

# **GENDER, MIGRATION AND THE CITY: AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

**By**

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## **Abstract:**

Migration over the period of time has gained considerable currency with its impact felt in policy making, demography, security, and empowerment. The theorisation of migration has been traditionally male biased failing to capture the questions of women and address the gender related migration experiences. The feminist interpretations criticises the public/private divide that invokes a justification of female subordination, exclusion and an abuse of human rights within the home and public arena since women are a symbol of national esteem, its cultural roots and spirit. Hence women's spatial mobility had been dictated by cultural symbolic meanings of space. Gendering the city provides a new socio-political paradigm to conceptualise the intersections of power, belongingness, rights, culture, economy and law. The cities become the places and spaces which experiences huge influx of migrants living there and gendering the city enables us to reformulate the urban politics. The paper aims to deconstruct the traditional understanding of migration and will study the theoretical underpinnings of female migration in the cities while understanding the circumstances under which they migrate, the conditions, experiences as well as responses from the host city and the state in context of globalisation, acceleration, differentiation, politicisation and feminisation.

The global migration of women as maid servants, nannies, sex workers and contract brides have not been a recent phenomenon but have taken a up swing in the globalised world. The paper aims to anchor the migration of women in the cities for definite work especially in domestic roles and examine whether the migration of women in contemporary world is re-inscribing the histories of migration and exploitation or generating new ones in the process. As cities become the spaces for women migrants to escape the discrimination and exercise freedom they also get plugged into the informal market such as trafficking, sex industry, and low paid domestic work rendering them invisible in the entire economic circuit. Female migration mainly in the urban

locales accompanies a production of changing role of women in their families and home country. Migrating independently they assume the role of main economic providers and heads of households thereby acting actively in public and social roles re-inforcing their status and reconfiguring gender relations and power equations in the urban space thereby carving a new space for them.

The paper while looking into theoretical aspects also investigates the issues and challenges faced by the women migrants in the global south (developing countries) mainly in Indian mega cities, such as Kolkata, Delhi, and Mumbai and analyse the legal framework for the women refugees and migrants who are stationed here. Including gender and cities as variables in the migration theory, cities are used as a landscape in the paper for understanding the concepts of rights, security, power play, citizenship, and negotiation cutting across the local, national, regional as well as global level. It will examine the structural changes that can alter gender relations within the society; social and cultural inequalities underlying the differences; the interconnectedness between socially constructed gender relations and the visible as well as invisible boundaries that affect women in urban spaces.

Analysing the reports, data and available literature the paper will explore how female migrants are plugged in the global economic and labour market? How the social and cultural boundaries are maintained, crossed, resisted and reconfigured? What are the reasons behind increasing trend of female migration within global south and from south to north? Does the growth of informal market in urban economies reconfigures economic and power relations between men and women? How the NGOs and the international policy frameworks, state's legal policies help to protect them from any exploitation and abuses? The significance of women and immigrants in the mega cities of the global south will help to uncover how women are emerging as profit-making resources in alternative survival circuits, especially in the shadow economy, and for government revenue enhancement?

The gendering of city will engage historical, social and political processes theoretically to understand women as subject and city as an object of the study, helping to understand women as crucial actors in the cities contesting, resisting the patriarchal structures and striving for justice in

the urban spaces carved by them. The study helps to expose the multi-level character of gendered belongingness in the city, its inclusivity in the urban governance to tackle crime, violence and inequality in the cities towards women inviting more women representation leading to a transformation of the cities in the global south.

*Keywords: feminization, urban space, migration, global south, inequality, transformation*

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