

Bound By Patriarchy: Women's Experience of Internal Migration in Bangladesh

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Abstract : Millions of Bangladeshis move from low-income agrarian villages to the country's urban landscape with the hope to gain from the rapidly-growing middle-income urban, industrial future. However, the economic gains are mostly offset by new forms of extreme depravity, indignity, and inequality. Nonetheless, many scholars report unique gendered gains through migration - the rupture of traditional, entrenched inequalities by gender, providing women not only reliable incomes but also the opportunity to re-negotiate gendered roles, responsibilities and identities. In this study, we present the reflections of ten long-term urban migrant women in Dhaka city: of their gains, their losses as well as their aspirations for the future. Our findings show the incredibly high costs of a migration that is induced by desperate rural poverty. Further, we find that patriarchy persists - within the often 'kutchra' walls of urban low-income homes to the nature of so-called economic opportunities - in the constant intertwining of capitalism, globalization, and patriarchy. Caught in between, women have little choice but to cope with these new vulnerabilities by relying on the very norms and boundaries established by patriarchy and by recreating patriarchy to celebrate the (if) gains from displacement and migration.

Keywords : gender, internal migration, patriarchy, urbanization

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