3.1 Introduction

How do we understand the city? The dwellers of a particular city are the best resource to know more about a city. de Certeau (1984) writes that ordinary practitioners of the city make use of city spaces that cannot be seen. He writes that “their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms” (p. 93). This chapter explores the experiences of women journalists in four different cities of Madhya Pradesh: Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior, in an attempt to engage with feminist understanding of cities and outline critical debates on gender and space. As Phadke (2005) writes, “Life in a city has often been described as filled with ambiguity, replete with a sense of possible threat and the inevitable negotiation of risk” (p. 43). Thus, the presence of women journalists in a city and their interaction with city spaces and surroundings are significant aspects of their experience which have been critically discussed in this chapter.

Women journalists have certain fears and perceptions about the city they live in. They go out for reporting in the city, travel to different places for their work, often with a sense of insecurity. Even everyday life as a journalist brings challenges for them in ensuring their safety as they move about ‘at their own risk’ in public spaces. The spatial context is not just about space but more about socio-cultural process of making and remaking of the cities and its dwellers. Lefebvre (1991) writes, “Social space is a social product” (p. 26). He also posits that “the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power” (p. 26). Discussing space from a social perspective, Massey (1994) critically brings out that “construction of place is articulated consideration of patriarchal relations” (p. 181).
This chapter tries to capture urban experiences of women journalists in order to examine their relationship with their city. It attempts to understand their experiences of being in city spaces, and how they negotiate their right to city as an individual and as a journalist.

3.2 Small City, Women Journalists: Reporting Big Issues?

The notion of the ‘small city’ often brings a sociological image in mind filled with conventional traditional ideas. Also, the understanding of small cities gives a generalized sense of less urbanized spaces and a more conventional life style. I myself have experienced these socio-cultural realities of a small city. According to the Government of India Census (2011) “Out of 468 Urban Agglomerations (UAs)/Towns belonging to Class I category, 53 UAs/Towns have a population of one million or above each. Known as Million Plus UAs/Cities, these are the major urban centres in the country. Around 160.7 million persons (or 42.6% of the urban population) live in these Million Plus UAs/Cities.”

In context of my research, all four cities – Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior and Jabalpur, come under the category Million Plus Urban Agglomeration city. This is a useful context to understand existing realities which women journalists have shared through their narratives. Here, I would like to emphasize the importance of engaging with women's urban experiences in small cities as these are markedly different from gendered experiences of metropolitan cities. Thus I am trying to connect the presence of professional women to their experiences in these four cities of Madhya Pradesh.

It seems hard to define a small city. Through this research, I am trying to develop an understanding of these small cities based on the lived experiences of women. Repina (2009, p. 27) quoted in Tyapkina (2011) writes that

“the new urban history and sociology moved away from traditional approaches (biographic, typological, autonomous and local) toward a contextual approach that presented a new understanding of the place and role of cities and

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urbanization in human history. The city appeared before the scholar as a complex object which united multiple functions in itself but was also a part of a larger whole. The city became a spatial incarnation of its social connections and cultural specificities.” 27

Women journalists face dual challenges as they work in small city, one as women and secondly as journalists in a small city. It becomes significant to highlight the experiences of women journalists as ‘small city journalists’, a title which they find undermines their capacities as professionals in this field. Certainly one cannot ignore the social, economic, and cultural realties of small cities which have uneven development and are not in the race to be a metropolitan cities. Also, smaller cities are often looked down upon, and the journalists I spoke to were very aware of being small-city citizens. There was a sense that their issues were not important.

While interviewing these women journalists, it was revealed that they themselves find that belonging to a small city limits their aspirations and their choice of work within journalism. The nature of journalism in metropolitan cities is different because there it is all about the issues, political processes and negotiations going on in those respective geographies and political spaces. Here it is important to examine the choice of work women journalists made in their cities vis-a-vis existing journalistic hierarchies regarding the traditional binary of soft versus hard beats.

*Upasana: For a Hindi newspaper a woman working on Defense beat was not easy to digest and my work got both criticism and appreciation. I continued working but still I face many challenges to survive with this beat in this field. It has been a hard choice made by me and because I have chosen it so I am entitled to all risk and arrangements required to cover any assignment in such sensitive locations. Borders are very sensitive zones and I do this work out of my passion. Such a choice in itself has brought additional challenge as I work in Hindi Print media. For them (male employers) I am valuable reporter in a small city because I am a woman and I am fearless and open to go to cover Defense issues. At the* 27 Repina L. P. (2009) cited in Tyapkina, Olga. (2011) Small Towns as a Phenomenon of Historical Urbanization from a Western European Methodological Perspective, *Institute for Human Science*. Retrieved from [http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxx/olga-tyapkina-small-towns-as-a-phenomenon-of-historical-urbanization/](http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxx/olga-tyapkina-small-towns-as-a-phenomenon-of-historical-urbanization/) accessed on August 4, 2016.
same time, I know how less I am paid and over loaded with work because I chose this.

Interestingly, during my work while covering Defense issues I have found that borders provide a more secure and respectful/dignified environment for a woman journalist as compared to a Hindi-newspapers’ office and work culture. Most of the times, I myself make my own travel arrangements including ticket, hotel booking and other related stuff for assignments. During the most dangerous period I have covered Jammu and Kashmir at my own life-risk situation. I am sure if I would have been working in some big city I would have been given more facilities and benefits.

When a woman finds her professional working environment unfit it is really a challenge to sustain their work under highly gendered circumstances. Generally Hindi media houses still shun taking on the economic-reimbursement expenses’ responsibilities of the women journalists who have to travel for their work assignments while risking their lives. It is hardly an issue in human resource management within their office. Women feel more secure while are on their assignments, when they find themselves more confident at their work. According to the respondent, it is her passionate involvement with the work and her own arrangements during any assignment make her feel secure. Whereas the functioning of her workspace, a Hindi print newsroom, leaves her disappointed as it is not supportive and does not facilitate her work in any way.

Upasna’s narrative reveals that often a woman journalist in risk zones is at her own risk and that her organization rarely shows any concern or interest in her security. As she traverses border areas that are sensitive and dangerous zones, her being a woman journalist is more favored there and she receives due respect for her work.

When it comes to understanding the beat-specific facilities to be given to journalists within an organisation, no women journalist I interviewed could clarify the actual policies existing for them in their office. This means that the conditions of work and human resource management policies are not communicated to women journalists by the media house/s they are working for. It can be said that it is a deliberately maintained information gap in order to affect and restrict women journalists’ bargaining power with respect to their rights within the workplace.
Bhavna: Covering election is always considered something not matching the capacity of a woman and thus we rarely get opportunity to cover news related to elections. The seniors make such elections sound like such a dangerous thing to report so that women stay away from it. Because here it is assumed that women can’t handle analytical reporting like covering elections. After spending years in journalism while covering certain local politics issues I understood that media organisations tend to favour political parties. Also, male-lobbying is very tight so as not to allow women journalists into election reporting. Any woman who manages to get into it is seen as a threat in this biased journalistic world. It is important to understand why women are prevented from covering elections; Perhaps being a woman the inequalities and hierarchies of caste and class are better understood and thus I can report well with the ongoing equations. But somehow being in a small city, one’s chances and opportunities are shrunk because a male is more powerful to be decisive and to declare that who should cover what and why. The situation is changing now but very slowly.

Bhavna’s narrative shows that during elections, there is a special desk set up in media offices to look after all news and events related to election. A high pressure environment is created so as to not miss any news. In such an environment male journalists again segregate news beats between soft and hard angles. For instance, covering gender, even with respect to elections translates as a ‘soft’ news story but other issues related to elections are considered as hard 'news'. Denying or restricting women’s access to election-news reveals the many layered gender issues in politics are not touched upon which directly eliminates coverage of debates around gender. Basically, in a hierarchical newsroom where male-view dominates, women's work and their opinions are dismissed as being illogical. As Bhavna's example illustrates, often covering elections is seen as the task of male journalists especially in small cities.

It is an irony that in small cities women journalists are kept at distance from those news-fields which require major participation or involvement of women to bring a more gender sensitive approach to news coverage. Sharma (2010) writes that a gendered lens enables us to have a deeper understanding of all issues ranging from policies, politics, business that have an impact on both men and women. While critically arguing Sharma (2010) mentions that women are missing from news-coverage because journalists do not understand how patriarchy functions determining gendered work for men and women. Also patriarchy reduces the value of women’s work which is reflected in news coverage.
Writing for hard beats in journalism is thought of as being beyond a woman’s intellectual abilities. The segregation of beats and subjects is projected in very abstract manner. The set-up of the Hindi print media shows a conventional approach which holds women solely responsible for household and care work and therefore journalistic work is cast as an extension of women’s domestic engagement.

Ruchita: No wonder this Hindi print media can make a ‘Hindu family environment’ at workplace too like a ‘parivaar’ or ‘Kutumb’ (extended family). Such nature of work place promotes more conventional values towards family and expects women to be submissive and less argumentative space for women is allowed at workplace despite them being journalists. I have always wanted to do issues based reporting to highlight the atrocities and oppressions in societies. But the sphere of issues-based writing is controlled and not given easily to women journalists despite showing your mettle as a journalist. As the political motives are mixed with the beats and issues, it is always made clear that women should take up the feminine issues without any pink, red revolutionary understanding. The entire effort to get issue based writing seems a hard bargain in Hindi print media because it has less or no space for people and their voices, forget about women.

In Hindi print media in small cities, if a woman journalist challenges this hierarchy, she has to face day to day comments and sarcasm because of her work. Portraying women journalists as only feature writers and desk–bound employees has been a tradition in Hindi print media. I had to be very strong to get to work on issue based writing but I was always suggested that here people don’t want to know what are the issues they want more entertainment rather than any serious stuff. Writing on ‘issues’ is a rare phenomenon in Hindi Print media in small cities.

This narrative has been the most powerful expression to show dissent of a woman journalist directly explaining the conventional character of the Hindi Print media. Understanding from Ruchita’s experience shows that Hindi print journalism reinforces the dominant gender roles in media workplace. The construction of a 'family-like' workplace reiterates gendered and age-based hierarchy found within the institution of the family rather than inculcate ethical professional values. It produces a conservative space where women are expected to be silent and not speak their minds. Thus the Hindi journalistic workplace promotes conventional-ideological values.

Her experiences reveal that women are forcibly kept away from any issue-based writing. The process of not letting women work on issues which are of concern is indicative of the
notion that a thinking-woman journalist is often assumed to be a threat to the media-system. It is presumed that small city readers want entertainment rather than news-content educating and informing them about the politics behind structural inequalities. ‘Issue-based’ writing is considered more relevant to readers in big cities or in metropolitan cities.

Orsini (2002) writes that many Hindi writers and intellectuals "who thanks to their strategic position as Hindi experts, could pursue their cultural agenda and force it upon the public” (p. 174). The constructed nationalized identity has been used by elites although only in a subordinate way as the higher echelons of society engage with the discourse in English language print media. Labeling women journalists as limited to Hindi print media can be seen as deliberate effort to keep them under-represented and under-reported. Orsini (2002, p. 26) writes that "Hindi's claim to be the national language of India was an ideological construct”. Thus promoting conventional values in the name of culture and tradition is often done in an effort to make Hindi and Hindi print media focus on a right wing ideology to reinforce a specific socio-cultural agenda.

The demarcation between small city and big city women journalists by Hindi Print media enunciates the politics of a variety of issues in traditional binary of soft versus hard beats. In the Indian context, this is also indicative of the fact that cities have multiples realities dependent on socio-cultural and geographical circumstances. It directly controls the participation of women journalists in reporting and coverage of issues concerning women and their views in news. It perpetuates a male-centric view in news coverage with strict binary of news beats as hard and soft beats. Women journalists’ choice of work is not considered significant while assuming that women coming from small cities lack exposure. Experiences of women journalists’ echo the conventional pattern of choice of work which is reinforced by not allowing women to experiment with new areas of reporting. Though women have been negotiating in their own interests, they are limited by being constantly pushed back as 'small city journalists.'
3.3 Experiencing Cities: Questions of Safety

Negotiating with the street, localities, places and every possible space yet to be claimed by women has been a long struggle. It has been a journey from home to work and from work to public space; the negotiation establishes firmly that women are gendered bodies vulnerable to male-violence.

Valentine (1989) states that women presume geographical location of male violence is distributed differently through space and time. Women somehow learn to sense danger from strange men while being in public space whereas according to facts on rape and attack, women are at more risk at home from the men they know. In her context of research, Valentine (1989) emphasizes that women perceive only men as strangers and in public the behavior of any stranger as unpredictable and uncontrollable. In relation to my study I attempt to connect women journalists’ mobility for professional work and city environment asking whether city-spaces offer sense of safety.

Waltzer (1986) defines public space as ‘the space which we share with strangers, people who are not our relatives, friends or work associates’ (cited in Valentine, 1989). Women find that their personal space is invaded by whistles, comments, physical assaults from strange men in public. While being out in public women find it difficult or almost impossible to interact with any one in public. In an incident of molestation in Bengaluru city on New year-eve 2017, in Karnataka state seemed to confirm that cities are unsafe for women. Increasing number of incidents of mass molestation in cities exposes the exclusive nature of city spaces which reflect a structural violence of restricting women’s mobility and liberty.²⁸ These incidents of sexual violence against women are strictly used to limit their mobility leading to further construction of city as unsafe spaces for women.

Streets are also viewed as unsafe spaces for women as they face sexual harassment, stalking, male-gaze activating a constantly threatening environment for women out in

these spaces. Being out in public, a woman is more perceived as a body controlled by patriarchal values that limit her, making her responsible for her own security.

*Bhavana: Security and safety issues are always considered as woman’s responsibility, even if you are working with a big-brand newspaper. Once you are out in public, you professional identity is not visible on your body thus chances of being molested, eve teased or raped are always as high as for any other woman who is out. Here being a small city one cannot expect too much of organizational support for women journalists. There is no pick and drop facility. It is always a personal arrangement supported by either family or friends if we are on late night assignment.

Though there are cooperative male colleagues who are caring and ask us to leave for home in time by 9:30 or 10 pm. All long-distance assignments are done alone; sometimes photographer accompanies us to the place of the event. Generally women are asked to leave early for home. Usually women journalists are not sent on any outgoing assignments as it requires a lot to arrange for them for their security thus they are confined to city reporting only. Even in city reporting, sometimes, there are places which are not women friendly and one might not feel safe to go for coverage. Many a times either a photographer is accompanied with the woman journalist or it’s all up to the individual to take the risks if signing up for the assignment. Somewhere the professional task does not allow you to think of risks.

The narrative adds to the discourse on ‘risk' that a woman faces which then feeds into restricting their professional freedom while being in public spaces. Ensuring safety is always a personal effort for women while returning from office as the organization does not offer any pick and drop facility. In small cities women are told to leave for home early form office as a safety measure whereas it is reinforcing a restricted mobility on them. Bhavna’s experience also elucidates the limited work choices given to women, limiting their professional growth and opportunities.

Lewis and Maxfield (1980), Brower et al., (1983) cited in Valentine (1989) write that when a woman is out beyond her own local environment she judges her safety in the area based on certain preconceived images about the area and its residents. She receives certain social behavior from the physical surroundings; for example, sense of incivility as vandalism is inappropriate or threatening behavior is considered as possible fear while being out. Thus a woman usually cannot afford to assume safety in public space which is occupied by others too.
Potential threat makes woman more vulnerable even in familiar spaces and locations indicates the staunch patriarchal character of the space. As a woman goes out in public spaces, her safety becomes an everyday issue. Women constantly negotiate their access to public spaces even in their own localities. This structural violence is highlighted for women who are from marginalized class, caste and communities. The structural violence in public space and its internalization by dominant understanding makes space exclusionary to women and controls their mobility. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 54) write that “women are inevitably cast in the role of potential victims to be protected and the discourse becomes not about women’s right to the city, but about risk, fear and danger.” Anisha adds to this argument as she shares:

Anisha: Jabalpur is very inactive-slow city. Here males are dominating and think they can do whatever they like. Even in media, there are colleagues with same mentality.

When the country was raising voice against the perpetrators of rape in the “Nirbhaya Case”, people and media in Jabalpur were in deep slumber, after almost two weeks they thought that they should do something for women's safety in their city too thus they organized some workshop and talk only in women’s college. This is an irony of the city that always women are taught to be responsible for their behavior and dressing sense to be safe. The violence against women is completely understood as women’s fault because it is understood that on moving out, they invite incidents like rape. It’s a common attitude here that women are preached here more to stay traditionally value-oriented. We are not given out-station assignments because we are the women from Jabalpur and we need to stay in city limits.

It's easier for the people here to blame women who are frequently out in public in big cities because they are seen as the major reason to invite violence against them. In any way the moral guidelines and controlling attitude is taught to all of us while saying that “mahaul ganda kar diya hai ladkiyon ne, jitani ladkiyaan bahar hongi utna yada crime hoga” means “Women have spoiled the whole milieu/environment, the more women are out, the more there is crime-violence against them.”

29 The 2012 Delhi gang rape case involved a rape and fatal assault on a 23 year old woman that occurred on 16 December 2012 in Munirka, a neighbourhood in South Delhi. The incident generated widespread national and international coverage and was widely condemned, both in India and abroad. Subsequently, public protests against the state and central governments for failing to provide adequate security for women took place in New Delhi, where thousands of protesters clashed with security forces. Similar protests took place in major cities throughout the country. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35115974 accessed on March 25, 2017.
This response from the respondent deciphers the particular character of the city Jabalpur, where males cannot accept presence of women in public; their opinion is that the women should not be out beyond a certain time Interestingly the code for ‘city-limits’ is taken as a socio-moral limitation describing the code of conduct of a particular city in this context. This is quite similar to the approach of treating women as “our daughters” who should not be out like the women in big cities because they are not safe. Teaching and preaching to women is a systematic approach mobilising patriarchy through educational institutions, media and the state. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 27) write

“Respectable women could be potentially defiled in a public space while ‘non-respectable’ women are themselves a potential source of contamination to the purity of public spaces and therefore, the city. For the so-called ‘respectable’ women this classification is always fraught with some amount of tension, for should she transgress the carefully policed ‘inside-outside’ boundaries permitted to her, she could so easily slip into becoming the ‘public’ woman the threat to sacrality of public space.”

Anisha’s narrative informs that women who are seen in public are considered a threat to patriarchal family values. Thus the demarcation of ‘inside-outside’ is made to morally police women in the family. Clearly, gender relations are organized and reinforced through controlling women whereas man remains the powerful gender at every level. Blaming the victim is the common reaction of a patriarch mindset which finds that woman and her free mobility is responsible for rape and violence against them. Vishwanath et al., (2007, p. 1543) write “inequality between the sexes and the systemic discrimination that women and girls face in a patriarchal system limits their movements and ability to negotiate public spaces. This limitation affects women’s lives in numerous ways-right and access to education, to paid work and the freedom to move around. These must be seen as violations of basic rights of women to live and work in cities.”

The patriarchal mindset justifies rape culture while targeting women and their freedom in public spaces, moreover commenting on their clothes and the time of the day they choose to access public spaces shows a complete rejection of women’s autonomy. Even metro cities like Delhi fail to accept women’s presence in public. Vishwanath et al., (2007, p.
write “Public spaces in Delhi are primarily male dominated spaces. Men can be seen out in most areas and during most times. Women are legitimately allowed to use these spaces when they have a purpose to be there. Thus, if they are on their way to work or study, dropping or picking up children, walking in a park (at certain times), shopping (at certain times), then they are seen as legitimate users of the space.” It explains how women ultimately do not have the license to hang around in public.

In Mumbai, a 22-year old woman photojournalist was gang raped by five men including a juvenile when she went to a deserted mill with her male colleague on an assignment on August 22, 2013.\textsuperscript{30} \textsuperscript{31} After the rape case, politicians’ misogynistic statements created controversy for blaming the victim, for labeling women's sartorial choices as provocative and reducing rape to 'a small mistake.' \textsuperscript{32} It is important to understand that women taking ‘risk is term that is already value-loaded term’ Phadke et al., (2011, p. 61) is neglected completely while performing their professional role. Trivializing incidents of crime and violence against women, the then Home Minister of Maharashtra, RR Patil\textsuperscript{33} gave insensitive statement on Shakti Mill compound rape case "should I give protection to all journalists.” He also mentioned that a number of incidents took place within confines of domestic space, and stated that it was not possible that police security could be given to each household. \textsuperscript{34} \textsuperscript{35} It is important to understand that such patriarchal control over


\textsuperscript{33} Raosaheb Ramrao Patil known as R. R. Patil (16 August 1957 – 16 February 2015) was a member of the Nationalist Congress Party. In 2009, he became Home Minister for the second time. He was a member of the Nationalist Congress Party.

women’s mobility does not allow them to explore their professional opportunities and freedom. It directly questions the mindset which restricts women from their right to city as these spaces are presented dangerous to women. In a way it is a reinforcement of inciting the fear of being out in city.

This does not allow considering women’s safety and security issues as significant without blaming the victim for courting risk because it is an individual’s right to access the city with safety. But constructed hierarchy between woman and man reinforces man’s accessibility to the city precluding woman’s mobility.

Connell (1987, p.134) writes “the street as a milieu thus shows the same structures of gender relations as the family and state.” Unchanging patriarchy has multiple locks and tricks to keep a women trapped. The question of safety is rarely addressed in an attempt to check the male-domination and chauvinism. Ironically this narrative raises the line of discrimination between ‘our' city women and 'other' city women. The patriarchal character finds it easier to treat ‘other’ women as a site of violence while simultaneously making the protection of ‘our women’ a collective moral responsibility.

This regressive attitude in the name of safety confines women’s professional-career growth and exposure ultimately reinforcing the patriarchal control and violence against women. Valentine (1989) describes that the way public space is occupied, exercised and controlled by different groups at different times invokes fear of male violence in women’s mind. It is a vicious cycle in process. Thus a majority of women restrict themselves from using public space as a temporally segregated use of space which actually make them opting for their traditional gender role in regulated mobility and use of the space.

At several points it is necessary to analyze the operation of patriarchy which manipulates women into surrendering to dominant values and assuming a more conventional attitude

of submission. Even in their professional capacities choices are made with the fear of being in public as a result of these patriarchal city-limitations.

*Niharika: Jabalpur city is not safe for women as cases of sexual harassment are common on streets. It cannot be a modern city as it lacks modernity in terms of ideas because there is material show-off and consumption by people. Already the number of women working in media is less and on top of that organizations consider that recruiting a woman needs to have cost-expansion.*

*Either women are accompanied by male colleagues or take risk for going alone home in late hours. And try to be on safer side while having best possible means to be safe i.e. being picked up by a family member.*

*Jabalpur is very slow-pace city. People lack ‘protest attitude’ sometimes it becomes a challenge to get a source for news. Jabalpur is a small city which is going through urbanization process thus it has also got four malls, private hospitals and colleges which has given opportunity for women to come out of home. Here still eve teasing is common on streets. The localities are not women friendly especially old city-structures in the city.*

When it comes to recruiting a woman journalist in print media, it is still seen in terms of affordability; measuring the risk of appointing the female body with reluctance as most of the media workplaces fail at ensuring a healthy workplace environment. Also, when women journalists are away from workplace for any assignment, the city and its spaces do not ensure her safety. The city spaces are male-dominated and occupied with their authoritative presence.

Valentine (1989) writes there are usually younger people, specifically men, who are visible in public space. They go out after work, having no family responsibilities, unlike most of women. Men are financially more capable of accessing leisure activities and so men are seen numerically dominating public spaces. Whereas most of the women find many places frightening even during the day. Fear of public space in night is inseparable from them and therefore it increases chances for attackers to assault unnoticed. The reason for the low visibility of women is not just the fear of darkness and isolated places but the changing nature of public space.

For women, city and its localities do not allow a friendly space to walk or being out in the evening. Access to public space is further delimited in terms of class, age and caste.
These days many women work outside the house, but still they cannot access public spaces for leisure activities like shopping, get togethers, celebrations etc. At the same time, men are meant to be out even after work hours to claim the city spaces for their leisure and pleasure of being out. The presence of males in night certainly increases the risk for women being unsafe as each man has a potential to be a harasser and of casting a male gaze on women who are out after evening or late in night. Small cities do not give a woman the liberty to be in her own city till late as there is the perceived threat of rape, molestation and harassment. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 66) write

“Across geography and time, men and women do not have the same kind of access to space, nor do they use it in quite the same way. Further, constructions of gendered space are not the same everywhere and they also change over time. Nonetheless, it is possible to generalize that across locations and time, one specific characteristic of gendered public space is that it often excludes women. This exclusion operates in complex ways so that different women have differential access to public space.”

To save their own freedom and mobility, women tend not to share their troubles and challenges posed in the form of stalking, threatening and harassment. I have found that during interviews with the women journalists, it took long hours to come to such unraveling of their own cities and experiences. Their prime concern is to keep their jobs in journalism which is gives them an opportunity to experience their own city. It is unlikely that these women journalists share their fears and struggles of being women as they might be shared with their media employers who are a part of a structure that is inflicted with socio-cultural dominant values. The contextualization of these cities shows a strong presence of power structure where gendering is very much at work in city patriarchy too. Still women continue to explore their work and cities.

Further, in small cities, spaces to voice issues of sexual violence are unavailable and issues of violence against women are not part of the resistance among people. In 2011, India’s first ‘slut walk’ which was titled as “Besharmi Morcha (Shameless Rally),

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36 Slutwalk is a transnational movement calling for an end to rape culture which reasons rape because of women’s appearance and dress. Slutwalk protest, demonstrate and organize rallies which started on April 3, 2011 in Toronto, Ontario and Canada. In India its first ever slutwalk was organized on July 16, 2011 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
Bhopal-The Pride Stride for Women” took place in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. It was organized to condemn the mindset which blames women’s clothes for sexual harassment and violence against women. Mitra (2012, p. 254) analyses, “the organizers were unable to rally large numbers of people to protest in the deeply conservative state of Madhya Pradesh, a state that had witnessed the highest number of reported rapes in the country. While up to five thousand people had confirmed on a Facebook page that they planned to attend, only fifty to sixty people showed up, with more attendance by men than women, and all of them dressed in conservative attire.” Mitra (2012) mentions that since the Bhopal march, there was other initiative of organizing Slut walk in India, one was done in Delhi and another in Bangalore in December 2011 but it was banned at last minute by police intervention. Despite the lack of space to contest oppressive structures, women have been negotiating their choices regarding work, clothing and space as they are more marginalized and experience sexual violence.

Elizabeth Wilson (1991) cited in Phadke (2005) argues that a city could be an emerging threat to men whereas for women it is a place of freedom, liberation, deviation and disruption. It shows that women use different strategies to be in public space while still being inconspicuous. Though Wilson clears that woman being in public spaces as symbolic of urban disorder is revealing which she articulates through binaries of city being in masculine through its towers, vistas, industrial regions and it is feminine through its labyrinthine uncentredness. She posits urban life as a constant struggle between routinised order and pleasurable disorder reflecting male-female dichotomy. She finds that women are more able to deal with urban disorder in comparison to men as women have not been through internalizing the need for over-rationalistic control.

It is understood that during their daily bargaining with the city spaces, women experience the patriarchal-mindset controlling the city limits for women. The basic character of these

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four cities reflects conventional values which forbid women’s mobility. During research, respondents from Bhopal and Indore expressed their relative freedom to access city spaces with a sense of safety because visibility of women is higher. Whereas the experience of women in the other two cities were markedly different. As respondents from Jabalpur and Gwalior informed me, safety concerns in these cities were higher as visibility of women in public is less due to a conventional atmosphere. Jabalpur and Gwalior echo regressive attitude towards the issue of women’s mobility and freedom. Women journalists’ narratives unravel the character of these cities which have gendered socio-cultural boundaries. Reinforcing patriarchal ideas of an unsafe city restricts women’s choice of work and freedom whereas uncritical acceptance of unsafe cities needs to be questioned. The right to city spaces is a basic right which women are not allowed to enjoy due to socio-cultural hierarchies reinforced by the fear of being out.

3.4 Women Journalists: Negotiating the City Spaces

While accessing and exploring the city through journalistic work, women interact with the city as a place. City and its spaces are not free from power-relations thus women have to negotiate with spatial realities. Assessing what kind of spaces offer freedom to women or discriminate against them is a significant aspect of feminist geography. City and its social and cultural boundaries play a key role in shaping gender-relations in certain spatial contexts. Mueller (2002) writes citing Elisabeth Wilson (1992) that the independence of women has been always a source of anxiety in a patriarchal society and this becomes particularly acute in the context of the city. Citing Wilson’s book *The Sphinx in the City* (1992), Mueller (2002) describes how women have been held responsible for chaotic elements of the city since Roman times when Juvenal focused his attack on the immorality of Roman life primarily on the conduct of women. Their lack of virtue figured as the root cause of Rome's decadence. Wilson mentions that presence of women in cities and in city streets has been historically questioned. Moreover, controlling and surveillance aspects of city life have been directed particularly at women.
Vishwanath et al., (2007, p. 1543) writes “inequality between the sexes and the systemic discrimination that women and girls face in a patriarchal system limits their movements and ability to negotiate public spaces. This limitation affects women’s lives in numerous ways right and access to education, to paid work and the freedom to move around. These must be seen as violations of basic rights of women to live and work in cities.” In my study, women indicated that small cities have a conventional approach thus here women have to face difficulties for being working women. A city’s socio-cultural environment regulates women’s mobility and their behaviour.

Apeksha: Being single and living alone is not a good thing in small cities. Women are coming from other cities here but they have to face problem because many local residents of the city do not like giving accommodation to a single woman and this journalistic job doesn’t have timings thus they are not seen as good woman. Even for landlords, a woman has to maintain a ‘suitable’ image to continue her stay in a particular place. Sometimes being a well-informed woman helps but it costs otherwise too as you are called a ‘clever woman’. My father was not comfortable with my shifting to Gwalior. I have lived alone and I had to be extra careful because being single living alone is taken as if you are here to spoil environment in the locality or colony. Sometimes I get late to reach my place and my landlady does say that ‘ladaki waali baat hai..itane tak aati ho..mohalle wale kya sochate honge’ (it’s the matter of being a girl, if you come late in evening, colony residents might be thinking it otherwise) I try my best to keep her at convenience with my nature of job. I have to do so that my landlord perhaps allows me despite my profession.

According to her, small cities are hesitant to allow single working women as they don’t have social security and they are tagged as ‘free-bad’ woman. Their journalistic job brings freedom which could be a professional freedom but society does not take it easily and a woman has to follow a code of conduct so that she can continue with her work and stay in the place. The respondent how ‘being single’ is perceived as a threat. Phadke (2007, p. 1512) critically argues that “staking a claim for safety is critically dependent on being able to demonstrate that one is worthy of being protected. This demonstration takes varied forms from the wearing of symbols of matrimony, to the presence of protective men and the carrying of bags and other parcels to illustrate purpose. As is apparent such demonstrations are symbolic rather than materially effective for instance the presence of men in their roles as father, husbands or brothers merely marks women off as unavailable rather than provides them with the guarantee of physical safety.” Such demonstration of
being worthy as per social norms shows the structural vulnerability of a woman where her being a working woman’s safety concerns are negligible completely because it increases the risk of sexual safety and of turning threat to the city and its public spaces.

City as a collective has a moral-attitude towards woman which directly limits the mobility and visibility of the women in accessing public space in general. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 26) write that “public-private division of space decrees that the rightful place of respectable women at night is within their homes and not in public space.” As per the working hours of the profession, a woman who comes late and has an outgoing life style is taken as a threat by local people too. Her narrative brings out the language used to warn her or reinforce fear of being out till late evening. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 53) critically argue that concerns about safety of women are essentially about ‘sexual safety’ and not safety from theft or accident or even murder. Women’s sexual safety is rather connected to ideas of ‘izzat’ and honour of the family and the community. “The debates around danger and safety are usually constructed in the language of ‘sexual danger’ and focus on ensuring the sexual safety of women as defined by patriarchal families, communities and the state (ibid, 2011, p.53).”

The local culture of a particular city impacts journalism and perceptions about women journalists. Their professional identity as a journalist helps women get respect from local people but when it comes to accommodation they are socially judged. Phadke (2007, p. 1511) argues that “middle class women are central to any discussion on safety both as desirable urban subjects and also as the symbols of national honour to be protected from the potential contamination posed by others in public space.” It is important to understand that construction of fear and safety is gendered indicating sexual safety issues which demarcate outsiders as others and insiders as respectable.

*Rashi: As Gwalior is a small city, the city seems unsafe for women. It is difficult to find women being in public in evening or after that. One has to be careful about the dressing and mobility timing. Being an insider in the city, it doesn’t affect if I am being paid less as I have my family here. But if a girl comes from outside it is difficult to survive with low amount paid by these media houses. Being an insider to the city doesn’t ensure my free mobility whereas it is more noticeable when you are known among your relatives and people. In Gwalior more women are seen in malls, those who are working women or college going young women specifically, who are possibly outsiders to the city.*
Her narrative reflects the dress code and moral limitations experienced in the city. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 38) write that “dress codes that outline what women can and cannot wear are another example of such explicitly articulated regulatory codes of behaviour.” The dominant understanding defines all public spaces as made for men and they have all access at their wish and choice. The changing socio-economic relations because of working women do bring another perspective where despite being economically independent a woman is not free to choose her mobility, clothing and certainly cannot escape being noticed by the neighbours, relatives in locality too.

Availability of space as per social construction of gendered partiality in access to public space is experienced in these cities. Women are not free and fearless to move out in public. The patriarchal order of accessing space conveniently marginalizes women and keeps them excluded. Respondent indicated that somehow malls are places where women are visible and according to her these are the women who are mostly outsiders to that city and working women.

Nayna: It has become easier for us to explore our own city through such job of being in journalism. Especially the upcoming mall-culture, cafes, and restaurants have made our outings more frequent. For women it is important that what kind of place we are at and which locality. I personally feel that malls have really given us a kind of free space. These days it is quite easier for us to fix up meetings at places which are usually located in decent areas of the city. Indore as a more advanced city has many malls, coffee shops and such places where women are more comfortable to go.

Interacting with the newly emerging public spaces in cities has made women more confident in their approach to be in these places as they now assure themselves being in public. Apart from this the sense of locality in the city also gives them an edge to choose where they want to be for their work purpose too. Urbanization processes have introduced new spaces which are to some extent safer for women to be in public like malls, coffee shops, restaurants. Here it conveys a critical point when the subjectivities of respondents find malls, coffee shops as public spaces whereas Phadke et al., (2011, p. 46-47) brings out the embedded patriarchy of the public space by arguing that
It is important to point to reiterate that news spaces of consumption like coffee shops and malls are not public spaces but privatized spaces that masquerade as public spaces. Limited access to such private-public spaces creates a veneer of access for women, pre-empting any substantive critique of the lack of actual access to real public space. While these space might give individual women an opportunity to hang out it does not in any significant way change the limited nature of women’s access to public spaces nor does it adequately challenge the dominant idea that women’s proper place is in the private.”

In general, differentiating the embodiment of public-private spaces is not clearly understood because of conventional understanding of the places which does not liberate particularly women. Dominantly, open spaces or geographic areas are taken as public spaces whereas mall, coffee shops entangled with the understanding of these new public spaces which are basically private spaces with limited access to women.

Interestingly, women journalists find these places more convenient for them as they feel a sense of being more confident at such places. The decent access and nature of the crowd at such places make them feel comfortable as compared to walking on a street or sitting in any park.

Anita: I personally appreciate the urbanization process in cities, especially in Bhopal, it has been lately introduced whereas it has been the ‘Capital’ of the state. Malls and more modern places are more accessible by women these days. I would emphasize that being out in public is actual now because these spaces give you a sense of freedom. Also, these are places where the crowd is not a crowd but a class thus chances of being watched are less. I prefer my source meetings and interviews at such places where you are not being noticed. Earlier I had been a regular visitor at a Coffee House in the city at particular location but I found that there other colleagues also come and they do more gossiping.

The understanding of a place by a woman is perceived firstly with a sense of being watched and secondly with a sense of being unrestricted to visit any place. Women journalists’ narratives echo that the idea that new spaces have been ‘good’ spaces for them as they are modern according to them. The process of urbanization has certainly given them more alternatives to be out in public which work in two-folded manner in their favour; firstly, they themselves feel liberated in certain locations of the city; and secondly they feel freer at their professional front. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 42) argue that “the sense of apparent safety here is linked to the numbers of people and also to the
‘kind’ of people there—people who visibly belong to certain class.” It has been further elaborated that such suggested safety of middle-class women in malls as new spaces of consumption are to define preference of particular places and locations in the city. These locations are considered as desirable for middle to live, work or for entertainment (ibid, 2011).

Undeniably these women find that new spaces especially malls, coffee shops and restaurants are becoming their most preferred location which are offer freedom in their given social-cultural context of small cities. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 43) posit that “there is a sense of comfort, even belonging, that women of this class demonstrate inside the mall, which is absent when they step back out on to street.” In these places women have a sense of suggested safety in comparison to other places in the city which seem more conventional and traditionally limiting their freedom and mobility. While criticizing the illusion of freedom termed as ‘loitering’ Phadke et al., (2011, p. 46) make a point that “if we were conspiracy theorists we would argue that the space of a coffee shop offers the illusion of loitering while insidiously reinforcing gender roles and normative sexuality and class codes. Since we are not, however, we will simply say that as a step towards middle-class women’s claim to public space, it is remarkably small one.” In my study, here in this section women have repeatedly mentioned malls, coffee shops and such city spaces as giving them a sense of freedom and safety. To some extent it shows an extension of their aspirational mobility which they experience through their journalistic job.

City spaces do afford a certain degree of freedom to women. For these women journalists’ sense of freedom at work is associated with the nature of space and its geographic location. Negotiating with the available city spaces, women journalists find new urban space enabling their freedom and safety. Ardener (1981, p.11) argues that societies have constructed their own rules which are culturally defined. Dividing the social into sphere, levels and territories with invisible fences which describe that division of space and social formation are intimately associated. As Goffman (1976) cited in Ardener (1981) suggests that space reflects ‘social organizations’ exerting its own influence, similarly cities in context of my research also speak of gendered reality of the
space. Narratives establish that women journalists find Bhopal and Indore relatively liberal when it comes to visibility of women at new urban spaces whereas Jabalpur and Gwalior still have limited spaces accommodating women in public spaces. It also remains valid from seeking an accommodation to accessing city spaces for journalistic work. Their experiences demonstrate patriarchal socio-cultural geographies for women.

3.5 Sense of Belonging: Struggle for the Self?

While working in a particular city, women journalists engage with the day to day lives of the city unconsciously in an effort to build a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging is a need and a process both for one’s growth in daily urban practices with work life too. Despite having families, women who are working in their cities cannot claim sense of belonging. Their engagements tend to be dealing with being a ‘woman’ as a constructed social category rather than a professional in a city. Probyn (1996 cited in cited in Fenster, 2005) has emphasized the significant aspects of belonging as not just of being, but of longing or yearning. The Oxford Dictionary describes “belonging” through three meanings which are firstly, to be a member (of a club, household, grade, society, state, etc.); secondly, to be resident or connected with; thirdly, to be rightly placed or classified to or fit in a specific environment. These aspects assert membership element of belonging and multiple dimensions.

Going by this definition, women in city are as a social category where family is there but when it comes to state woman becomes a political category which requires citizenship. The belonging brings a contested space in terms of citizenship. Phadke et al., (2011, p. 9) argue that cities and definitions of citizenship have always been based principle of exclusion - on grounds of class, religion, race, age, sexual preference and property ownership, among others.

For women journalists in context of this study, sense of belonging speaks about the place where they were born, have grown up and are now working. Their narratives revolve around more day to day life in their city with reference to their work and domestic space.
“What Certeau constructs a model of how we make a sense of space through walking practices, and repeat those practices as a way of overcoming alienation” (Leach, 2002, p. 284 cited in Fesnter, 2005). de Certeau identifies the process through which sense of belongingness is created including a process of transformation of a place. The everyday practices built up attachment and emotions for the place. The fundamental of accumulated knowledge, memory and intimate corporal experience of one’s life develop sense of belonging and attachment. With time sense of belonging also changes with growing experiences.

_Roshani: For me, sense of belonging comes with my work more. Journalistic job makes us engaged in the city for work purpose but when it comes to see our own self as a part of the city, it remains missing. Thus professional belonging is very much there but personal belonging is missing. Here I specifically mean social-upbringing which trains us to be married as a woman, belong to a man but once a woman is working it becomes more about work rather than associating with the city as an individual because ultimately a woman must or should belong to a man. Being a professional brings more isolation and lack of social life and city also gives less space actually excluding woman as an individual._

For women journalists, the sense of belonging is important as it helps to seek a social support system in hours of need. Also, the feeling of belonging makes one feel included in the city. Being an insider in the city does not offer a woman acceptance in the city where her work gives her a professional association but sense of belonging is more socially constructed associating marriage as belonging to a man rather than belonging to herself in city. In her narrative respondent mentions the social upbringing of a woman which teaches her to belong to a man which has been the structural placement of a woman where she is sacrifice her aspirations and desires.

_Apeksha: Gwalior is a less developed city and it is a crime-prone city too. Many a times my professional position as a journalist brings me more protection. I do not belong to this city which helps me more to know the city with a new perspective. Though my professional engagement is more with the city as my news sources and networking for professional assignments are very strong here but I do miss my friends and more personal support system to feel more accepted. Though it is very strange to expect immediate acceptance, for women it is always a negotiation even in case of belonging to a particular city. I chose to be working over household work. That is how I wanted to be in this field to explore more but still I am not over from the lack of clarity between the domestic and work life. It seems a continuous fight within me where it makes me uneasy. This city Gwalior_
Knowing a particular city through one’s profession helps to critically understand the city. Here, women journalists are trying to point out the absence of a social support system or even acceptance that might have transformed their relationship to the city.

Yuval-Davis et al., (2006) write that belonging is an emotional attachment, a feeling of ‘at home’. Ignatieff (2001 cited in Yuval-Davis et al., 2006) writes that belonging is about feeling ‘safe’. Politics of belonging function with specific political projects aiming at constructing belonging to particular collectivities. Yuval-Davis et al., (2006) argue that citizenship and identities including culture and tradition with all signifiers of borders and boundaries have central roles in the discourse of politics of belonging. Respondents described Gwalior as being infamous for dacoit infested, an area which has been a male-controlled-crime prone city, and a woman journalist feels like an unbelonger but shows courage to work in such city without having a sense of citizenship or belonging. Phadke (2005, p. 53) critically writes that “in various spaces the risks that are created by belonging and not belonging are different. In conflict situations like riots, in pragmatic terms, it is safest for a woman, if she has to be in a public space, to be in a neighbourhood belonging to her own community where she is dressed or coded in ways that immediately identify her as belonging. However, in peaceful times it is often the insiders, those who belong, who are expected to conform and are censured if they do not do so.”

Being an insider to the city as local resident does not offer much freedom as there are many known people, close-knit relatives and social circle. Thus the mobility and freedom remains so limited with professional mobility. Women journalists find ‘anonymity’ to be a mask to hide their perceived fears and feeling of not belonging to the city. The journalist in previous narration finds herself located between domestic and professional spaces trying to express how both spaces are not free for her given her choices are regulated based on traditional values.

For many respondents, exploring their freedom and belonging does not exist even when they are out and working. The domestic space is also a much contested space. Roy (2005)
movingly argues that idea of domestic signifies a sphere of female activities separate from the public (male) sphere of activities relatively inferior but complementary to male sphere of activities. It has emerged in the context of historical transitions from feudal, agricultural, aristocratic, to industrial, bourgeois-capitalist societies. Roy (2005) critically brings out how gendered organization of social relations around ‘separate and contrasting space’ takes the specific form of the construction of the ‘domestic women’ which becomes instrumental to keep women confined to the private space, and far from equality. This in turn forms the framework of universal citizenship, preparing the grounds for a separate timeline of citizenship for women.

The notion of ‘anonymity’ that has been brought by the journalists in their narration is relevant. Being anonymous might give her more freedom in the city. The participation of a woman in a male-occupied space might require anonymity as it gives her more liberty. Vishwanath et al., (2007) writes that anonymity of a city’s public space offers the space and freedom helping in escaping family or traditional community boundaries. But for women this freedom is hindered by increasing rate of violence against women thus women prefer to be anonymous to have more freedom in accessing the city.

Secor (2004) writes that anonymity may be a tactic covertly helping women to transgress the everyday spatial hegemonies. Citing Judith Garber’s (2000) critical suggestion on anonymity in urban living, Secor (2004) mentions that anonymity may be a defensive tactic for those who are looking for freedom from persecution but in the long run identity replaces anonymity as the goal of urban living.

In order to understand the location of a woman in the realm of her own journalistic professional city of work, her negotiation to be recognized as a citizen of the city directly collides with the notion of anonymity. The dichotomy of ‘identity’ where on one hand the political identity of citizenship is a contested space and on the other hand the notion of ‘anonymity’ needs to be observed when it comes to be in male-occupied public sphere. In context of my research, there has been an emerging debate over belonging to a place, profession or self which raises critical questions on shifting meaning of identity, freedom, family with their respective journalistic profession. For these women their longing for stable identity with stable emotional attachment (Yuval-Davis, et al., 2006) has been a
socio-political engagement with their spatial mobility. It opens debate on notion of belonging which displays patterns of spatial mobility emerging through experiences of women journalists failing to specify their sense of belonging to any particular city. On the contrary, they expressed realities on facts which disempower them despite having their own family and work base in their respective cities. It opens a further line of inquiry on safety versus belonging.

Unfortunately among these four cities Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior none can fulfill the longing of these women journalists to enable their feeling of belonging and safe in these cities. It brings out critical feminist perspective that these four cities fail at promising the capacity to offer a sense of belonging to these women journalists, ironically many of these women have spent decades in these cities.

3.6 Conclusion

Negotiating with dominant values of city and its patriarchy poses a challenge to women journalists where urbanization processes have brought mixed realities of socio-cultural processes to them. For women journalists conceptualizing city from various points of views portrays a lacuna between city and their freedom to access public space fearlessly.

Small city journalism poses a challenge to women journalists as male journalists’ hierarchy controls and limits their choice of work. Issues and news beats indicate controlling mechanism to make women confined to conventional values and gender stereotyped roles. The fabric of Hindi print media echoes its nationalist values through the use of media and its ideologically charged environment. Where women are treated more as value-keepers at the workplace too rather than working on concerns of her choice. Moral policing and preaching of values are quite visible through the experiences of women journalists. It also shows that the construction of the divide between big city and small city journalism is institutionalized to limit issue-based journalism. It reinforces the sense of inferiority among women journalists doubly; first, as a women journalist undermining her choice of work, secondly regulating a woman’s work according to small
city journalism which presumes that women are weak at logical and analytical reporting unlike big city journalists.

It is critical as women are unable to claim the city completely as per their need and leisure. Especially, according to the respondents, Jabalpur and Gwalior are the cities which have little space for women having more restricted patriarchal city limits. There has been an emerging question on relative safety and freedom existing in big cities and small cities for women journalists which reveals that there is persistent risk and danger of being out in public spaces in cities.

Somewhere urbanization has been giving women accesses to the public spaces. Cities like Bhopal and Indore seem to provide new public spaces which women associate with a sense of freedom and relative safety. These capitalist-economic processes are bringing materialism and infrastructure to the cities which are basically providing a shallow freedom and limited access to public spaces and mobility. Nonetheless, women journalists appreciate these spaces.

The much contested issue of sense of belonging brings out the socially constructed meaning of belonging to a man. It further elucidates the exclusion of women from their city and citizenship in terms of having equal rights to city like men. It is important to emphasize the current need of anonymity as women in public spaces of the city, and to move away from this to establish a political identity as citizens in claiming cities.