Studies at the intersection of gender and labour migration have largely focused on female migrants. But in many developing countries, labour migrants remain predominantly male and their wives stay behind. Using qualitative research methods, I examine the impacts of men's migration on the everyday life and gender relations of their left-behind wives in two districts of Bangladesh (Bogura and Munshiganj). My analysis suggests that, the village wives lead strictly circumscribed lives under the supervision of their in-laws. The concept of ‘respectable woman’ vodro meye further curbs village wives’ physical autonomy. Whereas, changes in patrilocal settings in the migrant households place fewer restrictions on suburban wives’ physical mobility. Religious clothing such as Burkha is practised by both the village and suburban wives. Burkha facilitates suburban wives’ physical mobility, but it does not serve that purpose for the village wives. Data from the interviews with migrant men suggests that village men promote female ‘modesty’, madrassa education and early marriages for girls. I find that the identity formation of ‘modern’ Muslim wives, in the milieu of men's migration, does not convert to greater physical autonomy or decision-making power for the women. My thesis highlights the policy importance of considering not only the economic advantages of labour migration (remittances) but also its potential social costs which affect men and women differently.

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