

## ○ WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY WITH REFERENCE TO URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

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*'Public' and 'Private' were the spaces generally segregated into two groups of men and women respectively. Private spaces for women were most of the times "Built" (Safe) spaces. While studying women's transgression to the public spaces, it becomes critical to study their access to "Open" public spaces.*

*The barriers that restrict women's free access to such public spaces may be physical, psychological or social. In majority of Indian cities women and girls face violence not only in their homes and in relationships, but also in public spaces due to poor urban design and poor management of public spaces. The reasons may be the threats, intimidation, harassment, sexual attacks or rape, which prevent women from moving around the city because they feel unsafe.*

*Quality of life of an individual depends, on the conditions over which urban life develops. Open and public spaces are seen as vital for people's interactions, health and well being. People from different age groups, gender and backgrounds need public spaces for different purposes and uses. While using these spaces, people assume certain risks and prepare themselves to handle these risks or to avoid using these spaces altogether. The perception and decision depends on various factors that are mentioned above.*

*Women and girls are often targets of violence due to their vulnerability, and this vulnerability perpetuates their position in society. Gender role theory assumes that traditionally men carry out most productive (paid) work in public sphere, where as women were granted a private sphere of "reproduction" that is un-paid, domestic work and influences to a great extent risk perception by them. Present paper is focused to analyze women's perception of risk in public spaces. It addresses the barriers in accessibility of women to the public spaces. There are various theories discussed in this paper, supporting the fact that women and men are exposed to different risks, perceive risks differently and handle risks in different ways. It is an attempt to provide guidelines for architects and planners for design of gender appropriate urban public spaces to provide women equal opportunity in public sphere so that they can contribute for the betterment of the society as a whole.*

**Key words:** urban public spaces, risk, women's perception, safety, security