatory capabilities from the public. There needs to be a society/individual level change to the social legitimising of Indian women within formally and recognised employment opportunities. In order to achieve freedom, one needs *processes* that allow freedom of actions and decisions, such as implementing policies bringing women *in* to the formal and recognised labour market, and a change in the social/cultural view of women in the labour market, *and* actual *opportunities* being given to women (Sen, 1999, p. 17).

5.6. India's Informal Labour Market

While Indian women face a number of hurdles in regard to social norms and the perception of acceptable female labour participation, they simultaneously face a number of hurdles regarding potential of decently paid and formally recognised work.

Informality in the Indian economy continues to be a major characteristic of the country's labour market. Being an informal worker entails no paid leave, no social security, no contract, or decent wages (Singh, 2021). India's informal sector is not only massive, but also massively persistent. During India's economic development, the sector has remained persistently stable for the last 20 years. Compared to other countries who have gone through similar developmental stages, India's informal sector is exceptionally large for the state of development the country is currently at (Ghani, William & O'Connell, 2013, p.2).

Most labourers in India, 94 per cent, are informally employed or work informal jobs (Punia, 2020). It is estimated that a percentage as high as 90 percent of all active workers in India have no written labour contract (Dasgupta & Kar, 2018, p.7). It has been argued that the growth of India's informal economy is not a concurrence that happened to coincide with the growth of neoliberal globalisation, but that it is a result of it. As India moved away from import protection and strict state regulation, and towards a neoliberal laissez-faire export-oriented regime, it brought with it increased poverty, rising unemployment, and the spread of the informal economy for those Indian women outside of the middle- and upper-middle classes of Indian society. Indian women are those who suffer the most, because they are seen as the first that needs go in times of economic crisis, and the last to be employed in times of economic growth. (Smith, 2016, p.121). The implication for Indian women who partake in an economy that is largely informal in nature has meant that living within employment uncertainty, and the acceptance of being poorly paid and poorly treated has become the norm. The informal economy has become a place that reinforces gender disparities and strengthens gender inequality in the Indian labour market.

It seems quite clear that economic growth has not been translated into adequate labour conditions for the average Indian woman. Alarmingly, As Banerjee (2019) argues in her article regarding women in the unorganised sector in India "*94% of women are employed in the unorganised sector, involved in work which lacks dignity of labour, social security, decent and timely wages and in some cases, even the right to be called a 'worker'.* Participation in the labour market due to necessity and driven out of poverty is not a prerequisite for decently paid and formally organised labour for Indian women.

5.7. Indian Women's Labour Reality

It was hypothesised that India's developmental process and FLFPR would follow a u-shaped development curve (See Figure 5.10). This means that before economic development occurs in a country, the labour force participation will be relatively high, as the informality of the economy and the low GDP force women to participate. As the country develops economically, educational attainment will increase, fertility rates will decline, and a growing demand for labour within a range of different sectors will create decent opportunities for women (Verick, 2014, p.2). When looking at countries which have experienced similar developmental processes, such as China, Brazil, and Russia, their FLFPR has reached a higher average than India (See Figure 5.11). India's FLFPR is currently lower than it was hypothesesed to be in 2020 considering the country's income level (Verick, 2014, p.6).

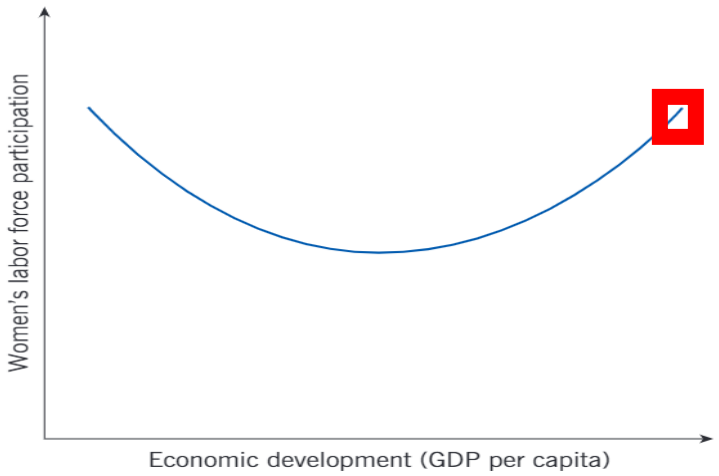

Figure 5.10 What India's Development Curve was hypothesesed to look like in 2020. The red square indicates where they should be now.
Retrieved from Verick (2014, p.2)

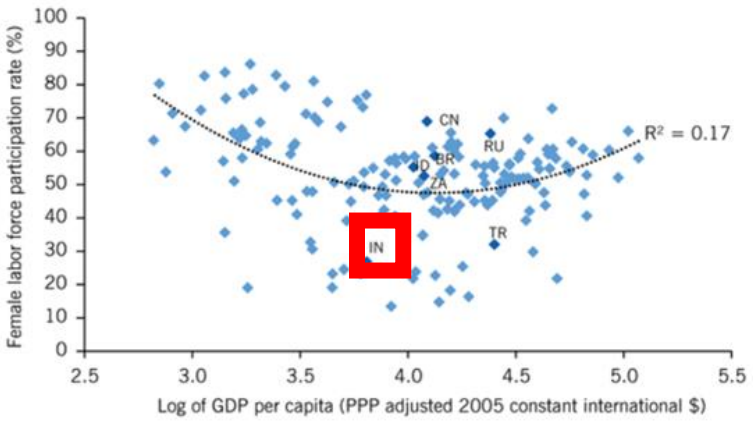

Figure 5.11 What India's developmental curve is currently looking like (2010). The red square is India, while other BRIC countries are also represented.
Retrieved from Verick (2014, p.2)

Although the u-shaped developmental hypotheses might be realised in the future, there is little indication that this developmental hypotheses is for India. As of 2018, India was still ranked among countries such as Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq for economic opportunities given to women. Additionally, South Asia, where Indian women make up ¾ of the female population, has the second highest gender gap in the world, just behind the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). The economic gender gap in India is especially large compared to other developing countries in the world. India is the only country in the world that has had a larger economic gender gap then its political gender gap since 2006 (WEF, 2020, p.11).

5.8. Concluding Remarks

India's process of globalisation has not produced inclusive economic growth, but rather decreased opportunities for Indian women to partake in the labour market as independent workers. Additionally, growing Hindu nationalism, has brought with it a strengthening of patrilocal- and patrilineal traditions, and has meant that the socio-economic standing for the average Indian woman has diminished. The double burden of domestic work and the second-class citizen status of many Indian women has contributed to India's decreasing FLFPR and strengthened the patriarchal nature of the Indian society. Indian women continue to be victims of

subordination, due to male domination through the legitimisation of patriarchy, exploitation, due to unequal access to fair wages and fair employment opportunities, and oppression, due to a growing gendered discrimination, a clear male preference, and the use of Hinduism to continue this oppression.

Following the words of Fraser (1999, p.73), what India needs is participatory parity. In order to achieve participatory parity, one needs *redistribution*, meaning, a just distribution of resources, such as access to decent work, fair wages, and equal access to skill development such as education etc. *Recognition*, meaning recognition of distinctive perspectives related to gender differences, class differences, caste differences, and *representation*, meaning equal potential for participation as equals with others within social interactions (Fraser, 1999, p. 73). However, at the moment, it seems quite clear that misrecognition, maldistribution, and misrepresentation are the reality for a large number of Indian women. One needs to recognise the obstacles which Indian women face that deny them the resources they need to be able to participate in the labour market in opportunities that are decent.

Furthermore, due to India's institutionalised hierarchies that are rooted in cultural values, many Indian women are being denied their required standing in society, and struggle to acquire a redistribution of resources based on their gender, class status, and caste affiliation. Additionally, there exist no redistribution of resources or recognition of gender differences without adequate representation of Indian women in the formal and recognised labour market. The dimensions of recognition, redistribution and representation are all mutually entwined, and they reciprocally influence and reinforce each other; none are reducible to the other (Fraser, 1999, p.73).

India's persisting gender norms and rigid caste affiliation have shown that economic development, decreasing poverty levels, falling fertility rates, and increased enrolment in higher education has been insufficient in increasing the number of Indian women in the workforce. In order to see a positive change in the right direction, a break in the inveterate attitudes towards Indian women is needed. India's process of globalisation has its roots in skewed power relations based on class, caste, religion, and gender. This process has been uneven, contradictory, and complex. It has affected India's gendered spaces in the organised/unorganised labour market, the household/family dynamic, and the social systems in which the women find themselves in. The dichotomy of male/female, oppressor/oppressed, and centre/margin is still a social reality for

many Indian women, as the concept of power is exercised between individuals, groups, governments, institutions, and social entities (Guenther, 2015, p.30-38).

In order to develop the view on working women in India, there needs to be a dyadic interaction between economic development that is producing decent opportunities, as well as a change in household processes in the “private” realm. The states attitudes and household views on women are both shaped and reproduced by each other. (World Bank, 1991, p.xvi-xcii).

Chapter 6 - A Global Demand for Employment Specific Migrants

"The changing flow of women from short distance to long distance or the increasing mobility of women over time helps in understanding that besides changes in women's motivations, their role in migration decision making is also changing"

(Mahapatro, 2013, p.72)

My reasoning for highlighting the factors contributing to India's declining female labour force is because these factors are connected to India's process of globalisation. While the average FLFPR is declining, a group of middle-class educated and skilled Indian women have benefitted from the country's developmental process. With the closing off of particular labour markets, the process of globalisation has also created new specialised markets, particularly for the highly skilled and highly educated. For this group of women, the process of globalisation has increased the potential for decently paid and formally recognised employment opportunities. While there has been a general decrease in active working women in India, there has also been an increase in specialised jobs within certain industries in India, notably the ICT industry. Today, Indian women make up 34 per cent of the ICT workforce and represent 50.7 per cent of the degrees in Information Technology (I.T) and 54.1 per cent of graduates in computer science (Gupta, 2020).

Throughout this chapter I will analyse the macro and micro changes in the Indian society regarding women and work. Most notably the state-led changes to the availability of certain jobs, and emerging individual aspirations among middle-class Indian women. I will also show how the increase in skilled female migrants is being perpetuated by meso-level factors, most notably the global market and transnational corporations.

6.1. Macro Changes to Female Employment Patterns

6.1.1. Employment-Specific Skilled Migration from India

Skilled female labour migration is fascinating to look at within an Indian context, as gender and work are inherently connected to a broader set of social restrictions and assumptions. As discussed in Chapter 5, women's access to, and mobility within, the formal and organised Indian labour market is, for many, beyond reach. While globalisation has shrunken India's traditional labour market, displacing many women in the Indian workforce, it has widened India's service industry. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the total number of highly skilled labour migrants who moved from India to the Global North grew by 70 per cent, and the number of highly skilled and educated female labour migrants from India increased by 80 per cent between the years of 2000 and 2011, and is continuing to grow today (Kõu, Mulder, & Bailey, 2017, p. 178).

Several studies have found that particular sectors, particularly the ICT sector, have the potential to grow the FLFPR exponentially, since it has the ability to absorb skilled professionals on a large scale (See Lopez-Bassols, 2002; Agarwal & Malhotra, 2016; Firdausi, 2020). Because of the industry's need for ever-growing technological advancement, the need for skilled labourers will to an extent, always exists (DCED, 2021). Additionally, India has become one of the world's largest export hubs for ICT services, and India’s outsourcing market of ICT professionals is expected to continue to grow (IBEF, 2021). Furthermore, India possesses a considerable competitive advantage in terms of a large pool of skilled professionals who are available internationally at a lower cost than many other countries (IBEF, 2021). An increasingly younger population in need of work is continuing to facilitate the migration of Indian ICT professionals.

As India's economic development has moved forward, structural changes have been implemented in the economy (Sundari, 2020, p. 696). The most notable change regarding the FLFPR by the state has been to move away from GDP revenue and labour absorption from the primary sector, notably agriculture, and towards the tertiary sector, notably technology and communication (Sundari, 2020, p. 696). Today, the Indian ICT-industry is the largest privately-owned employment sector (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012, p.47). This structural change to the sectoral division of labour absorption has meant that there have been changes to the employment

structure of the Indian female workforce. Indian women's employment patterns have shifted in tandem with the state, and globally led structural change towards employment opportunities in the tertiary sector.

6.1.2. ICT: The Role of the Indian State and the Global Market

As discussed by ILO (2019, p.11), as the process of globalisation moved forward, India placed their efforts in growing the country's economy by the provision of low-cost labour to a global market that needed it. The state relied on attracting foreign direct investment by exporting inexpensive labourers to other parts of the world. Because of this, India has one of the world's most extensive and specialised ICT industries and is continuing to invest in the education and training of ICT professionals. What has driven India's economic development has been the need to rapidly adjust and digitise Indian society. Today, the Indian ICT industry has become far-reaching, and supplies millions of Indians with formal and organised employment (ILO, 2019, p.11).

India’s development process, with the onset of globalisation in the early 1990s, has led to increasing levels of labour migration. This is due to development processes typically increasing individuals capabilities, in terms of increased opportunity for higher education, skill development, knowledge, social networks, and aspirations, due to exposure and access to changing ideas, lifestyles, images, and information (See Figure 6.1).

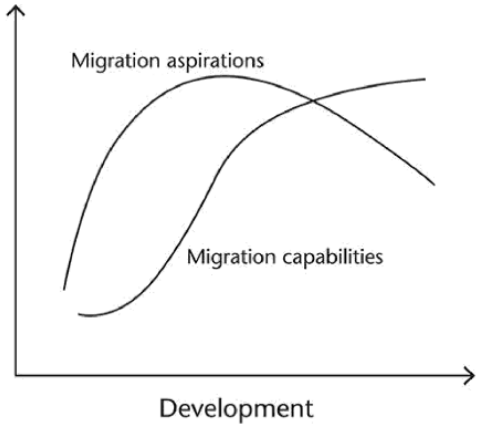

Figure 6.1 Effects of development on migration capabilities and aspirations
Retrieved from de Haas, Castles & Miller (2020, p.57)

The migration of skilled professionals has made it possible for India to facilitate Western economies with their demand for workers. Additionally, since the primary income source for the Indian Government comes from exporting, skilled migration related ICT have become one of their key factors in the country's labour market growth (Boucher, 2016, p.1).

6.1.3. Striving for Diversity and Inclusion in the ICT Industry

Due to the importance of the ICT-industry for economic growth for the state, the Indian government have begun directly targeting women to pursue a career within ICT through various diversity programs. Additionally, some of the biggest IT companies in India have set up diversity programs specifically for India to draw in Indian female ICT professionals. There are many diversity programs, but some of the most significant and impactful are *Robotics* and their *"@IndianGirlsCode*", which is a social initiative that gives underprivileged girls in India the opportunity to enrol in free coding and robotics programmes (UNESCO, 2017, p. 62). Furthermore, *Microsoft* launched their "*Codess*" and "*DigiGirlz*" programs to promote gender diversity in engineering and technology. PayPal launched their program "*Recharge*", which is a back to work initiative for women who either for personal or professional reasons, recently have not worked. *Accenture* and their "*High-Tech Women Rise*" initiative were established to help women build long-term careers within the ICT industry. *IMB* and their "*STEM for Girls*" and "*Disha*" encourage women to choose a career within STEM. *Shell's* "*NXplorers*" is aimed at young women in STEM by giving opportunities to female engineers (Thomas, 2020).

Additionally, a number of large Indian IT companies, among them *Tata Consultancy Services* (TCS), one of India's largest IT firms, have implemented policies directly targeted to draw female employees. TCS have around 400 000 employees, with women making up around 35 per cent (ILO, 2019, p. 19).

The direct impact that diversity programs and macro-initiatives can have on the professional development of Indian women was also evident among some of my informants. One of my informants, was woman in her mid-30s who was married and had small children, but was able to keep up with a demanding career as an international labour migrant due to her employer

allowing her family to join her in Norway. She and her husband worked for the same ICT firm and were both employed in Norway on temporary working contracts for the duration of their project. Their children travelled with them and were offered childcare facilities in the daytime while the woman worked. Housing was also set up in collaboration between her Indian primary employer and the Norwegian company for which the woman was working for:

> I definitely think that there are more women both working and migrating today than it was before. And if I compare from 2007 when I finished my education, and now, it has changed a lot in the number of women who get an education and then chooses to migrate for work. It has been a gradual increase in a positive direction. I think some of the reason for the increase is because there are many opportunities given to women in terms of education, and many companies are working on diversity programs. I do not think I would have been able to travel for such long projects in Norway had it not been for the fact that my employer was able to offer different facilities such as housing and childcare. (Aaradhya, personal communication, August 20, 2020)

The Indian ICT industry has become a mechanism in which educated Indian women are using to legitimise their presence in the workforce. Since India has completed a restructuring of its previous traditional labour market, women have received new opportunities to enter and gain access to jobs that might not have been open to them in the past. For India, both economic growth and physical- and social mobility for women is still relatively low, but a reorganisation of the type of work some educated and skilled Indian women now have the potential to engage in, is in some places, visible, for example, with the increase in women going into ICT.

6.1.4. Growing Popularity for ICT related University Degrees

In addition to structural changes at the macro-level, through the efforts of the Indian Government and multinational corporations by increasing the number of ICT professionals abroad, the demand for ICT related university degrees has seen a sharp increase. The popularity of ICT-related undergraduate and graduate degrees is seen in the massive enrolment of Indian female students since the 1980s. In the 1980s, the percentage of female computer science graduates was 5 per cent. This number rose to 30 per cent in 2009, and has continued to grow to 50 per cent as

of 2018 (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012, p.46). ICT has become a popular choice for Indian women, due to the industry's relatively high salaries in contrast to other jobs, the availability of mobility across continents and flexible work hours (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012, p.46.) However, the stratified nature of Indian society has made the ability to obtain a degree within ICT a class project. Middle class urban-living families in India spend on average more effort, money and, significantly more time on their children's education in comparison to rural and low-income families (Javalgi & Grossman, 2014, p. 664).

As discussed in Chapter 5, for the last 15 years, India has seen a massive increase in women enrolled in tertiary education. This has coincided with India's technological advancements and has made Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) -related degrees a popular choice for female students (See Figure 6.2).

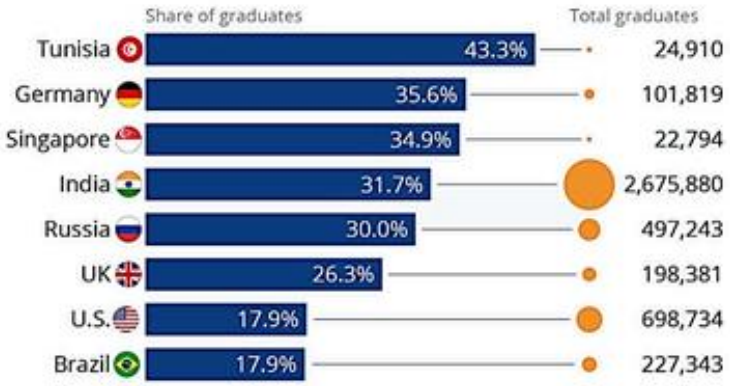

Figure 6.2 Share of graduates and total graduates from STEM tertiary education programs in selected countries as of 2018.

Retrieved from Buchholz (2020)

The changing views regarding Indian women, and the importance of tertiary education, is somewhat surprising, as Indian women and girls on average are given fewer educational opportunities due to the view of many households of education as a primary necessity for male children exclusively. In strong patriarchal societies, women often do not have the same chance to develop their skills and qualities as men do (Sultana, 2012, p. 12). However, it has been argued

extensively that an increase in tertiary education leads to an increase in the opportunity for work (OECD, 2012; Berger & Fisher, 2013; O'Lawrence & Martinez, 2009).

By having a large and skilled female labour force, the potential for enhancing Indian women's economic empowerment increases (UN Women, 2021). Moreover, although women globally are underrepresented in STEM-related education, India produces the most STEM graduates in the world (See Figure 6.2). STEM-related degrees have a long history in the Indian educational system as being respectable careers and the high regard in which ICT degrees are held has meant that Indian women can earn a good salary while still holding onto the notion of being a "respectable woman".

One of my informants, a woman in her 30s with a graduate degree in computer applications, told me about her experience with STEM:

> The Indian education system exposes students to Science and Maths very early in age. So, most women who are good or average in science and maths generally opt for STEM streams in higher education in colleges. For decades STEM degrees were the only dreams that parents had for their children. People with these degrees were looked up with great respect in society. So, for years there were also very limited options to choose from if a woman or anyone wished to go for higher studies.
> (Myra, personal communication, March 30, 2021)

Another woman in her mid-30s with a degree in engineering said:

> Before the year 2000, there was not many women in education. They stopped at education when they finished high school. After the I.T. revolution, more and more women get educated. The women feel safe when being at work, and it is not a physical job. It is not manual labour that means that more women are completing their engineering. After my period, I could see more and more women into this field.
> (Saanvi, personal communication, August 18, 2020)

Her answer regarding the difference between manual and non-manual labour is interesting. In the caste system, bodily fluids are seen as pollutants. Blood, sweat, and tears are to be avoided as it is seen as impure. The higher the women are in the caste system, the higher the levels of purity and piety is required of them. Manual labour is not only forbidden but disdained as an impure

and unacceptable form of labour (Munshi, 2016, p. 1). This is also why middle-class Indian women tend to be largely concentrated and over-represented in white-collar jobs in the service industry. As India's ICT industry is continuing to grow, many educated and skilled female professionals in the Indian labour market, has come to see these types of jobs as the only socially acceptable opportunities for women with secondary and tertiary education. (Deshpande, Lo Bue, Pieters & Sen, 2020, p.2). As such, white-collar jobs within the ICT sector has opened up as an acceptable form of labour for Indian women with higher levels of education.

The structural changes that have been implemented in India's liberalising economy, a rapidly growing technology sector, the digitalisation of society, and the country's changing social and cultural institutions regarding access and availability for Indian women, have created a demand for educated Indian middle-class women in the workforce. There is a growing change of opinion among Indians about what constitutes "*acceptable women's work*", and technical jobs within ICT are becoming acceptable at an increasing rate. A changing mindset regarding what it entails to be a "*respectable woman*" in India has made it possible for several middle-class women to take advantage of new economic opportunities in the labour market (Dutta & Shaw, 2019, p.1). The emerging trend of changes to acceptable female labour participation can be seen in Table 1, which shows the employment rate for Indian women between the ages of 15-29 was the highest among urban living women with a tech degree (Mitra & Verick, 2013, p. 6)

Table 1 Youth Worker Population ratio (%) in Rural and Urban areas by Educational Attainment (15-29 years), 2009-10

Retrieved from Mitra & Verick (2013, p.6)

	Rural			Urban			Total		
Education level	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Illiterate	90.3	39.0	54.7	85.2	22.1	45.9	89.4	36.7	53.4
Primary	83.5	34.3	58.0	81.2	19.7	53.3	83.0	31.7	57.1
Higher secondary	54.2	20.5	40.3	46.8	8.8	29.5	52.0	16.5	36.8
Graduate	58.3	23.7	43.9	58.2	20.6	38.2	58.3	21.7	40.6
Tech degree	49.9	13.6	42.8	79.6	50.6	71.4	73.2	45.3	65.8
Diploma below Grad.	59.1	25.2	49.1	61.6	31.8	51.5	60.5	29.4	50.5
Diploma above Grad.	50.7	12.9	32.6	64.0	34.6	52.3	60.4	27.2	46.3
Total	64.8	28.8	47.2	56.4	14.4	36.5	62.3	24.7	44.1

6.1.5. The U-shaped Development Hypotheses Revisited

As discussed in Chapter 5, the U-shaped development hypotheses, which assumes that the FLFPR should increase following economic development, is in part true. In India, the FLPR is relatively high at the lowest level of education, lower at the intermediate level of education, and increases substantially at the highest level of education (See Figure 6.3). For women with low levels of education, their reason for partaking in the labour force is that it is a necessity. Precarious labour opportunities increase the FLFPR, but do not result in increased levels of gender equality in the labour market (see Chapter 5) (Ghai, 2018, p.19). When analysing the type of work in which this group of women is involved, it becomes clear that it is neither decent nor formal (see chapter 5). Women with intermediate levels of education are reluctant to partake in the labour force, because of a decreased need to do so and hesitation to partake in manual labour with low wages. The women at the top, with the highest levels of education and the highest percentage of labour force participation, are those women who have completed higher education and are, therefore, able to find decent labour opportunities within white-collar industries, notably the ICT industry.

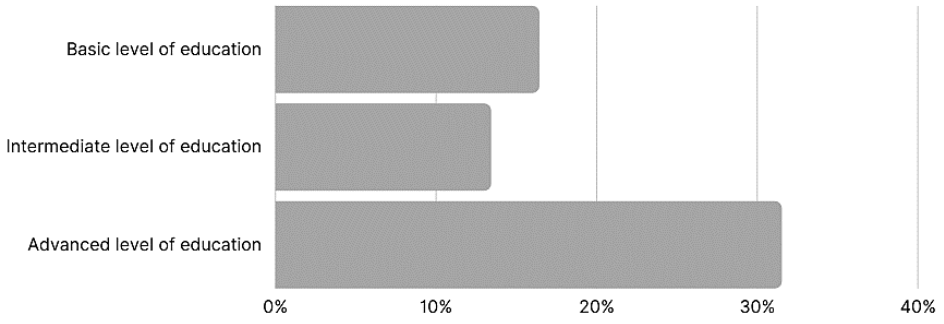

Figure 6.3 Labour force participation rate based on the level of education in India (2018). Retrieved from Statista (2020)

The women belonging to the middle class, who find themselves in between the highest and lowest caste groups and socioeconomic classes are also often less restricted regarding their social- and cultural norm and traditions, as they find themselves between the lowest tiers and the highest tiers of the caste system and simultaneously experience a family dynamic that sees the

beneficial outcome of sending their daughters to school (Ghai, 2018, p.38). Additionally, the importance of education for female autonomy has been established in numerous studies, as it has been hypothesesed that the higher an education a young Indian woman has, the more she can have a say in choosing a marriage partner. The level of education also affects the marrying age of Indian women, which has increased remarkably, hence prolonging the women's workforce presence, and their ability to earn independent income (Kõu, Mulder & Bailey, 2017, p.2792).

One of my informants discussed how a changing mindset among Indian families has contributed to the increasing number of Indian women enrolled in tertiary education within STEM. These changes have been incited by changes to the macro-structure of the Indian society, with the Indian State and the Global Market as the biggest push factors. These changes are being reproduced at a micro-level, and are now being seen among Indian individuals in the form of aspirations and desires for employment opportunities within ICT:

> Today, there are huge amounts of women that are educated in India. I think the reason is that families have started understanding that if the women are educated, it motivates later generations. Nowadays, it does not matter if the family is rich or poor. Everybody wants their kids to be highly educated. This is very common. They give up all their money for education.
> (Sarah, personal communication, September 29, 2020)

For India's process of globalisation, when looking at the macro-level, the most important factor that has affected the increase in skilled female ICT labourers leaving the country has been India's integration into the Global Market. This is in turn due to firstly, the Indian state's export driven ICT industry. Because of its technologically driven economic development, India is in possession of a surplus of skilled ICT professionals. The conscious act of the Indian state to target technological development in an effort to leapfrog economic growth has meant that the migration of ICT professionals is both socially legitimate and preferred. The global market's search for low-cost labourers within the technology industry is increasingly making Indian ICT

professionals a highly desired group of workers. Secondly, a growing internationalisation of the workplace, coupled with the highly regarded socio-economic standing of the highly educated and highly skilled, has meant that ICT professionals from India are enjoying increased privileges when it comes to mobility (Beneria, Deere & Kabeer, 2009, p.46). Thirdly, a growing social legitimacy for highly skilled female migrants from India, partly due to the increase in the number of multinational companies in India which has brought with it the emergence of a social legitimate environment of transnationalism, increasing the prospect for labour migration (Schoettli & Pohlmann, 2017, p. 2)

6.2. Micro Changes to Female Employment Patterns

6.2.1. The New Indian Woman

Clearly identifying who belongs and who does not belong to India's new emerging middle class is difficult, as income is not the only determinant or indicator of an Indian woman's position in society (Lau, 2010, p.272). Membership in the new emerging consumer middle class takes into account a woman's income, occupation, consumerism, access to formal/decent/quality work/education, and their ritualistic and traditional caste status (Lau, 2010, p. 272). For Indian women who are well-off, educated, high/middle caste/class, and decently employed, their sociocultural standing has been heightened during the process of globalisation, in contrast to those less educated, poor, and unemployed Indian women (Kapadia, 2014, p. 236)

For middle-class urban Indian women within the ICT industry a new social identity has been created regarding access to decent labour opportunities and their extent of mobility. A major part of what has driven the ability for middle class Indian women to partake in the global labour market as ICT professionals is their possession of a) *concepts*, in terms of being able to possess the latest and best knowledge and ideas through their education and knowledge regarding other parts of the world; b) *connections*, due to their class/caste belonging, which gives them access to resources and people; and c) *competence*, by having the ability, due to being educated and skilled, to operate at a high international standard anywhere in the world (Kanter, 1995, p.23-24)

Furthermore, since India's process of liberalisation in the 1990s, there has been a growing tendency of Indian migrant women to partake in formal and recognised white-collar jobs. The Indian ICT industry targets educated and skilled women, where the majority of women already stem from middle-class families, and, as such, the women's class and caste status plays a major role in the context of their potential employment prospects. The specific targeting of middle-class educated Indian women contrast with many other transnational industries, such as the care- and domestic industry which targets working-class and lower-caste Indian women who live within uncertain and vulnerable employment opportunities. This targeting of the new Indian middle class is due to the substantial growth of the economy, but also the new consumerism among this specific class. The rising middle class has seen a rise in the percentage of women in the workforce, in contrast to the highest- and lowest classes. This rise in the female workforce is due to the increase in accessible and better job opportunities for those women who are skilled and educated. In the past, the Indian middle class opted for employment opportunities in the public sector, earning a modest income. With the rise of neoliberal economic policies, the new Indian middle class is opting for employment in the private sector, consisting of transnational firms that are able to offer them a better income (Rangwala, Jayawardhena & Saxena, 2020, p. 2803).

6.2.2. How do Skilled Female Migrants Migrate?

The Indian labour market has been unable to keep up with the supply of skilled labourers (ABDI, OECD & ILO, 2018, p.84). Coupled with a decreasing need for ICT professionals in their home country, a growing demand for their skills in the international labour market, has made the choice to migrate abroad for labour an attractive alternative for many skilled ICT workers (Ramasamy & Reddy, 2018, p. 19). In 2019, Indian labour migrants constituted the largest country of origin for skilled workers outside the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and Indian skilled labour migrants accounted for 20 per cent of the work permits given to all applicants to the E.U. (Thorud, 2020, p.20).

The present-day labour migrants from India are part of the "*second wave*" of migrants. These migrants are highly skilled, highly educated, and highly sought after in the global ICT industry. The typical migration pattern for skilled ICT workers from India has been through "*employer-*

sponsored work visas". This means being placed abroad for a specific project for a specific time. Employer-sponsored work visas were the most common route of emigration among my informants. Out of the 14 women interviewed, eight of the women were placed in Norway by their Indian employer, who was contacted by a Norwegian company in need of workers. The Norwegian company needed ICT professionals for a specific project that ran for a specific time, usually around six to 12 months, but it could be for several years. These "*employer-sponsored work visas*" are becoming very common as a migration route for skilled professionals, and are very easy to obtain if you inhabit the rights characteristics.

In addition to the eight women currently in Norway on employer-sponsored work visas, one of my informants came here of her own choice after finishing her education in the U.K. She had chosen Norway as her destination area a couple of years prior. She differed from many of my informants because she was not already employed in Norway, but came here with the specific task of becoming employed. Another woman had also specifically chosen Norway, not for work, but her PhD education in the early 2000s. They are both living in Norway permanently and are still working.

Thirteen of the 14 women interviewed were from major urban cities in India, ranging from nine different states. These women had completed tertiary education from bachelor- to PhD level. They all had at least one parent who had also completed tertiary education. All the women's fathers had at least an undergraduate degree, but nine of the 14 women's mothers also had at least an undergraduate degree, with several of them also finishing a master's degree. What became apparent, when talking to these women, was that what kind of family situation you grew up in and your caste and class belonging would massively influence your path later in life. Being a middle- to upper-class Indian woman, with parents who see the benefit in, and have the money to send their children to school and, later, the positive aspects in being able to make their own money and become financially independent is what, to a large extent, affects a woman's possibilities to partake in the labour force. The fact that they all came from families who had at least one parent who had gone through tertiary education told me that they came from a privileged background. It is absolutely striking to find Indian women, some in their 60s, who had parents who had completed tertiary education in India throughout the 1940s- and 50s. The fact that it was, for many of the women a matter of course that they had parents who had gone

through education and that themselves would go through education, is quite unusual for the average Indian woman. It told me a lot about the women's background, and that they belonged to a privileged group of Indian women who have the possibility of being near equals within their family dynamic.

6.2.3. Emerging Desires and Aspirations among Indian women

Analysing the Indian women's migration and employment processes at a micro-level, entails including the functions, capabilities, and aspiration of migrant women in their given set of constraints. These include highlighting these women's practices, family dynamic and beliefs (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p. 43). While a macro-level analysis is able to give broad explanations concerning the effects of globalisation on employment opportunities at a national/local level, it is not able to provide a complete understanding of how the potential for employment has affected each individual Indian woman (Jenkins, 2005, p.604). Furthermore, although Indian women are enmeshed in a web of structural forces, structures in themselves do not determine the women's decisions and behaviours (Vandsemb, 2014, p. 76). Indian women are free, while at the same time, conditioned. Their decisions taken within their migration and employment experiences, and their developing aspirations and desires are created within their own history, while simultaneously contested by time- and place-specific contexts (Vandsemb, 2014, p. 76). While middle-class urban living Indian women are socially and economically better off than many other women in India, they are still constrained and enmeshed in societal assumptions and specific expectations regarding their role as Indian women.

However, there exists a huge gap between employment/migration aspirations and employment/migration intentions. Although the percentage of Indian women who aspire to be formally employed and wish to migrate might be high, the actual intention to realise those aspirations is very low for a large group of Indian women. To possess *both* the *aspiration* and *intention* (ability) requires a number of characteristics which need to align in order to make employment/migration aspirations a reality. In order to transform their wish for work abroad into a reality, migrant women need to assess context-specific obstacles that they will either overcome or fall short of realising. These obstacles will vary in accordance with each woman's socio-economic background, caste affiliation, skill level and the potential she has for quality of

employment abroad. Additionally, this employment and migration ability applies unevenly to different social groups, castes, and classes (Carling & Schewel, 2018, p. 955). But, due to changing societal exceptions for a certain group of Indian women, their agency has increased, and growing individualism among Indian women is enhancing their potential for decent and formally recognised work within ICT abroad.

6.2.4. Bound by Tradition but Fuelled by Modernity

There are several determinants affecting an Indian woman's ability to become formally employed and work abroad. In India, this includes the woman's socioeconomic background, the extent of her urbanisation, and her family structure (See Figure 6.4). All these factors have implications for the possibility of finding decent work and the potential for skilled migration abroad. Because there are so many obstacles and variables affecting women's opportunities, the group of women who is highly skilled, educated and, working as a skilled migrant is surprisingly homogenous in terms of class and caste affiliation.

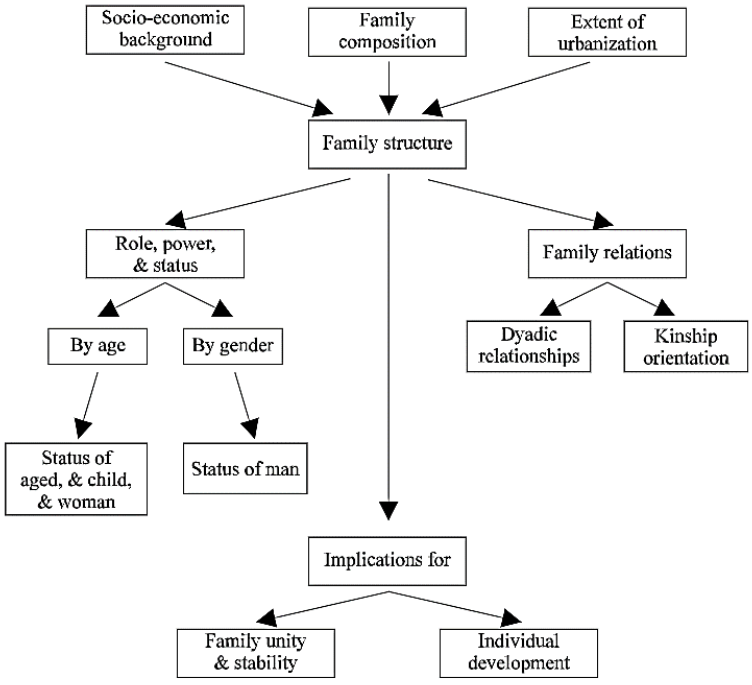

Figure 6.4 Diagram of the framework of family structure in India and how it affects the women living within the structure.

Retrieved from Sonawat (2001, p.179)

This has meant that India's growing economy has produced decent work opportunities for those women who are highly educated and belong to the upper- and middle-classes (Kapsos, Silberman & Bourmpoula, 2014, p.29). A study by Mehta (2016, p.1722) on the connection between decent work for Indian women and the ICT sector showcased the same results I found during my data collection (see Figure 6.5). In her study of 220 Indian women working in different ICT companies, she found that the predominant age group was 20-39 years of age. These women came from urban areas. They were primarily unmarried and belonged to the upper socioeconomic strata. Additionally, 70 per cent of the women belonged to upper castes, and 91 per cent of the women came from upper- and middle-income groups; also 94 per cent of the women had at least undergraduate level education (Mehta, 2016, p. 1722).

		IT	ITeS	Total
Age Group	20-25	66.7	41.3	49.1
	26-30	21.2	53.3	43.5
	30-38	12.1	5.3	7.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Marital Status	Single	72.7	68.0	69.4
	Married	27.3	32.0	30.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Income Category	Up to 150	12.1	6.7	8.3
	150-300	45.5	40.0	41.7
	300-500	33.3	40.0	38.0
	500+	9.1	13.3	12.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Social Group	Forward	78.8	66.7	70.4
	Backward Caste	21.2	26.7	25.0
	Schedule Caste/Tribe	0.0	6.7	4.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Place of origin	Rural	9.1	0.0	2.8
	Semi-Urban	15.2	13.3	13.9
	Urban	33.3	29.3	30.6
	Metro	42.4	57.3	52.8
Education	Higher Secondary	3.0	1.3	1.9
	Diploma	6.1	4.0	4.6
	Graduate	78.8	82.7	81.5
	Post Graduate	12.1	12.0	12.0
Technical Skill	Technical	69.7	37.3	47.2
	Non-Tech	30.3	62.7	52.8
	Total (N)	100	120	220

Figure 6.5 Findings regarding the demographic of 220 female ICT workers.
Illustration retrieved from Mehta (2016, p.1722)

As discussed in Chapter 4, a prerequisite for many middle-class urban Indian women's opportunities to partake in the labour force turns on the issue of being married or unmarried, or if the women have small children or not. These factors tie into the assumed domestic duties discussed in Chapter 5. If educated middle-class urban women are married, and thus, have to take on the primary role as the house caregiver, it will crucially impact the allocation of their time. Additionally, a woman's marriage status inherently changes her social position, and the

opportunity to enter the labour force usually only occurs if she inhabits a family dynamic where social norms and stigmas in consideration to paid labour do not conform with her family's restrictions or traditional views (Andres et al. 2017, p.18). Single Indian women have a higher degree of mobility and freedom from responsibilities than married woman. Responsibilities in the household, family obligations and caring for the children are, for many women in India, responsibilities that come before working. Prevalent gender roles in the Indian society are still, for many, a determinant in the possibility for women's labour migration even though they might be highly educated and economically well off.

The connection between the potential for migration and marriage was also evident among my informants. One of the women was in her mid-20s and was currently living in Norway. She did not know when or whether she would travel back to India, and had no intention of settling down any time soon:

> Another reason for why I think there are more women is because there is more support for women now than it was back in the day. Also, I think in India today, people are settling down later than before. When I think of my parent's generation, if you were not married by the time you were 20, it was late, but now I think people are marrying later and later. I am in my late 20s now, and so are most of my friends, and most of them are not married either yet. I think that is a big factor in why there are more women migrating, they do not have kids, so there is nothing holding them back from taking a lot of opportunities at work.
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

Indian middle-class women who were freed from perceived family responsibilities, such as being tied by marriage or children, and who also had former work experience and had completed, at he minimum, and undergraduate degree within ICT, had an increased likelihood of participating in skilled labour migration. Out of the 14 women I interviewed, 14 of them were all working in Norway on labour contracts or as independent workers due to their chosen undergraduate degree within ICT. Twelve of the 14 women had, at the minimum, undergraduate degrees in software engineering, IT engineering, electrical engineering, or computer applications, and worked for large international IT firms in Norway as ICT professionals. Additionally, two of the 14 women held PhD research positions.

One of my informants, a woman in her 50s who had come to Norway in the early 2000s as a student to complete her PhD degree in engineering, and who ultimately chose to stay in Norway, had this to say regarding her view on why there are more skilled and educated women migrating today than there were in the past:

> India is such a big country with so many people, and in recent years there have been massive changes to the structure of society. Big changes happen over a short period, and there has been a massive boost in the technology industry in India, which I think have contributed to more migration for both men and women in India.
> (Pihu, personal communication, August 31, 2020).

Her answer is interesting, because although she is an Indian born woman, she has, for the last 20 years been living and working in Norway. Her "*outsider*" view highlighted that, even for Indian women abroad, the changing structure of society regarding Indian women and work, is also evident.

Furthermore, during my interviews, I asked my participants if they had seen any developments in the number of female labour migrants from India to Norway. I was curious since the overall percentage of Indian working women was decreasing, but the number of skilled labour migrants was increasing. One of my informants, a woman in her 30s working as a software developer on a temporary labour contract set up directly by her Indian employer for a large IT firm in Norway, had this to say:

> There has been a significant development the past 20 years in the number of labour migrants, especially for women because of their good qualifications making them able to compete in an international job market. More women have a degree in higher education from universities in India, but many also travel abroad for education. There is more family support, and we have the chance of being financially independent.
> (Aadya, personal communication, August 20, 2020)

Another informant, a woman in her mid-30s who had for years migrated abroad on temporary labour contracts to Norway, elaborated further on the changes in society that she saw as the most crucial aspects for an increase in female migration:

> There was much apprehension about women travelling abroad earlier and especially when they were not married when they were travelling on their own. Over the years, the mindset has changed a lot. I think globally; the perception has changed. People also give many opportunities to women. That is how I see it. So, there have been developments, and more women do travel on their own. Earlier women also travelled, but they travelled because of their husbands. You would not find many cases where a woman was travelling because she had a work opportunity.
> (Myra, personal communication, August 5, 2020).

It became clear that presumed attitudes and expectations regarding acceptable female involvement in the labour market are a major determinant for whether or not Indian women actually engage. Additionally, family support and family dynamics impact whether or not it is socially acceptable that women work and migrate, as the Indian family is considered to be at the centre of Indian women's social organisation, and, as such, crucial in shaping the migration decisions and experiences of each individual migrant (Kõu, Mulder & Bailey, p.2791)

6.2.5. A Dyadic Compromise between Modernity and Tradition

For highly skilled Indian women, it became clear that the process of migration became an opportunity to diverge from social- and cultural traditional views and norms. However, it was also clear that the women had to compromise between their aspirations for autonomy and individualism, and the cultural constraints that lay latent in the Indian society. Since most of my informants found themselves belonging to the middle class/caste, they have been able to create a hybrid model of an Indian woman who is in many ways, a modern being, while at the same time a bearer of traditional Hindu values and norms.

The need to retain certain aspects of their social and cultural background is due to the importance of belonging to a particular social group. In order to have the potential as an Indian woman to partake in the labour force as a decently paid and formally recognised labourer, one needs to retain specific social and cultural characteristics (Andres et al., 2017, p. 20). Many middle-class urban living women have been able to incorporate formal and organised paid labour abroad into the view of being a traditional "*good woman*" (Kõu & Bailey, 2017, p. 178).

The highly skilled and educated ICT professionals who chose to migrate for labour has created an identity whereby they accept their family's expectations and assumptions to adhere to traditional gender norms and values, while at the same time using their skills and human capital as strategies to reinvent themselves through their labour migration process. This process has created a migration space where labour migration to the Global North has become socially accepted and encouraged. Through their migration process, middle-class skilled and educated Indian women have the potential to become liberated from some of the social constraints holding them back.

One of my informants, a woman in her 40s, attributed this new middle-class identity to India's liberalisation process, and especially the influx of western commodities and norms. She talked about the importance of Western values and traditions and how traditional gender norms are changing in India:

> There has been a huge element of development to the structure of Indian society. I can see the difference in, for example, T.V. commercials. That, I think, kind of mirror the whole thinking prospect. Men and women have started sharing more responsibilities. I remember my grandfather never had any of his children or grandchildren sitting on his lap because that was seen as too affectionate. But now, many men are completely different. Both mothers and mothers-in-law think about their daughters and sons as equally important because they are both out and earning money now. There is much liberalisation going on. Western culture has had a big impact, and people are trying to implement it.
> (Sarah, personal communication, September 29, 2020).

Diya, a woman in her mid-30s who had travelled to Norway for the first-time last year as her first international project started, stated:

> Being able to meet people abroad in person, see how they communicated, talked to each other that was also a learning experience. Also, being able to see how women are treated in a different country and how there is pretty much equality between genders, that really helped me too.
> (Diya, personal communication, August 25, 2020)

India's technological advancements have made the country the world's second largest user of the internet. A large part of Indian Internet usage has been in the realm of social media. This has meant that for many modern middle-class Indians, there has been a growing sense of knowledge regarding other parts of the world (Keelery, 2020). Several of my informants stated that the changing mindset on women in the Indian workforce was partly due to a growing sense of the outside world.

6.2.6. Agency and Individualism among Indian Women

India's process of globalisation has helped bring about changes in the country's social environment, especially for women's work opportunities branching out to new markets (Oishi, 2005, p.152). Studies have found that countries that specialise in export-oriented industrialisation and services, which India does, helps create a society and social environment where international female labour migration is looked upon as socially legitimate, hence increasing the opportunity for independent female mobility (Oishi, 2005, p.167). Moreover, seeing as most of India's annual revenue of around 130 of 147 billion $, comes from export-oriented services, the social legitimacy of women migrating for labour within the ICT industry is continuing to grow (Statista, 2017). As Nana Oishi (2005, p.168) states:

> The most significant challenge to traditional social norms is that women are leaving home and exposing themselves to the "outside world" before getting married. The fact that young single women are leaving home without being accompanied by a male guardian is controversial. This resistance is seen to fade once a large number of women begin to take on work. At some point, female migration becomes more "normal", and it gradually becomes acceptable. For this reason, in countries where the migration of women have been legitimised, international female migration also tends to gain social legitimacy.

The process of globalisation, brought on by liberalising policies and economic development, has meant that women's participation in the labour force, within a sector that has been heavily male dominated for a long time, has been legitimised and socially accepted.

One woman, who was in her mid-30s and originally migrated within India from a semi-urban to a metropolitical city in India before migrating abroad to Norway, stated that:

> Apart from the family dynamic and the educational opportunities given to women, there is also a major change in how women are thinking. This may be because of social media, or the kind of material we are reading or the things we see on T.V., But there has been a major change in the mindset. Many women choose to walk out of the house and go wherever they want.
> (Diya, personal communication, August 25, 2020)

Her last sentence was more of a figure of speech, but her message was clear. A change in mindset regarding what Indian women should and should not do, set in motion by the women themselves, is a significant factor in increasing female labour migrants. The growing social legitimacy of female migrants to Western Europe and North America seems to be incentivising more highly skilled Indian women to migrate for work opportunities abroad. Additionally, the changing accessibility of the ICT industry for women in India was also a topic among my informants. One of my participants, a woman in her mid-30s, highlighted the changing mindset regarding what kind of work women in India are supposed to have:

> When I started my job here in Norway, I did not see so many women, not many people with an Indian background. Nowadays, I can see plenty. Especially for the I.T. sector, it is not physical hard work. Before the year 2000, there was not a lot of women in education. They stop at education when they are finished high school. After the I.T. revolution, more and more women get educated, they feel safe when being at work, which means they are completing their engineering. After my period, I could see more and more women into this field.
> (Saanvi, personal communication, August 18, 2020)

The prior view on Indian women's migration pattern as "*unproductive*" or purely "*social*" is no longer an argument. Indian women's educational status has become an essential factor in their potential to mediate the structural forces that they find themselves within. Together with a growing social legitimacy of women enrolled in higher education and increasing demand for white-collar jobs, the demand for skilled and educated female workers is continuing to increase the labour presence of Indian women in the ICT sector.

A woman in her late 30s, who had been living in Norway for several years and had settled in Norway permanently, elaborated on the growing support for Indian women. She argued, "*I think there is more support for women in India now then what it has been. Now Indian women can be both mothers and at the same time have a demanding career*" (Aaradhya, personal communication, August 20, 2020). Another woman, Prisha, who was in her mid-40s and had just returned to India after five years in Norway, elaborated:

> I can see a difference in how it was before versus now. Because now Indian women are highly educated, and they are taking decisions independently. And when it comes to going abroad, I think people are getting aware of how things are abroad. They have the possibility to explore many good opportunities outside of India. Because we are so populous in India it can be hard to achieve dreams and aspirations because of the population.
> (Prisha, personal communication, September 20, 2020).

Fatima, is a woman in her 40s with a bachelor's degree in IT Engineering from Jharkhand, who was currently living and working in Norway and had no wish to return to India any time soon. She discussed how a changing view on the acceptance of women's qualifications had meant that employment opportunities for Indian women had increased:

> There are more job opportunities and there are more in terms of numbers and eligible candidates. Now you cannot reject someone just based on their gender. Most Indian companies have projects with companies outside of India and for these projects you have to go and work directly with the client and the companies want to send their best candidate, and today those candidates are based on merit and not so much on whether they are a woman or a man.
> (Fatima, personal communication, September 22, 2020)

Ananya, is a woman in her 40s, who was currently in India, but was planning another project that would take her back to Norway for a couple of months. She had a master's degree in computer applications and attributed the growing flow of skilled female migrants from India to the growing ICT industry, stating that, "*There are a lot of Indian women traveling now. I think it is*

because of the IT and Engineering sectors that have created job opportunities for women in India " (Ananya, personal communication, October 20, 2020).

In addition to create decent work opportunities, the ICT sector has also produced the potential for skilled Indian women to safeguard their future by becoming economically independence. This was argued by one of my informants, Aadya, a woman in her early 30s, who was working alone in Norway on a temporary contract while her husband was in India:

> Being a working woman, I have a very strong opinion on self-empowerment as a crucial aspect in my personal and professional success. As I am earning my own money and supporting myself as well as my old parents, I have gained a respectable social position. With a good education and a good job, I am able to develop my skills, align my goals, pursue passions in order to find direction and purpose in life. Every girl should be given the privilege and rights to get an education which will make her feel more valued. (Aadya, personal communication, August 20, 2020)

The growth in the number of women in the ICT industry is not just a result of Indian women's growing labour options, but points to a more significant change in the mindset in Indian society. Women's social restrictions and expectations are changing, for some who belong to specific castes and classes. Many women have experienced a widening in the number of opportunities available, and an increased feeling of autonomy and empowerment, because they have the potential to become economically independent due to receiving decent work contracts through ICT. As Dutta and Shaw (2019, p.2) argue in their study on the emerging employment patterns for middle-class Indian women, "*These emergent non-traditional service sectors largely target modern middle- class women, a group of educated, dynamic, career-aspirant women, who have culturally imbibed the idea of becoming economically independent*". A respectable Indian woman can now be a mother-, working woman and educated professional (Dutta & Shaw, 2019, p. 3). Studies have found that today's modern middle-class urban living Indian woman is more motivated than ever by achieving personal growth, and by her ambition and desire for personal success related to economic freedom (Javalgi & Grossman, 2014, p. 665).

6.3. Meso Changes to Female Employment Patterns

6.3.1. Migrant Networks and Global Institutions

The meso level emphasises the importance of looking at what exists between the micro- and macro-levels, what lies between the individual and the larger societal structures (Faist, 2009, p.59). While a macro and micro analysis of migration and employment processes help us explain why the process occurs, a meso-level helps us explain why processes, once started, continues over time (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p. 64). The micro- and macro- analysis of changes to India's female employment patters discussed above are linked together by meso-level mechanisms and structures, most notably through migrant networks and particular business sectors catering to skilled migrants (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p.43).

6.3.2. India's Competitive Advantage

In the women's origin country, India, the demand and need for skilled migrant labour have become structurally embedded in their liberalised economy, most notably brought forward by the Indian government, their integration into the global market, and the emergence of transnational corporations in India (de Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2020, p. 53). It is hypothesesed that human and economic development leads to higher levels of migration and mobility. The connection between development and migration is mainly due to a loosening of migration constraints, notably migration policies favouring skilled migrants. Additionally, an increasingly occupational specialisation, notably within technology, has meant that, as India's development process has increased, so has the population's propensity for migration (de Haas, 2010, p.22).

India's fast-growing and essential emergence into the global market is arguably due to its competitive advantage regarding its surplus of skilled ICT professionals. India has a surplus of skilled ICT workers because it has matched its advantages to the labour requirements needed globally in the following areas: a) India's surplus and availability of ICT educated professionals; b) the availability of English-speaking educated ICT professionals; c) a highly educated workforce specialised within different ICT fields; d) the global outsourcing- and export-driven nature of India's ICT industry; and e) India's price competitiveness. These are all significant

components that have impacted the migration-driven nature of India's ICT industry (Paul & Mas, 2016, p. 39-45)

Unlike other developing economies, most notably India's biggest competitor, China, India achieved economic development by shifting the sectoral focus away from agriculture and to the service sector. During the years after liberalisation, hundreds of educational institutions were established by the Indian State and private institutions, as the ICT sector became privatised. Mass production of ICT-educated young Indians, notably with degrees in engineering, computer science, and information technology, graduated and competed globally (Paul & Mas, 2016, p. 36).

6.3.3. The Global Market and Transnational Corporations

In destination communities, changes to the global market structure regarding the demand for specific labour skills have shifted in tandem as globalisation has moved forward. By moving away from manual labour towards the tertiary technology sector, the fast-growing technology industry has triggered a demand for skilled and educated technology workers. Through initiatives from the Indian state, and the cooperation between transnational corporations and the global market, migrating intercontinentally for work has become a readily available option for many skilled Indian ICT professionals.

As globalisation moves forward, highly developed nation-states are increasingly becoming reliant on migration labourers (Castles, 2010, p. 1567). Highly skilled and educated labour migrants are both valuable and necessary for western states. The global market of ICT professionals competes to win the "*global race for talent*," where states combatively compete over skilled labourers from the south. This competitiveness and legitimisation of India's ICT professionals has made it socially legitimate to travel abroad and easy compared to other routes of migration (e.g. refugees or asylum seekers).

Western governments are viewing skilled migration not only as a way to fill their labour shortages, but also as a type of migration wherein they do not need to worry about the migrants' social or economic integration into society, a factor that has been an issue in the past for many western countries (Boucher, 2016, p.1). Not only are the receiving countries benefitting from a

large, skilled, educated, and relatively inexpensive immigrant labour force, but the Indian government and private companies are benefitting from being able to export their skilled labourers to countries in need of them.

Furthermore, one reason why ICT services are such a common tradeable commodity in the global market of professionals is their universality. The ICT language regarding the modus of operation of ICT is universally the same, whether in India or Norway. Therefore, the transferability of ICT knowledge is latent in the industry and makes ICT a highly sought-after transnational commodity. As long as the workers know how to use English, they can work for any ICT corporation in the world. The transferability of ICT professionals is one major reason for why there is an increasing demand for skilled workers to migrate from India to the western world. The women are educated, skilled, temporary, and cheaper than their European colleagues.

6.3.4. India's Culture of Migration

Most South-North migration is not driven by poverty, and those who migrate intercontinentally are not those from the poorest segments of society. According to de Haas, Castles & Miller (2020, p.59) economic development can increase international migration. For this to happen, there needs to be an established connection between: a) the status of a country's economic development; b) state formation; and c) population mobility patterns that already lay latent. This means that, as a country develops economically, it will experience a migration transition as part of its broader development process. If economic development, state formation, and population mobility are high, an integrated migration system will allow the population to move within globally and locally established migration networks. As argued previously in this chapter, India's efforts in developing the state's economy concentrated on providing low-cost labour to a global market in need of workers. This has meant that the migration of educated and skilled Indian labourers is not only socially legitimated, but also being actively encouraged by macro- and micro-level factors (de Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2020, p. 58).

The growth of the global economy is inextricably connected to the rise of global markets. These global markets, most notably the global technology market are currently experiencing massive economic growth and impressive performances. This has increased the demand for certain types

of skilled labourers, namely within the technology (Javalgi & Grossman, 2016, p. 657). The world is witnessing an increasing stream of skilled migrant networks**;** thus, migrant labourers can no longer be seen as isolated individuals, but rather as group members and participants belonging to broader social structures. These structures and group affiliations directly affect their migration process, as both private institutions, the Indian government and family and friends are incentivising their skilled labourers to travel abroad (Ammassari & Black, 2001, p. 31).

The "*culture of labour migration*" among Indians became evident for me when interviewing my informants. I asked them all the same question: "*Has anyone in your family/circle of friends or acquaintances migrated for work?".* All the 14 women answered "Yes" and recited a long list of names ranging from uncles, brothers, and family friends. However, what also became apparent was that the women did not know many Indian women who had migrated for work the way that they themselves had. Most of the Indian women they knew who lived abroad did so because of family reunification or other family reasons. So, while the women had an extensive network of family and acquaintances who had migrated for work, they knew few women like themselves, which told me that the process of skilled migration to the Global North among Indian women is a relatively new phenomenon. The women all agreed that there had been substantial increase in the number of Indian women who migrated individually compared to before. They attributed this to the changing perception of Indian women in the workforce, making their presence in a normally heavily male dominated business legitimised, but also the emergence of the ICT industry providing them with new and decent opportunities, and as such, socially accepting their presence.

Chapter 7 - Indian Women's Perception of Empowerment through Decent Work and Skilled Migration

"*Where there is power, there is resistance*" (Foucault, 1980, p.95)

There are an estimated 272 million international migrants globally. Most of these migrants migrate due to labour shortages. As of 2020, 48 percent of these migrants have been women and the notion of a feminisation of labour migration has become a reality (IOM, 2020, p.3). With the intercontinental dispersion of female labour migrants increasing, the debate on migration, gender and decent work has never been more important. There is a need to look at the implications of migration and decent work for gender roles and relations (Shakya & Yang, 2019, p. 106). While migrant women are often described as victims of a global economy that takes advantage of disadvantaged groups of women, there is also a need for a different perspective: *under what circumstances can female labour migration contribute to positive experiences related to female empowerment and autonomy?*

During the course of my fieldwork, it became apparent that there exists a broader dimension within the migration process for skilled and educated Indian women. This dimension highlights the importance of what the migration process has meant for the women, especially what is has meant for their view on empowerment and autonomy. Their migration aspiration became a matter of personhood and identity, and instead of focusing on where the migration experience brings them, that is the "*where"*, the experience becomes about the person they become, that is the "*who"*. There exists an important relationship between the individual woman and the social aspect of what the migration process and employment opportunity can bring about. The capability to migrate becomes a freedom in its own right (Carling & Schewel, 2018, p. 957)

7.1. Promoting Empowerment Through Migration

In contrast to undocumented migrants, the highly skilled female Indian migrants possesses legal protection from both their primary Indian employer, and their host-employer in the Global North.

They also have a certain degree of autonomy in regard to the decision-making process related to their migration process. Additionally, they have some extent of control over their working conditions (Oishi, 2005, p. 188). In contrast to low-skilled and low-educated female migrants from India, those who are skilled and educated have greater levels of diversification in the type of- and length of the work they do. In contrast to low skilled women with short-term and circular migration patterns involving manual labour and degrading working conditions, high skilled women are mostly on long- and medium-term working contracts, shielding them from much of the uncertainty connected to short-term labour contracts (Mazumdar, Neetha & Agnihotri, 2013, p. 56)

Due to increases in Indian women's enrolment in higher education, changing patterns of employment, changes in Indian society regarding the perception of Indian women's role in society/internally in the family, and the prospect for decent wages internationally has made independent female migration from India increasingly more common (Gaye & Jha, 2011, p. 49). Migration is often seen as an option one might take in search of better opportunities; however, while it is most commonly argued that better opportunities offer the potential for higher income gains, this was not the primary reason for migration among my informants. Their migration experience became a process that improved the women's self-respect, dignity, autonomy, and self-empowerment.

The concept of empowerment is a difficult concept to define accurately, because it is context specific and associated with subjective understandings for each individual woman. However, broadly set, the concept of empowerment can be defined as:

> A multidimensional process which should enable individuals to realise their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives or have greater control over circumstances that influence their lives and free them from shackles imposed on them by customs, beliefs, and practices. (Oishi, 2005, p. 188)

When analysing the potential for empowerment through migration, the concepts associated with increased empowerment will vary from context to context. The societal factors concerning women and work in India, discussed in Chapter 5, made it clear that the factors enhancing Indian women's empowerment and autonomy are directly linked to: a) access to decent work and

quality education; b) increased power in decision making processes in the household; c) the potential to be economically independent; and d) increased mobility. As argued by Gaye & Jha (2011, p.49) "*Migration can be both a cause and consequence of female empowerment*.".

What follows is an analysis of the different micro-level perceptions of enhanced empowerment for skilled female labour migrant from India. By analysing the migrant women's aspirations through a micro-lens, one is able to go beyond just a purely income/consumption-based explanation for migration. By going deeper and looking at individual migration aspirations, employment security/stability, and the extent of social security and autonomy/empowerment in connection to the ICT industry, one is able to form a comprehensive understanding of the reasons behind the women's choices (Jenkins, 2005, p.604).

7.2. Female Migrants as Agents of Change

Female aspirations connected to individual development were a major factor in my informants desire to migrate. However, it was not monetary gains that initially drew them, but rather their potential for increased social capital. The women's desires and aspiration for the migration process significantly affected their migration ability. Furthermore, it became clear that it was largely the migration experience itself that acted as an essential motivation for migrating, and the prospect for higher wages or common functionalist factors played a minor or no role at all (de Haas, 2011, p. 18).

I interviewed an Indian woman, Myra, who was in her 30s, and had a graduate degree in computer science. She had lived in Norway for several years on different temporary labour contracts for big global IT companies. She was currently in the process of returning home to India in a couple of months. She told me that her decision to migrate was not about money, but rather the potential for increased knowledge and skills:

> For an Indian man, the migration process is more about "How much money would I make". But for an Indian woman money will not be the first decision making factor. For her it would be more like, "What is in it for me?", "Me" as a professional, "What can I learn?". "What am I going to experience?". To migrate is to be given an opportunity for more freedom. This factor does not apply to me, because fortunately I was raised in a

> family that did not have a lot of restrictions or a narrow mindset regarding women, but there are a lot of women in India that takes these opportunities as golden opportunities, because it gives them more freedom. They want to do a lot of things which otherwise they would not be able to do in the situation they are living in, but because they get a free hand to see that "Oh, so we have wings now". So, you had a very important first questions, "What kind of family do you come from?", because in a lot of ways that background really matters in that decision and in how easy that decision is for you to make.
>
> (Myra, personal communication, August 5, 2020).

As discussed in Chapter 4, incorporating gender in the migration process is salient in order to understand the context specific causes and motivations behind the migration process. The personal desires and aspirations for what the process can bring will differ, as Indian women's aspirations are a direct reflection of their position in society. While Indian men experience little to no restrictions regarding their social behaviour and mobility, most Indian women do. In a study on high skilled migrants from India, Faist, Aksakal & Schmidt (2020, p.32) found that Indian migrant women had mostly positive experiences regarding their migration process and social mobility, as they experienced positive changes regarding their position in society in India, and gained knowledge and experience that increased their potential for career development. In contrast, many of the migrant men from India they surveyed, had had a negative experience. As a result, the migrant men preferred short-time contracts, in contrast to Indian migrant women who tended to choose medium- to long-time contracts. The men highlighted their disappointment at the lack of professional growth in regard to their career development. According to Faist, Aksakal & Schmidt (2020, p.32) one high skilled male migrant argued "*I'm a very ambitious person, and my ambitions and professional growth, my motivation have been completely crushed and destroyed*". Many of the migrant men considered short-term contracts in order to gain international work experience that would act as a plus on their return home to India, while many of the women wished to extend their stay in order to continue the positive experiences they had gained from the migration process (Faist, Aksakal & Schmidt, 2020, p. 32).

The differences in migration aspirations between men and women were clear according to my informants. Indian women occupy a second-class citizen status in society, and, due to the existing patriarchal structure of society, this subjugation continues today. As their social status often involves being homemakers, child bearers, or unpaid family labourers/domestic workers, the women that are actually engaged in decently paid and stable employment, have different aspirations and desires for their personal development in contrast to their male counterparts. As my informant, Myra, further elaborated on the process of her migration process, she continued to highlight the potential for increased self-worth and confidence through migration:

> I would not really say that I was one of those who looked at the process of migrating as process of gaining freedom. I mean because I never had those restrictions in my family. For me it was more like exploring your own potential. Because when you live in a known environment, even if I travelled to a new city in India, it is still my own country, but when I travelled to another country where even everyone does not speak English, I had never travelled abroad before, it was more about challenging yourself. I was thinking "I am going to make this work". In fact, I would say that, because I lived in Oslo for 4 months at a stretch, so if I compare myself from what I was before living abroad and after, I can actually see the difference in myself. Because I can actually say that I am a lot more confident in the fact that I can sustain my own self. It might not be easy, but it has cultivated a lot of confidence in myself.
> (Myra, personal communication, August 5, 2020)

For many migrant women, their migration process is more about increased personal development than monetary gains. Their personal development is happening as the migration process is happening, by being able to break out of social- and cultural conventions and norms, and, as such, gain personal space and freedom. This sits in contrast to most migrant men, who see the migration process as an economic one. Faist, Aksakal & Schmidt's study (2017, p.34) found, similarly to my findings, that the women involved increased their level of individual autonomy and social mobility by being away from their parents and extended family, and by being able to escape unequally defined gendered norms in India and living by themselves in a different country. Similarly, a study by ILO (2020, p.73) found that highly skilled female migrants from

India perceive the potential for migration as an opportunity to separate themselves from overarching patriarchal structures. Thus, the migration process becomes much more than being able to earn decent wages in a foreign country.

The women I interviewed were acutely aware of their own societal position in their home country. And while it might be argued that they are in a more advantageous situation than many other Indian women, they still exist within a sphere of dominant masculinity. The notion of patriarchy does not mean that every Indian woman is treated identically within the different spaces of power, but as the patriarchal nature of a society continues to become more sophisticated, women from specific groups, notably the higher castes in India, are allowed to access certain situations and spaces, but they are never seen as the people with power within those institutions or spaces (Facio, 2013, p.2). This is also a reason why the women put more weight on non-economic factors such as increased independence and personal development, and less emphasis on economic factors such as the potential for higher wages.

The women's perception of independence and autonomy was highlighted by a number of my informants. Aarohi referred to her limited mobility in India as a handicap, drawing on her experiences of living in the U.K and Norway:

> Here [in Norway] I feel like I can literally do anything. I have lived in three different countries until now. India, England and now Norway and I really feel like it would be different if I had stayed in India. I remember when I moved back to India after living in the UK, and I felt like there was actually a handicap. I felt like I could not go places or use my abilities. When I talk to women who are still living in India, for example from my old office in Bangalore they tell me that everything falls on the woman. Here in Norway, I feel like the responsibility it is more equal.
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

Another informant, Aaradhya, told me about her perception of independence in Norway versus India:

> I am a lot more independent here in Norway then what I would have been in India. If I were still in India, I would be a lot more dependent upon other people then what I am here. I think there would be a lot more limitations for me as an Indian woman living in India then it is here. For example, I would have to be driven around, accompanied by other relatives at night-time and be constantly on the lookout for dangerous situations (Aaradhya, personal communication, August 20, 2020)

While the women gained more independence and autonomy during their migration process, it is important to highlight that most of the women I interviewed stated that they were, to some degree, already feeling empowered before their migration experiences. Their feeling of empowerment was connected to their potential for satisfactory employment opportunities, most importantly their choice of education and place of work. The women all came from resourceful families with parents who wanted them to enrol in tertiary education. Their wish to work was their own wish, although they all felt the positive connotations that being ICT professionals brought with it from their parents.

One of my informants, Aarya, a woman who had migrated for work opportunities to Norway in 1979, and who had been living in Norway since then, shared her experience of the feelings connected to her own empowerment and independence:

> I already had a feeling of empowerment when I came to Norway. I came here alone, as a single woman in 1979, so I already felt empowered. But I guess it has continued to feel empowering as I have lived here for many years and as I have continued my career. I do think my feeling of autonomy would be different if I had never moved out of India. There are a lot of limitations for Indian women, so although I already had a feeling of empowerment when I came in 1979, I think I am more independent and confident than what I would have been if I had never left.
> (Aarya, personal communication, August 20, 2020)

All of the women interviewed, stated that, as their migration experiences progressed they had gained increased independence and agency by having the experience of living in a foreign

country. The infusion of educated and middle-class Indian women into the global market has meant that for many, they have gained the possibility to "*travel like a man*" outside of India, meaning, travelling independently, navigating urban public spaces unrestricted and without having to worry about the time of night (Patel, 2014, p. 28).

7.3. "From the Womb to the Tomb"

Indian women's safety and security concerns are a major problem in India, and violence against Indian women has become a systemic issue, one that occurs both in the public and private realm (Manjoo, 2014, p. 3). Due to India's patriarchal structure, social norms, and gendered hierarchies routinely position women as second-class citizens. Indian women are discriminated against and subjugated, not only on the basis of their gender, but due to other factors such as their caste affiliation, class, skills/ability, and traditions. Referred to as "*from the womb to the tomb*", the problem of violence against women in India has become a reflection of the country's structural and institutional inequality, reflecting a cycle of violence that, for some, literally starts in the womb, and ends in the tomb (Manjoo, 2014, p.3). While many Indian women face social, financial, and personal barriers in regard to the potential for employment, physical barriers in regard to a lack of adequate infrastructure has become a crucial impediment for freedom of mobility for Indian women (Vasudevan, 2020)

The threat of violence and sexual harassment for Indian women, particularly when the women are situated in public spaces, involves a number of different threats. Public spaces in India have become synonymous with "*male dominated areas*" where female harassment, violence, and feelings of uncertainty dominate (Mahadevia & Lathia, 2019, p.160). Working women in India face safety concerns while commuting to work and while in the workplace itself, as a lack of adequate infrastructure in regard to safe working hours, transportation facilities and social security policies prevent many Indian women from being able to partake in the labour force (Vasudevan, 2020). The women's fear regarding their own mobility and security are connected to the fear of: a) actual physical violence, causing real injury and psychological trauma; b) the threat of "*loss of reputation*", which can result in the loss of marriage opportunities or experiencing that their sexual virtue are being questioned; and c) the risk of being blamed, as a

woman, for being "*in the wrong place*", resulting in an improbability of receiving justice if something unfair were to happen to them (Mahadevia & Lathia, 2019, p.155).

The threat of violence and a feeling of insecurity were, among my informants, major factors in their desire to work abroad. Due to a growing sense regarding the outside world, and other women's social position in other parts of the world, the women's desire for security was a major mechanism impacting my informant's desire for migration. Due to Indian women's restricted mobility (discussed in Chapter 5), the process of migration became a process of liberation. The need for security as a mechanism for autonomy was one of the factors most discussed among my informants, and, after their migration process began, became one of the most important in enhancing their female empowerment. Their role as skilled and formally employed workers allowed them to experience a different gendered environment, where strict and patriarchal gender norms did not impact their day-to-day life in the same manner as they did in India.

One of my informants, Saanvi, who had travelled to Norway together with her husband, not as an accompanying housewife, but as a migrant labourer, shared her experience of working in Norway versus India. She and her husband were both on temporary work contracts, for a project that would run for several years in the same ICT firm. She had two small children and had, before this project in Norway, never lived outside of India. When I asked her about female security in India regarding being free to move around as one wished, she stated:

> I was thinking about this the other day. Because my husband was going to have some friends over for dinner, and I would take the kids and myself out for a car ride while they would be at home celebrating. I was driving around; I think it was 11 o'clock in the night, and I was thinking to myself, "I could never have done this in India". I could never have been out alone, with my children, as an Indian woman at 11 o'clock at night just driving around.
> (Saanvi, personal communication, August 18, 2020).

This opinion regarding the importance of security was not just a mechanism stated by her. Another woman, Aarohi, the youngest one I interviewed, was in her 20s and deviated from many of the other women that I had interviewed, since she had not come to work in Norway on an

already established contract. She had come on her own, and had specifically chosen Norway as her country of destination. Her reasoning was connected to security and her wish to live as independently as possible. She stated:

> I was not interested in staying in India at all; I was interested in leaving. In India, things are just bureaucratic, and it is hard to realise your full potential. I did not feel like I fit in very much. I always thought that if I went somewhere with a lot more diversity, it would be much better for me. The biggest factor for me was not to get a good job opportunity but to be able to be really independent. In India and the city that I grew up in, it just did not feel safe enough. I wanted to be able to just live my full life. And as a woman in India, being outside alone, being on public transportation alone and being completely independent is almost impossible.
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020)

She further stated:

> […] I also think one of the main reasons for the influx [of skilled female migrants] is female security. Norway is a really secure country. If you go outside here at 9 o'clock, you do not think about it. You do not think twice about getting back safely. If I were in India, I would need a friend or colleague to accompany me.
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

Another woman, Aaradhya, who was in her mid-30s and was originally from one of the largest cities in India, but was now permanently settled in Norway had this to say:

> I am a lot more independent here in Norway than I would have been in India. If I were still in India, I would be a lot more dependent upon other people than I am here. I think there would be a lot more limitations for me as an Indian woman living in India than it is here.
> (Aaradhya, personal communication, August 20, 2020)

Further elaborating on the importance of security, another of my informants had this to say regarding the obstacles Indian women face regarding mobility. She was in her 40s and had around ten years of experience in the ICT industry. She worked for many years in India but was

now living and working in Norway, and had been on a temporary contracts for five years. She had previously worked in both Denmark and Sweden:

> I did not experience any gender differences in the workplace itself [In India]. But I think that in India, due to security reasons and for safety measures, the woman has to leave the office by five or six o'clock. Whereas a man could, and often would, stay longer. I could never leave the office at eleven o'clock. So, the reason is not the workplace itself, but it is other reasons outside of work that the gender differences become very clear.
> (Prisha, personal communication, September 20, 2020)

It became clear that the women's feeling of security to a great extent determined their possibility for tertiary education and, later, job opportunities. A number of my informants stated that if their job obligated them to stay at the office late, the woman would not be comfortable accepting the job. The problem was not the office itself, there the women felt safe, but the idea of having to leave to the office after dark to travel home was what made them feel unsafe. This highlights the limited mobility that still exists for many Indian women, regardless of their caste and class status.

The women I interviewed were all on formal working contracts, earning a fixed salary and from large urban cities in India. They would have had the opportunity to pay for a taxi or other forms of transportation, but this did not seem to be an option. The women's feeling of unsafety extended to all sorts of transportation, and this tells me that work and education opportunities are limited for women belonging to both the upper and lower classes of Indian society. For many, their experience as a labour migrant in Norway, a social environment quite different to what the women were used to, proved to be a significant factor in their view on being independent, and it enhanced their feeling of self-empowerment. For many Indian women, their migratory experience transformed them from "*caged birds to women with wings*" (Rangwala, Jayawardhena & Saxena, 2019, p. 2803).

7.4. The Economic Reality for Indian Women

For a long time, each Indian woman's role in society was defined by the success of the relationship she shared with the men in her life, be it her brother, father, husband, or uncle

(Behbahany, 2020). Additionally, Indian women were often discouraged from participation in the family's financial affairs. However, due to a change in the mindset regarding acceptable female employment, Indian women are increasingly becoming economically independent within previously male-dominated occupations. Even though my informant's primary determinant in migrating was not the potential for increased income gains, they all highlighted that the fact that they can be economically independent due to the formality and stability of their jobs is salient to them.

A woman I interviewed, Sarah, who was in her early 40s, was in Norway with her husband, but had come by herself in 2006 as a PhD student stated:

> I have my own independent thinking. I can decide my own shopping journeys, I can support myself, I do not have to beg my husband. So, being employed and having your own career I think definitely makes you empowered. It makes you confident. It makes you outspoken and boost your self-esteem. Even if it is just a small amount of money, I can decide on my own, I do not have to argue with my man. So, I feel like yes if you are independent financially you are independent in a lot of other aspects.
> (Sarah, personal communication, September 29, 2020).

Economic empowerment is a powerful tool in enhancing Indian women's participation in decision making process, while simultaneously providing the women with financial security and control. Additionally, when they are included in financial processes relating to their own life, the potential for economic empowerment also influences the prospect for social- and political empowerment, further contributing to a more egalitarian society (Bhatia & Singh, 2019, p. 187).

As discussed by one of my informants, Diya, the fact that she could be financially independent did not only lead to increased empowerment, but a more content outlook on life overall:

> Financial independence has played a major role when it comes to self-empowerment. Not only it gives sense of control and been a factor when it comes to important decision making but also helps in building self-esteem and confidence. Which in turn has resulted in a happier and more content life.
> (Diya, personal communication, August 25, 2020)

Another woman I interviewed, Aarohi, stated that financial independence was crucial for her own perception of what empowerment involved:

> I think being financially independent has been the most important factor in my sense of self-empowerment - I feel that having the resources to do as I want and please without having to ask for anyone's permission/opinion and which I have earned myself has opened up so many opportunities for me and has really emboldened me. I remember as a kid all I wanted to be a grown-up so I could get a job and my own money and now that I have been doing that for the last ten years or so - I cannot imagine anything worse than being financially dependent on anyone else.
> (Aarohi, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

Although an increased income does not automatically increase the socioeconomic equality for Indian women, it is still a necessity in order to improve Indian women standing in society (Razvi & Roth, 2004, p. 168). As argued by Sen (1999), "*economic discrimination is a much broader concept than economic status and a complex relationship exists between culture and economic status of women in India"* (p. 108). As a group of middle-class Indian women have had the opportunity to engage in decent work within the ICT industry, earning a good income, the ripple effects from being financially independent has continued. As argued by one of my informants, her view on being able to support herself not only set an empowering example for other women around her, but also for her children:

> The perception of self-empowerment is of course subjective, so the effect of financial independence on one's self-image depends on the individual to a great extent. However, in my opinion it builds confidence and self-worth. It also helps to set an example for a woman's children. Your own children looking up to you as a role-model is a rewarding feeling.
> (Ananya, personal communication, October 20, 2020)

By embracing financial independence, the Indian state as a whole does not only empower its women through economic development, but also raises the status of the Indian economy as a whole (Razvi & Roth, 2004, p. 174). By developing the female workforce, the needs of the nation state, organisations, communities, and individuals are being served and further developed, benefitting both the individual woman, and the nation. Additionally, employment and decent

income is a major factor in increased bargaining power and, by being able to participate in the formal labour force, women are able to capitalise on opportunities enhancing their own decision-making power, a direct mechanism affecting the well-being of Indian women (Klasen & Pieters, 2013, p.2).

Chapter 8 - Female Migrants Contributions to Social Development

"*We do not want your investments; we want your ideas. We do not want your riches; we want the richness of your experience*."
(Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in Kapur, 2010, p.124).

Within the debate on migration and development, the focus has often been on the economic aspect to which labour migrants contribute. Since India's period of liberalising in the early 1990s, Indian migrant workers have consistently been the world's top remitters, contributing with 78 billion dollars in remittances inflows in 2018 (World Bank Group, 2019, p.2). And while the growing demand for skilled migrant women from India has had a positive impact on economic remittances due to their higher earnings, the social aspect of female migration and remittances is important, as it has the capability to change the societal perceptions of Indian women, through the women themselves (Le Goff, 2016, p. 1).

8.1. Contribution of Social Remittances from Decent work and Female Migratory Experiences

There has been a gradual convergence from looking at the process of migration within a persistently sceptic light, emphasising concerns regarding the potential for brain drain, the lack of integration in receiving countries, and tightening immigration policies. However, it has also been viewed from the angle of migration optimism, emphasising the potential for brain gain, social remittances, and diasporic involvement in receiving countries (de Haas, 2007, p.4). With the emergence of the debate on migration as a positive occurrence, the debate on the socio-economic impact migratory processes can have on the individual migrant and society as a whole also emerged. Social remittances can be defined as "*the ideas, behaviour, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities*" (Levitt, 1998, p. 926).

The discussion about the impact of migration has moved towards the importance of acknowledging the social dimension of migration; expertise, ideas, practices, social capital, identities, and experiences also circulate within India's diaspora (Kapur, 2010, p. 124).

By inquiring into the empowering aspect of female migration, another aspect within this dimension also emerged: "*to what extent/in what way does female migratory experiences change society*?" (Van Hear, 2010, p.1531). As argued by Sen (2001) "*an enhancement of women's active agency can, in many circumstances, contribute substantially to the lives of all people – men as well as women, children as well as adults'*. (Sen, 2001, in Vandsemb, 2014, p.76). As such, *what impact do the social remittances the women bring home have on Indian society?* The concept of social remittances implies that female migrants affect society in more ways than just the act of transferring money.

While remittances have a crucial impact at the macro-level, contributing to the development of society at large both financially and socially, it is the micro-level impact from female migratory process that I wish to highlight.

8.2. Remittances as a Gendered Practice

As discussed in Chapter 4, the process of migration is never gender neutral. For the group of women at the centre of my study, if one approach the sphere of migrant remittances in a gender blind way, this masks power inequalities, and rules out individual decision making and the influence of non-household members, such as the migrant woman herself, and others around her that affect the migration- and remittance process (de Haas, 2007, p. 19).

The women's experiences prior to their migration process will strongly affect what they do when they settle into their country of destination, this in turn, will affect what they bring back home with them, in regards to knowledge, attitudes, desires and personal aspirations (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011, p.5). The women's experiences need to be understood in relation to their social and personal embeddedness. This includes realising that the women possess individual aspirations for their migration process, and that these aspirations will vary in terms of their own social context. The social context that the women find themselves within, will have a significant

effect on what the women bring back with them in terms of changing attitudes, aspirations, and wishes for themselves and Indian women as a whole. The structural barriers to the migrant women's social remittances need to be regarded. As argued by Di Martino, Maiztegui & Aristegui (2020, p.113) "*Migration, is much more than mere movement between places; it is always embedded in wider processes of meaning-making*".

The potential impact of social remittances can affect Indian women at the local and individual level, but it can also affect regional and national changes in society (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011, p. 5). The social and cultural exchanges of ideas, perceptions, and knowledge that migrant women experience during their migration process can transform their family and work life for themselves, but also for those Indian women who stay behind and see the women's empowering experiences (Mukherjee & Rayaprol, 2019, p. 63). By being financially independent and having the experience of living in a foreign country by themselves, many of the women experienced an elevation of status within their family, but also within their community/society.

8.3. Decent Work and Migration as a Passage of Hope

The far-reaching effects on female development from Indian female migrants was illustrated when I interviewed my informant Saanvi. She told me about her life in a small rural village in India. She had a father who was a graduate and a mother who had just completed primary school. She told me that the importance of educating their girls did not use to exist in rural India. People saw higher education as being a good reserved for their male children. However, as the thoughts and ideas regarding the importance of education for social mobility found its way to rural India, her father wanted her to get an education. She was the first woman in her village to attain a university degree. She ended up with a bachelor's degree in Software Engineering, a heavily male-dominated study, but was able to find formal employment, and has, for the last years been working on a long-time contract for a large IT company in Norway:

> My mother was a homemaker, and my father had a university degree, that was what it was like. My older sister never went to university, because they did not think that women need to get educated. They think it is enough to just have a high school diploma. When I was finished with high school, my father said he wanted me to get an education. It was

> very different from the other families in my village. In my village, I am the first woman who went out to study for university. But in later years I have seen many women from my village going to study, because they saw the route map. They see it is possible to change their economic situation. In the later years I have seen almost all the parents from the village investing in their girls education.
> (Saanvi, personal communication, August 18, 2020).

Additionally, Prisha, a woman in her 40s who grew up with two elder brothers and parents who had just finished primary school, told me about the changing dynamic of work, education and mobility for many Indian women:

> In recent years there have been huge developments within India. I can see a massive difference in how it was before versus how it is now. Because now a days women in India are highly educated. They are able to take decisions independently. When it comes to going abroad, I think people are aware of how things are. They see that they have the possibility to explore good opportunities outside of India. Because we are so populous it can be hard to achieve your dreams and aspirations because of the population. Going abroad becomes an opportunity to develop yourself in a way that is not possible for many women in India. I think that is a big reason for why Indian women wish to travel. They wish to see something different than what they are used to.
> (Prisha, personal communication, September 20, 2020)

Another woman, Aadya, told me that she made a strategic choice to migrate for work:

> I made a very conscious and strategic life choice to live and work abroad. I have made these decisions taking in consideration my overall life journey and future aspirations. As I am earning my own money through a good job, and living overseas in a different environment, I am able to support myself as well as my old parents, I have gained a respectable social position because of this. People I know look up to me. Not all Indians have the mindset that women should just be at home. Many young women wish to work and earn their own money.
> Aadya, personal communication, August 20, 2020).

It is clear that the women's cultural and social capital is strengthened from being educated, formally employed, and gaining the experience of having lived abroad. This cultural and social capital, which is the women's accumulated knowledge, gives them both power, in regard to being financially independent, but also status, in being educated, employed, and independent (Mukherjee & Rayaprol, 2019, p.66). In addition to individual aspirations and changes in perceptions of autonomy, emerging notions on previously strict traditional women's views among Indian women who have experienced a different environment also emerged.

Sarah, a Brahmin woman with a PhD elaborated on her thoughts on the caste system. She had married before she came to Norway in 2006, to another Brahmin man. She was originally a strong believer in the caste system. This might have been due to the fact that she was born Brahmin and carried a strong pride in this. However, as she had settled permanently in Norway she elaborated on her changing views:

> I feel like me moving to Norway has broadened my outlook on a lot. For example, before I moved to Norway if my friends say that I have to have relationship with a guy and I planned to live with a guy, it did not matter to me, because it was already planned. Now if you talk to me after 14 years, marriage is just an agreement, it does not matter, if you like that person, that is the most important thing. This is a huge change in my thinking. And another way my thoughts have changed since I came to Norway is that before, I was a little bit narrow towards caste system. I meant that a girl should be married to a boy with the same caste, this is still a huge taboo in India, but it is changing. If someone told me that a girl married another caste now, I would react in a milder way, the most important thing is the human being. Because of the exposure, you are exposed to different kinds of people, every people are equally important. So, all these things have integrated into me now.
>
> (Sarah, personal communication, September 29, 2020)

Social remittances can promote increased socio-economic development for Indian women, increased participation in decision making processes, and increased gender equality. Migrant women who send money, and transfers skills, attitudes and a different expression of womanhood have the potential to transmit a different definition of what it means to be a woman; this in turn, can affect individual's, household's, and communities' views on Indian women and acceptable

labour participation. Female migrants do not only change the economic and social perception of themselves, but can also impact their role in the family and society at large.

In addition to the statements from Prisha, Aadya and Sarah in this chapter, my informants evolving perception regarding their own potential for empowerment and autonomy discussed in chapter 7, are an essential mechanism in transmitting social remittances connected to increased gender equality. That the women found increased empowerment through their migration process and formal employment, gives other Indian women the ability to see that change is possible. As the women's migration experience exposes them to other cultures and social environments, previous norms can become less valued or crucial when they find themselves within a different milieu. Even though the family is still highly valued in an Indian context, a growing sense of independence is increasing the importance of individualism among Indian women. Due to experiences gained from their migration process, Indian women are actively transforming and modifying expectations and cultural norms related to marriage, childbirth, and labour market involvement (Kõu, Mulder & Bailey, 2017, p.2801).

Encapsulating the notion that migrant women carry with them numerous forms of non-financial capital, such as ideas, practices, and knowledge, highlights the importance of remembering that migrant women's encounters and experiences in host societies contribute to sending back much more than just money (Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou, 2017, p.2788). The role of social remittances in affecting future female migration aspirations is important in establishing a migrant culture, where Indian women have the capability and aspirations to make individual decisions regarding their own migration process. As my findings suggest, the women's migration process and potential for formal employment was immensely important for the women's ability to enhance their feeling of empowerment and autonomy. The social remittances they bring with them back to India have the potential to influence a growing desire among Indian women for employment opportunities outside of India that has the potential to be both empowering and strengthening.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the women's increased independence and confidence in themselves were major consequences of their migration experience. And while the women experienced this while they were situated in Norway, many of them only had temporary labour contracts that would eventually take them back to India. The women were able to strengthen their already

established belief in the importance of autonomy and independence, and were able to take these notions with them back to India after being free to express their desires and attitudes while in Norway. My findings agree with Mukherjee and Rayaprol (2019, p.67), namely that the migration experience has brought with it changing social and economic roles for decently employed female labour migrants from India, roles which may have been rejected at home had it not been for their formal employment and migration experience.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to analyse how India's process of globalisation has increased the number of skilled and educated female labour migrants leaving India to work abroad.
My main research question sought to discuss: *How the process of globalisation has affected the movement of high skilled female ICT professionals migrating internationally from India.* In order to be able to adequately answer my question, I found it important to substantiate the main research question with four sub-questions. In Chapter 5, I inquired into*: How social norms and India's gendered occupational segregation affect the potential for decent work for Indian women*. In Chapter 6, I inquired into: *the employment specific targeting of skilled and educated ICT workers from India and how this has been brought forward by macro- and micro changes to the Indian society.* In Chapter 7, I analysed: *how India's ICT industry and consequent migration process has contributed to enhanced feelings of empowerment for Indian ICT professionals.* And, in Chapter 8, I inquired into: *how high skilled female labour migration is contributing to socio-economic developments in the women's home country*.

In this chapter I will summarise my analysis and findings accounted for in Chapters 5,6,7 and 8, and conclude my theses.

9.1. Globalisation, Skilled Migration, and ICT

When analysing India's structural, economic, and political changes since 1991, I find that, with the onset of India's globalisation process, driven forward by the importance of being able to rapidly see immense technological advancement, brought on by the implementation of neoliberal market oriented global competition and trade, India has seen itself become one of the world's largest producers and exporters of ICT enabled services to a global market in need of a constant flow of both products and labourers. India's process of globalisation has seen a drastic cut-down of women employed in the traditional primary- and secondary sector, but a increase in new opportunities for a certain type of woman in the tertiary sector.

I find that India's process of globalisation has been a key factor in increasing the number of Indian women who are offered decent and recognised labour contracts within the technology industry. The Indian ICT industry was, in its infancy, a heavily male-dominated area of employment, but I find that, due to an immense increase in the number of female students in higher education within STEM, and an increase in the social legitimacy of certain Indian women in male dominated employment areas, that the industry has been able to substantially increase the number of Indian women who now have the ability to partake as skilled and educated labour migrations within ICT abroad.

I find that those women who find themselves in between the highest and lowest castes, classes, and societal standings, have been, due to this position, able to navigate and implement a hybrid version of an Indian woman as both a successful career women within heavily male dominated areas of employment, and, simultaneously, a dutiful and pious Hindu woman. My findings also suggest that the women's drivers of and reasons for migration differ substantially from those Indian women who migrate within informal, unorganised, and vulnerable channels. The need and desire for increased income gains are not their main motivation for migration, but rather increased autonomy, empowerment, and skill development. My findings also suggest that these socially and individually related aspirations in regard to their migratory experiences are directly linked to their socio-economic standing, as they do not have the urgent need for higher wages, but simultaneously possess the aspiration, capability, and ability to migrate from the Global South to the Global North as skilled ICT professionals.

My findings suggest that India's ICT industry has the ability to be a powerful tool that can be used to reduce the number of middle class educated Indian women who find themselves living in disempowered circumstances, as well as function as a pathway to a society that is more egalitarian, but also sustainable. Having a large female workforce in the formal and organised sector has shown to decrease gender discrimination and increase female empowerment. India's globalisation process has made it possible for a select group of Indian women to improve their social position and employment possibilities, due to the fact that they possess skills in labour markets where decent work conditions are available.

I find that urban living middle-class Indian women have been able to move between traditional societal and cultural Hindu values and norms while concurrently being able to engage in formal and decent work opportunities within new markets that for a long time were exclusively looked upon as traditional "*men's work*". This is partly due to state intervention at the macro-level, in the form of policies directly targeting Indian women for specific labour markets. I have found that the emergence of a particular industry, namely the ICT industry, has been able to offer both formal and decent labour opportunities in India and abroad for a particular group of Indian women. Due to the export-driven nature of this industry in India, this has facilitated an increasingly larger flow of skilled and educated ICT professionals leaving India to work worldwide. For a long time, this group of skilled and educated ICT professionals were largely comprised of upper- and middle-class Indian men. However, in recent times, a growing social legitimacy of female ICT professionals from India and a growing acceptance of skilled female migration has increased the number of skilled female labour migrants leaving India to work around the globe.

In her book on migration in Asia, Nana Oishi (2005) argues that what affects the outcome of female migration are, structural elements, mostly state policies, cultural norms, and the women's access to power within their families (pp-10-14). This is, in large part, what I have found as well. The reason that it has become relatively easy for highly skilled female labour migrants from India to travel abroad is due to lenient state policies concerning skilled migrants and changing cultural norms, and evolving family dynamics which sees the beneficial outcome of sending their daughters to school and later accepting that they partake in the global market as skilled professionals. Additionally, at the meso-level, the continuation of the migrant process is related to the continuous stream of skilled labour migrants to the Global North bringing back with them new attitudes/views, knowledge and aspirations that combine to incentivise a growing number of skilled Indian women to travel abroad.

Since India globalisation process made them experience a restructuring of its previous traditional labour market, women have had new opportunities to enter and gain access to jobs that might not have been open to them in the past. For India, economic growth and physical- and social mobility for women is still relatively low, but a reorganisation of the type of labour that women now engage in is, in some places, visible. The process of globalisation, along with India's

economic liberalisation, has increased the number of women who move across the border as formally employed labourers, and is continuing to boost the movement of labour due to the continuation of technological advancements.

Through my fieldwork, and by analysing my gathered data, I find that the women that are the area of focus in my theses hold a substantial amount of power in regard to their desire to work. I found that power is not only a tool possessed by the oppressors, but also a tool used by the oppressed to resist and transform themselves into active agents of their own lives. As the women in my study have been able to enter the organised technology labour market in a considerable way, they have been able to transfer their social capital, in terms of knowledge, skills, and aspirations into action. As argued by Guenther (2015, p.38), but also witnessed by me, for some Indian women, traditional gender roles have been deconstructed and reshaped, as Indian men are not the sole bread winners anymore. The three-way interaction between womanhood, decent work, and migration has meant that, for my informants, their feeling of autonomy and self-empowerment has been increased through the ability to obtain decent work and transformative migratory experiences.

I find India's process of globalisation and the growing ICT industry has given Indian women the potential to step outside of the traditional norms of conventions regarding typical employment opportunities often given to Indian women. This in turn has created a space that has yielded long-term shifts in the societal position of middle-class female ICT professionals, a shift in the perception of what constitutes "*a woman's place"* (Patel, 2014, p. 29). Female mobility is vital to human development, and the women I have analysed expressed how their female movement is a natural expression of their own desire to be able to choose for themselves where, how, and what they do with their lives, privately and workwise.

Sen (1999, p.18) argues that greater freedom, seen as expansion of ones capabilities, enhances the ability of people to help themselves, but also to influence the world in which they find themselves living within. This is what he calls the "agency aspect" of the individual. When utilising the notion of "*agency*" I make use of Sen's (1999, p.19) notion of the word, meaning "*someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of their own values and objectives*". I find the importance of recognising the role of agency as an

exceptionally important point, as I feel a need to assert that the empowering experience the women I had the chance to interview went through, would not have been possible had it not been for the women themselves, actively realising their potential through the use of agency. As I have argued throughout this theses, there is a need for state/society changes to the view on Indian women in the labour market, but that change will never become a reality if it is not for the women themselves. The individual is immensely important in the process of enhancing ones capability; the state may lay the foundation for what is to come, but it is the women themselves who are the active agents in realising the change.

9.2. India's Gendered Occupational Segregation Still Persevere For Many

Although there have been improvements for a certain group of Indian women in regard to decent work and skilled migration, I must emphasise that my findings suggest that there is only a small category of certain in-between Indian women who have been given the ability to partake in decent and formal migratory labour. I find that the window to obtain decent and formal employment is rather narrow. In order for Indian women to be able to partake in the workforce with labour that is both formal and decent, it is apparent that numerous factors need to align. My findings emphasise that there needs to be real change in macro- and micro-level attitudes toward Indian women in the workforce, regardless of their caste, class, and socio-economic affiliation (see Figure 9.1).

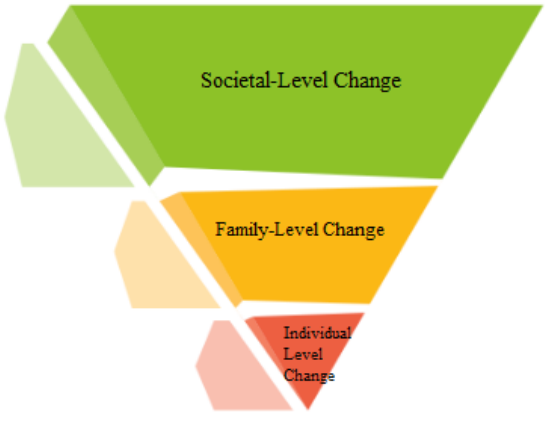

Figure 9.1 Bottom-up model for achieving increased levels of FLFP within decent work

Retrieved from Siddiqi (2021, p. 5)

As argued by Desai and Jain (1994, p.119), "*Women's concentration in the 'private' realm is shaped by forces outside as well as within the household*"; and in order to see a positive development in regard to formally employed and economically independent Indian women, the Indian government and society at large needs to intervene in what is seen as "*culturally acceptable women's activity*". This is because the "*shame of having a working wife*" is still a real phenomenon for many Indian households (WorldBank, 1991, p. xvi-xcii).

My findings illustrate that the inveterate view on Indian women's labour participation as belonging to domestic duties, is due to the institutionalising of the notion of patriarchy as something natural, through the implementation of gender-based political relations and consensus on the lesser value of Indian women. In this way, the second-class view on Indian women has been allowed to continue to grow, reinforced by the state and the household (Facio, 2013, p.3). I emphasise, through my findings, that there needs to be an increase in the social and cultural value of Indian women in the formal and recognised labour market. It seems that India has not been able to ensure that the country's economic growth has been translated into better labour conditions and opportunities for the average Indian woman. Lack of quality of employment and the opportunity for decent work is still one of the major factors contributing to India's rising inequality gap and decreasing FLFPR. I find that there is still a clear connection between traditional occupational segregation in the Indian labour marked and gender, caste, and class discrimination.

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Appendix A - Informant Descriptions

Informant Code	Age	Place of Birth	Educational Attainment	Occupation	Religious Affiliation	Siblings	Parents Educational Attainment
Saanvi	36	Andhra Pradesh	Bachelor in Software Engineering	Software Developer	Hindu	Younger brother and sister	Mother Primary School, Father Graduate
Aadya	33	Maharashtra	Bachelor in Software Engineering	Software Developer	Hindu	Elder brother	Mother and father Graduates
Kiara	50	Uttarakhand	Master in Engineering	Engineering Teacher	Hindu	To elder brothers and a sister	Mother Primary School, Father Graduate
Diya	34	Gujarat	Master in IT Engineering	IT Sector	Hindu	Elder sister	Mother and father Graduates
Pihu	53	Uttar Pradesh	PhD in Engineering	Owns her own business	Hindu, not practicing	Three older siblings	Not gone through any education
Prisha	40	Andhra Pradesh	Bachelor in Electrical Engineering	IT Engineer	Hindu	One elder brother, and one younger brother	Educated up to 10th class
Ananya	44	Maharashtra	Master in Engineering and Commerce	Owns her own business	Hindu	Elder brother	Both graduates
Fatima	40	Jharkhand	Bachelor in Arts and Commerce	Owns her own business	Hindu	Elder sister	Both graduates
Myra	36	Delhi	Master in Computer Application	Computer Engineer	Hindu	Elder sister	Both graduates
Sarah	41	Jharkhand	PhD in Molecular Biology	Researcher	Hindu, not practicing	Elder brother	Both graduates
Aarohi	30	Rajasthan	Master in IT Engineering	IT Sector	Hindu	Younger sister	Both graduates (masters)
Aaradhya	38	Punjab	Bachelor in Software Application	Software	Hindu	Two younger sisters	Mother bachelor, Father Graduate
Aarya	62	Delhi	Master in Science	Researcher	Hindu	Three older siblings	Father Graduate, mother none
Pari	35	Maharashtra	Bachelor in Computer Engineering	Computer Engineer	Hindu	Younger sister	Mother bachelor, Father master

Appendix B - Interview Guide given to the Informants

Interview Guide

Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. As I have mentioned, my study focus is on female labour migration from India in modern times. I wish to get a look into the experience of migrating for work, and in addition to this also look at gender differences, and if there is an empowering aspect to the process of labour migration. As a reminder:

- Your information will be kept confidential and you will remain anonymous
- So will the responses that you provide
- You can decide not to answer any question
- You can decide to stop the interview process
- You can contact me during the course of the research study

Questions 1-4 will be about your demography; the questions are as follows:

1. When and where were you born/grew up?
2. What kind of family did you grow up in? (If she did, what did your mother work as, have she gone through any level of education?)
3. Have you completed any level of education?
4. What are your religious beliefs?

Question 5-10 will be regarding your migration process; the questions are as follows:

5. There is a story behind every decision to migrate, what was yours? (follow up if needed: why did you choose this country?)
6. Do you think your background (such as class, educational attainment, place of birth etc) has had a say in your decision to migrate?
7. Has anyone in your family/circle of friends or acquittances migrated for work?
8. Do you think there has been a major development within labour migration among women in the last 10-15 years?
9. How common do you think it is so labour migrate based on the organization you are working for? Do you think most of the women come through such organizations or do you think they come on their own?

Question 11-12 will regard gender differences within the migration process and the aspect of empowerment, they are:

10. Do you think there is a difference in the possibility for labour migration for women in India? (for example, due to class differences, between men and women?)
11. A part of my research is to explore if the choice of working abroad has an empowering aspect to it. Do you feel that your choice to work in Norway/Sweden/Denmark was empowering for you, and has it continued to be empowering whilst you have been living and working here? Do you think your autonomy or feeling of empowerment would be different if you were still in India? (When I am utilizing the concept of empowerment, I am referring to this understanding: *process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices)*

Before we conclude the interview, is it anything you wish to add, or do you have any additional remarks?

Appendix C - Consent form given to the Informants

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

Female Labour Migration in the Age of Globalization?

A gendered analysis of the opportunity for labour migration, and the connection between empowerment and labour migration among women from India working in Norway

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to look at a gendered labour migration process and its connection to empowerment of said women. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project
The purpose of this research project is to look into how or whether the process of labour migration has changed in modern times and if/how it is connected to enhanced empowerment for the women that choses to migrate for work. Is there a connection between the process of labour migration and empowerment, which in this study use the definition as "a process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices". My research questions for this project are split into two, the first one evolves around the process of labour migration as a whole and will look into how it has changed for women in the 21st century

1. In what way has the process of globalization affected the movement of female labour migrants migrating internationally from India?

The second part of the project evolves around the process of labour migration and empowerment and I will look into

2. Is there a connection between international female labour migration and enhanced empowerment for women from India working in Norway?

The information collected will be part of my master thesis dissertation.

Who is responsible for the research project?
Oslo Metropolitan University (Oslo Met) is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?
The sample has been selected based on their relatedness to India their interconnectedness as either working as labour migrants or have previously been working as labour migrants or who are planning to work as labour migrants in the future. There is a total of 10 women who have been asked to participate in my master dissertation.

What does participation involve for you?
The method that will be used to collect the data is unstructured/semi-structured interviews with each of the participants.

"If you chose to take part of this project, the conversation will be based on and involve topics such as your early life, your description of the migration process, your view on working conditions here in Norway versus in India and your current life situation."

The interviews will not be reordered or filmed but will be written down by the researcher.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- The only person besides me (the researcher) that will have access to the data as long as the research period is ongoing is my supervisor Berit Helene Vandsemb who is an associate with Oslo Metropolitan University.
- To ensure that your personal data that is collected will not be read by unauthorized persons I am storing the data, such as information collected and contact details on a research server that is locked away. In addition to this I will not be using your name but instead a number/code.

The information that will be indicated in the master thesis will not make the participants recognizable, what will be mentioned is age-group (approximate age), sex, occupation (but not workplace) and place of birth, the information will be as general as possible to ensure that the participants participating will not be able to be recognized based on the information given in the dissertation.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The project is scheduled to end May 2021. When the project is over the data will be deleted.

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with Oslo Metropolitan University and NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Oslo Metropolitan University via Berit Helene Vandsemb at beritv@oslomet.no
- Our Data Protection Officer: Ingrid Jacobsen at Ingrid.jacobsen@oslomet.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project Female Labour Migration in the Age of Globalization and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in this semi-structured interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. May 2021.

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix D- NSD Approval of Project

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Female Labour Migration in the Age of Globalisation

Referansenummer

738385

Registrert

25.06.2020 av Mia Maria Haugen Feuth - s340416@oslomet.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet / Fakultet for lærerutdanning og internasjonale studier / Institutt for internasjonale studier og tolkeutdanning

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Berit Helene Vandsemb , beritv@oslomet.no, tlf: 4767237274

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Mia Maria Haugen Feuth, s340416@oslomet.no, tlf: 97403148

Prosjektperiode

01.08.2020 - 10.08.2021

Status

31.05.2021 - Vurdert

Vurdering (2)

31.05.2021 - Vurdert

NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 14.05.2021.

Vi har nå registrert 10.08.2021 som ny sluttdato for behandling av personopplysninger.

I tilfelle det skulle bli aktuelt med ytterligere utvidelse av den opprinnelige sluttdato (14.05.2021), må vi vurdere hvorvidt det skal gis ny informasjon til utvalget.

NSD vil følge opp ved ny planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Lene Chr. M. Brandt

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

01.07.2020 - Vurdert

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 01.07.2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

SHARE THE PROJECT WITH THE PROJECT LEADER
For students it is mandatory to share the Notification form with the project leader (your supervisor). You can do this by clicking on "Share project" in the upper left corner of the Notification form.

NOTIFY CHANGES
If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION
The project will be processing special categories of personal data about ethnic origin and religion, and general categories of personal data, until 14.05.2021.

LEGAL BASIS
The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is therefore explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a), cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA
NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS
Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES
NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Lene Chr. M. Brandt
Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)