

Chapter 12

Travel with Care

Reinforcing Patriarchy through Tips for Solo Female Travelers in India

Kiranpreet Kaur Baath

Wearing a wedding ring and saying you're married, and due to meet your husband shortly, is another way to ward off unwanted interest.

—"Women Travellers in India—Lonely Planet" (2021)

In most places, it is best not to venture out alone after dark. While booking flights, trains, and buses, choose options that get you to your destination in daylight. If its unavoidable have someone from your hotel/homestay come meet you.—

—Neha Dara (Dara 2017)

Travel and the genre of travel writing—directly linked to cultural exchange, knowledge of self and the other and power and authority—has provided an opportunity for women to escape the domestic spaces and explore self and the world. By enabling women to adopt the role of traveler and travel writer, which was largely associated with masculinity, travel employs agency to women by rescuing them from a static mapping of women's bodies and spaces by the male "gaze." For a long time, they, either Victorian women or other colonial migrants, have been traveling in groups or with their husbands. Recently, almost a decade ago, the trend of solo traveling has proliferated among female travelers. Solo traveling provides women an opportunity to push the boundaries of patriarchal structures of power and allows women to

negotiate a space for self. Indian women, ever been a part of travelers and explorers, are now taking up the challenge of traveling solo around the world as well as across India.

Nonetheless, to understand the place and possibilities for solo women travelers in a global patriarchal or at least male-dominated space, let me take the readers through three Facebook pages: *Solo female travelers*, *Finding Carla* and *SAWTA*. Though these pages are not primarily related to Indian roads and Indian solo female travelers, still they demand attention as they symbolize and voice three different understandings about women traveling alone. The first one, *Solo female travelers*, earlier known as the “First FB group for women who travel solo,” is a Facebook group started in 2015 with a vision to “empower” women to travel and “explore the world solo . . . on their own terms” (Club 2015). Though the group was started for English solo travelers only, it has attracted acceptance from all over the globe, so much so that it has now 144,600 members. Such worldwide acceptance of a group encouraging, arranging, and documenting solo female travelers demonstrates the rising interest of women in solo traveling. According to the O.A.T (Overseas Adventure Travel) report more than “60,000 women traveled solo between 2018 and 2019” (*Over 85% of Solo Travelers are Women—Adventure Travel Reports* 2020). Google trends have also recorded that searches for “solo female travel” have gone up by 52 percent (Kow 2018) from 2016 to 2017, and most recently it has further gone up by 230 percent in 2019 (Roberti 2019, 4; *Solo Travel Statistics and Data: 2021–2022* 2022). Karen Lawrence, in her seminal work, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition*, has discussed that travel tropes and the genre of travel writing has played a vital role in allowing women to negotiate their place in society by allotting “more (and new) territory to women’s province and replace[ing] the static mapping of women as space with a more dynamic model of woman as agent, as self-mover” (Lawrence 1994, 18). This observation, though made for British women, is indeed true for all women across the globe who had been suppressed, gazed upon, or made to agree to gender stratification. It is established, through a study of 194 solo women travelers, that the reason for traveling solo by women was “to explore new experiences, gain new-knowledge and understand different ways of thinking and being in the world”; out of five major reasons “experience, escape, and self-esteem” were most prominent ones (Chiang and Jogaratnam 2006, 59–60). These women, through their solo journeys, “transgress gender norms” which, consequently, empower other women to employ “a form of gender power” (Ghose 1998, 133). Therefore, the growing trend of solo female travelers in a way motivates other women to claim agency and directly indulge in cross-cultural exchanges and knowledge that eventually lead to power and authority through visibility and gaze. Indian women have also started undertaking solo

travel and using digital platforms, such as blogs and social media accounts, to document their new experiences and claim agency in dictating their space. This group, *Solo female travelers*, therefore resonates with the demand and need for solo female travelers. By arranging trips, holidays, and solo travel for women, along with giving them a space to connect with like-minded people and document their experiences, the Facebook group validates the presence of solo women travelers and also motivates other women to join the cadre and reclaim their space through mobility.

Alternatively, women traveling alone have never been accepted by patriarchal power structures, due to which female bodies, trying to push the boundaries of patriarchal understanding of travel tropes and genre, have faced violence, abuse, and witch-hunt. Women on the move are either seen as vulnerable, or morally corrupt and thus inviting men for sexual advancements, or just easily available objectified bodies deserving to be violated or even eliminated. The second Facebook page in discussion *Finding Carla* validates the travel for “solo women” as a “particularly risky undertaking.” Charlotte Macdonald has documented this behavior of patriarchy against Victorian women travelers: though these women started “traveling to the colonies” for “a young woman to set out ‘alone’ was regarded as a *particularly risky undertaking*” (Macdonald 2015, 10; emphasis added). This belief has managed to survive well into the twenty-first century as well. Lauren Haigh, in her article “Female Travellers: A Unique Risk Profile,” has noted that “the number of females travelling alone is on the rise, but so is women’s unease” (Haigh 2020). Megan Specia and Tariro Mzezewa, in an article published in *Independent*, states “more women are travelling solo, but that doesn’t take away the danger” (Mzezewa 2019b). This “unease” and “danger” spans a wide spectrum of threats posed in public spaces to solo women travelers: from being uncomfortable with male stares and uninvited efforts to talk to being groped, teased, and sexually harassed in public transport and places that many times has led to rape and even death. *Finding Carla* is a page that was started in December 2018 after Carla Stefaniak, a 36-year-old Florida woman, went missing from her Airbnb hotel in Costa Rica. After finding that Costa Rican authorities were not making enough efforts to find Stefaniak, her family started this page a week later as a search mission to find the whereabouts of Stefaniak. Her body was discovered soon, and now the security guard has also been sentenced to a sixteen-year term for raping and murdering her. However, the page exists to date; now it has become a place for putting missing information of other travelers in the public domain. The presence of this page in itself interrogates the “empowerment” and “encouragement” the first page (discussed earlier) tends to provide to women for traveling solo. The picture portrayed by Hostelworld, one of the largest holiday booking companies, by stating that “Solo travel was once seen as brave and risky

for female travelers, but . . . it is now an adventurous, exciting experience that allows them to feel free with no one else to worry about or please” is ruptured by *Forbes* report stating “[b]ut the sobering reality is that this can be a risky endeavour” (Bloom 2017). Stefanaik is not a solitary case, rather such incidents are reported frequently and some even go unreported globally. However, the situation is even worse in patriarchal societies, such as India, where women’s mobility is linked to promiscuity. According to the NCRB (National Crime Record Bureau) report of 2020, 77 rape cases on average per day were recorded, and 62,300 cases of kidnapping and abduction were recorded in that year (Bureau 2020, x–xii). So, the question arises: should the women take “encouragement” from the social media pages, such as *Solo Female Travelers*, and continue claiming agency in structuring their own space; or they should refrain from visiting dangerous roads as it happened after the high-profile Delhi Gangrape¹ in 2012. It was reported that after the incident, the number of women traveling to India dropped by 35 percent (Advani 2013, 2); however, the way the behavior of Indian women traveling in India was altered has not been reported—I doubt if it was even thought as a subject of study! If they refrain from traveling “dangerous roads” then another question is: where are the “safe roads”? Most of the time violence against women is carried out at home: according to WHO (World Health Organization) report, 38 percent of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner, globally only “6% of women report having been sexually assaulted by someone other than their partner” (World Health Organization 2021). Nonetheless, by warning women against “dangerous roads” or “dangerous countries” or “dangerous areas and time” the discourse of gender vulnerability and femininity is circulated. These discourses, as rightly suggested by Sara Mills, has constructed travel “as physically dangerous and a site for sexual threat” (Mills 1991, 103). Similar image of “dangerous” Indian roads, specifically after the Scarlett Keeling² rape and murder case in Goa and the Delhi gangrape case, has helped patriarchal society to dominate and instruct women to either be away from public space or depend on the male counterpart to use the space or take the responsibility of knowing and “doing” everything “right” to be safe.

The third Facebook page, *SAWTA* (Safety for all women traveling alone), speaks to and about this responsibility of women to be “safe” by providing safety tips for women traveling alone on foreign roads; thus signifying efforts of sustaining solo women traveling (2018). In the twenty-first century when there is “increased financial independence amongst women” and they have “created unconventional careers” (Chaudhary 2020, 297) as travelers and travel bloggers, the need to develop ways to navigate through the “physically dangerous site” of solo traveling has become essential. The page started in October 2018, allows space for the contributors to share their fears,

experiences as well as safety tips depending on their socio-cultural understanding of gender relations in a particular travel destination. Even though the page is highly appreciable due to its constructive role in enabling women to travel safely, still, it, and other such pages, convincingly indicate that for a woman to travel alone is not simple leisure, but rather a complicated project that needs planning, risk management, and psychological skills. A woman is expected to research the destination, not only for the places to visit, but for how solo traveling women are seen and treated in that place; she is then expected to read the mind of male counterparts or *travelees* wherever she goes: it is a recurring tip to believe your intuition, and be conscious of male stares as well as behavior; and finally, she is expected to have a risk management plan in place. Certainly, these are wise steps to be taken while traveling in a foreign place but the problem is they don't transcend gender. Rarely, or even never, a male solo traveler is instructed to be conscious of female stares, or female advancements in terms of efforts to talk or touch or to dress according to societal or cultural norms. It is not to say that men are not under threat of any kind of violence, but, I propose, that their security is most of the time seen as a law-and-order situation; whereas that of a woman is seen as a socio-cultural problem, which means that situation is seen as avoidable if a woman can travel with care. Due to this, women traveling alone are burdened with all the responsibilities of staying safe—this automatically signals that women should find and learn ways to navigate the patriarchally constructed public spaces where a female body *will be* subjected to masculine violence. This perhaps is the reason for the president of WorldAware, a global risk management provider, to state that “it is 100% easier to be a man traveling than a woman” (Bloom 2017). It appears as if the first Facebook page discussed in this study is about the reason for traveling solo and the second one is a warning against doing the same, however, the third one is a rescue and provides a way for women to travel solo while reinforcing gender stratification. This gender stratification, further, hampers the mobility of women or allows them conditional mobility only, thereby interrupting the cause forwarded by the first page. Solo women travelers thus are sort of trapped in a circular model of the necessity of claiming agency and challenging patriarchy, perceived threats of disagreeing to social expectancies, agree to patriarchal conditions to navigate “safely” through their spaces to claim agency.

In this chapter I argue that the digital and print guides for travelers, designed to provide them with appropriate information and cautions about the destination, reinstate the process of instructing women about male authority and significance. Though the Indian women's travel accounts, either printed or digital, are indeed a testimony of solo women being capable of taming “dangerous” roads, still, the tips provided by online magazines, such as *Lonely Planet* and *National Geographic*, advise women to follow a strict list

of recommended tricks and safety guards, as demonstrated in the opening quotes, is not only emblemizing the space of Indian roads as dangerous for women but also disrupt the authority of women as capable of traveling alone, rather it reinforces the need of male persona to accompany a woman on her journey. The agency allotted to women by travel and the genre of travel writing is ruptured when women are made or at least advised to follow “terms and conditions,” often pretending to save them from violence and sexual threats, of traveling solo. This not only controls their mobility and thus their experience of travel, but also forwards gender stratification. In this paper, I argue that though the travel tips available on digital platforms are to facilitate travelers, in operation, they reinforce and reinvent the male authority and supremacy by constructing Indian roads as highly gendered spaces. Also, instead of looking at law and order situations, educating men on gender equality, or developing a guide for men to behave in public places, it seems that travel tips blogs and advisories work toward pronouncing gender vulnerability, which is in itself a paradigm and the by-product of inequality. I will read some of the blogs by leading Indian women travelers, where they share their experiences on Indian roads, and the online travel tips to study how and to what extent these tips influence the travel experiences of women on and off the road and the way they reinforce gender stratification.

In the next section, I study Indian roads as constructed gendered spaces, and later I read safety tips provided by leading travel magazines and blogs by solo females traveling on Indian roads to analyze the relationship between travel tips and gender stratification.

INDIAN ROADS: GENDERED SPACES

According to the UN report “Violence against women . . . are not isolated ‘incidents,’ private family matters or sacrosanct ‘local customs’ but “are based on the patriarchal system that establishes relationships of power and domination between men and women” (Impe 2019, 8). Traditionally, India is a conservative and patriarchal society, with a skewed sex ratio (Phipps 2017). This “skewed sex ratio” itself speaks about the perceived supremacy of male child in Indian households who is seen as the carrier of patrilineality and thus more relevant to this patriarchal social structure. However, to understand the relationship between power and domination, the very core of the circulation of this discourse of supremacy needs to be understood. Michel Foucault suggests that every society has its regime of truth—which in itself is a “system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements”—as well as its “general politics of truth” in terms of accepting some discourses as truth and others

as not (Foucault 1980b, 131, 133). Once the “truth” has been normalized by society, that is it is taken as a *divine rule*, the individuals become subject to that truth, which means, according to Foucault, it now sets up laws. The discourse of truth decides, conveys, and propels the effects of power (Foucault 2003, 25), which means that the knowledge formulated and circulated in the form of the “truth” is relational to power: “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge, and conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (Foucault 1980a, 51–52). Indian patriarchy also has, through the “ordered procedures” of culture, religion, and traditions, forwarded a “truth” that validates and accepts men as superior and higher in the hierarchy, leading to violence against women starting from female foeticide and infanticide that results in “skewed sex ratio.”

The “truth” in a patriarchal society establishes that gender is natural and even more natural are gender norms. For instance, Gender norms, generally in all patriarchal societies, dictate that “women prioritize family and men prioritize career,” which validates the “male bread-winner norm” casting “men as primary-or-higher-earner in the house” (Gonalons-Pons and Gangl 2021). In India, primarily due to this gender norm, men are referred to as “head of the family” and “*pati-parmeshwar*” (husband is god), and father and brothers are seen as protectors of daughters and sisters; in contrast, women are seen as responsible for domestic space, serving men of the family. These gender norms feed into the discourses of masculinity and femininity: masculine becomes a symbol of protector, superior, provider male; feminine becomes a symbol of vulnerable, inferior, receiver female. These roles are performed through “stylized repetition of acts,” which further produce the effect of gender, that according to Judith Butler, is “the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (Butler 1990, 191). Consequently, the performativity of these roles produces the discourses of masculinity and femininity, which are then circulated through social interactions between genders, furthering the process of masculine superiority. Since these discourses, by evading the constructed nature of gender identity, reinforce a “truth” of gender being natural, thus they declare the performance of gender as a natural “law” (Ridgeway 2008; West and Zimmerman 1987) for the working of the society. A study around marriages and separation has demonstrated that couples do perform gender roles according to societal expectations: they “follow scripts that signify and accentuate men’s masculinity and women’s femininity.” The failure to carry out gender roles leads to “confusion, sanctions and stigmatization,” therefore individuals feel “pressure to account for gender non-normativity” which they do through “exaggerating gender normativity in other domain” (Gonalons-Pons and Gangl 2021). This “law” then is seen as *demanding* and *deserving* to be maintained for the effectual operation of the society. If a

female member of the family is seen as evading gender norms, that may be as minimum as making decisions of her career, men start feeling the need to practice masculinity in another way- often through laying rules of mobility, timing and choice of clothes. The urgency to impose and operate these rules of domination and subjugation, as well as performing masculine authority in controlling female bodies, may lead to the use of “violence against women as a way of maintaining power and dominance over women” (cited in Diamond-Smith and Rudolph 2018). Also, the customs, such as dowry, and women as prestige carrier of the family that informs the gender-based normative rules and roles such as the preference of the male child, looking at the girl child as a financial burden, act as a catalyst in commodifying the female bodies and reduce gendered relationships to mere transactions. The female body is either “sexually objectified or seen as belonging to the men in their lives, this prompts a dehumanisation of women which allows others to perpetrate violence against” female bodies conveniently (Behrana 2021). Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, executive director of UN Women, has affirmed that there exists evidence demonstrating that “women face risks that men don’t face in public spaces, at home, or wherever they may be” and this, according to her, is largely due to “the underlying gender stereotypes, social norms, entitlement and patriarchy” (Mzezewa 2019a). It is because the “accepted truth” of male supremacy, now seen as a law, allots the power to male members of the society, to make or approve every decision of the society, including that related to female bodies in terms of education, clothing, marriage, or holidaying. As Foucault, in his theory of Panopticism, suggests that human behavior is controlled through normalization of power norms which are assured through “dissymmetry, disequilibrium, distance”: the dominant and dominated are trained to believe the supremacy of power invested in the dominant (Foucault Autumn 2008). Women also, after being in a panoptic discipline mechanism created by patriarchy, start taking responsibility for playing gender roles and adhering to gender norms. Gender stratification thus evolves as a core value of the society, empowering men to take charge of female bodies, and instructing women to obey the subjugation.

Gender stratification reinforces patriarchal hierarchy in the society (Hesse 2020, 9), and as Pierre Bourdieu argued, there “is no space, in a hierarchical society, that is not hierarchized and which does not express social hierarchies and distances in a more or less distorted or euphemized fashion” (Bourdieu 2018, 107). Indian roads, also, become the site of expressing hierarchies. India has noticeable cultural, social, and political variations across different geographical regions. This makes the country a favorite destination for solo female travelers and one of the “most complex” too (Bloom 2017). The complexity arises due to cultural, social, and traditional variety, nonetheless,

there remains homogeneity in dividing Indian space as public and private. In India, public space, which is the space of “transcendence, production, politics, and power,” is seen as the space of men; whereas private space, which operates as the domestic front and “the sphere of reproduction,” is considered as women’s space (Siwach 2020). Male occupying a space of politics and power, thus, is entitled to produce, govern and implement the rules to control public space. Therefore, they exercise the power manifested through public space by keeping the “outsider,” who are women in this case, away from these places. It then results in “social practices which see certain activities and certain spaces as male preserves” (Storey 2001, 160), thus acting to transmit inequality. Indian roads are compulsively seen as male preserves: though women are visible on roads specifically in a metropolis, still the image of “footpaths spilling over with old and young women watching the world go by as they sip tea, and discuss love, cricket and latest blockbuster” is imagining a utopia whereas “men hanging out . . . stop[ing] for a cigarette at a paanwala or lounge on a park bench . . . to stare at the sea or drink cutting chai at a tea stall . . . wander [ing] the streets late into the night” is a familiar sight (Shilpa Phadke 2011, vii). Thus Indian roads, like other gendered spaces, are also instrumental in adhering to and reaffirming “patriarchal systems of power,” which reinforces “male dominance” (Spain 1992, 4). The “prevailing status distinctions that are taken for granted” (Spain 1993) are reinforced, reproduced, and recirculated on Indian roads. Men are empowered to dictate rules for women using Indian roads, and women are made responsible to legitimize their presence in that space. If a woman is unable to do this, then her act is termed as “loitering”—a term that comes with massive negative connotations. Through these terms, their presence on roads “is conjectured to entail dishonor and shame as well as questions of sexual virtues” (Walby 1989). Thereby forwarding the case of “respectability”; Doreen Massey sees the absence of flaneuse in contrast to flaneur as a result of linking this “respectability” to “mobility” specifically seen as “wander[ing] around the streets and parks alone” (Massey 1994, 234). The case for controlling the mobility of women then is shaped as a way to uphold her “respectability” as well as saving her from “the threat of male violence” (Massey 1994, 233). Thus, when an incident of violence against women takes place on roads, specifically those in patriarchal societies such as India, the victim is seen as culprit. For this reason, though violence on roads is also carried out against men, but the violence against women stems largely out of the hierarchical structure that sees women as subjects of male dominance as well as instinctively sees public places, such as roads, as male spaces. This furthers the validation of exclusion of female bodies from the Indian roads making the Indian roads highly gendered spaces.

TRAVEL TIPS AND TRAVEL BLOGS: CONDITIONS OF “SAFETY” AND TRAVELING

Based on a survey of 550 respondents, in 2018, Reuters declared India as the “world’s most dangerous country for women due to high risk of sexual violence,” the war-torn countries Afghanistan and Syria are second and third (Goldsmith 2018). Nonetheless, to sustain the encouragement and interest in women for solo travel, demonstration of which can be seen on social media platforms—as *Solo Female Traveller* discussed earlier—the online, easy to access, travel guides and blogs enlist number of tips on traveling in India as a solo woman. These travel tips, as will be discussed in this section, are designed around the idea of instructing/suggesting to women the ways to be “safe” while traveling solo in India. This, in a way, suggests that any irresponsibility in using tips will make women “unsafe,” which means prone to direct or indirect violence; not only does this tend to make the mobility of women conditional but also tend to reinforce patriarchal authority on public spaces by underpinning gender stratification.

Even though these travel tips, and any research done before exploring a foreign land, is a commendable and responsible way of traveling. Nonetheless, these gender-oriented tips for safety appear as a way of informing women about the expectations of society from a particular gender and dictating them to match these expectations as a condition to travel safely. When women are categorically instructed to “do some research” and understand “culture, customs, and traditions” (Hewitt 2021) to avoid offending someone—it means primarily not to offend male members of the society because they are the ones who own the public spaces, and the safety of a woman depends on the attitude of these men. The majority of travel tips published on travel websites such as *Wanderlust*, *Intrepid Travel*, *National Geographic*, and *World Nomads*, concentrate on instructing women to “dress[ing] conservatively,” “behave[ing] appropriately in public,” “accompany[ing] women as much as possible” and “not travelling at night” (Phipps 2017; Childs 2017; Pearce 2021; Dara 2017). Even the welcome kit issued to foreign travelers in India included safety tips for women. Mahesh Sharma, then tourism minister, said “In that kit, they [women] are given dos and don’ts . . . these are very small things like, they should not venture out alone at night in small places, or wear skirts” only “for their safety” (Safi 2016). Ranjana Kumari, the director of the Centre for Social Research, Delhi, reacting to Sharma’s “irresponsible statement” called it the reflection of “the syndrome of blaming women” (quoted in Safi 2016). As Jessica Nabongo suggests that the approach of telling “women what not to do to avoid being attacked instead of telling men not to attack women” is a way to find a “convenient scapegoat” (quoted in Mzezewa 2019a). The

statement made by Sharma is reflective of the common patriarchal attitude of investing power in men to protect public spaces from any perceived immoral behavior of women, “the outsider.” In India, a country where women mobility is still linked to promiscuity, such statements give men an authority to judge women on the basis of their clothes and mobility and make women responsible for adhering to the norms of accessing the public space. Thereby shifting the responsibility of gender vulnerability on the victims rather than the culprits.

As Sharma said “for their own safety” women accessing Indian roads are expected to know and value, as in other gendered spaces, “a behavioural code of conduct” that includes a “definite physical look, proper decorum, non-verbal communication, proper attire, etc.” (Siwach 2020). Neha Dara reports that certain actions, such as “drinking alcohol, dancing with men, staying out late, wearing small clothes, rank high among them” and are “considered as ‘unbecoming’ for women in Indian culture” and thus women who are traveling alone are considered as “immoral” and “available” (Dara 2017). The article, rather almost all the articles and blogs about travel tips for solo women travelers, clearly mentions “dress conservatively” as a primary tip. Almost all have maintained that covering yourself will help in warding off unwanted attention—revealing clothes are seen by local men as “an invitation.” However, a blog, *Hippie in Heels*, implicitly suggests that covering up may not work all the time. Rachel Jones in this blog on her Indian travels recounts that in “the overnight local buses and sleeper class trains . . . no amount of clothing/hiding made me feel covered enough” (Jones 2014). Priyanka Dubey, an award-winning journalist, while traveling to work on a story for her reportage on rapes in India, was “groped in the night by a group of men on a train” (Mohta 2019). This gives the impression that probably “covering” your body works in daylight, and women should seek another alternative tip to travel “safely” at night. This demand for another tip related to a “safe” time to travel for women is answered in all blogs homogeneously as by Dara’s blog that says: “not to venture out alone after dark” (Dara 2017). Nonetheless, this tip also sounds insufficient after reading Baruna Goswami’s blog on travel tips, where she suggests “never travel alone in an empty bus, even during day hours” (Goswami 2020). This indicates that a solo woman traveler should be conscious about not only the clothing, and time of travel but also the place of mobility. Aparna Parikh however wrote that overcrowding of public transports makes women more vulnerable (Parikh 2018). Also according to a 2011 survey by Jagori and UN women on sexual harassment in Delhi, it was established that 51.4 percent of women reported being harassed on public buses (Choudhury 2021). This suggests that if empty buses are not safe, so are crowded buses. To address this problem, the next tip appears almost homogeneously in all travel blogs: *Intrepid travel* suggests taking

taxi services with women drivers only, and if taking public transport “ride in the women’s carriage only” (Intrepid); *Wanderlust* in addition to this, also suggest women to take an upper berth in sleeper trains for additional safety. Kartik Pandey goes a step further to suggest: “Be around other women. Opt for an all-women hostel or dorm, sit next to a female on a bus or any other public transport and join a female-only group on a social media site, especially wherein the members know the place you are going to” (Pandey 2020). These travel tips appear suggesting women to only move and interact in women space and avoid male spaces.

This conditional access to safety and public spaces validates what Robert Aldrich, has suggested that gender has always “influenced what travellers can and cannot do, and where they can and cannot go” (Aldrich 2019, 520). Travel tips are not only instrumental in proposing “the perceived travel risks and travel constraints [that] have negative effects on cognitive and affective destination images” (Kaba 2021, 478) but also persuade women that “public places are where men are most likely to commit violent acts against them”; this evolves “personal fears” that further “hamper their mobility” (Condon, Lieber, and Maillochon 2007). It is not to suggest that “the perceived travel risks” never turn into reality, rather the stories of violence or an attempt of violence against women have recurrently been documented by solo female travelers. For instance, Sreshti Verma, in her blog, writes about her experience in Macleodganj. She writes that in the market:

I had already spotted a shady man who looked completely out of place. I felt his eyes on me, but I am from Delhi, even aunties stare the shit out of us. The man had started following me. He pretended to talk on the phone so I wouldn’t notice. By now, I just wanted to rush home. Screw hotel, I wanted home. The distance between us almost vanished when I suddenly felt his hand grabbing my behind. (Verma 2016)

Nonetheless, the dramatic circulation of these stories through media reiterates “the narrative that women are not safe in public spaces” (Shilpa Phadke 2011, 10) which further leads to hampering the mobility of women. Not only do their families feel unsafe for them to travel alone but women get intimidated too. As Shivya Nath, a travel blogger writes that “hearing fearful stories of faraway places can make anyone reconsider traveling solo”; she narrates that, even if she is an experienced solo traveler still “listening to my mother’s endless apprehensions can dampen my spirit” (Nath 2015). Similarly, the range of tips, as discussed above, by travel websites, portrays if all places, all times, and all spaces are dangerous for solo female travelers. Women’s mobility in patriarchal public spaces, such as Indian roads, then becomes a matter of affordability, that is to say, what and how much risk one can afford

to take to travel solo. These public spaces then become “spaces of contest” as women “literally have to fight their case” for accessing these spaces (Siwach 2020)—writing travel tips is a form of negotiating the conditions to access the public spaces.

Even in an urban metropolis, such as Bombay, where women using public spaces is visible site, women “do not share equal access to public space with men” (Shilpa Phadke 2011, viii). Not only does this fear for women’s safety “allows even more brutal exclusions from public space in the guise of righteous desire to protect women” (Shilpa Phadke 2011, 11–12), but also demands women to have a strategic plan to navigate through these “dangerous” avenues. Other than instructing women to dress conservatively, not travel at night, and while traveling look for women companions, these travel tips also recommended women to “ask a male travel companion . . . to accompany you if you need to leave your compartment overnight” (Intrepid). Furthermore, to tackle all the perceived threats related to time, place, and space of mobility, women travelers are even suggested to “consider pretending to have a husband” or “keep an imaginative lover waiting” (Fergusson 2019). This tip though is given to keeping the unwanted attention of “local men” off, nonetheless, it reinforces an attitude that reproduces and validates gender stratification and declares public places as male spaces where women can only enter either in a company of a male companion or by abiding by the behavioral and other instructions outlined by patriarchy for women. These tips to travel safely, therefore, become a way to further a case of “neo-traditionalism” that “locates women back in the private space of the home” (Shilpa Phadke 2011, 10).

CONSCIOUSLY FEMININE: CHALLENGING THE VEIL WHILE EMBRACING IT

In the late nineteenth century Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1888–1889), a social activist, started traveling across India and abroad and producing her experiences in the form of travel narratives. Since then, Indian women, such as Rosy Thomas (1958), Savitri Devi Mukherjee (1980), Anees Jung (1987), Monisha Rajesh (2012), and Jahanvi Acharekar (2015), have taken in stride to travel and write their experiences. Earlier, traveling and travel writing conformed to masculine ideals of valor and sexuality (Bird 2016), this was seen as a masculine endeavor, nonetheless, women by traveling solo and documenting their success stories were, and are, producing an alternative narrative. The blogs by solo Indian women travelers, such as Shivya Nath, Sreshti Verma, and Mansi Singh, demonstrate the eligibility and ability of

Indian women to travel solo. Also, since “travel functions as a defining arena of agency” (Smith 2001, ix), these solo women travelers claimed agency and challenged gender stratification, and the patriarchal authority over public spaces by claiming equal ownership of the Indian roads. Nonetheless, the travel tips, by making their mobility conditional and dependent on patriarchal norms, tend to interrupt this agency. Women solo travelers, then to safeguard this agency and the authority, claimed through travel and travel writing, chose to navigate between challenging and adhering to the gender norms.

Women travelers and travel writers, who opted to “stay away from home and perform tasks considered as masculine,” globally, right from the Victorian era, were “likely to be labelled as immoral” (Kassis 2015, 38). Their condition, according to Victorian patriarchy was similar to that of “the fallen woman,” who as suggested by Lynda Nead, was once a “respectable woman” but “fallen” due to her choices and decisions (Nead 1988, 95). This “respectability,” as discussed earlier, has helped, and is still helping, patriarchy to dictate the “respectable” choices for women, including the use of public spaces. Earlier, as well, women using public spaces, specifically roads, without “legitimate reason” were witch-hunted through recurring images of “fallen women” that tended to legitimize violence against women and also blame women for violence against women. In the twentieth century, feminist reformers sought and fought to revert this idea of a “fallen woman” as a culprit of society to a victim of “male lust and exploitation” (Odem 1995, 3). Though this demand resonated with the idea of “New Woman” that validated the “woman leaving home” as opposed to the “angel at home” image of “respectable women.” Still, the status of women, in this twenty-first century, in public spaces, specifically in societies with a higher degree of gender stratification, remains that of an “outsider” or lesser “being” than men, and therefore women are still expected to adhere to the patriarchal rules for accessing the public sphere “safely.” Consequently, either, to uphold their “respectability,” or to avoid this threat of violence, women in these societies, have been persuaded to avoid male spheres and roles, or adhere to the rules laid by the masculine hegemony and patriarchal authority of accessing that sphere, such as roads. Even though Indian women have long been traveling and writing, still the uncontested equal ownership of Indian roads have yet not reached even the metropolis, such as Bombay. There is a compulsive demand as well as a need for women to demonstrate that “they have a legitimate reason to be where they are” (Shilpa Phadke 2011, 8). In case there is no “legitimate reason,” the female body is seen as “asking for” violent punishment, an example of that was seen in the case of the Delhi gangrape, and the attitude of society toward the victim despite public outrage. Jyoti Singh’s, famously known as Nirbhaya, rape on a moving bus in Delhi, which eventually led to her death, is “a catalyst for new

awareness of patriarchal structures in society that limit women's movement" (Hesse 2020, 1).

Even if women are not explicitly instructed to remain in private space, still through conditional mobility and reinstating men, even an imaginative man, as the savior of women, the gender-based distribution of space is naturalized. The travel tips, advocating women to depend on men or segregate them from men through "dedicated" spaces, imply gender segregation as well as stratification by pronouncing men as either protectionists or predators and women as "victims." Nath suggests, "relentless victimization"—that portrays women "neither as strong nor as safe as men"—is a "root cause of so many challenges faced by women" (Nath 2013). Through the effect of naturalization,³ women "subconsciously accept their subordinate position by abiding by rules of gendered spaces and indirectly enable men to reaffirm their advantage in society" (Spain 1992, 15). It also inculcates a behavioral pattern among women, who unconsciously as well as consciously start protecting their bodies from the "male gaze" and gender-based violence. This answers to the behavior of women in metropolis, such as Bombay, where even if women are "visible as commuters on public buses and trains," still they wear "visible *mangalsutras* that mark them as married," "have their files clasped carefully to their chests in the classic posture of defensiveness," keep their "cell phone close" to them, "almost without being aware of it, every woman reflects deeply about how to access public space" (Shilpa Phadke 2011, 6, 7, x). According to Foucault, this controlled behavior leads to the power that is "visible and unverifiable" which means women continuously feel under surveillance, under a "gaze" of patriarchal society, and consciously believe that any effort to break the norms will then result in inviting danger and violence. It can be understood through Foucault's theory of Panopticism, which says:

The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being see dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. . . . A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. . . . The efficiency of power, its constraining force have, in a sense, passed over to the other side—to the side of its surface of application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power. (Foucault Autumn 2008, 6,7)

This when applied to travel tips, which is a form of suggestion for traveling with care, it becomes evident that women are led to assume this responsibility for the constraints of power. Undoubtedly the travel tips are provided for "safety" but do they solve the purpose? The answer to this can be found in Shilpa Phadke's experience while traveling with a friend through Agra, Gwalior, Jhansi, Orchha, and Datia in North India:

We were well aware of the need to plan the minutest details. Our hotels and guesthouses were booked in advance. The train tickets were reserved mindful of delays. We could not leave before it was light or arrive after dark. Our clothes were chosen to be as little out-of-place as possible. As urban *bal-kati auratein* (short-haired women) we could not hope to blend in completely but nor did we want to draw undue attention. . . .

Nonetheless this did not mean we were not harassed. In our guesthouse in Agra, we put a chair under our door handle as we heard repeated knocks on the door well after midnight. At the Gwalior fort we finally succumbed and hired a guide . . . , his presence “protecting” us from many offers of guidance and other things. At the palace-fort in Orchha we held our breath when a group of men loudly talking to each other and verbally harassing us went by without doing more. As they passed us, both of us saw vivid images of gang rape in our minds. That holiday passed off without anything worse than verbal harassment and strange and leering looks. Despite the pleasure we found in our travels, there was a sense that as women we did not have access to the full range of travelling pleasures. (ix–x)

Solo female travelers remain in the interstices of effect of Panopticism and will break the Panopticon. These tips of traveling “safely,” reinforcing the “fearful” stories of attack and violence, make women feel “fearful of travel,” which is “a modern form of *purdah* (seclusion or secrecy), with sexist and misogynistic undertones” (Ward 2020). Nath acknowledges that online forums, such as *Lonely Planet*, “flooded with safety concerns” (Nath 2011) for women traveling solo in India, circulate the discourse of threat and violence against solo women travelers. On the one hand, she challenges the discourse as well as the *purdah* it imposed on women by “choose[ing] not to read media reports propagating fear about traveling in countries labeled unsafe” (Nath 2015). On the other hand, she also affirms that “dress conservatively”—a form of “covering up, a *purdah*” (Nath 2016)—is a useful safety tip. Not only do the women, in an effort to adhere to safety tips, reinforce a form of *purdah*, but also the efforts made by the society for women’s security revolve around this in the form of “women only” spaces. Alka Kaushik, a Delhi-based travel blogger, expressed her discontent over the “women only” hotel started by Oyo by writing “I feel that the society which failed to assure women security, is now trying to build walls around women to make them feel secure.”⁴ These walls are nothing but a form of *purdah* imposed on women which in a way restricts their mobility to a specific zone. Even though Kaushik acknowledges the threats and inconvenience of being a woman traveling in male spaces, she still feels suffocated by the “siege” around her. She advocates traveling with men and women for that is where, according to her, society exists (Kaushik 2015), thus challenging the

gendered segregation. Nonetheless, she also reinforces that as a solo woman traveler she remains alert about “not to take any risk” and thus, adheres to the norms of dress, behavior, and time of travel. Therefore, redirecting solo women travelers to the zone of conditional mobility.

CONCLUSION

These travel tips, that in a way agree on the conditional mobility of women, empower the social and civic structures of the society to evade real gender-based violence by shifting the focus to the way women dress, carry out the mobility as well as cultural exchange. As much as travel has given agency to women to claim voice, power, and authority; their gender and gender-related violence, therefore, become a tool for the patriarchal society to interrupt that agency of women as solo and independent travelers and explorers. Since “[b]odies are used to act out roles in various settings, which confirm and resist wider sets of expectancies” (Cresswell 1999, 176). Therefore, through solo female travelers oscillating between adhering to and challenging these norms—expectancies of patriarchy are confirmed. It is now evident that both the travel tips as well as “fearful stories,” which tend to educate and caution women about their “dangerous” journeys, actually end up hindering women’s mobility; nonetheless, women, to reclaim agency, negotiate between adhering to and, simultaneously, challenging the gender norms.

REFERENCES

- Advani, Rahul. 2013. “India: A Destination Nightmare for Tourists? Implications of Sexual Violence.” *ISAS Insights* 214: —8. www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166940/ISAS_Insights_No_214_-_India_A_Destination_Nightmare_for_Tourists_10072013140704.pdf.
- Aldrich, Robert. 2019. “Gender and Travel Writing.” In *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, edited by Tim Youngs Nandini Das, 520–534. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Behrana, Maheen. 2021. “India: Can We Turn the Tide on the Epidemic of Violence against Women and Girls?” *Candid Orange*. Accessed September 9, 2021.
- Bird, Dunlaith. 2016. “Travel Writing and Gender.” In *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Carl Thompson. Oxon: Routledge.
- Bloom, Laura Begley. 2017. “10 Most Dangerous Places for Women Travelers (And How to Stay Safe).” *Forbes*. www.forbes.com/sites/laurabegleybloom/2017/07/28/10-most-dangerous-places-for-women-travelers-and-how-to-stay-safe/?sh=23cb6eda2448.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2018. "Social Space and the Genesis of Appropriated Physical Space." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42 (1): 106–114. doi.org/doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12534.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Chaudhary, Sanchari Basu. 2020. "Flânerie in Female Solo Travel: An Analysis of Blogposts from Shivya Nath's the Shooting Star." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 12, no. Themed Issue on "India and Travel Narratives" (3): 296–302. doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v12n3.35.
- Chiang, Chu-Yin, and Giri Jogaratnam. 2006. "Why Do Women Travel Solo for Purposes of Leisure?" *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 12 (1): 59–70. doi.org/10.1177/1356766706059041. doi.org/10.1177/1356766706059041.
- Childs, Lorinda. 2017. "6 Easy Tips for Solo Female Travel in India." Intrepid. www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/tips-for-solo-female-travellers-india/.
- Choudhury, Disha Roy. 2021. "Why Women Stay Silent about Sexual Harassment in Public Spaces." *The Indian Express*, February 15, Life-Style. indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/life-style/women-sexual-harassment-public-places-transport-7183030/.
- Condon, Stéphanie, Marylène Lieber, and Florence Maillolchon. 2007. "Feeling Unsafe in Public Places: Understanding Women's Fears." *Revue française de sociologie* 48 (5): 101–128. doi.org/10.3917/rfs.485.0101. www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-sociologie-1-2007-5-page-101.htm. www.cairn.info/load_pdf.php?ID_ARTICLE=RFS_485_0101.
- Cresswell, Tim. 1999. "Embodiment, Power and the Politics of Mobility: The Case of Female Tramps and Hobos." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24 (2): 175–192. www.jstor.org/stable/623295.
- Dara, Neha. 2017. "Should Women Travel Alone in India?." Travel. Accessed February 10. www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/destinations/asia/india/should-women-travel-solo-india-tips.
- Diamond-Smith, Nadia, and Kara Rudolph. 2018. "The Association between Uneven Sex Ratios and Violence: Evidence from 6 Asian Countries." *PloS one* 13 (6): e0197516-e0197516. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0197516. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29856763. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5983495/.
- Fergusson, Asher and Lyric. 2019. "A Study of the World's Most Dangerous Countries for Women Traveling Alone Reveals the Good, the Bad and the Ugly." *Solo Female Travel* (blog), Asher and Lyric. www.asherfergusson.com/solo-female-travel-safety/.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980a. "Prison Talks." In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1980b. "Truth and Power." In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon.
- . 2003. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*. Translated by David Macey. Edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana. New York: Picador.

- . 2008. "'Panopticism' from Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 2 (1): 1–12. muse.jhu.edu/article/252435.
- Ghose, Indira. 1998. *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze*. Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Goldsmith, Belinda. 2018. "India Most Dangerous Country for Women with Sexual Violence Rife—Global Poll." *Reuters*, June 26.
- Gonalons-Pons, P., and M. Gangl. 2021. "Marriage and Masculinity: Male-Breadwinner Culture, Unemployment, and Separation Risk in 29 Countries." *American Sociological Review* 86 (3): 465–502. doi.org/10.1177/00031224211012442.
- Goswami, Baruna. 2020. "21 Tips For Solo Female Travelers in India." *IndianVisit* (blog), *Indian Holiday Pvt Ltd*. www.indianvisit.com/blog/solo-female-travel-in-india/.
- Haigh, Lauren. 2020. "Female Travellers: A Unique Risk Profile." *International Travel and Health Insurance Journal* 203. <https://www.itij.com/latest/long-read/female-travellers-unique-risk-profile>
- Hesse, Sandra. 2020. "Gendered Spaces in India: Processes of Claiming Space through Feminist Street Art in Delhi." Master's of Education, Institute for English/American Studies, University of Potsdam. www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/wci/Gendered_Spaces_in_India_Hesse.pdf.
- Hewitt, Rachel. 2021. "For Women to Feel Safe in Public Spaces, Men's Behaviour Has to Change." *The Guardian* (Opinion). Accessed September 25.
- Hill, Amelia. 2017. "Two Men in Scarlett Keeling Murder Case in India Face Court Again." *The Guardian*, February 9, News. www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/09/two-men-in-scarlett-keeling-case-in-india-face-court-again.
- Impe, Anne-Marie. 2019. *Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls: A Handbook for Journalists*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Intrepid. "Safety Advice for Women Travellers in India." Intrepid Travel. Accessed November 15, 2021. www.intrepidtravel.com/en/women-safety-india.
- Jones, Rachel. 2014. "14 Tips for Solo Female Travel in India." *Hippie in Heels* (blog), *Wordpress*. hippie-inheels.com/tips-for-solo-female-travel-in-india/.
- Kaba, Bahar. 2021. "Foreign Solo Female Travellers' Perceptions of Risk and Safety in Turkey." In *Hidden Geographies*, edited by Marko Krevs, 475–494. Key Challenges in Geography. Switzerland: Springer.
- Kassis, Dimitrios. 2015. *Representations of the North in Victorian Travel Literature*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kaushik, Alka. 2015. "Why 'Women's Exclusive' Tag Does Not Appeal to the Nomad in Me!" *LyflnTransit* (blog). alkakaushik.com/2015/10/24/why-womens-exclusive-tag-does-not-appeal-to-the-nomad-in-me/.
- Kow, Nicole. 2018. *The Solo Female Travel Trend: The Experiences and Priorities they are Chasing*. TrekkSoft (Online), May 11. www.treksoft.com/en/blog/solo-female-travel-trend-experiences-and-priorities.
- Lawrence, Karen. 1994. *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Macdonald, Charlotte. 2015. *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.
- Massey, Doreen. 1994. *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mills, Sara. 1991. *Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Mohta, Payal. 2019. Meet the Journalist Documenting India's Unreported Rape Cases. *Open Democracy*. Accessed September 20, 2021. <https://opendemocracy.net/en/5050/meet-the-journalist-documenting-indias-unreported-rape-cases/>.
- Mzezewa, Megan Specia and Tariro. 2019a. "Adventurous. Alone. Attacked." *The New York Times*, March 31.
- . 2019b. "More Women Travelling Solo but That Doesn't Take Away the Danger." *Independent*. Accessed March 3, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/travel/solo-female-travel.html>.
- Nath, Shivya. 2011. "On Solo Travel & Indian Women." *The Shooting Star* (blog). the-shooting-star.com/travel-india-alone/.
- . 2013. "Why I'm Not Celebrating International Women's Day." *The Shooting Star* (blog). the-shooting-star.com/why-im-not-celebrating-international-womens-day/.
- . 2015. "How I Conquer My Solo Travel Fears." *The Shooting Star* (blog). <https://the-shooting-star.com/travel-india-alone/>.
- . 2016. "Practical Ways I've Learnt to Stay Safe while Travelling Alone." *The Shooting Star* (blog). the-shooting-star.com/practical-ways-ive-learnt-to-stay-safe-while-travelling-alone/.
- National Crime Record Bureau. 2020, September 13. *Crime in India 2020 Statistics*. Ministry of Home Affairs. New Delhi: Government of India. ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/CII%202020%20Volume%201.pdf.
- Nead, Lynda. 1988. *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Odem, Mary E. 1995. *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States 1885–1920*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Over 85% of Solo Travelers are Women—Adventure Travel Reports*. 2020. IGN24 (Online), January 14. industryglobalnews24.com/over-85-of-solo-travelers-are-women-adventure-travel-reports.
- Pandey, Kartik. 2020. "25 Safety Tips for Solo Women Travellers in India." *Travel Tips and Hacks* (blog), *fab hotels*. www.fabhotels.com/blog/safety-tips-for-solo-women-travellers-in-india/.
- Parikh, Aparna. 2018. "Politics of Presence: Women's Safety and Respectability at Night in Mumbai, India." *Gender, Place & Culture* 25 (5): 695–710. doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1400951.
- Pearce, Sophie. 2021. "10 Honest Tips for Solo Female Travel in Varanasi." *Third Eye Traveller*. Accessed October 20, 2021. thirdeyetraveller.com/solo-female-travel-guide-varanasi/.

- Phipps, Anna. 2017. "5 Practical Tips for Solo Female Travellers in India, Including What to Wear." Wanderlust. www.wanderlust.co.uk/content/solo-female-travel-india-practical-tips-what-to-wear/.
- Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2008. "Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations." *Gender & Society* 23 (2): 145–160. doi.org/10.1177/0891243208330313. doi.org/10.1177/0891243208330313.
- Roberti, Janice and Nick Waugh. 2019. *Solo Travel Trends Report*. Solo Traveler (Online). solotravelerworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Solo-Travel-Trends-Report_Full_v3.pdf.
- Safi, Michael. 2016. "Female Tourists Should Not Wear Skirts in India, Says Tourism Minister." *Guardian* (India), August 29. www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/29/india-female-tourists-skirts-safety-advice.
- SAWTA (Safety for All Women Travelling Alone). 2018. www.facebook.com/SAWTA-Safety-for-All-Women-Traveling-Alone-489038611584339/?ref=page_internal.
- Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade. 2011. *Why Loiter?: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Siwach, Prerna. 2020. "Mapping Gendered Spaces and Women's Mobility: A Case Study of Mitathal Village, Haryana." *The Oriental Anthropologist* 20 (1): 33–48. doi.org/10.1177/0972558X20913680. doi.org/10.1177/0972558X20913680.
- Smith, Sidonie. 2001. *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Solo Female Travelers Club. 2015. Facebook. www.facebook.com/groups/solofemaletravelers/.
- Solo Travel Statistics and Data: 2021–2022*. 2022. Solo Traveler (online). solotravelerworld.com/about/solo-travel-statistics-data/#More_Sources_of_Solo_Travel_Statistics_and_Trends.
- Spain, Daphne. 1992. *Gendered Spaces*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- . 1993. "Gendered Spaces and Women's Status." *Sociological Theory* 11 (2): 137–151. doi.org/10.2307/202139. www.jstor.org/stable/202139.
- Storey, David J. 2001. "Territory and Locality." In *Territory: Nations, State and the Claiming of Space*, edited by David J Storey. Oxon: Routledge.
- Verma, Sreshthi. 2016. "How I Was Attacked and How I Fought Back as a Solo Female Traveller." www.tripoto.com/mcleod-ganj/trips/how-i-was-attacked-and-how-i-fought-back-as-a-solo-female-traveller-578de9b7d5b59.
- Walby, Sylvia. 1989. "Theorising Patriarchy." *Sociology* 23 (2): 213–234. www.jstor.org/stable/42853921.
- Ward, Mariellen. 2020. "Is India Safe for Women Traveling Alone?" *World Nomads* (blog). www.worldnomads.com/travel-safety/southern-asia/india/womens-travel-safety-in-india.
- West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1 (2): 125–151. doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002. doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002.

“Women Travellers in India—Lonely Planet.” 2021. www.lonelyplanet.com/india/narratives/practical-information/directory/women-travellers.
World Health Organization. 2021. *Violence against Women*. www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women.

NOTES

1. On December 16, 2012, a 22-year-old physiotherapy student was brutally beaten, tortured and gang-raped on a moving bus in Delhi, the capital city of India. Jyoti Singh, the victim also named as Nirbhaya, died thirteen days after the incident.

2. Scarlett Keeling was a 15-year-old Briton who was found dead on Anjuna beach, Goa in 2008. She was on a “trip of lifetime” with her family members. Her death was initially declared as an accident by the police, but later, after a campaign by her family, the second post-mortem report in March 2008 confirmed that Keeling was drugged and sexually assaulted before drowning in sea water (Hill 2017).

3. The effect of naturalization is associated with “the durable inscription of social realities onto and in the physical world: differences produced by social logic can then be seen to arise out of the nature of things.” *See*.

4. The blog is written in Hindi, in this quote I provide my translation of the blog article on solo travel.