

# Gendered Migration: Post-liberalisation Trends in Indian Mega Cities

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**ABSTRACT:** Human migration involves individuals and families moving from one place to another. It can be categorised into internal migration (within a country) and external migration (between countries). Historically, women have migrated for marriage, while men have migrated for work and education. In India, marriage has been a major reason for female migration, but other factors like education and employment are becoming more important. More women are now migrating to India's major cities. This research aims to study the patterns, causes, and trends of female migration to India's megacities and their impact on development. The study uses secondary data from the Census, which shows that most migrants to cities come from disadvantaged states. It will examine factors like education, employment, and marriage that influence female migration. The study will also explore how female migration affects the development of megacities, including the challenges and opportunities it presents. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of female migration.

## INTRODUCTION

Migration is a longstanding phenomenon that has been utilized by humanity as a means of escaping challenging circumstances. Its existence can be traced back to the earliest stages of civilization and has persisted to the present day, with the underlying reasons for migration evolving. For instance, Indian mythology provides evidence of the concept of migration, as exemplified by the narrative of Lord Krishna and his father relocating from Gokul village to Vrindavan village in search of safety and improved amenities. This account is reminiscent of the Pandavas, a group of five brothers from the Mahabharata, who were forcibly exiled by their Kaurava cousins for a period of thirteen years and spent that duration migrating from one location to another. The transition from the mythical era to the present day has enabled us to gain knowledge about

migration through both literary sources and personal encounters. The historical record is replete with accounts of migration, which is defined as a relocation that may be either permanent or semi-permanent. The move may be of any duration, voluntary or involuntary, and may involve either domestic or international relocation. (Lee, 1966). Migration entails the relocation of individuals from one place to another in pursuit of improved prospects in terms of employment, education, and various amenities. Presently, a greater number of individuals reside in foreign nations compared to their country of origin. As per World Migration Report 2020, the global count of international migrants reached approximately 272 million in 2019, signifying a rise of 51 million since 2010.

The phenomenon of migration is a gendered process that engenders distinct outcomes for men and women. It is an integral component of development, which also entails alterations in the role

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and status of women. Historically, migration research has been predominantly centred on males. However, there has been a recent shift in focus towards females, a trend that is frequently referred to as the feminisation of migration. (UN, 1993). The term “feminisation of migration” is now often heard. However, the word is deceptive and might raise discussions over whether it should be used given that it implies absolute progress in proportion of female migrants. The feminisation of migration occurs concurrently with feminisation of poverty and work, two other changes that have an impact on women. Women are willing to work for any wage and are in high demand, which contributes to the feminization of labour migration. Women tend to lag behind men in many developing and underdeveloped countries, whether in education or professions such as entrepreneurs, investors, lawyers, journalists, medical specialists, scientists, and academics. Countless women migrate for better opportunities for work or education and a better life for their families. Migrant females, who make up about half of the 270 million migrants worldwide, are change agents and leaders who make numerous economic and social contributions to both their destination and transit countries. They contribute a variety of skills and knowledge as well as money to their families and communities (UN Women, 1993). There could be several reasons for women’s migration, including conflict caused by climate-related disasters, poverty, and deeply embedded gender inequalities, including violence and a lack of access to livelihood resources. With approximately 27 million people dispersed around the world, India has second-largest diaspora in world after China. India is one of the top ten popular countries for out-migration. With 3.5 million migrants and 2.2 million migrants from Bangladesh-India and India-United Arab Emirates respectively became two of the top ten migration corridors in world in 2010 (International Organization for Migration, 2010). In India, there is not only out-migration but also in-migration at the inter- and intra-state levels. The UN Global Migration Database indicates that India leads the Asia-Pacific region in terms of immigrant population. Alongside a report by US committee for refugees and immigrants in 2009 highlight significant invasion of migrant labourers from Bangladesh and Nepal, India accommodates approximately 400,000 refugees from adjacent nations, including Sri Lanka,

China, and Myanmar. The Nation has been in a stage of development, since the economic liberalisation in 1991, due to the development in social, economic and other domains that influence population mobility and migration the high rate of development in social, economic, and other domains must have an impact on population mobility of female. Liberalisation as we all know, is all about freedom from state interference, which entails privatization which creates many opportunities for women in the education and employment sectors, liberalisation significantly affects the status of women. Before 1991, the government controlled many aspects of society, particularly because there was constant concern about how these foreign companies might affect our small industries, national culture, and traditions, and market-based reforms might lead to an economic disparity between the rich and poor classes. Overall capital control would be limited to a few individuals. Later on, these fears were realized, such as after 1991, when LPG reforms were implemented in India because every coin has two sides. On one side, these reforms had a lot of positive effects not only on our economy, but also on our political and social structures, such as an increase in GDP, a check on inflation, a check on fiscal deficit, a boost in industrial production, a decrease in poverty, education, and employment. There were also negative consequences, such as multinational industries failing small local industries, which has a direct impact on rural or local labour power, new technologies replacing labour power, reduced labour wages in China sweatshop workers work overcrowding, no worker breaks, lack of sanitary conditions, more work pressure to complete a task, and lack of job security. All of these factors contribute to individuals migrating from one city, state, or country to another in quest of a job, a better way of life, and security and safety.

In India, as far as we can tell, migration is not restricted to out-migration; it also includes in-migration, when people move within a state as well as between states. In addition to migrating within states, individuals also relocate within districts. Most migrants come from Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan, but among these most migrants come from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. According to the 2011 Census, 20.9 million people left the two states. People relocated to megacities like Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, and Bangalore

had a combined population of 9.9 million or about one-third of the total population of 29.2 million. The migration data from the 2011 census provides an opportunity to shed additional light on female internal mobility in India. Female migration occurs for economic reasons such as work, education, and so on. It is unnecessary to emphasize the status of women in terms of female migration as a voluntary decision to migrate. The marginalisation of female in the context of migration is tied to her comprehensive socioeconomic conditions, as well as their work's non-recognition and undervaluation. The huge amount of female travel due to marriage and associational factors has reduced the economic impact of gender dimensions of labour migration. In the mid-1980s, scholars gave attention to female migration due to their contribution to the labour force primarily in the unorganised sector. People generally relocate from their typical place of origin to megacities in search of employment and better economic opportunities. A review of migration literature from several fields obscures women's migration participation. Despite all of the "women on the move" throughout 20<sup>th</sup> century, research strategies in same period have mostly concentrated on men. Scholars first attempted to focus on female migrants in 1970s. Most existing research on migration and immigration frequently excludes women, concentrates only on men, and behaves as though men were non-gendered (Wright, 1995) before that, Ravenstein (1889) in *Law of Migration* stated that women move more than men for shorter durations across longer distances.

In a sedentary population stagnating, migration brings life and progress. Professional and managerial workers are likewise extremely migratory, typically as a means of advancement. The elements that may influence the decision to migrate can be categorised into four categories: place of origin, destination area, intervening obstacles and interpersonal relationships. Several factors act to keep people behind in every area. However, not all people who migrate make that decision on their own. Children are carried by their parents, and wives accompany their husbands (Lee, 1966). Women or female migration is always seen as a social and cultural issue rather than an economic one; before, many experts assumed that the women's movement was primarily caused by marriage, and

divorce also tend to move. When they relocate to a new city, state, or country encounter new possibilities, ideas, and social norms that can promote their rights and allow them to engage more fully in society. According to Talcott Parson's Sex Role Theory, women and men perform their sex roles males perform instrumental roles and women perform expressive roles in the family. It emphasises women's diversity rather than commonalities while highlighting how linkages to the public realm enable their movement. As we all know, India is a growing country with shifting migration patterns. Marriage is not the major reason for migration of women to major cities. In India, the urban population's femininity ratio is steadily improving. The migrant population's femininity ratio is determined to be greater than the non-migrant population's femininity ratio. Gender and Migration in Developing Countries (Chant, 1992) demonstrates that many movement academics continue to resort to predefined sex norms to explain women's migration. ("*The most conspicuous disparities in male and female mobility in the text appear to connect most closely to men's and women's responsibilities in earning revenue within household units,*" - writes Chant 1992, p. 199). Migration significantly impacts the demographic mix of any nation, state, or district population. Women are more reported to be migrant among intra-district other than inter-district and inter-state. Since women are willing to work for any wage to enter the labour market, this has a major impact on women's rural-urban migration. When we see migration from rural-to-rural and rural-urban areas, it could be due to marriage, (Premi, 1980) discovered in his study that a higher percentage of women migrated from rural-to-rural destinations compared to rural-to-urban destinations. Internal migration offers better potential for poverty reduction, contributing to economic development in developing countries, and reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Women often move in response to the changing demands of different life stages, so their reasons for migrating can vary. Factors such as technological advancements, increased access to education and training, rising living costs, evolving standards for assessing one's status based on income, and shifts in men's attitudes all contribute to encouraging women to leave their homes and pursue

work opportunities (Singhal, 1995; Philip, 2002).

In this research paper, we investigate female migration's post-liberalization trend in six Indian megacities between 1991 and 2011. Traditionally, it is considered that females in India migrate small distances, usually for marriage purposes. The Indian economy's urbanisation, privatisation, and globalisation may have an impact on population movement in general, and female migration in particular. It is believed that as the economy and culture develop, more female migration will occur. It would influence the level and patterns of female migration in India. The research on recent patterns in female migration is likewise limited, as the focus is mostly on male migration. In 1951, the number of metropolitan cities in India was limited to four. However, over the course of 60 years, this figure has significantly escalated to encompass a total of 53 metropolitan cities by 2011, indicating a remarkable increase of 49 cities. Among these urban centres, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pune, and Ahmedabad have emerged as the foremost metropolises in India. These eight cities, commonly referred to as India's megacities, hold significant prominence in this research paper, which exclusively focuses on the migration patterns of women within six of these megacities, namely Delhi,

Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bangalore.

*Objectives:* (1) To analyse the differences in female migration rates in selected megacities from 1991 to 2011; and (2) To investigate the factors contributing to females' migration to selected megacities.

#### MATERIALS & METHODS

The present study is based on secondary data, specifically census data, which have been utilized to carry out a comparative analysis of female migration in six selected mega-Indian cities. As per the census 1991 Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad named as megacities however in the subsequent census the number of megacities is increased but to make it comparative only above-mentioned megacities are taken into account consideration Furthermore, the research aims to examine the trends in female migration over a span of three decades (1991, 2001, and 2011) and investigate the underlying factors driving such migration.

#### RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results of the research paper have been divided into three categories such as: Demographic Profile, Migration pattern and Factors affecting female migration.

##### *Demographic profile*

TABLE 1

*The female population of six megacities*

City/UA	2001	2011	The Decadal difference in the female population.	The Decadal growth rate of the female population in per cent
Bangalore	3110525	45,98,890	1488365	47.8
Chennai	2124106	2310888	186782	8.8
Delhi	6243273	7800615	1557342	25
Hyderabad	1,848,580	1924748	76168	4.1
Kolkata	2,072,836	2139928	67092	3.2
Mumbai	1,459,785	14,00,803	-58982	-4

Source: Census District Handbook 2001, 2011

Data presented in table 1 shows the female population across six major Indian megacities between the Census years 2001 and 2011. Data reveals important inter-city variation in both absolute numbers and decadal growth rates. Bangalore recorded the most significant increase, with the female population rising from 3,110,525 in 2001 to 4,598,890

in 2011 an absolute increase of 1,488,365 females, corresponding to a growth rate of 47.8 per cent. Delhi experienced an increase of 1,557,342 females over the decade, with growth rate of 25 per cent. In contrast, Chennai experienced a comparatively modest increase, with its female population rising from 2,124,106 to 2,310,888, reflecting an increment of 186,782 females

or 8.8 per cent. Both Hyderabad and Kolkata exhibited minimal growth, with female populations increasing by 76,168 (4.1 per cent) and 67,092 (3.2 per cent) respectively. Notably, Mumbai was the only city to report a negative trend, with a decline of 58,982 females from 1,459,785 in 2001 to 1,400,803 in 2011 resulting in

a negative growth rate of -4 per cent. These patterns underscore the spatially uneven demographic trajectories of female populations across India's leading metropolitan regions, shaped by a complex interplay of migration, urban development, and socio-economic factors.

TABLE 2  
*Sex ratio of megacities 1991-2011*

City/UA	Sex Ratio Six Megacities in 1991	Sex Ratio Six Megacities in 2001	Sex Ratio Six Megacities in 2011	Differences in the sex ratio in six megacities
Bangalore	902	908	916	14
Chennai	933	957	989	56
Delhi	830	822	868	38
Hyderabad	933	933	954	21
Kolkata	830	829	908	78
Mumbai	828	922	832	4

Sources: General Population and D3 UA, Census of India, 1991,2001 and 2011 Note: sex ratio no. of female / 1000 male

The sex ratio among six megacities can be seen below table 2, in Bangalore, the sex ratio experienced an increase from 902 females per 1,000 males in 1991 to 908 in 2001, and further to 916 in 2011. This represents a net increase of 14 females per 1,000 males over the two-decade period. In Chennai, the sex ratio rose steadily from 933 in 1991 to 957 in 2001, culminating in a significant increase to 989 in 2011, resulting in an overall gain of 56 females per 1,000 males from 1991 to 2011. Conversely, Delhi witnessed a decline in the sex ratio from 830 in 1991 to 822 in 2001, followed by a recovery to 868 in 2011, leading to an overall increase of 38 females per 1,000 males over

the 20 years. In Hyderabad, the sex ratio exhibited slight variations, beginning at 933 in 1991, rising to 933 in 2001, and then slightly decreasing to 954 in 2011, resulting in an overall decrease of 21 females per 1,000 males from 1991 to 2011. Kolkata saw a notable increase in its sex ratio, moving from 830 in 1991 to 829 in 2001, and further to 908 in 2011, which translates to an overall increase of 78 females per 1,000 males during the two decades. Lastly, Mumbai's sex ratio displayed minor fluctuations, starting at 828 in 1991, dipping to 922 in 2001, and then rising to 832 in 2011, resulting in a net increase of 4 females per 1,000 males from 1991 to 2011.

TABLE 3  
*Female literacy and work participation in Megacities, 2011*

Six megacities	Female literacy per cent	Female workers per cent	Female main workers in per cent	Female marginal workers per cent
Bangalore	85.4	21.58	91.11	13.52
Chennai	86.55	20.70	88.65	16.84
Delhi	80.96	31.88	95.09	6.25
Hyderabad	78.49	32.42	80.62	32.58
Mumbai	86.53	22.29	93.46	9.02
Kolkata	84.75	23.93	88.62	16.02

Source: Census of India 2011; PCA-11, UA

Data presented in table 3 shows the female literacy rate and work participation across six Indian megacities in 2011. Data shows the notable patterns and disparities in women educational attainment and economic engagement. Female literacy rates are relatively high across all cities, with Chennai (86.55 per cent) recording the highest rate, followed closely by Mumbai (86.53 per cent), Bangalore (85.4 per cent), and Kolkata (84.75 per cent). Delhi (80.96 per cent) and Hyderabad (78.49 per cent) trail slightly behind, indicating that while urban settings tend to support higher literacy among women, regional disparities persist. Nevertheless, these high literacy levels do not uniformly translate into higher female work participation. Hyderabad and Delhi report the highest female work participation rates at 32.42 per cent and 31.88 per cent respectively, whereas Bangalore (21.58 per cent), Mumbai (22.29 per cent), and Chennai (20.70 per cent) exhibit significantly lower levels, suggesting that socio-cultural barriers, gender norms, and limited access to formal employment continue to constrain

women's economic roles. Further disaggregation of the workforce reveals that Delhi leads in the proportion of female main workers at 95.09 per cent, signifying more secure and long-term employment among women. Mumbai (93.46 per cent) and Bangalore (91.11 per cent) also report high shares of main workers, while marginal employment is relatively low in these cities. On the other hand, Hyderabad shows a contrasting trend, with only 80.62 per cent of its female workforce classified as main workers and a high 32.58 per cent engaged as marginal workers, reflecting greater employment instability or informal labour participation. Chennai and Kolkata also display higher proportions of marginal female workers at 16.84 per cent and 16.02 per cent, respectively. These findings underscore the persistent disconnect between education and employment outcomes for women in urban India and highlight the need for policy interventions that not only promote female education but also address structural and cultural barriers to decent and stable employment in urban labour markets.

#### Migration Pattern

TABLE 4

*Female migration 1991-2011 in percentage*

City/UA	Female migration in 1991	Female migration in 2001	Female migration in 2011	Difference in female migration
Bangalore	48.03	45.32	45.66	-2.37
Chennai	48.61	46.83	49.96	1.05
Delhi	45.24	43.94	47.76	2.52
Hyderabad	49.08	46.23	48.65	-0.43
Kolkata	47.24	46.61	52.74	5.5
Mumbai	43.77	42.07	45.66	1.89

*Sources:* Census of India 1991,2001 and 2011; D3 UA

Table 4 shows the analysis of female migration trends across six Indian megacities from 1991 to 2011 reveals varying patterns of mobility and urban absorption among women. The data indicate that Kolkata experienced the most notable increase in female migration, rising from 47.24% in 1991 to 52.74% in 2011 an overall increase of 5.5 per cent. This important growth suggests a steady influx of women migrants, possibly due to marriage, family reunification, or economic opportunities in the city's expanding informal sector. Delhi also recorded a considerable rise, with female migration increasing by 2.52 per cent, from 45.24 per cent in 1991 to 47.76 per cent in 2011, reflecting its growing prominence as a national urban hub attracting women through both

marriage and employment-related migration. Similarly, Mumbai witnessed an increase of 1.89 per cent, from 43.77 per cent to 45.66 per cent over the same period. Although lower in magnitude, this trend is noteworthy given Mumbai's high cost of living and dense urban structure, which often pose challenges to migrant settlement. Chennai's female migration rate showed a modest but positive increase of 1.05 per cent, reaching 49.96 per cent in 2011, indicating near parity between migrants and non-migrants among the female population. In contrast, Bangalore and Hyderabad experienced slight declines in female migration. Bangalore's share dropped from 48.03 per cent in 1991 to 45.66 per cent in 2011, a decrease of 2.37 percentage points, while Hyderabad declined marginally by 0.43

per cent, from 49.08 per cent to 48.65 per cent. These declines may reflect saturation of urban infrastructure, changing patterns in regional migration flows, or a slowing rate of in-migration relative to natural urban population growth. Overall, the data suggest that

while female migration to megacities continues to be a significant demographic trend, its intensity and direction vary widely by city, shaped by a complex mix of social, economic, and spatial factors influencing women's mobility in urban India

TABLE 5  
*Female migration in rural and urban areas in six megacities in percentage*

City/UA	Rural migration in 1991	Urban migration in 1991	Rural migration in 2001	Urban migration in 2001	Rural migration in 2011	Urban migration in 2011	The difference in rural migration	The difference in urban migration
Bangalore	46.77	49.77	43.38	46.65	44.50	47.61	-2.27	-2.16
Chennai	47.89	49.20	45.38	47.21	49.14	50.02	1.25	0.82
Delhi	41.46	49.54	41.06	48.89	45.09	52.19	3.63	2.65
Hyderabad	48.57	49.76	43.70	46.23	47.98	48.87	-0.53	-0.89
Kolkata	45.74	50.57	45.14	50.82	52.65	54.15	6.91	3.58
Mumbai	41.15	48.77	39.66	46.63	42.31	49.03	1.16	0.26

Sources: Census of India 1991,2001 and 2011; D3 UA

When discussing migration, it is widely accepted that the majority of time is spent examining the movement of individuals from rural to urban areas. Table 5 shows data on migration trends of males and females across six megacities. In Bangalore, rural migration saw a decline from 46.77 per cent in 1991 to 43.38 per cent in 2001, followed by a slight increase to 44.50 per cent in 2011. Conversely, urban migration decreased from 49.77 per cent in 1991 to 46.65 per cent in 2001, with a minor rise to 47.61 per cent in 2011. The net change in rural migration from 1991 to 2011 reflects a reduction of 2.27 per cent, while urban migration experienced a decrease of 2.16 per cent. In Chennai, rural migration fell from 47.89 per cent in 1991 to 45.38 per cent in 2001, before rising to 49.14 per cent in 2011. Urban migration also decreased from 49.20 per cent in 1991 to 47.21 per cent in 2001, subsequently increasing to 50.02 per cent in 2011. The overall change in rural migration from 1991 to 2011 indicates an increase of 1.25 per cent, while urban migration saw an increase of 0.82 per cent. In Delhi, rural migration decreased from 41.46 per cent in 1991 to 41.06 per cent in 2001, then increased to 45.09 per cent in 2011. Urban migration decreased from 49.54 per cent in 1991 to 48.89 per cent in 2001, followed by an increase to 52.19 per cent in 2011. The overall change in rural migration from 1991 to 2011 shows an increase of 3.63 per cent, while urban migration

increased by 2.65 per cent. In Hyderabad, rural migration decreased from 48.57 per cent in 1991 to 43.70 per cent in 2001, with a slight rise to 47.98 per cent in 2011. Urban migration decreased from 49.76 per cent in 1991 to 46.23 per cent in 2001, and further declined to 48.87 per cent in 2011. The overall change in rural migration from 1991 to 2011 indicates a decrease of 0.53 per cent, while urban migration experienced a decrease of 0.89 per cent. The table on migration patterns in Kolkata reveals a decline in rural migration from 45.74 per cent in 1991 to 45.14 per cent in 2001, followed by a notable rise to 52.65 per cent in 2011. Conversely, urban migration exhibited a decrease from 50.57 per cent in 1991 to 50.82 per cent in 2001, before increasing to 54.15 per cent in 2011. This indicates an overall increase of 6.91 per cent in rural migration from 1991 to 2011, while urban migration saw a rise of 3.58 per cent. In Mumbai, rural migration decreased from 41.15 per cent in 1991 to 39.66 per cent in 2001, with a slight recovery to 42.31 per cent in 2011. Urban migration also declined from 48.77 per cent in 1991 to 46.63 per cent in 2001, before increasing to 49.03 per cent in 2011. The overall change in rural migration from 1991 to 2011 reflects an increase of 1.16 per cent, while urban migration experienced a modest rise of 0.26 per cent. Collectively, these trends underscore the evolving patterns of female migration in both rural and urban contexts within these major cities over the specified years.

TABLE 6

*Female migration within the district in six megacities in percentage*

City/UA	Female migration within districts in 1991	Female migration within districts in 2001	Female migration within districts in 2011	Differences in female migration within districts in the decades
Bangalore	50.09	45.38	48.08	-2.01
Chennai	53.47	47.45	49.37	-4.1
Delhi	47.17	0	50.29	3.12
Hyderabad	52.46	47.67	48.32	-4.14
Kolkata	63.51	55.02	55.38	-8.13
Mumbai	54.44	49.37	48.35	-6.09

Sources: Census of India 1991,2001 and 2011; D3 UA

The implementation of LPG reforms in India led to the establishment of a significant number of multinational corporations (MNCs) in urban areas, resulting in various outcomes. It is widely acknowledged that any phenomenon has its advantages and disadvantages, and one of the positive aspects of these MNCs was the creation of employment opportunities for individuals within their respective districts, rather than having to seek employment in other states. Consequently, while migration did occur, it also manifested as intra-district mobility. The extent of mobility within districts can be observed in Table 6 the statistics regarding female migration within districts reveal notable trends across various cities over the years. In Bangalore, the percentage of female migration within districts was recorded at 50.09 per cent in 1991, which decreased to 45.38 per cent in 2001, before rising slightly to 48.08 per cent in 2011, resulting in a net change of -2.01 per cent from 1991 to 2011. Chennai exhibited a similar pattern, with female migration rates of 53.47 per cent in 1991, declining to 47.45 per cent in 2001, and then increasing to 49.37 per cent in 2011, culminating in a total decrease of -4.1 per cent over the two decades. In contrast, Delhi's data presents an anomaly, showing a female migration rate of 47.17 per cent in 1991, a complete absence of recorded migration in 2001, and a recovery to 50.29 per cent in 2011, resulting in a

positive change of 3.12 per cent. Hyderabad's figures indicate a decline from 52.46 per cent in 1991 to 47.67 per cent in 2001, followed by a slight increase to 48.32 per cent in 2011, leading to a total decrease of -4.14 per cent. Kolkata had the highest female migration rate at 63.51 per cent in 1991, but this figure fell significantly to 55.02 per cent in 2001 and marginally to 55.38 per cent in 2011, reflecting an overall decline of -8.13 per cent. Mumbai's rates also showed a downward trend, starting at 54.44 per cent in 1991, decreasing to 49.37 per cent in 2001, and further to 48.35 per cent in 2011, resulting in a -6.09 per cent change. The term "female migration within districts" refers to the percentage of women relocating from one city/town to another urban area within the same district, the table 4 observed changes in these migration patterns over the decades are noteworthy. The differences in female migration from 1991 to 2011 indicate whether trends have increased or decreased, with negative values denoting a decline and positive values indicating growth. While Kolkata initially had the highest migration rate, it experienced a significant reduction by 2011. The zero-migration figure for Delhi in 2001 warrants further investigation. Overall, the majority of cities reflected a decline in female migration within districts, with the exception of Delhi, which experienced a slight

*Factors Affecting Female Migration*

TABLE 7

City/UA	Census Years	<i>Reasons for female migration in percentage</i>								
		Work	Business	Edu.	Marriage	H.H	F.M	N.C	MB	Other
Bangalore	1991	6.22	0.70	2.31	33.21	-	42.59	0.25	-	14.72
	2001	7.15	0.52	1.66	33.53	23.43	-	-	4.68	29.02
	2011	10.00	8	2.00	29	26.44	-	-	4.18	27.60
Chennai	1991	7.07	0.99	2.00	34.10	-	41.59	0.35	-	13.91
	2001	5.94	0.60	1.22	25.20	23.26	-	-	4.06	39.71
	2011	5.85	0.41	2.00	28.90	32.03	-	-	4.18	27.60
Delhi	1991	2.90	0.59	0.83	49.24	-	39.39	0.10	-	6.94
	2001	4.19	0.19	0.67	33.06	47.51	-	-	2.12	12.25
	2011	3.78	0.25	0.73	37.21	45.82	-	-	2.18	10.00
Hyderabad	1991	8.65	0.95	1.98	38.75	-	33.72	0.34	-	15.61
	2001	6.96	0.74	1.48	20.94	29.73	-	-	3.61	36.54
	2011	7.62	1.12	1.72	17.82	25.78	-	-	4.32	41.51
Kolkata	1991	3.75	0.49	0.93	26.60	-	47.22	0.15	-	20.88
	2001	3.12	0.38	0.52	37.59	27.84	-	-	2.46	28.09
	2011	2.45	0.61	0.44	42.30	25.18	-	-	5.29	23.70
Mumbai	1991	3.49	1.18	2.19	28.31	-	45.37	0.29	-	19.16
	2001	3.72	0.17	0.75	45.72	25.55	-	-	9.27	14.82
	2011	4.77	0.77	0.75	35.84	29.52	-	-	7.93	20.39

Sources: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011; D3 UANote: F M: Family Moved, M B: - Moved with Birth, N C: - Natural Calamities, M H H: - Moved with House Hold

The data presented in table 7 shows female migration patterns across six major Indian megacities such as Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai from 1991 to 2011 reveals a complex interplay of social, familial, and economic factors driving women movement into urban areas. According to Census data, the causes of female migration were initially categorized into seven groups during the 1991 census: work, business, education, marriage, family relocation, natural calamities, and other reasons. By 2001, the categories of family relocation and natural calamities were removed, while new categories such as “moved after birth” and “moved with household” were introduced, indicating a shift in conceptualizing and measuring migration motivations. Moreover, marriage continues to be the most prominent driver of female migration. In 2011, the percentage of female migrants citing marriage ranged from 17.82 per cent in Hyderabad to 42.30 per cent in Kolkata, with cities like Delhi (37.21 per cent), Mumbai (35.84 per cent), Chennai (28.90 per cent), and Bangalore (29 per cent) also showing significant figures. However, a comparative assessment over the decades reveals a gradual decline in marriage-related migration in Delhi, Bangalore, and Hyderabad, while Chennai has experienced a modest increase since 2001. This trend suggests that while marriage still

dominates, it is no longer as overwhelmingly singular a motive as in previous decades.

The proportion of female migrants relocating for work remains relatively low, with Bangalore leading at 10.00 per cent in 2011, followed by Hyderabad (7.62 per cent), Chennai (5.85 per cent), Mumbai (4.77 per cent), Delhi (3.78 per cent), and Kolkata (2.45 per cent). While work-related migration has increased in cities such as Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Bangalore, it has declined in Chennai, Kolkata, and Delhi. This regional variation reflects the uneven expansion of women’s employment opportunities and differing cultural norms around female labour force participation across urban India. Migration for business purposes is notably rare, consistently below 1 per cent in most cities throughout the census years, and has either stagnated or declined, reinforcing the limited economic independence or entrepreneurial engagement of urban migrant women. Notably, female migration for educational reasons has also remained marginal. In 2011, Bangalore and Chennai recorded the highest percentages at 2.00 per cent, followed by Hyderabad (1.72 per cent), while Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata each had under 1 per cent. A closer look at the trends indicates unexpected patterns, such as a decline in education-related migration to Chennai and Kolkata

since 2001, while Bangalore, Delhi, and Hyderabad saw modest increases. These shifts may suggest a broader societal transition where modernisation and rising female autonomy are gradually opening new avenues for women, though not yet at a scale sufficient to significantly alter national trends. The consistently low figures underscore that educational aspirations still take a secondary place to familial obligations in determining female migration.

One emerging trend is the growing role of household-related movements. In 2011, “moved with household” accounted for a substantial share of migration in Chennai (32.03 per cent), Mumbai (29.52 per cent), and Bangalore (26.44 per cent). Additionally, the category “moved after birth” likely referring to young women or girls migrating with family following birth has grown modestly in cities such as Mumbai (7.93 per cent), Hyderabad (4.32 per cent), and Kolkata (5.29 per cent). These figures reveal that a large proportion of female migration continues to be dependent migration, where women move not for individual economic gain but as part of broader family relocation. Overall, the data suggest that despite socio-economic progress and urbanization, the feminisation of migration in India remains heavily shaped by social structures, particularly the institution of marriage and family ties. Migration for independent economic pursuits such as employment, business, or education remains limited in comparison. This trend contrasts sharply with patterns in higher-income countries, where women increasingly migrate for economic empowerment and individual development. For India, the road to such transformation appears gradual and culturally mediated, and current migration patterns reflect broader gendered realities where women’s mobility is still largely defined by their familial roles.

#### MAJOR FINDINGS

Over the past decade, the total female population across India’s six megacities has shown notable growth, with Bengaluru (47.8%) and Delhi (25%) reporting the highest decadal growth rates among them (Census of India, 2011). In contrast, Mumbai

registered a decline of approximately 4%, indicating demographic stagnation or out-migration trends in female population growth. Additionally, female migration patterns within these urban centres reveals that Bengaluru and Hyderabad experienced negative net migration, whereas Kolkata (5.5%) and Delhi (2.52%) recorded the highest positive migration rates. In both cases, marriage emerged as the primary reason for female migration. Moreover, the sex ratio, India has made measurable progress over the past three decades. As indicated in Table 2, the sex ratios in Chennai (985), Kolkata (935), and Hyderabad (954) exceed the national average of 943 (Census of India, 2011). Among these cities, Kolkata demonstrated the most substantial improvement in sex ratio over the past decade, likely due to improved healthcare access and social awareness.

In terms of rural and urban migration, Bengaluru and Hyderabad exhibited a decline in female migration, with respective rates of -2.27% and -2.16%. Conversely, Kolkata and Delhi recorded the highest rural-to-urban female migration, with figures ranging between 6.91% and 3.58%, and 3.63% and 2.65%, respectively. Marriage continues to be the dominant factor driving these migration trends. Notably, Delhi is the only megacity among the six to report positive internal migration, while the others have experienced negative intra-urban migration trends (Census, 2011). On other hand, marriage remains the predominant cause of female migration as shown in Figures 1 and 2, which compare trends from 1991 and 2011 there has been a decline in its relative contribution. Simultaneously, the proportion of female migrants citing employment, business, and education as reasons for migration has increased (Deshingkar and Akter, 2009; Tumbe, 2015). Post-liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG) reforms, substantial progress has been observed in women’s development indicators. Female literacy rates now exceed the national average in several megacities, and women’s workforce participation has also seen a considerable rise, especially in the formal and service sectors (Planning Commission of India, 2013).

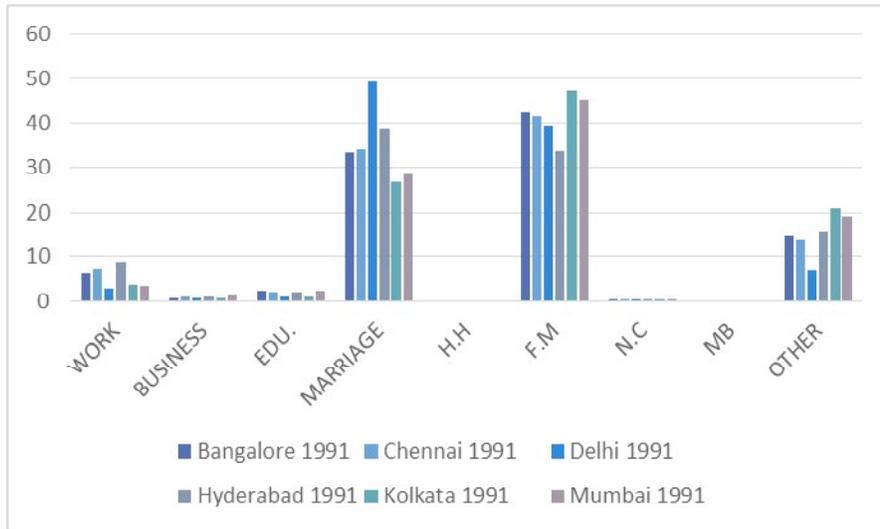


Figure 1: Reasons for the Female Migration Per cent 1991

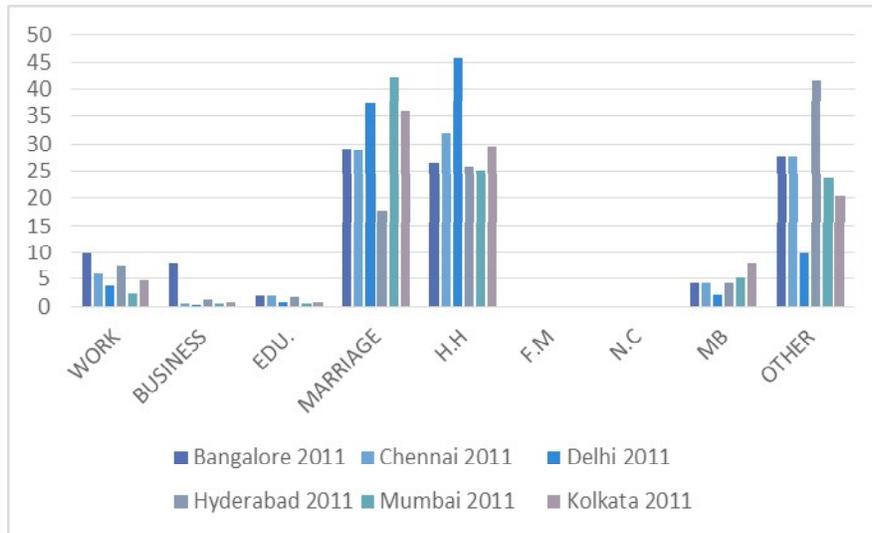


Figure 2: Reasons for the Female Migration Per cent 2011

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of the research and analysis conducted, it is evident that female migration in India is a complex issue that is deeply intertwined with social and economic inequalities. Women in India encounter numerous challenges to migration, including limited access to education and healthcare, which renders them vulnerable in society. Despite the implementation of policies and programs aimed at addressing the issue, reliance on the informal sector for livelihood persists

(Agarwal and Sarkar, 2022). Moreover, it is apparent that historically, marriage has been the primary reason for female migration in India (Pillai et al., 2016). However, there is a shifting trend as more women are migrating for work and becoming economically independent. This shift can be attributed to the increasing opportunities for employment and education that urban areas provide. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the overall percentage of women migrating for work remains relatively small, primarily due to the low female labour participation

rate in India (Rajan and Bhagat, 2021). The impact of migration on a state's development factor is a significant area of concern, as development cannot be achieved by halting or controlling the flow of migrants. Female migration, in particular, has far-reaching consequences, not only on women's economic roles but also on their positions within the family unit. The socioeconomic status of women is often elevated through migration, which has implications not only for the individual but also for the family as a whole. The phenomenon of migration is a global one, influenced by both development and underdevelopment.

### CONCLUSION

The dominance of women in migration within India presents a multi-faceted issue that necessitates attention and action. Addressing female migration in India requires addressing the underlying gender inequalities that contribute to their vulnerabilities and limited opportunities. Additionally, accurate data collection and research are crucial to fully comprehend the extent of female migration and its impact on society. To gain a deeper comprehension of female migration in India, additional research is imperative. While a considerable proportion of women migrate for marriage and family, a noteworthy percentage opt for megacities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Kolkata due to business, educational, and employment opportunities. Given the ongoing processes of modernization, industrialization, and enhanced female mobility, it is anticipated that the quantity and pace of female migration will escalate in the forthcoming years, primarily driven by economic motives. Moreover, the influx of women into urban areas can stimulate local economies and foster cultural diversity, enriching the social fabric of cities. However, without targeted interventions, these women may continue to face challenges such as inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare, and gender-based violence. Therefore, it is crucial to implement supportive policies that not only facilitate their migration but also promote their well-being and integration into urban environments. Ultimately, addressing these issues will not only empower women but also contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the nation.

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