

# REDEFINING GENDERED SPACE AS A PRODUCT OF DEVIANCE

## Abstract

Gender role is an issue of concern for a long time in our society. The subjectivity of this issue is very often confusing with the sexual identity. The present study is aimed to reveal the reflection of gender role on subjective and objective spaces. The gender differentials create spatial restriction in the form of societal norms. These societal norms, ultimately culminate into some gender related crisis which comes as a form of deviance. Social deviance take place out of the regressive concept of gendered spaces. This discourse is dependent on the literature reviews from various dimensions of gendered spaces and gender discrimination. From these literature survey, the discourse gets its way to conclude about the changing nature of gendered spaces and spaces of deviance.

**Keywords:** Gendered space, Deviance, Identity, Discrimination

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## INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination is a very common notion to each member of civilized society. This discrimination is the result of nothing but some deviant behaviour on the basis of gender role. Society often fails them to identify as a deviant behaviour and accepts as a part of the deep-rooted gender biased cultural norms. This kind of discriminatory attitude of society about gender roles are imperceptibly reflects over geographical space. It is in turn gives rise to spaces of deviance, which are commonly known as unsafe places for women, forbidden spaces for women. Ironically, women safety is often given by withdrawing women access from these spaces. Women may feel safe by withdrawing from those spaces but from a deep insight it is clear that they lose access over their spatial rights which in turn make them restricted and deprived in the name of safety from deviances.

- 1. Gender and space:** Gender is a concept which is continuously evolving with time. People are inundated by gender related issues every day, from the socio-legal reports about gender equality to filthy jokes coming via social media about the gender stereotypes. The concept of gender or rather socio-culturally constructed gender roles are attributed to human beings from the time of their birth. The sex is determined by the genital structure of a baby which is quite scientific but the determination of sex invites the gender attributes which makes the two concepts that are sex and gender interchangeable. This societal aspect of gender influences every aspect of our life from education to occupation, finance, career, relationships and many more. The gender binary allows space for only two identities: Male and female. With the passage of time, it is revealed that the idea of gender can go far towards non binary, agender and genderless identities. Very often our society fails to take these so-called queer identities in the purview of illusionary main stream. Gender is constructed basically with some components namely **body** with which a child is born; the **identities** which the baby is given to, like name, titles and the internal feelings of how the child recognize itself to the collective group it belongs; finally, the **society** means the norms the child has to follow from clothing, way of behaving, how community perceive about them etc.

The idea of gender is reflected on geographical spaces. Here the gendered spaces can be both subjective and objective spaces. Relation of people having different gender roles with their activity spaces creates the product of gendered spaces. In other words, the mental imagery which is created by the various genders in the due course of their spatial interactions produces the gendered space. For example, on a micro level, the shops selling alcohol are always crowded by male customers while men, women and transgender all can consume liquor within the four walls of home. This is nothing but a mental set up which restricts us to even imagine that women are buying alcohol. Thus this gendered space like alcohol shop is a product of our thinking which is constructed by the society. But this idea of gendered space can be changed with the class, caste or ethnicity. For example, in Maharashtra Konkani women run their own liquor shops but it is unimaginable for Bengali women due to cultural difference. In many beer bars girls work as waitresses where they serve alcohol. The question of safety and security outside the home generally arises for the women only because the society labeled women as emotionally fragile, physically less active and able than men, quite and calm in nature. All of the attributes can be attached with a man also but our societal stereotype does not allow thinking like that. Over all the production of gendered spaces restrict the access of

resources, facilities for women and also hamper their liberty of free movement (Spain, 2008).

2. **Spaces of deviance:** Talking about the societal norms it is very important to mention that our entire life is bounded by some cultural and social construct which direct our behaviour in certain ways. Those norms become our way of living. These norms change along with time and space but there are some standard codes of conducts in every society which have to be followed by the members of that particular society. Person who fails to follow those standardized norms and behave in some other ways are often labelled as deviant. These kinds of behaviours are designated as deviance from the social standards. On the basis of the nature of the deviance it can be termed as immorality, offence, crimes etc. Environment of a particular place influences the behaviour of an individual or a group of people collectively (Mayhew, 1862). High population density and heterogeneous population structure often lead to deviant behaviours among people. Thus, many researches on behavioural studies showed that urbanism is a significant predictor of immoral behaviour while some other studies confirm that particular areas may be especially prone to immoral activities, which can be designated as spaces of deviance (Campbell, 1993). The geographical explanation of deviant behaviour can be approached in two major ways: first draws the attention towards the areas of deviant activities; and the second one, the areas where the delinquent people reside. The Chicago School of Human Ecology studied the urban communities in details to bring out the spatial pattern of spaces of deviant behaviour in urban areas. They showed how the socio-cultural and economic backgrounds like ethnicity, immigration, occupation, income level, educational attainment affects the behaviour of a particular community and when they are placed in a larger urban assemblage often their behaviours are considered as deviant (Shaw and McKay, 1969). In urban areas where the difference between communities is high; for example, high income group and lower income group people reside in proximity, there the sense of deprivation becomes very sharp which creates some sort of strain on the lower income groups. The difference prevails in all aspects of life from education to standard of living, housing to employment which give rise to a social disorganization (Bottoms, 1992). These kinds of differences in the socio-economic backdrops create very distinct types of behavioural pattern among the residents of the same area. Deviant behaviours become sub-culture in those places. Such disorganization can be linked with the visual signs like broken window, graffiti, litter, visible signs of drug use, soliciting etc. These symbols do not go with the societal standard norms and creates some sort of fear among the local residents. These areas are often labelled as the areas of residents of delinquents. It decreases the neighbourhood cohesion. Ultimately, like feedback loop the social disorganization increases perpetually.

**Gendered space: as in literatures:** In the year 1792, **Mary Wollstonecraft** wrote for the equal political rights of women as per men. She presented a historical and moral view of the French revolution. This literary work is considered to be a pioneer of the first wave of feminism. This book advocated the concept of lack of education among the females and how the social order placed women in a subordinate position. This book is a corner stone of feminist philosophy. **Kate Chopin (1899)** showed with her literary work that women issues are not only limited within problems related to their maternity and feminine attitude. A woman has some social responsibilities also. As in the male dominated society her space is restricted within the four walls of home, it creates

psychological disorders also. Existentialist **Simon De Beauvoir (1949)** discussed about how women are being treated throughout the history. The position of women is always determined in comparison to the men. Women had to take a subordinate position in the society, which Beauvoir called as “other” in the society. **Betty Friedman (1963)** discovers doing a survey among her classmates that how women mostly suffer in their daily lives being a home maker and nothing else. They became frustrated about themselves and their families. Suffocation of women within the confinement of home makes them unproductive as an intellectual being. They need free space to grow. In the year **1992**, **Sonia E. Alvaroz** has presented a deep insight into the political rights of women and their rights in the democratic structure of state. She raised the question of representation of women in the political scenario of Brazil. Her work has broadened the sphere of activity space of women. In the same year **Daphne Spain (1992)**, addressed the issue of how in the work place the spatial restrictions to women hamper their access to resource and make their knowledge limited in comparison to the male counter parts. **Maria Miles and Vandana Shiva (1993)** dealt with the connection between exploitation of natural resources and subordination of women in our society. They showed how women power is apt for the management of natural resources and lead the green movement through environmental protection. **Doreen Massey (1994)** explained how the concept of gender role is reflected over geographical place which is the production of social space. Her work directly addressed the issue of gendered space construction. **Linda McDowell and Joanne Sharp (1997)** discussed about the geographies of gender and the inter section between gender and space. They outlined the major shift in the feminist geography, from geography of women to the impact of post structuralism. Feminist Economist **Nancy Folbre (2002)** emphasized the point that how society gave the tag of care giver to the women and restricted their access to the sphere of professional earning oriented activities. The legal system also gives the support to women mainly in terms of domestic issues and problems related to their sexuality. Providing these kinds of supports actually the spatial liberty of women is being decreased. In her memoir, **Caitlin Moran (2011)** described her journey from a girl to women. She discussed how her hair style, dressing sense, habit of playing with boys got socially disapproved because it was considered as deviant from the ideal behavioral codes of a female. Her work is a pure reflection of how our society dictates the gender role against one’s personal will. In **2012**, **Nivedita Menon** brought a wide spectrum about feminism. She discussed about issued like sexual harassment of women in public space, caste politics towards females in rural areas and lack of political representation of women in Indian politics. Her work unveils that in every sphere of society; in every form of society whether it is rural or urban, gender role dominates everywhere. The more progressive society, the more subtle gender role becomes. In **2013**, social activist **Mamta Malhotra** has done a detailed work on the issue of status of women n India. How Indian society perceive the role of women. She explored the immense creative talents, intelligence of Indian women which remained unnoticed as they don’t see the light of publicity. The spatial restrictions of women play an important role behind this kind of unequal treatment towards women in Indian society. **Rebecca Solnit (2014)** explained how domestic violence, sexual assault and rape cases got increased in France. According to the writer, as women are not comfortable to share these experiences with the outsiders and sometimes they are not willing to go the police, this kind of orthodox behaviour helps in rise of crime against women in every strata of society. **Mary Beard (2018)** tried to situate women in the patriarchal structure of society. She depicted beautifully how women with powerful personality are sabotaged by the

society. Their intellect and power of decision making are being ignored by the society. The production of gendered space is highly dependent on the male dominated power structure of the society. **Julian Guthrie (2019)** presented life story of four girls who entered the male dominated arena of Silicon Valley and how they build up new IT companies. Women and industry is not very commonly linked spaces, but this book showed how the male dominated space of industrial activity can be shared by women very successfully.

**Engels (1844)** gave an insightful description of the urban areas with the residential segregation of working class labours. Those places are highly dominated by social disorganization and criminal subcultures like drugging and alcoholism. Those areas are unsafe for women because of the frequent occurrences of defamation of women. **Sainsbury (1955)** delineated the issue of suicide prone attitude within women because of the stress they have to face due to the gender restrictions throughout their lives. Gender role and discrimination make women far more vulnerable to the deviant behaviour like suicide than men. In the year **1980**, **Clarke** explained how the spaces of crime against women can be modified by situational crime prevention methods. The infrastructural designing can play pivotal role to lessen the rate of crime in those places. Few years later **West (1982)** showed how occupational discrimination and restriction make women weaker than the male counter parts and increase their vulnerability to deviant behaviours in the public spaces. In **1986**, **Skogan** highlighted the issue of fear of being victimized within women in public spaces. The deep-rooted social views towards women safety have culminated that fear in them which in turn restricts them to access all the public spaces freely. **Fyfe (1996)** discussed in detail how socially deviant behaviour towards women can be controlled by the neighbourhood surveillance. In his book he showed practical examples of implementation of crime prevention techniques by the local people. **Norris and Armstrong (1999)** have given detailed explanation on nature of urban areas of delinquency. All the areas of delinquency have shown one common characteristic that they are highly gender biased in terms of accessibility. **Shapland (2000)** made a remarkable work on situational crime prevention where he brought the role of social values in controlling inappropriate behaviour with women in private and public spaces.

- 3. The crisis:** The present study will deal with the interconnectedness of these two above mentioned issues of Gendered space and Spaces of deviance. Gendered space can be found everywhere, from the confinement of home to work places to public spaces like roads, shopping malls and many more. In present day context the spaces of deviant behaviour can be found in various pockets of urban settings. The urban areas are considered as a symbol of social and cultural progress but the notion of gendered space imperceptibly exist in every urban areas. This vicious practice of spatial discrimination on the basis of gender helps to flourish deviant behaviour which very often reaches to the level of crime. As we know social disorganization is a one of the major power behind generating deviant behaviour. Gender restrictions enhance that disorganization. Spatial restrictions for women and men highlight the traditional gender roles which are irrational in present day context. The most traditional example of gendered space is the gendered based discrimination between public space and private space like home. Though women are doing all kind of works today but the title of home maker or rather responsibility of managing trivial issues of home goes to the women of the house. The reality is that both male and female members jointly run a family. Thus, there is no meaning at all to tag a

woman as home maker. This kind of tag actually to some extent confines her role into the four walls of home. Though a man also has to come back to his home at the end of the day but a woman is more bound by duties of home that she has to maintain a proper timing. In a more micro level, within a house kitchen is very much attached with the dwelling place of a woman. Even women who do not cook they has to take care of the kitchen related issues, though every member take food. So, if a woman is not attached to the kitchen on a level of objective space, her mind deals with the small details of that space which is quite a subjective matter. It may seem a very small issue but this issue is enough to create domestic fall outs. Women often face immoral behaviour by the in laws for not being enough efficient in the daily domestic works. Our society assigned the domestic works to the women only from time immemorial. As a by-product that gender roles people get encourage to behave in improper ways. On the other hand, the responsibility of earning bread and butter is assigned to the male counter parts. In our society, the success of a man is determined by the amount of money he earns or the position he holds in his office. The concept of house husband is very unique and matter of laughter in many times. As a result, if we look at the Crime Records Bureau Reports of last ten years in India, it can be found that the numbers of suicide cases are highest among the males falling in the age bracket of 26 to 45 years. Out of the huge pressure of social status and matching up the expectations of family, they often choose highly deviant approach of committing suicide.

On the other hand, in the sphere of public space the gender discrimination over space is much more unabashed. From shopping mall to office everywhere the rule of gender can be observed. Sexual discrimination is sometimes mandatory. This present discourse must not be interchanged with that. For example, the construction of different public toilets can be raised here, where the differentiation is needed. Even there also, there is no provision for the third gender till date. Separate quos for ladies in every shopping mall and the mandatory rule to use them is one of the common views which actually represent the concept the gendered space. Even ten to twenty years back one can find more men than women in any Government office. Some jobs like, Policing, Medical profession, aviation along with the entire transport sector, manufacturing sectors are highly gendered as they are male dominated. The reasons behind these kinds of restrictions are heavily dependent on the socio-cultural construct of gender. There is a tradition of thinking that women are not as physically powerful as men. Thus the sector of crime prevention and policing remained male dominated till date. But now a days this perception is changing and all women police stations are being established throughout our country but very few in numbers. As a result of this kind of gender stereotypes, police station is being thought as a space for males only. The female police officers face much discriminatory behaviour while working there. This kind of discrimination is actually a symbol of deviance in any civilized society. It is very fatal that in a police station where people go for safety and security, the women working there have to face deviant behaviours by the male counter parts. Many women whether residing in rural or urban set up have inhibitions to go to police station to lodge any kind of complain because the mental mapping of a police station is always male dominated. As a result, the crime against women remains unreported due to this gendered construction of spaces. This in turn gives rise to more offense against women. There are so many legal supports are being provided to women and transgender for securing them from immoral activities. But if reporting has not been done then all the supports go into vein. In the city like Kolkata

where there are 72 police stations, only eight out of them are female police stations. From this one example it is quite clear that the gendered spaces often give rise to deviant behaviours. Not only work spaces, the social spaces like roads in urban areas like Kolkata can be gendered. In every locality, there must be some lanes, alleys which are designated as “not very safe” for girls in a certain time of a day, particularly at night. In variably those spaces are dominated by boys in that particular time. This is because of the gender construct which taught us that girl must be at home within a time limit though boys don't have that kind of restrictions in terms of time. That evokes the boys so many times to commit deviant activities with the help of those gendered spaces like drugging, taking alcohol. As those spaces are prohibited for a particular gender if women in any case enter into those spaces, they often face eve-teasing, verbal abuse very often. There lots of examples can be given where the gender restricted access of space gave rise to deviant behaviours. Present study will be focused on this issue of construction of gendered spaces and how this idea turns a space into a space of deviance.

## CONCLUSION

Women empowerment is a highly talked issue over past decades. Provisions have been created for enhancing female literacy, the legal support towards women are more tightened, political rights and property rights are given to women. Despite of that the gap between male and female literacy is quite high. In urban India, 83.7 percent male and 74.8 percent female are literate in 2014 (Nation Sample Survey Report, 71<sup>st</sup> Round). Work participation rate among the women fall from 36.7 percent (2005) to 25 percent (2018) in India (Nation Sample Survey Report, 71<sup>st</sup> Round). All most 195 million female workers are engaged in unorganized sectors in unpaid jobs. These kinds of discriminations highlight the strain over female population of our country. It can be reflected on space also in the form of male domination in every Government office, industrial premises and on a wider spectrum in most of the public spaces. Though transgender rights are coming in the forefront but their presence in public spaces is meagre and ineffective.

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