1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Overview

Urban life presents lots of challenges for people to sustain both physically as well as mentally. Quality of life in urban settings is poor with all its stressors that affect human body and mind in a negative manner. The outdoor open green spaces are established as the de-stressors in urban environment and the relationship between quality of life and green spaces is acknowledged in many researches. Urban environment includes outdoor green spaces such as parks and gardens which have been a matter of research with reference to their history, spatial distribution, user perceptions, etc. whereas their usage from gender perspective is seldom explored. The relationship between outdoor green spaces and the creation of place related to the theorized meanings of leisure from gender perspective is the matter of concern for architects, planners and landscape designers. Historically, many examples of gender sensitive outdoor green spaces are found in India and abroad.

Natural and socio-cultural elements and their roles influence People’s lives and this environment defines a landscape of that area. Urban outdoor green spaces, hence often interpreted as a complex system of various land-uses such as transportation corridors (vehicular or pedestrian), other public places and utilities, waterfronts, green spaces, etc. and built forms in the city.

Urban environment possesses social meaning that can be enhanced considering aspirations of people in a way to take care of their cultural, social and political identity (Hayden, 1995). The quality of outdoor spaces can be perceived differently by people from diverse backgrounds with “total landscape concept” to avoid misunderstanding and confusion (Calder, 1981) who include male and female both as equal participants. There are number of ways which people adopt for perception of landscape or outdoor green spaces such as Nature, Habitat, Artifact, System, Problem, Wealth, Ideology, History, Place, and Aesthetics (Meinig, 1979).
One of the major attributes of outdoor open spaces is their ability to contribute towards leisure in individual’s life. Leisure has invariably been considered as an important element in people’s lives and the ability to engage in leisure activities is often associated with ‘quality of life’. The intrinsic value of ample public leisure space in cities is a matter of concern for residents to improve quality of life, which have always been a significant indicator of a city’s progress and development. Government bodies, architects and planners strive to provide leisure oriented public spaces such as parks, plazas, shopping centers, gardens and recreation facilities. However, like public spaces in general, leisure spaces can also be marginalizing to people of certain classes, race and gender which calls for analyzing such spaces in general, to looking specifically at the various social conditions surrounding public leisure spaces which dictate their use.

Landscape and nature is often discussed with using sexual metaphors like virgin forest, fertile soil and represent largely the notion of femininity (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), 2002). Gender issues though studied by sociologists and social psychologists, are seldom addressed in with respect to spatial design aspect such as in architecture and landscape research.

1.2 Gender and Leisure

Gender is a socially learned behavior and expectations of the society from both the sexes and is constructed socially. Considering gender as a socially learned behavior and expectations of two sexes which is constructed by society it is to be taken into consideration by architects, planners as well as landscape architects while shaping urban landscapes by and large. The expression of gender in ideology of masculinity and femininity is based on a system of culturally constructed identities. These identities interact with socially structured relationships between men and women and define division of labor and leisure (Khan, 2011)which influence architectural design and development of landscape of the place.
Definition of gender includes behavior of men and women, their attitudes, beliefs and identities as an individual. Gender can be seen in terms of social structure or as a symbolic order which is the way in which notion of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ is described (Davis & Cowles, 1991) which is largely associated with landscape values. Gender imposes privileges and restrictions and defines power dynamics in a society where men always have dominant position. Maleness and femaleness dictate the disposition of opportunities as well as burdens which affect social life and establish spatial needs of a community (Khan, 2011). These needs are supposed to be catered for in landscape development accordingly.

Men and women’s spatial needs, perceptions, aspirations regarding a space are different which depend on personality traits. Masculine personality traits include independence, rationality, assertiveness, competitiveness, while feminine personality traits represent sensitive, passionate, caring, nurturing attitudes. Masculine personality generally focused on individual goals in contrast with feminine which focus on communal goals. The member of a society determines status of gender and consequently creates their domination and subordination (Khan, 2011) which subsequently shape built environment and landscape as one of its major component.

1.3 Gender Inclusive Planning: An Emerging Global Concern

“Women’s experiences of city life are affected by gender-based discrimination and abuse in public and private space, including exclusion from political and socio-economic participation, limited access to essential services and infrastructure.”

Building Inclusive Cities and Communities: The Delhi Declaration on Women’s Safety; (Government of India, 2013)

Improving the quality of life for women has become an international concern. In 1994, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
(OECD) brought together for the first time delegations from 27 countries to examine the theme, Women in the City: Housing, Services, and the Urban Environment. Approach of gender inclusive planning to address urban issues is considered as an imperative approach towards efficient city planning and management. Devoid of such approach can lead to poor decisions on policies and ineffective execution of action plans (Sustainable Cities Programme, 2000). The role of gender in urban environment was addressed by a number of North American scholars in the mid-seventies which is yet to be considered in Indian context. Feminist research highlights the importance of bringing a gender perspective to the urban planning, management, and governance agenda.

Unfortunately, due to lack of gender sensitive planning most of the Indian cities have earned the status of “Women-unfriendly cities” with ever-increasing rate of crimes against women in public spaces. India has been ranked world’s fourth most dangerous country for women (Chowdhury, 2011). According to Global Gender Gap Report, out of 135 countries, India has been ranked 113th during 2011 (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2011).

In Indian culture it is expected that women remain at home in the domestic arena or private sphere, to be serving and caring for the family, not involve in outdoor leisure and sports and not claim their right to the public spaces that shows many men’s attachment to monopolizing the public sphere as a male arena (Derne, 2005; Cortis, Sawrikar, & Muir, 2009).

1.4 Rationale of the Research

Features of urban living such as crowding, density and housing have been found to be associated with chronic stress in relation to health and well-being and health related behaviours. Mood and anxiety disorders are more prevalent in city dwellers. (Lederbogen, et al., 2011).
Wheaton (1999) defines stressors (chronic, life events and daily hassles) as "conditions of threat, demands and structural constraints that by their very occurrence or existence, call into question the operating integrity of the organism".

Urban Neighbourhoods, Chronic Stress, Gender and Depression; (Matheson, Moineddin, & Dunn, 2006, p. 2605)

From contextual features arise chronic stress. Depression is experienced differently by men and women are found at greater risk where biological as well as social aspects and their interaction play a major role (Verbrugge, 1989). Social aspects influence health of the society largely that explains higher levels of depression associated with other health problems in women. The reasons may be health constraints associated with material and social conditions, less access to employment or working at lower status positions, lower income and also more women serving as single parents (Arber & Cooper, 1999; Ross & Bird, 1994; Denton & Walters, 1999).

Leisure plays a vital role in urban scenario offering nurturing of body and mind (World Leisure and Recreation Association, 1975). Functionalist Theory states that Institution of Leisure is functional both for the smooth running of that society and for the mental and physical health of individuals within it (Wearing, 1998). Aesthetic affective theory explains how proximity of nature has stress reducing effects on human brain (Nilsson, Sangster, & Konijnend, 2010). Quality of life or well-being in general can be improved with access to the green spaces that enhances social ties, reduces stress and improves mood (CABESPACE, 2010; Gladwell et al, 2013).

Urban life affects human health negatively leading to depression and other health problems. Visit to outdoor leisure spaces and being close to nature acts as remedy for such stresses. Yet various factors restrict people’s access to outdoor leisure. Research suggests that stress levels vary depending upon gender and also that leisure constraints differ for both the genders where social structure and spatial design aspects play a major role. Hence an inquiry
into leisure perceptions, preferences and constraints experienced by both the genders is felt necessary to improve overall quality of life by encouraging leisure participation.

![Urban Life Diagram](image)

**Figure 1-1: Establishing the Research Premise**

Source: Author

This background study provides a premise where further research is needed whereby leisure preferences, perceptions, constraints and motivations can be studied in a particular urban context from gender point of view. This might throw light on user’s preferences in landscape design, their perceptions of spaces, their activity and usage patterns in outdoor leisure spaces as well as spatial constraints which could help architects, landscape designers, urban designers and planners and policy makers for provision of outdoor leisure spaces and render them appropriate for both the genders. (Refer Figure 1-1)

**1.5 Research Gaps**

Research in various fields such as quality of life, psychology and health studies, etc has addressed the various elements of quality of life where leisure and benefits of being in contact with nature are few of it. **Though fields of architecture, urban design and planning deal with spatial design that**
includes planning of outdoor leisure spaces too, research in these fields has scarcely addressed people’s preferences and behavior with respect to design of outdoor leisure spaces. Stanis (2010) mentions a gap in research in the field of leisure constraints and their role that affect individual’s leisure behaviors. (Stanis, Schneider, & Pereira, 2010)

In urban planning processes, the health and well-being benefits of nature areas are not fully acknowledged and therefore, their provision is difficult to justify faced with competing land-use interests (Tyrväinen et al, 2014). Regarding context specific inquiries, research in India has hardly acknowledged the interrelationship of people’s leisure choices, behaviour and spatial design of outdoor leisure spaces in general.

Some studies have addressed gender with respect to spatial planning at institutional or individual levels. Dr. Madhavi Desai’s compilation of essays in symposium proceedings ‘Gender and the Built Environment in India (2006)’ and ‘Women and the Built Environment (2007)’ deal largely with gender issues and planning of indoor spaces which touches upon the topics of gender and public space and leisure to some extent. Dr. Priyanjali Prabhakaran in her doctoral research dealt with gender and public spaces focusing on gender inclusive city planning with respect to women’s experiences in public realm specifically urban streets in the city of Hyderabad (Prabhakaran). At institutional levels, under UN Women initiatives towards building inclusive cities in five pilot cities across the world, ‘JAGORI’, a Delhi based NGO conducted surveys in Delhi to examine women’s safety in public spaces and provide guidelines to build safe cities for women (O’Leary & Vishwanath, 2011). Pertaining to women’s restricted access to open public spaces in Mumbai, a journal article by Ranade et al addresses the issue of unavailability of enough green spaces in Mumbai where women experience more restrictions and focuses upon the social construction of gender rather than spatial design (Ranade, Phadke, & Khan, 2009).
In India, the studies are largely dealing with women’s safety in public spaces particularly focusing on streets suggest that women’s preferences, behavior and constraints with respect to leisure and spatial design of outdoor leisure spaces are rarely explored in Indian urban context.

Considering the research gaps worldwide as well as specific to Indian context, this study aims to make inquiries so as to render the outdoor leisure spaces appropriate for both the genders. Leisure and gender research has evolved with three themes – Activity participation, Gendered nature of leisure constraints, Gendered outcomes of leisure (Shaw S. M., 1999). This research focuses on the themes of Activity participation and Gendered nature of Leisure constraints exploring the themes theoretically as well as empirically. Founded on a recognition of the unequal participation in leisure pursuit by men and women and the knowledge gaps concerning the impact of constraints on women’s leisure from architectural and planning perspective this study has the following aim and research objectives:

1.6 Aim of the Study

The study aims to make a scientific inquiry into how the responses, behavior, experiences and preferences vary for both the genders with respect to outdoor public leisure spaces in order to explore spatial qualities that offer equal opportunities to both the gender in urban realm and qualify them as gender appropriate space.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the meaning and importance of leisure for men and women, and the role it plays in the wider context of their everyday lives.
- Examine the inter-relationship of Spatial Design and Human Behavior in urban outdoor leisure spaces from gender perspective in order to look into differential spatial needs/preferences, usage patterns, perceptions by both
the genders.

- Identify the constraints associated with spatial design of outdoor leisure spaces in urban realm and to examine their impact on leisure participation and experiences with specific focus on women.

### 1.8 Hypothesis

1. Leisure preferences and perceptions are different for men and women that influence their usage patterns of outdoor leisure spaces.
2. Leisure constraints and motivations are linked to the attributes of spatial planning and design of outdoor leisure spaces.

### 1.9 Research Questions

The research is a thoughtful consideration of following questions,

1. What is the significance of Leisure and outdoor leisure Spaces in urban life from gender point of view?
2. How site characteristics, landscape, location and spatial design of outdoor leisure spaces influences men and women’s behavior, perceptions and choices?
3. How men and women perceive different typology of outdoor leisure spaces and in what way these perceptions influence their preferences and experiences?
4. What are the factors that motivate, restrict, modify leisure participation with reference to outdoor leisure spaces by men and women?

### 1.10 Need of Study

“Women’s holistic development is a pre-requisite to all round development of the society and the nation. Gender planning should not be seen as a separate, parallel process to mainstream development planning but should transform mainstream planning to address the
Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development and Planning – The Kerala Model; (Tom & Jyothiprakash, 2011, p. 2)

Tom and Jyothiprakash refer to “Gender neutral” Urban planning as “Gender-Blind”. “Gender-blind is a failure to recognize that gender is an essential determinant of social outcomes impacting on projects and policies. A gender-blind approach assumes gender is not an influencing factor in projects, programs or policy” (Gender and Development: A Trainer's Manual - Glossary of Gender Terms). Urban Planning refers to many aspects such as housing, work-places, commercial places, recreation, services and infrastructure, etc and in the changing societies; gender plays a major role in all these aspects. Planners are oblivious to the gender aspect while designing cities. Land-use zoning mars the all-inclusive development and fails to create live and vibrant urban spaces as it segregates all the activities and people, increases distances to be travelled restricting women’s participation and mobility.

Cities and public spaces can be rendered gender inclusive by taking into account infrastructure and services, transportation, housing, crime against women and safety etc. Incorporation of gender into planning offers various benefits to the society.

1.11 Significance of the study

“The appropriation of a space by an inhabitant is part of a process which makes society turn spaces into places… The inhabitant applies his analytic capacity to adapt, or to legitimate, the space in which he lives, the space he feels is his own” (Llopart, 2000). Public space is understood as an effect of the community that modifies it and also of an impact by individuals (Mierzejewska, 2011). Various studies in India support the fact that the planning of mandatory public spaces in India does not acknowledge women’s differential spatial preferences and needs and efforts are made to structure guidelines to render them gender
friendly. Unfortunately voluntary public spaces have not gained much attention of researchers as well as authorities towards designing such spaces gender friendly, that include pure leisure spaces. A gap exists in research till today in this field where further attention is needed. This empirical study will contribute towards bridging this research gap focusing on significance of leisure to improve quality of urban life identifying constraints in accessibility to such spaces for both men and women.

The outcomes of this study may help formulate policy framework with design norms for the authorities while designing public leisure open spaces that are appropriated for both the genders in cities that may further guide planners, urban and landscape designers to approach such projects with gender sensitivity.

1.12 Scope of the study

This study focuses on spatial characteristics of outdoor leisure spaces in the context of Indian urban society with respect to gender roles and leisure constraints from gender perspectives. Knowledge would be imparted based on the findings of this study conducted in Mumbai Metropolitan Region as a case study.

1.13 Limitations of the study

The observations and studies are done with respect to selected typologies of public leisure spaces in the urban and suburban areas of Mumbai. Large random samples of more than 500 in numbers, from widespread Mumbai Metropolitan Regional area were considered for this study; however private leisure spaces in commercial environment or gated communities are not under the purview of this study. Hence, generalization of the findings is limited to the public outdoor leisure spaces in Mumbai Metropolitan Region.
1.14 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter One provides the overview and introduction to the research problem. It includes a general introduction, an emerging global concern towards gender inclusive planning, rationale of the research, aim and objectives, research questions, need of the study, significance, scope and limitations and expected outcome of the study and organization of thesis.

Chapter Two provides a review of the related literature. This review focuses on literature related to quality of life, urban open spaces, significance of leisure, need of urban open leisure spaces, impact of landscape on human life, gendered usage of outdoor leisure, leisure constraints, gender theories, concepts of sex segregation and gendered spaces, gender perceptions, leisure constraints with respect to gender, historical evolution of gendered leisure spaces and contemporary women-only spaces. While discussing women-only spaces, at this stage it was felt necessary to examine the possibility of sex-segregation as a key to women’s access to outdoor leisure spaces and hence an online survey was conducted regarding women’s preferences towards sex-segregation in public spaces. The details of this survey – aim, instrument, settings, methods of data collection and analysis and the findings are incorporated in this chapter.

Further the literature dealing with gender and movements in architecture and planning needs to review usage patterns in existing urban public leisure spaces, inclusive planning efforts worldwide and in India with future planning guidelines has been reviewed.

Chapter Three, in the first part discusses the context of research whereby research premise is established. Grounded theory approach enables this study to make various inquiries with different qualitative research methods. Triangulation from all inquiries that are made provides a future direction for assessment of the phenomenon that evolved from the previous inquiries. Second part of chapter three describes elaborate methods and procedures
used in the study. Qualitative and quantitative both the inquiries are made in efforts to establish a phenomenon which further investigated with a carefully designed survey of larger sample. Development of instruments is discussed, followed by data collection process and analysis techniques are discussed for quantitative enquiry. In this chapter are discussed all preliminary surveys and final survey methods adopted.

Chapter Four presents the observations, analyses and results of qualitative inquiries applied in this study for understanding the phenomenon of gender leisure constraints and preferences in public leisure spaces in given socio-cultural contexts. The hypothesis emerged from empirical inquiries contributed to the quantitative inquiries to design the questionnaire survey.

Chapter Five presents the findings of qualitative inquiry applied in this study for understanding the phenomenon of gender leisure constraints and preferences in public leisure spaces in given socio-cultural contexts. It includes the comprehensive discussion with respect to the findings regarding perceptions, preferences, constraints and usage patterns of both the genders in public outdoor leisure spaces to get insights of the phenomenon.

Chapter Six contains the conclusions of the study from both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. It further discusses the implications, scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter Seven provides suggestions and recommendations regarding gender appropriate spatial spanning of urban public leisure spaces.