

**Right to the City as the Basis for Housing Rights
Advocacy in Contemporary India**

Draft Report

Urban Commons: An Exploration
into Young Women's Access to
University Spaces

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Preface

Urbanisation in the Global South is a complex process. Among its many fallouts is the social, cultural, and political transformation that is taking place in certain cities as city spaces are re-configured. The discourse on Commons and Urban Commons, in particular, is confronted with the challenge of grasping these dimensions and their context.

For us, this study began with the aim of taking a close look at the nature of change that is taking place with Commons in smaller, i.e. non-metro cities in India. Through initial exploration and deliberation, we decided to focus on Aligarh and Banaras, two cities that are historically and politically significant, and are regarded as education hubs due to the universities that they house viz. the Aligarh Muslim University and the Banaras Hindu University respectively. In recent years they have been in the news because of the tensions within the campuses focusing on female students' experiences of restricted access to facilities and spaces, and sexual harassment. Our examination of these issues through conversations with young women studying there, living away from their home turfs, and trying to find their feet in the social and professional world, shows that their lives on these campuses are fraught with unease and anxiety. Their initiatives at assertion to belong to the campus and the university show that change, though gradual, is on the anvil.

The report, in four sections, starts with an introduction of the context of the study; sections two and three detail the discussions with students at Aligarh Muslim University and Banaras Hindu University. The concluding discussion in the fourth section summarises the issues that emerge about the access to the university spaces in both the campuses.

We have been fortunate to have had Sheema Fatima, a young doctoral research scholar, to work with us on the study. Her nuanced understanding of the issues, as well as the ability to strike a chord with students on the campuses, has enriched the narratives.

1: Introduction

Introduction

Several large universities equivalent to a small size urban center have existed since colonial times in our country. They are the primary driving force behind the cities expansion and the nuclei around which it grows. The university campuses established during the colonial era are spatially not confined to certain neighbourhoods or buildings. It is spread over several acres intermittently dotted with civilian residential pockets and commercial areas. Over the years the university develops a symbiotic relationship with the city and is enmeshed at different levels in its relations. This study aims to understand the concept of “Right to the city” within the university campus and its interrelationship with the urban center in which it is located. The mapping of the internal geography of the university within the town helps in unpacking the modes of interaction and the restrictive or constructive nature of these spaces. Because it is the internal places, structures and processes that operate in university contexts that are important factors in determining how university campuses are experienced in empowering or exclusionary ways (Hopkins, 2011, p. 158). The experience and the conception of public space are to be singularly done through the narratives of female students. It dwells on their everyday encounters within a university space as an effect of them being students enrolled in the university. The study aims to fill the gap in the understanding about how our university campuses are constructed, contested, managed and experienced (Hopkins, 2011) in both marginalising and empowering ways that are barely available in reference to India in comparison to some research work undertaken in universities abroad. The notable exception is (Bano, 2011) and (Imam, 2015) both of which are written on Aligarh Muslim University speaking about “women on campus” and their everyday struggles. There is a need to read space and its experience on the basis of gender, class, age, sexuality, physical ability since access to it is determined on the basis of these socio-cultural traits (Ranade, 2007). The social trait of gender norms in the garb of culture and religion is defined by the urban center within

which the city is established. Therefore one needs to explore that does identities based on religion, region, and caste intersects with the aspect of gender to define the conception of Right to the city. Does the logic of safety and security for women give us a broader understanding of whose city is it? Can the university function in isolation. The “Right to the city” conceptually provides us with the means to reclaim public spaces and participation both through the “individual and collective determination of the present and future of the city and its spaces” (Vaddiraju, 2016). The study aims to explore this framework of collective and the individual identity and presumes that in relation to gender the question arising is much larger than the existing framework. One needs to account for structural biases institutionalised by the university and strengthened by the cultural and religious dynamics of Aligarh and Varanasi.

Defining the urban public in the university space

For this study, the public space can be defined as something which is common to everyone, has collective ownership and a communal usage and access is not ideally restricted. It may connote different meaning when contextualised with numerous meanings assigned to the public and the private (Mohammad, 2013) depending on the space we are reading. As the author explains, depending on how the public sphere is accessed, it is a precondition for empowerment and transformation. Accessibility is a key component, which allows the emergence of a collective representation wherefrom images of the city are produced. Public spaces in common use, like streets or squares, are open to the general public for unlimited use within the framework of their functions and without the need for special permission (Nissen, 2008). Scholars have defined 'Public space as traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to space, individual and collective behaviour sanctioned in specific spaces, and rules of use.' (Low, 1996). An important component of the public is the city streets. Emphasising the importance of streets, Jane Jacob (Jacobs, 1985) said the reduction of public street functions would cause the city to die off. It will give rise to the isolation of unrestricted public spaces, and the citizens will remain within bounded public areas. Thus identifying and acknowledging the methods employed, negotiations made and camouflage created to

access the very public for a particular gender is an act, created over years of training, conscious and sublime.

On the other hand, in a university setup, which is predominantly residential in nature the private space is the residential Halls of the students. The spaces within these Halls are enclosed and carry entirely different norms of occupation for both and girls. But the struggle gets manifested in the public realm; it is here that the legitimacy of collective social norms and values is negotiated (Mohammad, 2013) by the very act of being visible and present in that particular moment of the act. For many girls, a large part of the university remains beyond their realm of imagination. It is an unknown territory which doesn't encourage the presence of a female body. It brings in the sense of fear, unwelcoming and not central to their cognitive map of the university, which is made from the formal and informal knowledge and understanding formed over the years.

For all analytical purposes, the conception of space by Lefebvre in terms of the conceived, perceived and experienced or lived space (Lefebvre, 1991) has been used. One can use this framework to describe how female students in the campus had imagined the university spaces before they took admission in these institutions and how in reality they perceive these places and do the lived experience confirm or negate their imagination. The girl students imagine and experience the university to be a physical space, which is the central or heart of the campus out there, to space where they have to travel. It is not situated within the geographical boundaries of their actual existence. They perceive it to be a space, which is different from their mental imagination; often the way it is physically designed or the way females are allowed or barred from using it. In both AMU and BHU the historical trace of gendered segregation is therefore embodied in the organisation through its spatial location (Liu, 2018). And, therefore reading the spatiality of the gender struggle, discrimination and occupation is an important methodological approach which is continuously becoming (Ranade, 2007), creating itself and being reproduced in different manners and under different circumstances. The accounts of "everyday spaces" within this discussion are brought in by focusing on how the material infrastructure (Phadke, 2011) is reinforcing or undermining these structures of exclusion with the universities.

Situating the study

For the purpose of this research work, two universities in India was selected, namely Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Both the universities are situated within the state of Uttar-Pradesh. They were established in the early 20th century during the colonial times with an intention to impart modern education to the Indians (Bhattacharya, 2018) and over the years have proved to be the nerve of intellectual thinking in the country. At present both AMU and BHU are central varsities and boast of leading research centers. The town of Aligarh is 200kms from the capital city of New Delhi and 410km from Lucknow. It has a municipal corporation with a population of 8lakhs as per 2011 census divided into 70 wards and spread over 40 Km. The university is an integral part of the town and has been historically enmeshed in its layout. Banarash Hindu University is situated in the city of Varanasi; also known as Banaras or Kashi. It is one of the holiest cities in the world and is famous for its silk cloths. The Varanasi Municipal Corporation has a population of 1,100,748 as per 2011 census. The Varanasi urban agglomeration covers an area of 112.26 sq Km. It is well connected through railways, an airport and roadways. It is a thriving tourist city in the country contributing substantially to its economy. Varanasi is located 797Km from the capital of the country New Delhi on its south-east and is 320 Km from Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh.

The study was undertaken in 2017, and at that time universities in India were reeling under agitation and political interference. The sedition charges against students in Jawarh Lal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi, the Rohith Vemula case in Hyderabad were some of the instances. But it had set the tone of university student's engagement with the state machinery as well as the administration. The university has become a site of conflicts and contests (Bhushan, 2016) in recent years. The election of the present government, with strong right-wing leanings, made the matter more complicated. In between all these rising incidents of violence against females generally in the country made matters worse. As Pathania (Pathania, 2018, p. 5) argues the "identity of the university student became central to the intellectual's argument of student agency, and ones lived experience as a part of an institution". The universities considered for the study are public universities and under the central government. They aim to be symbols of inclusive institutions with an

equal representation of Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Caste (OBC), Dalit and females and at the same time is creating new politics by their presence (Nair, 2018). Given this conundrum in academic institutions, we found it interesting to engage with the concept of “Right to the city” in the framework of university campuses, considering such large universities play central character to its city. The educational goal in public universities can’t be spoken of in isolation of the heterogonous identities (Nair, 2018) they are carrying and gets manifested spatially in its campuses. It is this varied contestation, struggles by various identities in the campuses of AMU and BHU which needs to be mapped and made sense of. The primary anchor for it was gender identities and its varied manifestation in both the campuses. Does the continuous struggle hinder the process of enabling an urban space to be equally Rightful to a female as much as would do to a male body?

Methodology

As part of the research work extensive interviews were done with the girls individually and few in groups of two to four over a period of three weeks. These girls were bonafide university students and enrolled in undergraduate and other higher degrees as full-time students. While the majority of the girls spoken to were also full-time residents, to bring in some amount of heterogeneity in capturing the narratives few non-resident day-scholars were also interviewed. So as not to base the study on a singular imagination of the gender, even boy students in the campus were interviewed. Their perception and opinion make the study robust and enriched. In total twelve girl students, five boys and four faculties were interviewed at Aligarh Muslim University. Two focus group discussions were conducted in AMU, one was with the first year Master’s student in the department of South-Asian studies and the second FGD was with girls of first-year graduation living in New Hostel. The interviews were conducted inside the girl’s hostel, wherever accessibility was possible or permissible. A few interviews with the help of teachers were conducted in the department and Women College, and two interviews were conducted at the university canteen and CEC center, spaces which are normally bereft of female presence. It helped in actually

experiencing the lived realities of these girls. In Banaras Hindu University twelve girls and three boys were interviewed for this study. There was a focus group discussion with the students of nursing in their hostel. Another FGD was conducted in IIT campus. All the interviews were recorded with the consent and later transcribed. The language for conversation was mostly Hindi and sometimes English. Some female faculty members refused to be recorded in both AMU and BHU and conversations were noted down for future references.

The process of meeting and selecting students was done on the pattern of the snowballing method. At the time of this study gender issues and assertiveness of their identities by girls was at its peak, particularly in BHU, so not everyone was willing to give interviews or speak on the record. Since both these university receives students from all class, caste and regions of the country, not all the students were willing to speak about gender issues. Coincidentally at the time of the inception of this study, both AMU¹ and BHU² were reeling under the national news for its gender-related issues³. Several news channel and digital platforms have been continuously writing and publishing about events related to girl's hostel often at the expense of misrepresentation and misinterpretation Therefore several students didn't want to be interviewed, and several were more vocal and articulate in conveying their opinion. Therefore a reference from a confidante or a friend made it possible for the researcher to conduct interview, discussions and FGD only through this process. It was a semi-structured interview but primarily revolved around the experience of embodying the university campus and everyday experiences of exclusion and inclusion both in a spatial sense and through institutional practices. The fact that the key researcher also belonged to one of the universities included in the study helped in easy access to the women hostel and scholars. Students who were comfortable have been quoted along with their original names and the department in which they are enrolled. For others, pseudonym has been used. For the preparation of a base map, municipal boundaries were

¹ <https://thewire.in/politics/amu-vc-puts-off-resignation-of-provost-who-accepts-students-charges>

² <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/oct/09/thankfully-were-not-good-girls-any-longer-say-bhu-students-1668796.html>

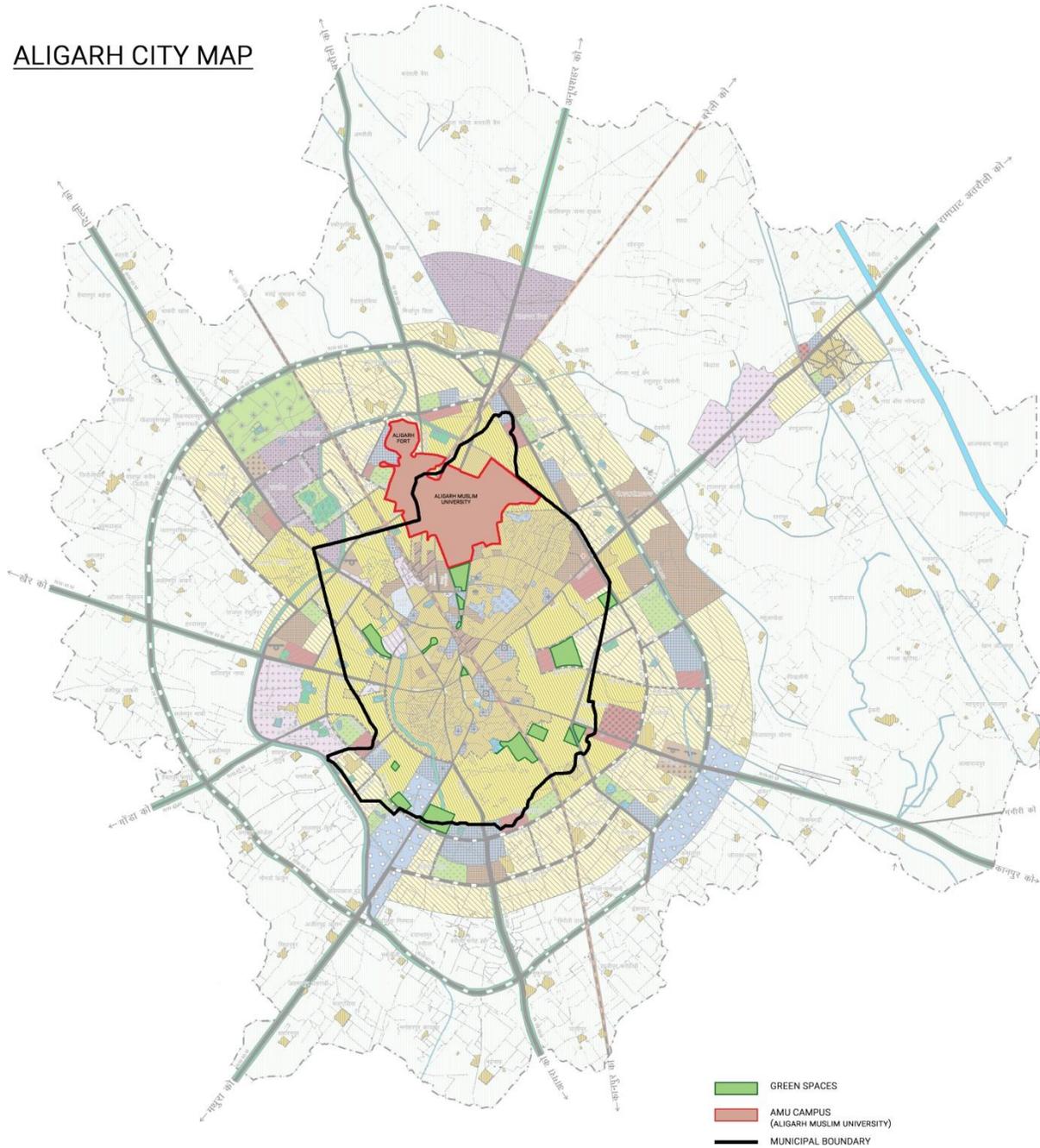
used. The marking of basic infrastructure and other amenities, markets etc. was done through field survey. A series of maps were also prepared with the help of cognitive mapping, drawing from the everyday movements of the girls and how did they imagine those spaces to be in terms of safety, accessibility and friendliness.

2. Aligarh Muslim University

Introduction

The population of Aligarh is 874,408 as per census of 2011. It has been traditional famous for its lock, which gives it the name of “Tala-nagri”. Even today locks from Aligarh have a huge market. Urban issues are under the purview of Aligarh Municipal Corporation and Aligarh Development Authority Board. The metropolitan boundaries include its suburban areas namely, Ashrafpur Jalal, Kwarasi and Sarsaul. The inner city of Aligarh is a compact area and is connected to the out growth on the north of the railway line through a bridge called “*kathpula*” that is a wooden bridge. The civil areas have administrative establishments and civil hospitals and colleges. The town is divided into two parts by the northern railway lines. While the old town is on the south-west, the civil lines and university campus is on its north-eastern part.

ALIGARH CITY MAP

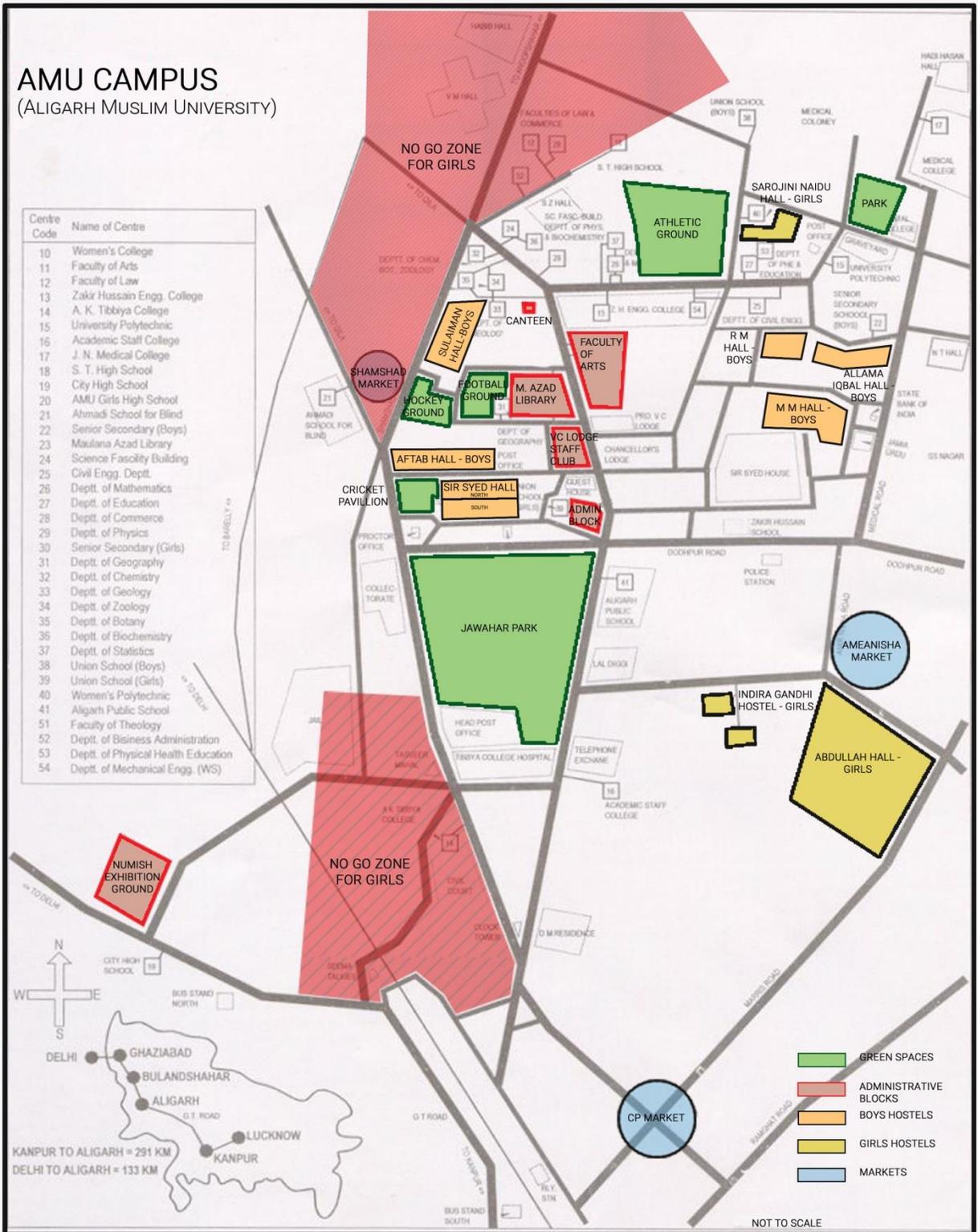


Aligarh Muslim University established in 1920 is one of the oldest central universities in India spread over an area of 467.6 hectares. It has been a pioneer in the struggle for modern education in British India and played an important role in India's struggle for freedom. Unfortunately, in the last few decades more than anything else AMU has been in the news debating its "minority" status and

the university's shrinking space for liberal thoughts. While much can be contested, the role it plays in imparting education for generations particularly for Muslims cannot be undermined. At present, it has 12 faculties and 98 academic departments. It houses more than a dozen boy's residential Halls, and nearly six residential halls for girls spread across the length and breadth of the campus. The Women's College was started by Sheikh Abdullah and his wife Wahid Jahan with an intention to educate girls from the aristocratic families⁴ but has come a long way since. Women's College boasts of feminist writers like Rashid Jahan and Ismat Chughtai as its alumni. The debate around education and freedom for girls today is positioned in AMU's distinct identity as mentioned earlier in reference to the social location of the university and the emphasis on its origin and related cultural values thus making it a complex space (Imam, Z. Bano. S. 2015).

⁴ Read Minault, G. (1998). *Secluded scholars: Women's education and Muslim social reform in colonial India*. Oxford University Press, USA.

The Physical Layout of the University



The Women's Residential House

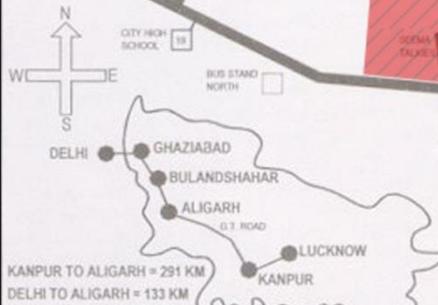
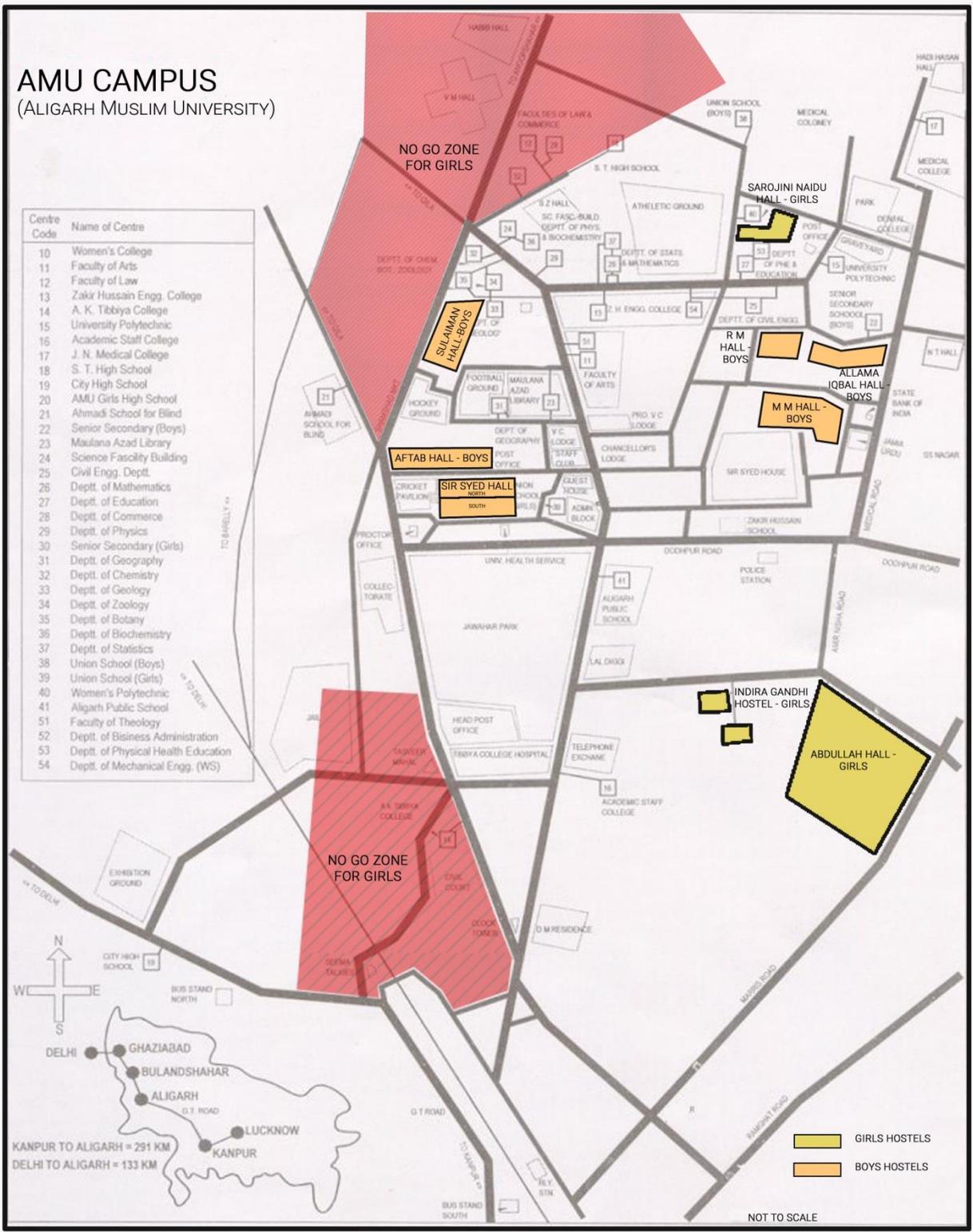
A separate sphere for women students can be seen in (Liu, 2018) the way universities conceived university spaces. In the case of AMU, it was thought of as a place which was far from the men residential blocks and the main administrative buildings. The Women's College and Abdullah Hall residential blocs were therefore built in a self-sufficient manner to ensure minimal or no interaction with the rest of the university spaces daily. It has only been in recent past, that for some particular courses and laboratory facilities girls are given special permission to go to the department. In this manner from its very inception gender identity was part of the active process (Liu, 2018) of how Abdullah Hall and Women College was produced and accepted the norms of this space in the larger truth of AMU. The Women's College in AMU campus is segregated on one side of the university, and there is a distance of about 2km from the central part of the campus. The central part includes Maulana Azad central Library, administrative block, the cultural center and the canteen and various other departments. Through the study when I say department, it means classes for undergraduate boys and Master courses for both boys and girls are conducted. Issues of safety and frequent incidents of snatching on this stretch discourage women to travel late in the evening. The other female residential Hall for post-graduate students is Indira Gandhi Hall adjacent to Abdullah Hall. The hostel for girls enrolled in professional courses are off-the main university lanes. On the cardinal roads of the university, some of the oldest boy's hostels on the campus are located.

Abdullah Hall and the Women's College

Abdullah Hall is one of the biggest residential Hall's for girls in the university. Spread over acres of land it houses the Women College and several residential hostels, two senior secondary schools and residential quarters for single female faculties. In total it has five residential hostels inside this Hall, each having a capacity of 300 or more students. It has all basic amenities inside the Hall and girls are not permitted to go out except on Sunday from 8 am to 5 pm. On any other day for an outing, one needs to take permission beforehand. Outing for attending cultural programs on the university campus is specially arranged for Abdullah Hall girls. A bus is arranged, and it is mostly the final year graduate students who are ferried to the venue. The question of permission for going out, as one student explains, is translated by the authorities as *our effort to roam around outside the hostel as if we don't have a life or there is no other work for us to complete and therefore we are only planning to go out.*

AMU CAMPUS (ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY)

Centre Code	Name of Centre
10	Women's College
11	Faculty of Arts
12	Faculty of Law
13	Zakir Hussain Engg. College
14	A. K. Tibbiya College
15	University Polytechnic
16	Academic Staff College
17	J. N. Medical College
18	S. T. High School
19	City High School
20	AMU Girls High School
21	Atmadi School for Blind
22	Senior Secondary (Boys)
23	Maulana Azad Library
24	Science Faculty Building
25	Civil Engg. Deptt.
26	Deptt. of Mathematics
27	Deptt. of Education
28	Deptt. of Commerce
29	Deptt. of Physics
30	Senior Secondary (Girls)
31	Deptt. of Geography
32	Deptt. of Chemistry
33	Deptt. of Geology
34	Deptt. of Zoology
35	Deptt. of Botany
36	Deptt. of Biochemistry
37	Deptt. of Statistics
38	Union School (Boys)
39	Union School (Girls)
40	Women's Polytechnic
41	Aligarh Public School
51	Faculty of Theology
52	Deptt. of Business Administration
53	Deptt. of Physical Health Education
54	Deptt. of Mechanical Engg. (WS)



GIRLS HOSTELS
 BOYS HOSTELS

NOT TO SCALE

In recent years the issue of such restrictive rules for girl's hostel has been opposed but is yet to be resolved because of lack of solidarity among the girl students. Nasra, a final year psychology student, wrote on her Facebook post protesting against the university restrictions on girl's movement and poor participation by the girls themselves, *"it is a very systematic indoctrination, the girls have been brainwashed into believing that these restrictions are for their safety and those struggling for their freedom are characterless blots on the tehzeeb of AMU"*. A report on Quint online news portal speaking about the issue of girls being able to choose their hostel timing created quite an uproar and the boys in no time criticised the women students and their leaders for publically speaking out against the university norms and restrictions. The restrictive structure of a girl's hostel is peculiar to girl's residential hostels across the country⁵. Most girls expressed their restrictions and rules with the word "unreasonable", something which does not stand any logic or rational. The present student union president for Abdullah Hall Naba Naseem talking about it explains *"on the one hand they say it is being done for our security. And every Sunday you compel us to go out; because that is the only day we are allowed in a week. What kind of security is this? Due to this the price of everything in the local market in Ameernisha is very high on Sunday. Because they know we are compelled to buy things, it is our need. You can check the difference, something which is being sold on Saturday at 200/-, they will give us for 250/- and they will not decrease a penny. Second problem is of doctors, they are not available on Sunday. Ultimately we go out illegally, how much can we run to the warden for taking permission. There is a demarcation between maintaining discipline and interfering in the life of people. Constitution of our country doesn't allow anyone's interference in our private life. Another student Shazia Imam who is a final year resident scholar and is studying economics elaborating about it thinks Abdullah Hall has some specific problems which no one wants to address in AMU. Everyone is turning a blind eye to it. It is a big problem in our everyday life. We almost have an existentialist crisis here. I come from a family where my mother has taught me to fight. It is very important to fight for ourselves. Here girls are so used to being suppressed that they don't even realize it. This "outing" is made to be such a big issue. What is it, basically nothing? Simply put it is our right to go out, we are adults. We have the right to go out. What I do out is my decision. I can explore the campus, make friends and do as I wish. I need to exercise this right. And we are stopped from doing it. We have to run around for permission even if there is some genuine reason. We have strange rules for gates on the campus. We can't go from one hostel gate at a particular time, and another hostel gate has different timings. My father is permitted to meet me at one gate which is for*

⁵ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/we-can-t-even-step-out-to-buy-medicines-amu-girls-battle-sexist-rules-in-hostels/story-dBIIm2AGfRbFVF0t0eaPIIN.html> accessed on 15th September, 2018

visitors only, and I am allowed to go out from another gate. What is the reason for so much chaos and confusion? What security are they trying to provide us? These restrictions Moniba a first-year English undergraduate student from Bihar, says has influenced the perspective of the girls badly, and they have become narrow minded rather than thinking progressively after joining the university. *They think whatever decision the administration takes is correct. And the parents think the daughter has come to some heaven. And she is living in a paradise and protected divinely.* She thinks had the protest for such suffocating rules come from the guardians the situation would be different. The girls or their parents don't protest against ad-hoc decisions making. *Every day a new rule is implemented, and nobody cares about. Girls are very scared here, it has been instilled in them deeply,* thinks Shazia is the reason for the present predicament. It is difficult to change the same because as Moniba tells, it is based on moral policing. *"Your character is based on your activities inside Abdullah Hall. If a girl comes, every day at 5pm people will think she is a good girl. But if she is even an hour late, she will be judged and looked suspiciously. No one knows what is the real problem, maybe she was stuck in traffic or she got late completing her work"*. Citing another example, Moniba continues during university student's election campaign boys are allowed to enter the Abdullah Hall and if a girl is at the forefront in the meetings, others will judge her. *What is the matter, why are you at all the meetings. No one will think that it is our right to ask the boy's questions about their manifesto. What is the problem if I appreciate a boy who is standing for the election based on his manifesto but girls will look at you suspiciously?* The conflict arises because the traditional mindset Moniba thinks has made an ideal frame of a girl from ages and nothing such exists for boys. *Boys make their own rules and frame. We have to follow it and live within that framework. As long as we are inside it, we are very good for the teachers, students and administration inside the hostel. But the moment we step out of it, we are bad girls.* If a male relative comes to the hostel to meet a girl and you start talking to him, people will start taking notice. It becomes an issue. The guards will look at you twenty times. And God forbid, if the warden happens to pass you at that time, she will stare at you ten times. As if we are committing some sin. Moniba continues that if by mistake we are talking and I will laugh out loud, *it will put a stamp on people's speculation that he is not my brother and I am doing something wrong.*

The dreadful nature of hostel rules and regulations are reflective when girls have to run around even if they are sick to take permission to go to the hospital. There was no ambulance facility in the hall till last year. If there is an emergency, the girls have to wait for the doctor to come at the small clinic inside the Hall which runs at its fixed timings. Even in the university medical college, the OPD closes at 12 noon. Moniba says any attempt to see a private doctor is cumbersome. We have to get a

consent letter fax from our parents and then take permission to visit the doctor. These are everyday practical problems the girls need to tackle inside making the experience of living and thinking about career a burdensome exercise. For going home, girls need to get a fax from their parents. After that, they need to write an application addressed to the warden, followed by filling registers at the gate. During winters if the trains are late and if the train will arrive past midnight or the next day, the student needs to do the whole process of taking permission all over again. Girls are not allowed to keep any transport in the hostel, i.e. a scooty or cycle. And Sunday is the only day when they can go out. Moniba says *“if we have a scooty we can finish our work fast. And the rickshaw is so expensive. The administration thinks it will set the girls free and it will be difficult to control us”*.

While speaking about wardens and their roles, girls from Abdullah Hall feel the warden is being paid for her work, and that is why she lives inside the Abdullah Hall. *One should be able to visit the warden whenever a student needs her; she has to be available for us*. Students find no logic with the amount of security present inside the Hall to regulate their movement. Rifat says, *“You must have seen outside our hostel gate a guard is sitting, what is the need of it? Just near the old Waheedia dining Hall a guard sits and from there to the main gate is almost 200mts stretch, and there are another guard and number of them sitting at night. At night we can’t go beyond the first gate after 10 pm. What is the need for it? It is just not that rules and regulations which is frustrating the students. Many expressed their anguish when the wardens question their morality every day and every time they ask for permission to go out. Girls are scolded when they sought permission to go out and enquired that where are we going and why do we need to go out. A girl was once asked when she wanted to meet her father” how do I know he is your father*.

In such circumstances the closed environment in Abdullah Hall invariably makes the girl behave in the same way as boys do in public spaces. Asif sharing his experience of visits to the Women’s College says, *“When we go to Abdullah Hall for a movie screening or any program girls also hoot at us very badly”*. This interplay of the repressive environment inside the hall, limited access to the outside world develops a distorted view of the girls from Abdullah Hall. Many believe when they step out in the university people judge the girls and even to make a normal conversation is difficult for them. Girls carry a tag that they are from Abdullah Hall which means the girls are bad and spoiled. Moniba puts it bluntly. *Basically, the people outside think that girls from Abdullah Hall are desperate since we are confined inside*.

Shazia says *“when I go out of Abdullah I have to be quiet and not laugh loud. I have to pretend that I am a nice girl. That is not my natural self. Though it is a coward step and I should fight against it. It is*

a conflict within me but what do I do. I am not judgmental, but there is this population of girls because of whom we are being judged. You put girls in prison and obviously they will get attracted to all prohibited things. If you make us free, maybe for one month we will roam around and fulfill our desires. But soon we will get tired and things will be normal. If girls of our age in courses like Law or medical and engineering stream have all the facilities, why is this bias against graduate students of social sciences?

The hostel authority has in recent years been careful in their handling of issues related to Abdullah Hall. With easy access to social media, the fear of any incident becoming national news is always lurking. Moniba describes the incident of Maulana Azad Library⁶ which became national news, *the administration immediately allowed us to visit the library. They wanted us to stand with the boys and show that things are not as it is being portrayed in the national media.* But if we want to go out for any other protest, they will not allow. At that time the wardens came to our hostel and said *please as many girls should go out as possible. We didn't have to fill any permission letter or sign on the register.*

Such incidents highlight the adhoc-ism with which the university addresses the issues of girls hostel particularly Abdullah Hall, which is meant solely for undergraduate girls. It remains segregated both structurally and in essence from the larger narrative of the university. The study probes various other spaces of segregation and marginalisation of girls on the campus which further accentuates the everyday living conditions of girls inside Abdullah Hall.

Girls Hostels for Professional Courses

Girls who are enrolled for Master's program and a degree in Law reside in Indira Gandhi Hall. The timings for their outings are 7 am to 8 pm since the classes are conducted in the department. From Post-graduation level and beyond the classes are co-educational in the university. In comparison to Abdullah Hall, it is a far liberal hostel in terms of rules and regulations. But the dominance of wardens and proctors continue undeterred. In 2015 there was a Mushaira⁷ program in the university. Girls had taken permission to attend the program. But on that day when the girls got ready to leave the residential Hall, they found the gates locked. The provost had locked the gate from inside and left. The girls were furious and came out of the hostel gate and started protesting⁸.

⁷ Urdu Poetry recitation competition

⁸ <http://theladiesfinger.com/women-students-protesting-in-amu/>

In an hour more girls from other Hall joined in and the protest became large. As one of the students who herself is practising Muslim not wanting to be named say's, *but we always have these Islamic minded groups of girls, who say don't do this; you are girls, return inside the Hall. We always have such groups; whenever girls come out to protest, they will say we should not do all this because we are women.* On that particular day, the girls didn't bother and continued with the protest. Many joined in covering their face, fearing their parents and guardians would recognize them. The student union at that time was very regressive, and the boy who was the Vice-president of the union said on NDTV that *"for us, women are like jewellery and like a jeweller we keep it inside the locker"*. Such statements reflect the regressive approach of men towards issues of women on the campus. Though such incidents are sporadic and barely manage to push the discussion around gender issues in the campus. At that time since the student union had been newly elected, they chose to support the girls. But it was not based on any ideological stand on gender norms but was an act in isolation and to keep the façade at the national level.

The other women residential Halls are Sarojini Naidu Hall which is for medical, engineering and research scholars. Since it is a professional course, the timings are not regulated like other girls hostel. They can enter the hall till 8 pm and after that those who have a duty in the medical college need to fill in the register when they enter.

Institutional Bias: rules and regulations

Hostel Rules

The institutional bias is evident in the way hostel regulations have been formulated for boys and girls separately in Aligarh Muslim University. For boys, there is no timing restriction of going out or entering their residential halls. They don't have to take any permission for going out anywhere at any time of the day. The situation is completely opposite to girl residential halls. They have timing regulations for going out and entering. They are roll called every day for attendance. They need to put an application for practically every issue to be addressed or to go out of the hostel. The letter has to be supported by a fax letter from the parent's stating they don't have any issue in their ward going out. The logic is given for only once a week outing is that education will be affected but as Ayesha a final year history undergraduate student points out by this logic even boys should think about their studies and have restrictive timings. *The administration thinks girls will fall short of attendance, but that is ridiculous if we are here for education, we will attend our classes fumes*

Khadija in support of her classmate. Due to these restrictions, girls have to think several times if they want to join any extracurricular activity club or cultural organization in the university. Girls don't have permission to join mountaineering club in the university. The girls from Abdullah Hall were permitted to join the Cultural Education Center only since January 2015 after a long struggle.

The everyday experiences of living in the hostel for the girls to a large extent get defined by individual operationalization of the rules and regulations by the provost and the warden at that particular time. Many students cite examples of teachers who are liberal and are open to conversation. They care about the welfare of the girls. The quality of food and other infrastructural facilities are comparatively better. And most importantly girls are given flexibility in their outing timings, although these are unofficial arrangements. But such stories are limited; such wardens are far and few. Shehla, a second-year student of Islamic Studies in response to the question, should girls fight for hostel timing believes everyone has their reason for doing it. Those who are supporting it want to go out to the party but her friends Shaheen and Mehwish disagree. For them visiting a doctor on a Sunday is impossible and final year students can't join any coaching classes. They also understand the importance of interacting with the larger world and broaden their world view. *Abdullah Hall is very limited, and confining* thinks Mehwish, who is a second-year political science student. Even the parents are irritated with the practice of sending a fax every time if the ward has to go out of the hostel. Due to these obstacles, many girls resort to wearing a burqa and walking out of the residential Hall during the college hours. Others say *we don't become too friendly with the guards and keep a low profile; we don't want to be recognised*. It is easier this way to walk out as a day scholar of the women college. And there are others who are very friendly with the security guards and get free access. Amidst all these negotiations sometimes girls do get caught and end up facing the wrath of the administration. Students even highlight the discrimination between the boys and girls hostel dining facilities. The quality and variety of food provided for boys are far better than the girl's hostel. Shaheen is one such person; *boys get better food than us in less money. They are served non-veg more often. I had asked my cousin to send his menu, and I am going to raise this question during the election*. The discriminatory administrative rules inside the hostel for girls in comparison to boy's hostel are disheartening for several girls. They feel as being marginalised and the university imagining them as a lesser being.

Departmental Facilities

The normalisation of discrimination for the other gender is not limited to the students. It is in-fact justified and institutionalised by the way male teachers behave in classrooms and on the campus. It

is evident even in the way courses are offered, and the number of seats opens for boys and girls during admission to the university. In the post-graduation course, the number of girls in the university is less since the seat is decreased in comparison to the boys. In women's college, they have contract teachers for most subjects, who are barely present. In science streams, the number of teachers is far less than required. When the girls were asked do teachers try to moral police if they are friendly with boys, they confirm it with a big yes. *The teachers will not say anything directly to girls who are vocal and friendly with boys, but they talk behind them and gossip.* Shaheen has another point to make; she says most importantly, *if boys complain about something and take out a protest, the administration pays immediate attention to them. We can keep shouting and they won't listen.* Her friend Mehwish thinks it is because we don't pressurize the administration in the same way as boys. *Girls make up their mind beforehand that nothing is going to happen, so let's not do it. Even before we raise an issue, the enthusiasm dies down. A lot of girls get influenced by their brothers and cousins. During election too that is how they vote for brother, friend or cousins.* Concerns raised by female students about the poor facility in the women's college, the courses taught or possibilities of accessing better books or instruments for lab-rotary work is largely met with condescending attitude or outright negation by the university authorities. It includes both the teaching and the non-teaching staff. Nearly all the students spoken to said giving sexist remarks by teachers, incidents of verbal harassment and staring are common. Zehra gives an interesting example; she is a final year Psychology student. "A male teacher in her class one day commented, *girls, wear jeans to garner attention towards oneself*". When some of these girls were organizing a march for #onebillionrising⁹, he said we are wasting our time and girls call for such incidents of harassment". In the university departments where most faculties are men and domination of boys in each course is high. Girls who attend classes in the department avoid even looking around and will quietly walk away after the classes because there is so much catcalling. A girl from Women College who is in her final year graduation says we go to the department once a year for our practical exams, and that itself is such a huge issue. Boys will call out loudly and say *salam*¹⁰. For example, the final year geology graduate students have combined classes in the department i.e. for both boys and girls. The classes are held on the third floor for girls and for boys it is on the ground floor. Such barriers are ensured to keep the two genders separate. It leads to a permanent hesitation and eventually girls internalize the argument that there is no need to speak to boys. Shaimala is a final year geology student and has had a long fight in her department to get access to laboratories and classrooms

⁹ <https://www.onebillionrising.org/category/locations/india/>

¹⁰ Islamic way of greeting

with adequate facilities. Talking about her family, she says my mother was only a graduate when she got married, but my father encouraged her to study and always supported her to keep working and be financially independent. Coming from such background, she finds the condition in AMU amusing and frustrating at the same time. *If your parents are liberal and don't mind what you wear or how you live, people here will even accuse them.* She took admission in B.sc in Geology in the Women's college. The entire third year course is taught by a single visiting faculty and for practical papers, they need to frequently attend classes in the department along with the boys. When asked about how it is being in the department, she puts it straight, *I feel alienated. Open minded girls are easily given character certificates in the department. Even if I am sitting in a library room and studying alone boys will think I am doing it to attract attention*". This kind of sexism is encouraged and reinforced by male teachers in their everyday interactions. Once a male teacher in her department said, "we girls are depriving the boys of their rights because they have to give time to the Women's College girls and therefore boys don't get proper attention. For a young girl like her, these continuous fighting can be daunting. These struggles make her think that no matter how much of a rebel you are but at some point, a girl feels her dignity is important. And she should take care of her character, and be careful before people start stamping her as a free girl. "I am judged a lot. Since I am very vocal, rumors have started spreading about me. My cousin brother two days back messaged that you have become very famous in the department and most boys now know you, so " *thoda daab kar kie raho*", meaning I should stay quiet and insisted that I keep a low profile. Its only because I attend seminars, I do things alone; sometimes I come alone to the canteen for a cup of tea boys garner such notions about me. Once I spoke to this boy in the department for the first time and his friends asked him, " *aur bhai tumne ladki kaise pataaa liya*". In such circumstances and environment, it, therefore, becomes difficult for girls to develop any healthy relationship with the boys and have a normal conversation.

Nabila who is a day scholar and narrates about her friend, she had asked her teacher for his phone number in case she needs some help in future and in-front of the whole class he said "*itnii jaldii tum number loge*" (you are going to be so fast and taking my number), the girls went quite listening to his answer in the room and boys were roaring with laughter. It is common for teachers to say "*I don't give my number to girls*". They feel such instances are insulting and we fail to feel part of the university. Even when they protest against the discriminatory allocation of seats or facilities, most feel they are not even heard out. Shaimala say's "*if we girls raise any issue people miss the main point and start talking about other things*". Like boys have 100 seats in the science department, but for girls, it is only 25. They don't want to discuss these issues. I feel the issue of hostel timing is not as

serious as issues of seat discrimination for girls in AMU. Girls are here for an education, so it should be addressed first. The condition of women college education is very bad. The outing is not our priority. *Last year in our course we had only one teacher, and she was also a guest faculty. She knew nothing and taught us all the papers in geology. And in the department, they have four teachers for an elective paper*". Every student enrolled in Women College said that the quality of the teacher is better in the department. In Women's college, there is no authority or pressure. In the department teachers have to be in the office from 8 am to 4 pm. In women's college, there is no regulation. Female teachers too believe that women should behave in a particular way. Khadija explains this attitude citing an example, *one day we were lifting the chairs in our botany class. Our teacher, who is a female said if you can't lift a chair properly how you will take up the responsibility of work in your in-law's house. She has this standard comment for everything, sasural mie ghar kaise sambhalegee*". A male teacher comments *"if you don't dress up properly and go to Amirnisha market on a Sunday how will we suggest marriage proposals for you girls*. This particular male faculty is currently heading the student counselling center in Women College and the past has been accused of sexual harassment and was suspended.

During the Sir Syed centenary celebrations¹¹ in 2018, the university had around 250 volunteers, and the majority of them were girls. They had been kept in large number to give an impression to the visiting dignitaries and alumni that girls are equally present and are given an equal opportunity to participate. But the irony is as Khadija says, *"after a while on the day of the main function the boys asked us to go and sit on the first floor of the auditorium, saying no one can protect you, girls, if some untoward incident happens"*. Hearing this comment, several girls walked out of the program as if the university confirms that they cannot protect us argues, Uzma. A week later as a gesture of pacifying the girls, the Vice-chancellor had invited all the girl volunteers for a separate dinner. But several girls said we want to be treated as equals and we don't want such patronizing attitude by the Vice-chancellor of giving dinner invitations. In such a university program, it is common for boys to be sitting at the forefront and enjoying the program, whereas the girls are pushed at the back. Sharjeel is a final year graduate student in political science in AMU. He is one of the vocal students talking about gender issues on the campus. He looks at such incidents positively and admires that now girls are replying and fighting back. In a particular incident girl students of final year, computer science course had to go to the department for classes of one elective paper in mathematics because

¹¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/lucknow/in-amus-year-long-celebration-mission-to-revive-minority-education/>

Women College didn't have a teacher. So the girls went to the chairman of the department to take permission to attend the class. The chairman said, "*ladkiya computer science padh kar kiya karege*". Snowy who has completed her graduation in psychology and is now enrolled in Masters wrote a Facebook post about this incident and Sharjeel tagged the professor who had said this. He even made his phone number public and requested students to call and ask him what is wrong with girls studying computer science. This caught the attention of the university authorities and rectifications were made. Once a girl had written on Facebook about girls from Abdullah Hall not getting permission to attend programs at Cultural Education Center, the administration took note of it. She was first asked her to remove the post because it was putting the administration in a bad light and then they were given permission. In comparison to a decade back such protests and everyday defiance of university dictates by girl students were unheard of. Omar, another young boy in support of freedom for boys and girls in the campus, is a student in the engineering department. He says I know of professor's who ask girls to cover up when in class. If a girl is wearing sleeveless, she is asked to cover up. The presence of religious groups in the engineering department is prominent. He says "*I can't speak about the discomfort of a girl if a male teacher is staring at her, but casual sexism in the class is very common and is so normalized. If a girls is sitting with the boys in the back of the classroom, male teachers will comment*".

Summarising the institutional biases Shazia thinks the problem is that *there is no accountability. No one is there to question the administration and the faculties that what is happening. It is not that only they are trying to suppress us, even we are willingly giving up.* More than often speaking on public platforms the boys have believed that just because the situation in Abdullah Hall is bad doesn't mean the whole university is to be portrayed in the same light. *He almost meant as if 2000-3000 girls don't matter. Our educational situation doesn't make a difference to them.* Shazia says "*the teaching quality of my subject is very poor. I am facing a lot of problems, my concepts are not clear. I don't know where to look for it.* The previous student union was relatively better; they did try resolving some of the teaching problems. But we still have plenty of unresolved issues. In another instance, the final year students of Mathematics in Women College wanted computer science, but they were offered sociology. So the students went to the university department and made a request since *Physics, and computer science students are already visiting the department, could we also join them.* The girls were told by the department head that *if you come here, the environment of the department will get spoiled.* The girls did protest, but nothing much happened. At present, the female students of B.com degree are also going through the same situation. They are offered computer as an elective subject but are forced to study HRM because the administration says they

don't have enough computer systems. Several other such instances in the university on a routine basis define the educational quality for girl's students. In such circumstances, the imagination of an inclusive space is marred by the biased approach of the teachers. Because it is the teacher in an educational institute which enables the idea of empowerment and builds in confidence to be able to participate in making an inclusive space, the presence of an all embodying physical space can only lead to "Right to the city". The everyday encounters and the role of university teachers are paramount to this understanding. The university at present (in 2018) has just formed the Committee against Sexual Harassment and for Gender Sensitization. It's first meeting in the campus has been just initiated and doesn't have full participation of female students because of hostel regulations on timings for going out. The participation of girls in the university games committee or the library committee is negligible. Such discriminatory practices by the authorities further accentuate the presence of participation of females in the campus.

After completing her schooling from Doha, Fiza joined AMU in 2008 for Bachelors of Economics. She went on to complete her Master's program and is currently a PhD scholar in the university. She has lived in Abdullah Hall, I.G hall and is presently residing in research scholar's hostel. She has traversed through each level of patriarchal monitoring in residential hostels and is one of the few who has been continuously raising her voice against the institutional oppression towards girls and the practice of citing religion as a justification for the same. In the course of her student life she say's I have met all kinds of girls. Those who believe women should be kept under the feet of a man to those who think indulging in conversation on feminism and finding its relevancy in the domain of Islamic teaching is wrong. She is one of the senior female scholars in the campus and is member of the GCASH. In one particular incident a boy misbehaved with her at the Maulana Azad library. *He would continuously stare and follow me everywhere. When confronted he misbehaved with her at the library canteen.* Other boys from her class said, "*don't haggle with him and we will take care of it.*" But knowing that boys don't take any action on such matters she and her female friend found out his name and went to his department. The teacher their said, "*he is not a good boy don't get after him*". Everywhere Fiza adds flabbergasted, "the men just normalize such things and don't bother to take any action. "We didn't care and went to the proctor office and complained. Later the proctor office barred him from entering the AMU campus. She also highlights the manipulative nature of men in the campus. In media and on public platforms they cite people like us and our activities to give an impression that the university is a very liberal space for women. But these men within the campus are oppressive and judgmental in their opinion.

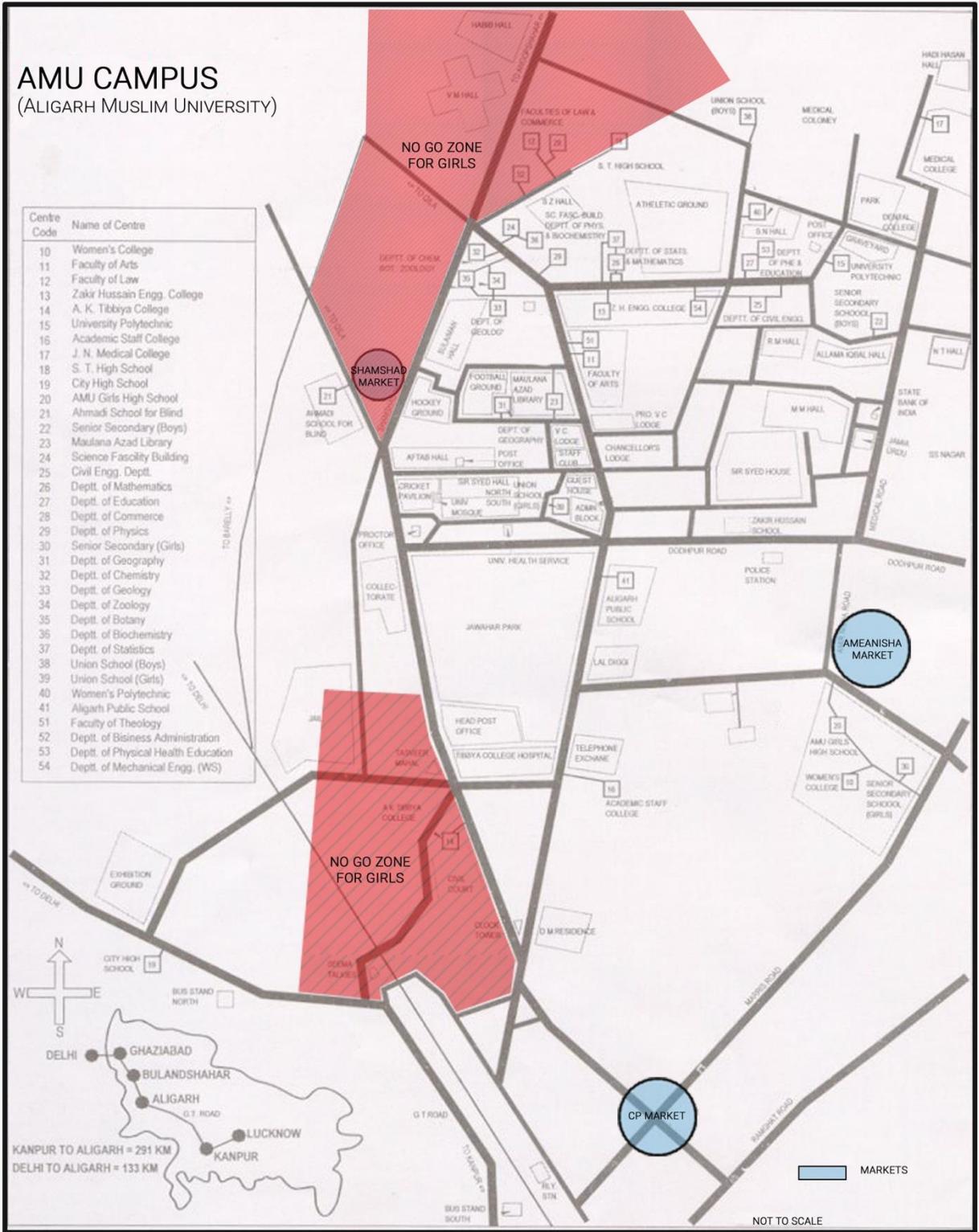
The university public spaces

The Market and Public areas

The main market for women in Aligarh is Ameernisha Market. It is on a walking distance from Abdullah Hall. The old market area in Aligarh city on the other side of railway track is beyond access for girls of AMU. It is considered to be a space outside the university boundary, and for females, it is not a place to visit. Since it is far from the girls hostel not many like to venture out. In Ameernisha market predominantly the shops sell dress materials, shoes, tailors, general grocery and in the last few years' innumerable numbers of restaurants. They do brisk business particularly on a Sunday when the girls have permission to come out of their hostels. It is a well-known truth as Naba say's on Sunday everything is priced ten rupees higher than the normal rate. The other market places or commercial centers are near the Medical College, Dhooipur, near Sir Syed Colony, City market and Shamshad market. City market is out of bound for university students. There is a proctorial rule; especially for the girls it bars them for visiting the city area of Aligarh, the eateries and cinema hall. Out of these Shamshad market holds a special symbolism. It is near to the boy's residential Halls. It has book shops and innumerable road-side dhaba and tea-stalls. These are regularly occupied by boys in large numbers around late evening till past midnight. It is a center of endless discussions and sips of tea. And unsurprisingly it is a typical male bastion, with a very limited access to females.

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14	A. K. Tibbiya College
15	University Polytechnic
16	Academic Staff College
17	J. N. Medical College
18	S. T. High School
19	City High School
20	AMU Girls High School
21	Ahmad School for Blind
22	Senior Secondary (Boys)
23	Maulana Azad Library
24	Science Faculty Building
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28	Dept. of Commerce
29	Dept. of Physics
30	Senior Secondary (Girls)
31	Dept. of Geography
32	Dept. of Chemistry
33	Dept. of Geology
34	Dept. of Zoology
35	Dept. of Botany
36	Dept. of Biochemistry
37	Dept. of Statistics
38	Union School (Boys)
39	Union School (Girls)
40	Women's Polytechnic
41	Aligarh Public School
51	Faculty of Theology
52	Dept. of Business Administration
53	Dept. of Physical Health Education
54	Dept. of Mechanical Engg. (WS)



In the last one decade, girls from Thailand and other foreign students are to be seen in Shamshad market, but they are confined within their group. But most girls of AMU can't think of visiting Shamshad market at night for a cup of tea. It is part of the folk-lore of boyhood among the male students. But for girls, it is part of an unfulfilled dream. Most girls when questioned one thing you want to do in the campus, and instantly comes the reply, "*having tea in Shamshad market at night*". If you ask the girls do you feel comfortable going to Shamshad market the girls replied:

Uzma: *have never been alone, they make you feel as if we are encroaching* .even if you are waiting to take a rickshaw in Shamshad market you will feel weird. It is a sea of unknown faces staring at you. I have asked my brother to take me along, but he also thinks it is not a good place for me to go

Kulsoom: *I have gone with my father*

Snowy: *I once sat there for six hours, and it was not very comfortable, boys stopped drinking tea and stared at me.* I was feeling so uncomfortable, so I had to call a male friend to join me. He said what made you sit here and not be noticed. If you go to any *dhaba* boys will comment that these girls have nothing better to do although, they are doing the same thing.

Najma: *boys have marked it as their place.*

What you wear and where you go

There is no guarantee of respectable eyes depending on what you wear. Zainab a second-year Islamic study student say's "you wear western cloths they will stereotype, you wear hijab they will say"*abaya pehn kar bhi yie saab karte hia*, meaning even after wearing an abaya¹² she goes around with attitude or has an opinion. Nabila is so conscious of her appearance on the campus that she always covers her face when riding a scooty and say's "*I don't feel like going out by myself. I feel extra conscious. I don't feel myself*". Several girls informed of never wearing a scarf and even their parents don't want them to, but they think wearing scarf keeps them safe in the campus. Girls also expressed that they feel scared; you never know who will scold us for sitting at the canteen or talking to a boy. Sometimes boys will randomly go upto the girls and say why you are not wearing a Hijab. Similarly, a girl wearing scarf can get comments like, *Mashallah you are looking very nice*. The girl's privacy and individuality are violated in both circumstances. But none of it is a sure guarantee of protection and respectability due to a female. Moniba says "*I wear Aabya people imagine me and my personality in a particular way. And if someone will see me in a restaurant they will start*

¹² A black clock like dress girls wear those who practice purdah as per tenets of Islam

commenting oh she wears a burqa and goes out with boys to a restaurant, doesn't matter if that male member is my uncle". People don't realise that this is my faith, don't interfere and judge me on my faith. They build an expectation that a girl who can wear jeans can go to a restaurant with boys but a girl wearing burqa can't. Many girls mentioned contemplating wearing a burqa to avoid being noticed. This double-mindedness is visible among both the traditionalist and the modernist. Moniba over the course of her stay in the university has seen several examples when girls who come from Madarsa background stop wearing the burqa and those who come from liberal backgrounds pick it up without even thinking what they are doing and why. The moral policing for what you wear can come from any quarter for the girls, and they only need to be men say Khadija. She has several encounters where the rickshaw-wala outside the hostel gate lecture girls about modesty and to dress appropriately. Describing with a big laughter Khadija says "one day my friends and I were wearing jeans and a T-shirt, so the rickshaw wala said, where is your dupatta. Her friend Ayesha was told by the same rickshaw wala "madam how we can protect you if you only wear such cloths and come out". She was wearing jeans. The university space ends up being so intimidating for the girls that many find ultimate happiness and freedom inside the women residential halls. These are spread over acres of land with several hostels, gymnasium, canteen and other facilities. Girls are free to wear what they wish and walk around in the campus at any time of the day or night. As Mehwish says we can keep walking past mid-night. There is no body consciousness or fear of being watched. This confined and only girl's space gives a new sense of freedom for girls who come from religious backgrounds or who have been educated in a Madarsa system. Shehla has observed these girls transform drastically. Back home they need to wear dupatta even in the room; here she can explore wearing jeans. The overall patriarchal attitude of the institute and the physical discomfort girls feel in the public spaces eventually makes them appreciate the exclusivity of Abdullah Hall. Fiza says "the freedom I found inside AMU, I found it only in JNU. Because it is safe, I can walk anywhere on the campus freely, and we can do what we want. We can go to the women college in slippers. Abdullah campus is liberating. It is safe; you are not under the glaring eyes. There is no body shaming; I can walk around without a dupatta". Girl students inside female residential halls who are at the forefront of discussions and protests against the administration do so at great risk of character assassination, threats of suspension and daily experiences of humiliation at the hands of the authorities.

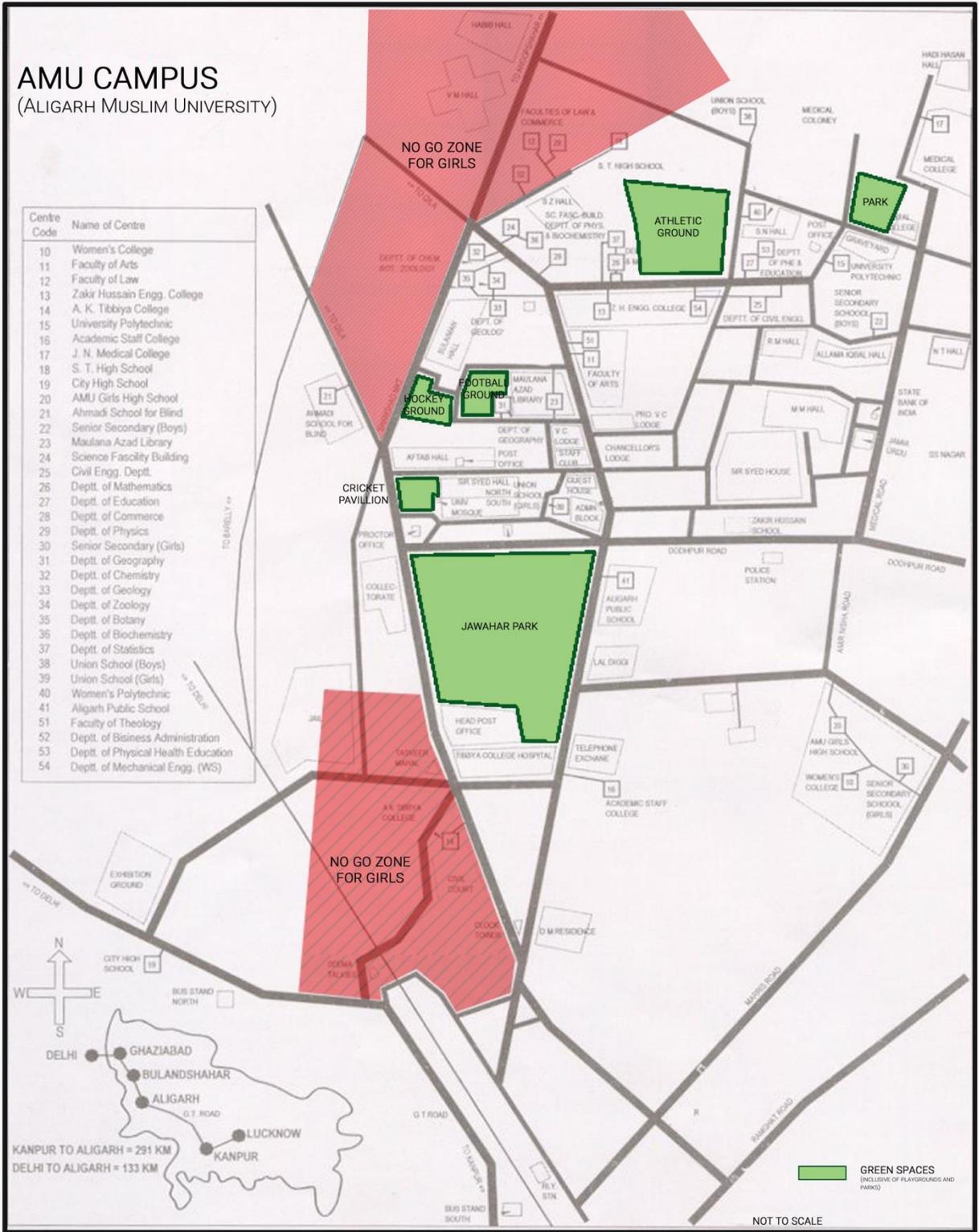
The University Library and Cafeteria

The Maulana Azad university library is at the center of the campus. There is a canteen behind it. It marks the heart of the campus physically and the nerve of discussions and debates occurring on the

campus. Customarily these two spaces have been traditional domains of male occupation. The norms and practices have been normalized by men, and the female is always an outsider to this space. The access is formally not denied but is hegemonized through practices and postures which keep the females uncomfortable and objectified. On the other hand, the attitude of men towards women coming to these places is always patronizing. Their presence is questioned and often reprimanded for being present say during evening hours or alone. When being asked how easy is it for girls to occupy the public spaces in the university Ayesha who is a final year graduate student says "if a girl does try to occupy public spaces, she will immediately become famous in the campus. Some will support her and others will make fun of her, that despite the catcalling she is sticking around. They will say "*kitne besharam hai*, she is still coming out and speaking although people are calling her names pitches in Zehra. After the particular incident in which Zehra and Ayesha were publically trolled on Facebook and shamed they have become a known face in the campus. They laugh out loud saying, "*they thought after my public shaming I will go quietly. And girls will avoid coming out publicly; unfortunately none of it happened. Now boys are in-fact careful of speaking with us*". Outnumbered by the sheer presence of men the university canteen it has always been a no-go area for the girls. But the current batches of girl students realize the importance of occupying these spaces; *unless we do things will continue to be the same they believe. So we should go to such places. We are not aliens; we must sit there. That is how a revolution will begin* is the hope they are building on. The experience of being at the university canteen even among girls is slightly different depending on their seniority. Girls who are research scholars and enrolled in Master's program said during morning hours you can find girls in the central Maulana Azad Library. But it is understood that after 5.30 pm girls will return to the hostel. Occupying public space in the morning is easy or even evening, but at night it is an issue. Inside the library, it is difficult for girls to sit after 5.30 pm they are not used to seeing us after that, say Fiza a PhD Scholar. Shehla, Mehwish and Shaheen are in the final year of graduation. They all belong to the state of Bihar and come from middle-class families.

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53	Dept. of Physical Health Education
54	Dept. of Mechanical Engg. (WS)



On being asked the public spaces females can comfortably visit in the campus, they give out a loud laugh. They think there is no such concept existing in the campus. On being prodded further, the only space they could talk about was Ameernisha market. They feel body conscious when visiting the main campus because it is full of boys. For accessing the Maulana Azad library, Shehla explains we have to take permission a day before and visit only on Sunday since they are living inside Abdullah Hall. Who is going to make so much effort, pats come the reply. She says *some of my friends wanted to go to the central library for reference work and study and often they would go illegally*. But how long can one do it? We have very limited books in the Women College library. Often good books listed in the catalogue are not even available. We have to compromise a lot on education because this adds her friend Mehwish. Narrating about her experience Ayesha says *a week back we had gone to the library reading room. The boys behave as if we are entertainment. They stop reading and start staring at us*. Uzma thinks the apathy towards girls comes from all sections of boys and they are not bothered how we can feel. Even if something is happening in front of them, they won't think they should interrupt or say something. *I had gone to the Maulana Azad Library on Sunday with my friend. We got books issued. There were boys sitting and reading. Within a few minutes this particular boy would continuously pass us from behind where we were sitting. Another set of boys came and sat in-front of us and kept looking at us. Ultimately we left*. There is a separate section marked for girls in the university library. But one can't issue books in this section, and moreover, on Sundays, they don't issue books, so we have to sit there and read. Naibla, a final year history student on the campus while giving this interview was sitting at the library canteen for the first time. She thinks it is so difficult to be able to come here. *We are confined and restricted to one place. We can do anything in the Women's college, but here you feel alien*. Her friend who is a student of Law thinks her experience is different. She easily sits with boys in the library preparing for her court arguments and has never felt uncomfortable or being watched upon. Arguing Nabila says, it is true only for her because it has always been a co-education center. They are open-minded and are not judgmental. We are students of Women College, and our issues are larger, she emphasizes. We cannot attend any talk or seminar. And when we want to attend something you have to take permission. For day scholars it is still better, if the parents are lenient they can easily attend such events in the campus. But for hostellers, it is an everyday struggle. Girls can't think of sitting at the library canteen alone, Shaimala though has tried it a few times. Her friend who doesn't want to be named and is a final year Law graduate too believes this is not the place for her to sit, *"I come from a good family, I will not come here, I know it is not a good place"*. She is immediately criticised by her

friends who try to reason out with her during this interview. Shaimala thinks it is not her, but it's her parents who believe this is not a good place.

The act of walking is not difficult on the campus *per se*. But the regulation comes in terms of being body conscious, of being present in a predominantly male space. Most girls said if we walk alone it is uncomfortable. In a group it is fine. Travelling in cycle-rickshaw is still better than walking. The campus spread over acres and spotted with green spaces and roads lined with trees are a perfect example of work-home neighbourhood concept of walking. But girls prefer to take a rickshaw when alone. Rifat says we can do anything during the day time; I can stand anywhere in the university, talk, laugh or take pictures but not at night. Hence most girls long to see the campus at night; it's a part of their fantasy. Afeefa who is a final year graduate says when the university is lightened up for Sir Syed Day we do feel like going around in the campus. Her roommate has done it, *"I made an excuse to go to the Health center. I have used it often. When I want free ride, I go to the health center"*. A matron accompanies us, they give us some medicine, and we come back. She has often accompanied a lot of girls when they are taken to the health center, just for the free ride she quips. These are acts of defiance, although done in the domain of illegal act and are not very common. It is important to understand how do the girls stretch their boundaries to claim more spaces through such acts. Does it make them feel brave or do they feel further deprived and frustrated? Can it possibly nurture healthy participation in place making?

A walk was organized by some of the female research scholars of AMU under the **"Why Loiter"** series running across feminist groups in the country. A small number of girls undertook a walk around those places in the campus which has traditionally never been occupied by the female students. It was done in the day time. As Zehra says, *"Off-course, we did it in the morning but at least we are pushing the boundaries. Even during day time we felt weird, as if we are aliens"*. Fizza says *"we went around the market and other public spaces in the campus. We sat for one hour at Chungi and later at Café De laila near Aftab hall. Girls would never go their earlier. We knew boys occupy these spaces. When we went, it was normal; girls were also sitting there from before. They could not do why loiter at night, because of hostel timing hours. There were reports in the media about this walk and boys commented a lot they said why you have to do something like Why Loiter. But these girls would like to believe that they are pushing the boundaries step by step.*

hooting at the boy's, we want to be part of the election campaign and rallies when boys are going zooming around on their bikes. Some of the first year students interviewed and students of south-

Asian studies a co-education department excitedly narrated their the thrill of being able to hoot at the boys in the campus. *"We do it when in a group since we are wearing burqa we manage to remain anonymous"*. They say its stress-free. This expression is telling that not only spaces are physically discriminating; it leads to mental stress of being continuously monitored. To be continuously watched, to be always conscious of where they are going, what are they wearing or speaking to is daunting for most girls. Due to such everyday encounters, a large majority of girls don't even get to visit the various departments, hostels or public parks in the course of their entire education in the university. They are familiar only to that part of the campus which holds the administration block, university library and those which is on the main road. Hostels and departments lying on arterial roads are no go areas for females.

Culture education center: CEC

The university cultural education center conducts workshops on writing, theatre, journalism, music and other activities. It also conducts its annual AMU literary festival. It is completely organised and managed by the students. For all practical purposes, CEC symbolises a liberal space, much to the discomfort of many in the university. But they believe for girls it is not an ideal place to be seen, it denotes a specific type of girl, who is too open-minded, likes talking to guys and is using CEC as an excuse to come out of her residential hostels. This perception about CEC has been prevalent for many years, and therefore till three years, back girls from Abdullah Hall were not allowed to be part of it. Zoya, a history honours student says *"We were the one who initiated it and in last three years almost a hundred girls have been going to CEC. Girls are interested in going and they are ready to pay and join such clubs in the university. We have seen changes from our first year to third-year graduation students. Khadija's brother who is also a student of AMU has asked her not to visit CEC because it is not a good place. Zehra says it is thought off in a particular way because people think girls who go to CEC look for undue freedom and to talk with boys. Some even say things like CEC mie naga naach hotaaa hai. Common parlance used in our country to define the ultimate form of shamefulness on the part of the youth community. The university community will immediately start spreading rumours for girls who are friendly with boys and talk and laugh in public spaces in the campus area or CEC. Ayesha talked about another incident when a rumour was spread that she had kissed a boy in the western music club at CEC in-front of everyone, and the funny part is at that time the boy I was associated with was not even in town. In fact a lot of girls's conveyed the idea that they don't go to CEC, "hum log ache ladki hai, hum aise jagah paar nahi jaate hai, humare ghar ka mauhul aisa nahi hia"*, we are good girls, we don't go to places like CEC, we don't come from such a family environment of singing, dancing or theatre. Another student Snowy tells her story, *"I was standing*

outside CEC and speaking to some boys, and this other guy friend of mine came up-to me and said, tum CEC aakar kie sirf laundebazii karo, meaning you come to CEC to meet boys. I was standing with my colleague, and I was so shocked. I am discussing work with them. I don't face such things back home; it is hurtful". Apart from the cultural programs held in CEC various events are organized across departments in the university. If an event is organized in the university auditorium, Kennedy Hall the girls are made to sit separately. Several girls expressed, *it is so disheartening to realize and feel the discrimination in the same university, where boys are getting all kind of freedom.* Naba narrates a particular incident to highlight this discrepancy, *"once for a program, boys and girls were sitting on each side of the row. The first, second and third prize had been mostly won by girls. Realizing this after a point boy's simply stopped clapping for us. They said, "ladke maar gaye hai, are the boys dead that they are not getting a prize". Imagine they are not judging us on merit but our gender. Even after the program coordinator made repeated requests to clap, there was absolute silence. And once the prizes were given to boys, there was an endless round of clapping and thunder. I was so shocked and disappointed. It means it is not based on merit but on gender.*

A fourth-year dental graduate thinks it is not an issue, if girls are given their due in the campus or not. She thinks a girl should take precaution and should not talk to strangers and avoid opening up to strangers. *"And this is true for every girl whether sitting here or in New York, every place is safe or unsafe. If you will sit along the road it won't be safe. If I am sitting with my colleague,s it is not a problem but if I am sitting alone it will be difficult".* This is the general opinion among the girl students in the campus. But many girls thought the opinion is not singular of the girl herself but is defined by the diverse backgrounds they come from. Naibla says we have a student from a village in Murshidabad and another from Dehradun. Off-course the girl from Dehradun is very open and the girl from Murshidabad is the first generation to come out for education. So they normalize a lot of things saying this is a right way of doing it. The girls often derive their opinion from religion citing numerous examples saying Islam doesn't permit girls to go out alone and bad things happen to girls who do so. These everyday struggles are not limited to the girl students themselves, even the parents and guardians also get co-opted. Naibala's mother has no problem with her daughter's activities and movement in the campus. But it's her relatives and male cousins who will complain that we saw her at the canteen. *"She knows that I should not be stopped from achieving what she couldn't but not every guardian understands".* While some students like Naba believe most girls are conscious when they are in public space and feel being watched at because they are self-conscious. Those who are confident don't bother. She thinks girls need to change their mindset and *one cannot blame only the boys for the prevailing situation.* Throughout the course of this research work one

came across several girls who do not carry such a mindset and are yearning to participate in the university on a daily basis but find it untenable and impossible to assimilate. Moniba a first-year English literature student at the women college explains this *“we have a frame defined for us, and in the university campus, we have to conform to that frame. So that they can look at us as good girls, a boy can speak to anyone standing in the main campus on the road. But the same doesn't stand true for a girl. They will look at us in a different perspective and judge us.* Her friend Shazia continues, *it is not about being body conscious. We are confident girls and know how to carry ourselves. It is a character specific judgment. Body-specific judgment happens everywhere, and it is not peculiar to this campus. But maligning your character is stressful for anyone.*

Student union elections and Women candidates

The AMU students union started in 1884 as a debating society called -Siddon's Union Club and was renamed AMUSU in 1920. Traditionally student union elections have been fought on regional affiliation in the campus since it is not affiliated to any political party unlike Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University. The informal affiliations are based on regionalism with Bihar-Bengal and Azamgarh groups being some of the prominent ones¹³. The students harness the regional network through brothers-sisters-cousin kind of network, and it depends a lot on word of mouth. In girls hostel, there is no discussion on the basis of manifesto of each candidate standing for elections. After the implementation of Lyngodh committee, there is an upper limit of mere 5000 rupees as total expenditure amount. During the recently concluded election in the month of November 2017, the tone was different than the previous elections. It was primarily due to the use of social media extensively by students. The effort for outreach to girls students was higher since in the last few years the participation of females has been particular stronger in the campus. The candidates had systematically put their manifesto, pamphlets, and videos of their public speeches on Facebook accounts. There was live update of every speech made; question answered etc. it built a kind of trust among the students and led to much larger participation by the student community in raising questions and constructive debate. It also collapsed the conception of time and space, so one did not need to be present for the rally, or meeting at the café and was very convenient for girls. This stretched the decision making irrespective of the regional lobbying and being influenced by the brothers-friends-cousins network. They were judged by the informed decision, leading to the election of the present Vice-President who is from Kashmir and is the first to be so. The second and

¹³ <https://www.news18.com/news/india/why-amus-hopes-for-a-peaceful-year-ahead-hinge-on-these-three-girls-1300455.html>
accessed on 15th September, 2018

probably the most remarkable beneficiary of the Facebook domain were the female students of the campus. Abdullah Hall, which also houses the undergraduate Women College, has a separate electorate and they are limited to girl student issues. Their participation and presence in the AMUSU body are merely symbolic. In the 2017 SU elections, the girls who stood for women's college elections opened a hornet's nest. They refused to stay limited within the campus and very strategically marked their presence in the larger AMUSU election through Facebook. It provided opportunities for girls to actively participate in meetings or protest rally in the main campus public areas since information flow is fast, easy; equally accessible. The instances of hiding, lying or sabotaging of information was comparatively less since previous elections. The presidential candidate from Abdullah Hall used Facebook to occupy center stage in AMU elections, by being present in rally, marches and showing her political literacy by posting discussions on national issues because she didn't want to be relegated as a mere women college candidate. She could occupy this space in the imagination and discussion of mainstream political discussion, which has been traditionally taken up by boys. She and her team participated in all the victory rallies¹⁴, which till date was done only by the boys in an open Jeep. It is the first of such incident. These images on the various social media platforms garnered much to applaud as well as discomfited the masculinised vision of university elections. The male students in large number took to Facebook to mock this assertion by a female leader and for the first time brought to the forefront the male contempt out in the public gaze. It opened up intense debates around feminism and the uncomfortable and dominating presence of the female body in supposedly unregulated forms in the campus. The participation of Women's College girls in the student union election has been symbolic with no assertive value. As the present secretary Areesha Khan says, *"Women's College has been projected as opinion less, however, I know that we have an opinion it's just that our voices get lost in the crowd or the hush that we maintain."* Change in perception and attitude towards the union election has been noticed for the first time among girls. She thinks it is about time women come out of this sanctuary and rather talk about women freedom and fight against unreasonable restrictions. While others like Snowy feel that inside Abdullah Hall the election is a symbolic exercise. Even after being elected, the union has to keep taking permission from the principal and the provost. So they don't have any power. *You can't negotiate with them about your demands. Such permission I can get done without standing for election* she reasons out and doesn't think much of it.

¹⁴ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/aligarh-muslim-university-students-they-thought-only-boys-campaign-on-bikes-woh-soch-badal-gayi-4984768/>

The girls who participated in the elections were trolled online with the rationale that good girls don't enter the political sphere. Some of the female elective representatives attended the victory rally for the first time in the campus and refused to cover their head in public which has traditionally been the norm in the campus. Citing an example, Fizza talks about a girl student in 2012 who was in the student council. She used to raise a lot of questions in a meeting, which the boys didn't approve of. Ultimately she resigned. The men in the union said, "*humare union me ek aur bhai hota to hum mazboot hote*" meaning if we had that one member who was also a boy and not a girl. They spoke bad things about her and threatened her. This news went to national media. But her supervisor asked her not to speak to national media, else it would have become a bigger issue. After much persuasion, the union leader apologised in a meeting at the union Hall. Such incidents reaffirm and are cited to girls that elections are not meant for good girls. Male candidates during the election time can enter the girl's hostel; there is a designated space for it, generally at the ground in-front of the gate. The same is not true for a female candidate. She has to depend on her male friends to campaign in a boy's hostel. Laiba is an equestrian player in the university and has played till the national level. She has been a student in AMU since kindergarten and lived in this city all her life. A student of social work, she goes to the university sports club every day for horse riding along with the boys. She thinks people who come to play sports in the club are not bothered about gender issues. They are different people she asserts. She frequently visits coffee shops and hukka parlours with her friends. Till last year she was part of the university student union. Girls are mostly elected as cabinet members but never has been a girl elected as President, Vice-president or Secretary. This she thinks is because boys have more bonding and their lobby group based on regionalism is dominating. She says everyone is not capable of managing their manipulations. When spoken about gender issues in the campus, she thinks it is the girls themselves who are shy and hesitant. But she has never faced any problem and comfortably sits in the library whenever she wishes to. Though she does accept that once in a while, some boy will greet you with a salaam, which has always been a custom in the campus. She has heard many such stories from her mother and aunt too. Needless to say this salaam is not really done as a mark of respect but as a hooting which has been normalized over the years in the name of culture and tradition. For her even acts of boys following girls in the campus is normal, she comes across it often. She thinks since she is a local Aligarhian people don't harass and

Naba Naseem is a first year student of B.A. Political Science in Women's College. At the time of this interview she was contemplating the idea of standing for the union elections from Abdullah Hall. *Because I want to do something new and go beyond the manifesto of taking care of attendance shortage during exam time. She thinks the administration should remove all restrictions for outing in girl's hostel. I am standing for the election only because it is high time we fight against the outing restriction. It is the root of all our problems in the hostel. She loves the campus and therefore will try to make it a better place and not blindly worship it. Girls have forgotten that they are the change. Today if they stand up, things will change. I am not claiming to change it. But I know if someone starts, I will join them. It is a central university; it cannot run on few people's ideas and opinions. She is well aware of girls whom are from good families but their parents will not send their daughters to Delhi University. So it is serving the need of many girls and I want to make this as a better space.*

Women's college representation is meager in main campus's protest and I want to fill this gap. I want to highlight that women's college is the "INTEGRAL PART" of AMU. Facebook Post, Dated: 7th December

Facebook curtailing the lived experience

Network societies are spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of government and corporations who have monopolized the channels of communication through history¹⁵. Our cities today are deeply embedded in various social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram among several others. These are proving to be sites of counter-power¹⁶ to the inherent power embedded in our social institutions. In recent years across the world, we have witnessed instances of “Facebook Revolution”¹⁷ as a medium to raise collective voice but not necessarily pre-ordained or coordinated. Since everyday interaction is very limited among the two genders, Facebook has proved an interesting medium which is bridging this gap. Many such arguments and articulation of their opinion are being regularly done online. It is even challenging the assertive and moralistic nature of men on the campus. Girls are raising questions about the selective preaching to them based on religion although the boy’s themselves easily roam around on their bikes and use curse words so frequently for girls on online posts. It becomes the new public sphere for students to meet, irrespective of gender, hierarchy or region and exchange ideas. The university physically does not provide a space to engage in any healthy and open discussion around several issues like feminism, sexual identity or even someone openly professing to be an atheist. This has been made possible through Facebook. Through active usage of Facebook female students are exercising their agency to engage with boys on issues of gender equality and the contentious discourse of feminism being practised by Muslim girls.

¹⁵ Castells, M. (2011). Network Theory | A Network Theory of Power. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 15.

¹⁶ Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International journal of communication*, 1(1), 29.

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook_Revolution

The virtual third space

Physically the boys and girls residential Halls are far and apart. There are very few public spaces for the students to interact and have healthy debates, more so till the undergraduate level. With the current assertion by female students on Facebook, through their writing, their personal political and ideological stands and sartorial choices a Pandora Box has opened up. This assertion in the public realm has brought the contention out in the open, and there is a continuous ongoing debate on various issues at any given time. The traditional demarcation of spaces between the two genders has collapsed. The girl students have occupied it powerfully and are challenging the patriarchal notions of a good girl; or a good Muslim girl. They are breaking the hierarchy of junior students arguing with senior and girls replying firmly to the boys, *“please learn to be open to debate and ready to digest a counter-argument from a female”*. It has led to a reconfiguration of questions around *tahzeeb*, i.e. culture and traditions particularly by the girls and develops a new vocabulary of democratic participation. In a way it has provided agency to the girls, to speak and write for themselves under completely different normative. Till last year the Abdullah Hall girls were not allowed to visit the Cultural education center in the university. One of the students Snowy wrote on her Facebook, *“initially the warden was not giving permission, but now it is fine. I wrote a post about it on Facebook. Reading it, she said, oh I didn’t say such a thing”*. She and many of her friends use social media as social journalism. They write on various issues. Girls also feel that *men are ready to debate only on Facebook they are not willing to argue face to face. If you ask them to come and have a discussion in person, they will refuse.*

Zoya: girls today are aware of their rights. So for anything, they will take up the issue on social media, and it does bring in changes. Girls are writing about their life inside the Abdullah hall, so administration takes notice. It gives us strength when we see our seniors writing and talking about such issues.

Moniba: I was in senior secondary school in Abdullah Hall, and that time the Kanhaiya incident had happened. And I realized the administration is so scared, they were literally on their toes and didn’t want anything to happen. So they were pampering us a lot. That year we didn’t even have a union. So they were alert about any student protest starting here. At that time they didn’t take any strong stand against the students. They realize we can write our opinion on social media.

Shazia: today the administration is very scared of the media. They are always worried if things will leak out. But the girls also need to come out in the open and protest more often she believes than only a real change will happen.

The presence of internet technology has enabled the building of a third public sphere and opened a new stream of communication. The debates and discourses today are unconstrained by geography and time. It has opened a virtual third space and has enhanced the lived experience of girls confined within their hostel walls. At present, though it can't be spoken about as a big revolution in times to come to the presence of social media and digital platforms are going to play an important role in the way the women experience and participate in AMU.

Freedom/Azadi and Assertion

The overall scenario in Indian universities has been volatile. Assertions by students who are Dalit, women students or transgender are coming out in the open. Among these the incidents¹⁸ unfolding in JNU has been most widely discussed and spoken about. So, JNU and *azadi* in the same breath have since become a legitimate verb. It expresses a particular meaning to different people at this point of time in the country. Hence, it is often used by students to denote what kind of freedom they like or appreciate or what is completely not acceptable. Men often write on their Facebook or while trolling a particular girl will simply write, *"I think they want Azadi which they see in JNU and I request all Aligarh students to be careful from this sense of Azadi because it threatens the AMU culture and girls are safe in our campus"*. Ayesha an undergraduate student who is incessantly trolled for speaking out in the public domain of the university says *"very few women are encouraged to speak out, and those who are ready to fight for themselves are looked down upon"*. She belongs to an upwardly mobile and educated family; it has been a smooth running on the home-front. Same is true for many of her friends who in protest to the unceasing negotiations and struggles left Abdullah Hall and live in a rented flat. But for most girls that is not an alternative and often they don't even share with their parent's about their activities in the campus. In case of Shaimala, another B.Sc geology student who is always arguing with her department faculties for better infrastructure and facilities is shamed by her male cousins in the campus and other relatives living in Aligarh about her sense of freedom and assertive nature. In such cases, parents ask their children to be careful and avoid getting into situations leading to such incidents. As Zehra says, *"the majority of the girl's believe jo ho raha hai sahi hai..aise hie hota hai, ise pata chalta hai ki aap achi ladki hai"*, meaning everything is good, that is what is the norm and it is a sign of a good girl, to follow the norm. Zehra thinks, in the garb of Tehzeeb they want to control us as she puts it, *"Tehzeeb is the new*

¹⁸ <https://thewire.in/education/jnu-developments-journalists-protest-bjp-mp-says-not-all-jnu-is-anti-national>

fig leaf to keep freedom in check, a word brandished at us every time we pursue freedom and I have forgotten what it originally signified since it is so blatantly abused”.

“One billion rising Majaz and the Good girl”

Few girls from Abdullah hall had organized a march on the day of one billion rising, on 14th February 2017. But the boys in the campus assumed this rally that the girls are obviously protesting to get permission to celebrate Valentine’s Day. One boy told me, “*aree what are your friends upto...you should speak to these girls, what is the need for a protest for celebrating Valentine’s day, they can do what they want*”. Because they can’t imagine girls can organize something on their own. When Ayesha one of the organizing member announced about this march in the Maulna Azad library boy’s started commenting that *how could I speak in the library being a girl*. Zehra continues, they were like “*apko neta baana hai*”. The point is, so what if I want to become a leader, do I need to take permission from them she adds furiously. On the other hand students from the union were shocked to realize that we started a rally without taking permission from them, it was exclusively headed by girls and proved to be a successful initiative too. *It was successful, we occupied the university spaces and we left. They couldn’t digest this at all. And many people had joined this rally.* Ayesha talking about that day says, we took out the march, read feminist poems, and spoke publicly on several issues. The proctor refused to give us permission; *he said you will talk about women issues in the campus and it will valorize in some controversial news.* A girl from the student union managed to get us permission. We finished of the march nicely and gave interview to the media. As we were about to finish it, two boys came to us and said what is your problem, what freedom do you want on Valentine’s Day. We had been shouting “*Patriarchy sie azadi*”. They kept saying we girls always bring AMU in bad light. We had to threaten them, that the media is right here, so they might as well behave. There was an uproar among boys that woman protestor were present without covering their head. The same day it was circulated on the Facebook with a quote, a twisted form of a revolutionary poem written by Majaz, “*Tumhare kaandhe par ye jo parcham hai khoob hai magaar is parcham sie apna saar dhaak leti to aachaa tha*”. The original poem if read in its translation means the opposite of what the boys derived it to be.

The Feminist Agenda in the campus

In recent years with more and more women come out in the open and occupying public spaces the feminist agenda has come to the center of several discussion as well as controversy in the campus. Many organizations have dummy figures pretending to talk about women issues to keep an image. The feminist agenda in AMU is a sensitive matter about the larger debate of emancipation and freedom of Muslim women in the country. While there are men who openly support the girls in their quest for equality, but Zehra thinks it is difficult to say it with conviction and trust them. Many people are cunning who will say we are supporting you girls but meanwhile be friends with misogynist boys and say, *oh these girls should not behave in such a manner*. And they will try to

neutralize the argument by saying “*oh both of you are right*” adds Uzma as if we can’t understand their diplomacy. She continues, basically, they don’t want to be criticised for being feminist supporters publically and want to carry a good image in-front of girls like us. Sharjeel and Omer, boys who are quite prominently know in the campus for their liberal views on gender issues, say that they don’t get bullied or threatened for it but are teased and commented upon by other boys. Sharjeel say’s *when we speak about hostel timing for girls; they say yes you guys at CEC will benefit the most if the hostel timings are changed and that is why are so vocal about it.* The premise for discussion around gender is derived from religion, but they lack a clear understanding of theological stand on these subject matter. And is mostly of regressive nature, representative of the society within which it is placed. Citing an example, Sharjeel says Jamate Islami Hind¹⁹ wanted the girls to give sound bites to news channels on triple talaq. So in that case, they fought with the girls that the provost must give them permission to come out and talk. Otherwise, they don’t bother about freedom of speech or that girls can have a right to choose. Shaimala tells us about Women’s day celebration in Abdullah Hall. It was called an Islamic Women Day by some of the girl students. They made models of women representing western society, who wore western cloths and is free without any discipline. The second model was an Islamic woman who wears Hijab, and stays at home and looks after her family and children. The intermingling of religion with discussion around female freedom as one student spoke makes the fight very difficult for us. Because these are not rationalized discourses situated in the Quran but are bias of the male view which is imposed on us. Kulsum talks about her roommates who were from Madarsa background in the first year, “*for everything they would lecture me saying this is not Islamic and it is an Islamic university so we should follow the tradition. I had to remind her; this is not a Madarsa but a university.*” She says it’s only now in the last two-three years that girls have started speaking openly about gender issues. Today it’s a cool thing to talk about feminism in the campus. There are many boys, who think it is cool to be feminist or atheist. But the majority think that feminism is anti-Islam. And those who are liberal put a binary on girls who wear Hijab and yet want to speak about feminism. Fiza and her friends are experiencing this intersectionality between being Islamic, wearing a scarf and being a feminist. They are research scholars and have learned to handle it over the years. When spoken to undergraduate girls that what happens if a girl talks about gender issues in the campus the responses are revealing:

Naibala: *They are boycotted*

¹⁹ It is an Islamic organization in India

Shaimala: *they are slut shamed...there is nothing in between*

Naiblal: we are questioned and trolled for what we write on Facebook. Many times they come and speak to you in person and ask why you wrote this. I had written an article on Islam, and this boy wrote, *don't you feel ashamed that you put such flamboyant pictures on Facebook. How can you talk about Islam?* He gave references from the Quran that girls are not allowed to go out alone after the age of 14yr. And that my parents should feel ashamed of me.

Naba: *talking about gender issue is not difficult, but it holds no value.* They will not respond to our questions. Why should men bother about my security, my parents do not ask them to? Most girls are shut down saying this how it has always been, and we will learn, and this is our tradition.

Ribbat : the Fortress of Truth

It is an online portal which aims to speak about the true meaning of feminism and Islam. It publishes stories and contextualizes the role of good Muslim women within the Islamic framework. A highly misogynic source of writing and literature it draws wide admiration from the conservatives in the campus. It believes that feminism at present time preaches smoking, drinking and nudity among women and is a trap in which once caught it is impossible to come out. The concept of feminism is an exploitative model prorogated by men for trapping women. The literature encourages the unconditional trust women should have towards men without raising questions and men would always support them and lead them towards the larger attainment of reward, in front of the almighty. Because it is the women who is carrier of the Islamic teaching among the family and community and the men must play a role even in disseminating the real interpretation of women's role in Muslim society. Those who are currently speaking through feminism in the campus are distorting the real Islamic teaching. It is run by students from the engineering department. Below is an example of the kind of things they publish

[Mohammed Imran Baig](#) was with [Ribat Admin](#)

4 March 2017 ·

[#Mujhe_Acha_lagta_hai](#)

[#Ribat](#)

khwateen ka safha:

Mujhe acha lagta hai mard se muqabla na karna aur us se ek darja kamzor rehna!

Mujhe acha lagta hai jab kahin bahar jaate hue wo mujh se kehta hai "Ruko! Mai tumhe le jaata hun" ya "Mai bhi sath chalta hun"!

Mujhe acha lagta hai jab wo mujhse ek qadam aage chalta hai. Ghair mehfooz aur khatarnak raste par uske.....

The awareness towards subtle patriarchal oppressions on a daily basis is not there. And mobilising an opinion among girls has time and again proved difficult as narrated by most students one spoke to. To support the girls of BHU in their fight against repressive hostel administration some of the girls had organized a rally in the campus. Naba says, *“Whole night I was trying to mobilise girls so that they can accompany me for the protest march. And when I went on Sunday, I was the only one*

from my group. Some said, we have exam, others said we don't want to go. The police might beat us. I told them, it is a protest march, as a student community we should do this. Some girls said what the use of such march is. Others said we will write articles. But it is only for an elite class I think. Not everyone is reading articles, they don't like it, and they don't have access to it. Very few girls had gone from Abdullah Hall. It was specially organised on a Sunday so that girls can join in. It is ironical that girls are not supporting another girl who is molested, but she has the time to go shopping. Than they should not complain and say that this is a patriarchal society. I titled it as the protest of hypocrites because boys were shouting, we are supporting our sisters from BHU, and we are with you completely. But they are not supporting us in reality in AMU. They are doing this because soon they are going to stand for student union elections.

The female faculties who speak openly on gender issues are openly abused or called names, and they are far and few. Therefore even those male faculties who are considered as rational and liberal keep a reserved opinion on gender issues and don't speak up openly in the campus.

Conclusion

AMU since its inception has been treading this fine line between religiosity and modernity. It has had several historical encounters proving its participation in both the circumstances. Considering there is also an ongoing contestation about its minority status it is hard to shed either of its characteristic. Any narrative, articulation of an argument or justification of an act specifically about gender issues arise from its being a predominantly Muslim dominated space. Even than amidst all these chaos, slowly and steadily women are challenging the gender norms prevailing in the campus under the garb of rules and regulations. The Muslim community at large still thinks AMU is a safe place for the female members of their family to get educated at. The turmoil between going for full expression of gender equity and restraining the debate for the time being for the young feminist, activists, and students is argued on the premise that one needs to think about girls who will never get permission to come and study if the status quo is not maintained. In recent few years, the voices of dissent have increased and taken various forms of expression. The presence is being noted in a union election to social space to the organization of cultural programs. But even while all this is happening there is a continuous undercurrent of sexism. When asked how these girls sustain their unceasing protest against it Ayesha poignantly points "this is the reason girls don't come out in the open for events and other public participation. There are very few girls taking part in a cultural program. But many like Zehra and others sums it, " *Now we don't care*", she says I had never

experienced such things earlier, the whole identity of myself as a woman and how that makes me different from a man was established once I was in this campus. My friends are stunned to see so many feminist posts on my Facebook profile.” Earlier I was not this kind of a person. This change in their personality and approach towards life was repeated by several girls. The suppression and patronization of females are done under the garb of culture or *Tahzeeb* or tradition as one would like to put it. Shazia argues culture or *Tahzeeb* can’t be enforced and Aressha her friend and co-warrior in this struggle think *Tahzeeb* should be in our heart and can’t go against her own identity. For her upholding her own identity is more important and then thinking about the university tradition. The logic of *tahzeeb* for females is on the premise of religion but Moniba declares even religion is interpreted differently for male and female, “*if a boy stands in a public space in the university and is singing holding on to his guitar people will join in but if the same thing a girl does they will say she is a sinner. She is singing*”. Her friend Zoya narrates her own experience “I was part of the music club in the university last year. It was my first performance, and obviously, it was very overwhelming. The program was part of the alumni meet. And then the president of the university union said, *it is not part of the AMU culture that girls are singing in public spaces. And she is wearing a hijab, (meaning she should have maintained the image of a hijabi girl). I was singing a chirpy song, and I was enjoying myself. And that guy later said, girls are disgracing the university.* The discriminatory rules and regulations permeate in every sphere of their lives. Moniba highlights many such instances when they are judged and discriminated because they are girls from Abdullah Hall. “*After the university elections, boys will take out a big procession. They will scream and shout and go around in their bikes on the whole campus. But for the girls, it will be confined to Abdullah hall*”. *The girls from the Law department can freely go around and campaign or participate in various programs. So the discrimination is just not on the basis of gender but on the courses we are enrolled in. Since it is a professional course, they are respected more. We in Abdullah Hall are doing a bachelor’s program and we don’t get an equal amount of facilities and support. They will say those are serious people who want to study and they need all the facilities. As if we don’t wish to. In Delhi University you will see students are focused and by the final year they are preparing for civil service exam. Where do we go? Earlier girls were going out for coaching. Now they are bringing the coaching center inside the campus. Its standard was so bad outside, and now you can imagine it will be worse.* The girls felt demotivated and demoralized caused by institutional discrimination in the way their issues are addressed. Shazia explicitly expresses the anguish of majority of the girls on the campus when she spells out that “*I have paid to come and study here. If I like this place and love it, I will follow the tradition of this institution. And that is possible if this place and campus respect me and my desires. If*

it can't respect and nurture my desire, how can they expect to adopt the culture of this university? I have paid money to reside inside Abdullah Hall. You can't force stupid rules on me; I am an adult". Giving her example she elaborates how the repressive environment within a year changed her personality," *I come from a co-education school, and when I was in Abdullah Hall for my entire first year, I didn't go anywhere. I was inside the Hall. I didn't know anything. When I went home, and there was a reunion of my school friends I realised I am not even talking to boys. I am not even making eye contact with them".* She had also started wearing hijab although she was not confident and comfortable about.

The narrations of female students in the AMU campus gives us deep insights into their daily encounters and the structural discrimination existing in the university setup since its inception which prevents women to feel integrated with the institution. It calls for large scale reforms by the university which can then pave the way for change in mindset and attitude towards the presence of female bodies in the campus.

3. Banaras Hindu University

This chapter introduces the city and its historical precinct with special reference to the campus of Banaras Hindu University. It further elaborates the physical layout of the campus and how it influences the everyday interaction between the two genders. How does the city get influenced by the campus and vice-versa and does it create a distinct narrative about the Right to the city?

As per the census of 2011, the city of Varanasi has a population of 11.98 lakhs which grew from 10.9 lakhs in 2001. It is famous for its centers of religious importance situated along the River Ganges and holds particular importance for Hindus. It is also famous for its silk weaving and is one of the major occupations in the city. There are a total of 84 ghats along the river, and each holds its own religious and historical significance. The urban area is governed by Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC), and the component of urban planning and building regulation is under the Varanasi Development Authority (VDA). If we look at the city map of Varanasi, it is broadly divided into three areas, the central core, the old city area and the emerging peripheries of the city²⁰.

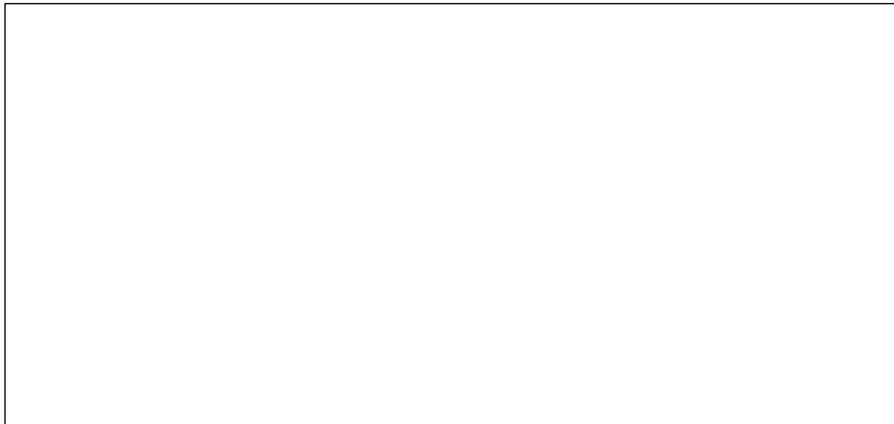


Figure 1: Zones of Varanasi (Source: CDP, 2015)

²⁰ Final City Development Plan, 2015, CRISIL

The old city area is the core, serving as the Central Business District and is dotted with heritage buildings and is characterized by its narrow streets. The central city adjacent to the old city area is an area in continuous flux, which the City development plan for Varanasi identifies as “proximal areas”²¹. The state authorities are developing the peripheral areas in a planned manner, and housing infrastructure is being well taken care off. Banaras Hindu University was established in 1916 by Pandit Madan Mohal Malaviya. The establishment of the university campus was at the outer periphery of the core city. It is located on the southern periphery with a large tract of land being allocated to the university. This has helped in a comprehensive spatial growth of the campus. It was possible by generous donations from wealthy kingdoms, financiers and businessmen and the support of the British Government. It was created under parliamentary legislation- B.H.U ACT 1915. Madam Mohan Malviya envisioned a university which would carry both the ancient traditions and modern technologies for education in India. There are two campuses of BHU- the main campus which is in Varanasi and south campus which is in Barkachha, Mirzapur around 60kms away. South campus is newly built having an area of 2700 acres while the main campus of BHU is 1350 acres. It is also called Kashi Hindu Vishvavidalya. It is spread across 1300 acres with widespread greenery, a temple and private airstrip. The university comprises 4 Institutes, 14 Faculties²², 140 Departments, 4 Inter disciplinary centers, a college for women's and three schools. Four Degree Colleges of the city are affiliated to the University. The campus has a hospital with a capacity of 927 beds and equipped with all modern amenities. The university is a self-sufficient gated enclave, and the student’s everyday interaction with the larger city is limited.

The Physical Layout of the University

The campus spread over 1350 acres consists of various faculties and four institutes namely Indian Institute of Technology, Medical Institute, the agricultural institute and Institute of Sciences. IIT which has recently been part of the university²³ has a fairly bigger section solely to itself on the western part of the campus. It has its entire departments and the hostel for both boys and girls in that given area. The science faculties and Art’s faculties are spread over the campus interspersed with open spaces, gardens and temples. The Mahila Maha Vidhiyala is situated right at the entrance of the university campus and is a gated enclave in its own self. Banaras Hindu University is a completely enclosed campus. It has a boundary wall erected with two entrance gate. Lanka Gate is

²¹ Final City Development Plan, 2015, CRISIL

²² Faculties are equivalent to schools and departments are same as centers

²³ It is independent of BHU campus in terms of administrative structure, only physically it is part of the campus

the main gate to enter the university. It is the sight for student demonstrations and agitations and acts as the central public space. The other gate is on the backside of the campus and is not used as the main thoroughfare.



Map 1: Physical Map of Banaras Hindu University

There are around 25-30 boys hostel in the campus and ten girls hostel. While the boy's hostel since the inception has been built along the main arterial roads, the girl's hostels have been systematically constructed behind the faculty hostel and never on the main road. As one professor observed, *"it is to keep an eye on the girls"*. The idea of monitoring and controlling female movement is ingrained even in the way the girl's hostels are constructed within the BHU campus and perhaps defines the everyday interaction of the females. The walls of the girl's hostel are very high although the boy's hostel has no such wall: they are very open. Boys hostel have bigger playgrounds and gardens, unlike girls hostels which are closed enclaves. A student pointed out that *"Even if the girls are taking a walk, she will be walking on the faculty residential area roads and in this way they can be kept an eye upon. The campus is always patrolled by proctorial vans to keep an eye"*. Both gender can't enter each other's hostel. Swati highlights that this constant monitoring and surveillance is to keep in check any expression of love between two consenting individuals. *There is no space to express, except on the road.* Inside the IIT campus, the senior girls students are asked to keep the junior girls in control and that they should not get into love affairs or express any such feelings. *Basically we should not do any public display of affection. There is a lot of pain and complain if you speak to couples. We can't sit anywhere. We end up walking for four to five hours because there is no space to sit. Even as a group we can't sit anywhere. We will keep on walking. Or we end up going to the Ghat. Gardens are not really conducive for us to sit and have a discussion; moreover, they close early in the evening.*

The Women's Residential Hall

Women students were an integral part of BHU since its inception. The university started by making provisions for female students who could stay at home and get tutored and enrol in the university only for writing the exam. The women college and hostel was made much later with the help of a generous donation by Seth Khatau Makanji²⁴. Over the years it has expanded into a full-fledged college and residential hostel. For medical students, there are four hostels namely Kasturba, New

²⁴ Renold, L. (2005). *A Hindu education: early years of the Banaras Hindu University*. Oxford University Press.

Doctors hostel, Mother Teresa and Florence Nightingale hostel, the last being primarily for nursing students. At the entrance of the nursing, hostel are quarters of doctors and nurses from the medical college. So every time a student is coming or leaving the hostel she has to cross this stretch and then reach her hostel. This has been a way of keeping an eye on the girls. The same is true for other girl's hostels which is not on the arterial roads of the campus but is dotted along the secondary roads, behind faculty residences. For students of post-graduation courses, there is Triveni Hall which was at the center of the agitation last year.

Mahila Mahavidyalaya College

Mahila Maha Vidhyala is the undergraduate Women's college of BHU. It has several girls' hostels inside the residential Hall. For first-year graduation students, they have Swasti-Kunj hostel which has four students in one room. For the second year there is Kundan Devi, Kirti Kunj and Pragya Kunj hostel. The students are allotted hostel depending on their rank. For third year students, there is Pragya Kunj and Jyoti Kunj. Inside MMV there is Women College and B.Arts and B. Sciences classes are conducted here. For Commerce courses, girls have to go to the faculty for their classes which are at a distance from the MMV campus. The basic daily requirement facilities are provided inside the MMV Hall. There is a small tea shop and a daily grocery shop. Other facilities include a basketball and football court, an auditorium and a gymnasium. The main canteen which is inside the hostel remains open till 5 pm in the evening and the smaller tea shop till 8 pm. There is a dining hall in each hostel for basic meals provided three times a day. The timings for students to go out was 8 pm which has been extended till 9.30 pm since 2018. And if a student comes later than the prescribed curfew time one needs to fill in the register. As per the rule if a student enters the hostel after the curfew timing more than three times each month, the parents are informed. If a student wants to go home or outstation one needs to fill the leave form four days in advance and if there is some emergency two days in advance. The warden may call up the parents if she has any doubt about the leave application. The hostels till last year didn't have wi-fi connection nor were they permitted to use the mobile phone after 10 pm. If the warden found a girl student speaking on the mobile-phone, she would confiscate it. Inside MMV the girls are not permitted to bring in their female friends, relatives or even their mother. Unlike the boy's hostel where the father can stay with his son. The incident of harassment and eve-teasing is most visible for girls from MMV. Since they are under-graduate girls and many of them are coming out of their house for the first time: they are weak in speaking up or protesting. A PhD scholar who belongs to Mirzapur reflects on her stay over the years in the campus *"Tab bhut pareshani hue thi, peeche chalna, tease karna, comments karna.... ye saari cheze bhut hoti thi. Magar dar bhe lagta tha kyu ke age mie mai bhut kam thi, ab to*

ladd sakte hu (earlier I used to get affected by all this following and commenting and since we were under-graduate student it was common too. Today I can fight back). In fact, it is far better now. Girls can speak, raise their voice. Boys are also coming out in support. Talking about her stay in MMV girl's hostel she says "In fact *MMV kis andar bhut jyada accha lagta hai.* I used to be very happy there. There is a big field at the front and a volleyball ground at the back of the hostel. One does not have to think to go anywhere else, and there are girls everywhere. Jeena is a PhD Scholar she came to BHU for her graduation and is currently a research scholar. "I am from Kolkata; we don't have such discrimination in our city". Speaking about her days inside MMV College she says we had lots of restrictions on what one could wear. *Over the years now I feel I should dress as I wish to. Since I also teach now in BHU, I dress differently; when I go out, I wear something else. When I go to Goa, I can wear shorts, but here I can't. But we never made an issue out of it or protested, and eventually, it became a habit.* People's mindset has not changed over the years, and even the teachers are the same. It is only the generation of students who have changed over the years she believes. We kept adjusting. She thinks with time girls learn to stay happy inside the MMV campus and *we found ways to stay busy. Sometimes we would be frustrated and vent out our anger in the rooms. But the class kept us busy; we didn't go out every day. Our outings would be in a planned way since we knew our restrictions and limitations.* Pallavi hails from Patna. She had cleared the entrance exam for Women's college in Patna too, but her parents thought BHU is a better place to study. She says *I never expected this place to be so conservative.* My friends who are boys say the quality of education in the department is so much better than MMV. When asked about the reason for deeply embedded gender biases in the campus she thinks it is because of the regions from where these students are coming. For girls who are coming from small towns in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, this environment is not problematic. And the boys from these regions confirm every conception of misogynistic behaviours. She points out that boys staying in the hostel will ask for a mobile number from girls while you are walking on the campus or the department. *The point is they don't respect girls; I don't mind sharing my number. But you cannot demand unreasonable things from me. That is beyond my dignity. They look at us as materiality.* Citing an incident, she says a boy from IIT said the girls from MMV couldn't do without them. *Unka kaam nahi chalta hai.* And they mean it in a derogatory sense, "we can't do without them". It is true that there are some girls because of whom everyone is looked and branded in the same way. But they are very few. *Wherever we will go and say we are from MMV, they will look at us and think we can easily be lured by them.* She thinks boys on the campus don't understand that it is important to be aware of history, political science or gender studies. *They think*

in a patriarchal way and don't understand that girls who are studying here have competed through an entrance exam and we are not some mute spectators.

Pressures of being monitored and policed come from the hostel wardens also. There are numerous cases when the warden calls up the parent to show that your daughter is characterless. *They won't say, she has come late to the hostel, they will say she is a characterless girl and comes late to the hostel. So they are directly giving our character certificate to our parents.*

Hostel Rules

At the core of the December agitation in the BHU campus in 2017 was the discriminatory hostel rules. It marginalises the girls at several levels. It is done by regulating their physical movement, their access to facilities and daily amenities and mentally training them in a subjugated environment. One of the commonly cited discriminatory practices is the poor quality of food in the girl's hostel. They don't serve non-veg to the girls students. They are barred from visiting each other's room after 10 pm at night. Citing an example of how deep such discriminatory practices can influence a student's state of mind Pratik narrates the story of his friend. She expressed her desire to visit the hostel terrace. She said *I don't have some strong reason to go to the terrace but when I see the lock, it makes me feel deprived, and I feel insulted. It hurts my sense of being. That for no reason I am barred from using it.* Speaking about hostel facilities for boys in comparison to girls Vikas a PhD Scholar in Hindi department highlights that in almost all boys hostel they serve non-vegetarian food. Only the students in Sanskrit hostels students sit on the floor and eat without onion and garlic. They are also particular about keeping a Pandit, who is from an upper-caste as a cook. The girls are charged for their dining hall food for the whole month, but for boys, they have a provision to pay as par each meal consumed. As Jenia says, *the biggest difference in the mess of boys hostel is that they choose what they want to eat or not but in girls hostel you have to pay for the whole month and eat whatever is being served. Boys Bawal kar dete hain, they create a nuisance if it is otherwise.* That is why the food is of a better quality in boys hostels.

The second discriminatory rule is hostel timings. On the one hand, boys have absolutely no restrictions about timings. But for girls hostel such is not the case. For MMV hostels the timing is different and along with other women hostels including working women's hostel. It closes at 8 pm but there are PhD students and Assistant Professors and masters students who stay in these residential halls. They have a provision to make a late entry in the night as long as there is written permission from the warden. The monitoring of the female body and her movement inside these residential halls is not only limited to the wardens. Even the staff members inside the hostels which

include the cook, cleaning staff or security guards monitor a girl's attire and their outing timings. Many girls expressed their sense of deprivation; we can't live like boys or stay out of the hostel. The girls from the nursing department have far more regulative timings and even after the agitation the hostel timing remains at 8 pm. They have to take written permission every day if they have a duty in the hospital after the deadline. A nursing student confided that *Today after the agitation it is just that we are not punished any more for getting late. Earlier we had to inform the warden; the guard would not open the door if we were late, we had to go and speak to the warden for permission.* Explaining the situation in IIT BHU a girl tells the students had been sent a letter saying, "*Hostel girls caught outside late in the night after 10 pm*". One girl said it sounded as if we are criminals. The girls decided to boycott the letter saying even if we are wrong this is not the language to be used towards us. There was an explanation call by the hostel authorities, and all the girls decided to march after their curfew timing and protest. They boycotted signing the register at the hostel gate, so it was not possible for the authorities to keep track of timings. *The director threatened that our parents would be summoned. So we decided to call our parents and update about the situation. We called a public meeting and boycotted signing the register. And we don't do it till date. We come and go whenever we want, and we don't give any explanation, where are we going and why. We should not be given a warning letter and summon us for explanations.* Till a year back if we didn't sign, they would come and check our room, now they are lenient.

The December Agitation, 2018

The girls in BHU campus are of the firm belief that sooner or later the agitation and its outburst was bound to happen. They remember of several cases of harassment in the campus which was ignored, and the university took no action in the past. The protests happened in reaction to an incident on the night of 21st September 2017 when a girl who was returning back to Triveni hostel and was harassed by unidentified men who were on a motorbike. The situation became violent²⁵ after a few days. When the girls went to the warden, she said, why do you need to go out of the hostel after 6 pm. Some of the male friends of the girl who was harassed than went to the proctorial office to complain, they also started blaming and scolding the girl. This led to anger, and the girls decided not to tolerate such behaviour and spontaneously came together and started protesting outside the hostel gate. These girls were from Triveni Hall; it has four separate girls hostel inside it. The agitation sustained for so long because the girls were united and the Vice-Chancellor didn't address

²⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/violence-rocks-bhu-campus-as-students-police-clash/articleshow/60812088.cms>

the issue immediately. On 22nd September 2017 the girls were brutally beaten up by the police on the instructions of the university administration. The girls were attacked with tear gas and rubber bullets. The university administration to curb the protest decided to close the hostel till 2nd October, and the girls were ordered to vacate the hostel immediately. The agitation also got support from women who are enrolled in degree colleges affiliated with BHU in the city of Varanasi. When asked about the participation of boys during the agitation Prakhar who is a student of Masters in political science says, *“There were some boys who believed in their demands and supported the girls. But there were others who believed it is a protest against men and their patriarchal control. They had spread rumours that in the garb of this agitation girls had stayed outside went out with their boyfriends and spent the night in a hotel. And that a large number of condoms were sold in the city. He says these were men comprising of the local police, rickshaw pullers in the city who believed girls are doing all this to move freely with boys and wear short cloths. Very few teachers had supported the students in the agitation saying they are forbidden from joining any such protest. But Vikas a PhD scholar questions rightly, “the teachers were saying we are not supposed to be part of any political program but then they are always participating in RSS sponsored programs in the campus, how is that happening? Nonetheless, it was a culmination of collective anger against the University for ignoring sexual harassment and overall gender discrimination prevalent in various administrative rules which manifests itself in various forms in the everyday lives of the girls. The girls had been demanding relaxation in hostel curfew timings and discriminatory food practices in girl’s hostels. Swati explains that these discriminatory practices were moreover being legitimized by the institution and students were pressurised to follow it. The suppression had led to frustration. Girls always wanted to do agitate against it but at the time of admission girls sign an affidavit saying, if I take part in any agitation or protest march my hostel seat will be cancelled and so will be my admission. Girls were therefore afraid to take part in the demonstration. The Vice-chancellor, on the other hand, was of the opinion that outsiders had created this protest. And he justified²⁶ the rules because he was thinking like a father for the girl students. Following the incident, the first woman proctor²⁷ was appointed in the university who later went ahead to claim that the whole protest movement was sponsored²⁸ too. The incident repeated itself in a somewhat similar manner in 2018 again. When the girls in the university decided to celebrate the one year of the incident as “**outrage***

²⁶ <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2016/10/bhu-vc-justifies-sexist-hostel-rules/>

²⁷ <https://thewire.in/education/bhu-woman-chief-proctor>

²⁸ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bhu-on-boil-after-proctor-says-2017-protests-sponsored-5165067/?fbclid=IwAR34Djujhtqssb2lmcQB-0y27LFPzem6WRIAjeziiv5wc>

eve” through poetry and protests they faced violent retribution from ABVP goons in the campus²⁹. The University administration recently suspended 56 students and completely debarred 12 students from the campus in different cases. A total of 12 students have been currently debarred from the University who were at the forefront of the movement. When asked why did the movement eventually lose its momentum Shruti says, *“in this campus you have any discussion, movement or seminar boys will enter the crowd, create chaos, beat up other boys and break the initiative.* The same thing happened with the girl’s movement. Many boys were leaking news to the administration and media. Some girls were mobilised separately by the warden and taken to the Vice-Chancellor for a meeting, and the girls left behind were beaten up by the police at the Lanka gate. Boys from ABVP were continuously looking for a chance to divide the girls. And they succeeded. As one of the students points out that the girl who went to meet the Vice-Chancellor was affiliated with ABVP, she had gone to Russia with the prime minister's delegation and had the political inclination and compromised with the agitation agenda. She says most students are scared to be part of any such event. *Because they want to do research and the professor won't agree to supervise if you are found to be part of it. I am not scared; I will go somewhere else and do my research. Doing anything here alone is very difficult. Students who were at the forefront of the agitation have been targeted earlier too. I am not scared because I have support of my organization i.e Joint Action. Boys from AISA are beaten up regularly by those from ABVP. Girls who are socially active are easily targeted in the campus. Character assassination is a common tool for the same.* It was also pointed out that most students from science faculty were not part of the agitation. They were not allowed to go out of the hostel. The warden said who will take the responsibility if something happens to you. At the same time there were many girls who jumped the hostel wall and came to participate in the movement. Girls blame the administration and singularly point out at the attitude of the Vice-chancellor who was heading BHU at the time of the agitation. In one of his speeches in MMV Hall he said, *“ek acchi beti wahi hoti hai jo apni padhai ka balidan de apne bhai k liye”*, meaning a good daughter is one who is ready to sacrifice her education for her brothers. Girls who participated in this agitation knew its repercussions but continued with the strike. Shruti also says girls generally who are at the forefront of such agitation or are outspoken find it difficult to get hostel in the new academic calendar. *When you go to take a hostel next year, they create a problem and will not let you to write the exam. They will put three girls in a two-seater room.* Some of the girls who protested were not allowed to give exams, and their parents were called. A girl from the

²⁹ https://www.thequint.com/news/india/bhu-women-students-allege-heckling-by-abvp-members-on-campus?fbclid=IwAR1oIn7WmfQb8zMv-xoWcYD9IalF0L2uqqdHydRDIYU5fcRtHpAv_aQTy0g

sociology department narrates an incident about her friend *her parents are very old, and they were made to run around a lot during hostel allocation. When the girl came to the class the warden said " Tum kya karne yahan aaiye ho, tum nikal jao yahan se, tum jab dharna de rahi thi tab tumhe yaad ni aaya hostel bhi lena ha, mai bhi tumhare sath aisa hie karungi"*, why have you come to the class, didn't you realize during the agitation that you will need a hostel too. Now I am going to behave in the same manner with you. At the time of the agitation last year, the female teachers of MMV College discouraged the girls from participating. Many of the final year students were scolded in the classroom. All the classes were conducted and the assignment was given to keep the students busy. The second-year girls were pioneer of the agitation. Most teachers said nothing will happen and such things have happened many time earlier. Students who were in agitation were given bad marks in assignments. Girls were told if you are found anywhere in anything your career will be spoiled. As one girl puts it, our previous Vice-Chancellor was very uncultured and would speak in languages we can't even imagine. *"He would say after 6pm library will be closed. Because boys and girls don't come here for classes. Girls will get married after graduation, so let the boys study."*

During the agitation people from Congress, BSP, CPI and RSS party were trying to intervene. But girls had categorically kept them outside their agitation. Anamika highlighting this aspect says, *"We told them we appreciate your concern but you are a political party and we are not getting funds to do all this. It is a common girl's issue. That is why we had no one girl leader otherwise there was a danger of getting co-opted. Girls who were generally active in the campus wanted to hijack it on their party platform or NGO. But for us, it was our basic need, so we didn't allow it. We wanted to send a message to the nation and the university that it is our need, our basic right. We were watching what the university administration, district administration or the state is doing for us. Therefore we didn't allow anyone to enter and take mileage.* Looking at the brighter side after this agitation there has been a marked change in the attitude of the boys as well as the administration towards the girls. They have realised that girls also have an agency and they can also speak. If action is not taken girls will retaliate therefore since last year the proctor is always on alert. Earlier they didn't care, says Anamika. Physically in the campus barricades have been put up near Triveni Hall was the incident had occurred. With the placement of barricades, the movement is regulated of boys on bikes, and they can't simply speed through. The change in hostel timing has not been officially amended in the hostel regulation book. So the girls are not sure if this change is permanent or temporary. Moreover, the change in timing also differs from hostel to hostel, while some have made the necessary changes and extended it to 10pm, for example, Triveni Hall others continue with the 8pm

deadlock. Those hostels which had girls from the science stream and were not allowed to participate in the agitation are continuing with the earlier rules.

Institutional Bias: rules and regulations

Shruti has been a student at BHU since her graduation days. She went on to complete her LL.B and LL.M from the university and is presently preparing for the judiciary exam. Her father is a police inspector, and they originally belong to Azamgarh district. When asked if the university is gender friendly she says *“as you enter the campus you can see a separate Women college which is discriminatory”*. It is only at the Masters level in the departments that classes are conducted for boys and girls together. She believes a lot of it comes from the inherent discriminatory practices shown by the teachers in the way they talk to girl students and behave. In courses like Law, she observes there are two kinds of students *“Those who are upper-caste and class and those who are not”*. They are also the ones who opt for classes which are conducted in English. There is a separate section for Hindi medium students. Teachers use a lot of casteist remarks against the students and reprimand boys for being friends with girls they will say *“yaha paar laudiya bazi bahut karte ho tum log”*(you guys come here for being friends with girls). When asked about the presence of females in public spaces and their everyday interaction with other male students Shruti feels the situation is much better now. Two years back it was worse, and the general atmosphere was terrorising, *the proctorial monitor would continuously patrol in the campus, and if any boy or girl was found sitting together they were picked up and taken to the office, their parents were called and informed*. She thinks students are under all kind of monitoring and censorship by the authorities inside the BHU campus. During the time of earlier Vice-Chancellor G.C.Tripathi (2014-2017) there was incidents of even physical violence *“because ABVP was so dominant, they would simply beat up if a boy and girl were found sitting together”*. She believes female teachers are more conservative and are the least supportive of girl students. In one particular incident, her friend had complained against a boy from the medical department, but the female teacher in the committee harassed her for filing the complaint. *“They tried all means to protect the boy, and ultimately the girl was asked to go home and write her PhD. She was assured of getting full attendance and her scholarship money too from the university”*. Her parents were called to the campus and humiliated by the authorities saying she is not a good girl. Even her family abandoned her, and ultimately this girl had to file a court case in the Allahabad High court and is still waiting for the judgment. Shruti is aware of at least five-six such sexual harassment cases in the campus, but there is no authority to which the girls can trust and file

their complaints. She says such incidents are rampant in medical faculty and among research scholars with no recourse for corrective action.

Library Facility

The BHU campus library earlier used to remain open the whole night. Under the present regulation, it is closed in the evening. There is a separate cyber library too. Undergraduate girls in their first year hesitate to come to the central library, as one girl says, *in the beginning, I was very worried. Bhut pareshan ho gayi thi and I didn't come to the central library for two months. If we sit in the library gardens, boys will try and talk to you. They will ask for our phone number and address.* In 2016 eight students were suspended for protesting against the university and for demanding that the library remains open 24 x7 along with their other demands in terms of restrictions for girl's students. They were barred from writing their exam and ultimately the students had to take recourse from the Allahabad High court³⁰.

Departmental Facilities and gender discrimination

Incidences and experiences of discrimination towards the female in the departments are acknowledged by every student we spoke to. Most reported that the teachers discourage boys and girls from sitting together inside the classroom. Vikas who has completed a major part of his education from BHU and is currently a research scholar cites example of a male professor who said in the classroom *hum usie zamane kei hai jab dupatta uddaye jaate thie ladkiyon(I am from that generation when boys would pull away the girls scarf while walking on the road).* The teacher was almost acknowledging a long tradition of teasing girls on the campus. Citing another example, Anikesh says a male professor always makes fun of his female colleague in his department. Most students don't protest or express displeasure to such conversation or gesture. Anikesah thinks it is only because *"In PG courses we are dependent on grading done by the teachers. We can't displease them. We have to join research under them. So we have mental slavery, we will touch the feet of the teacher whenever we see them. Only now some young teachers these days ask us not to do it"*. A girl student from the history department agrees to give the interview but doesn't want to reveal her name. She is from an economically weak family and says her only aim life is to make a career and support her brothers in their education. *I am the first girl in my village that completed her graduation in science stream. My parents couldn't send me for a professional course after high school. Except for a few families in the village girls are not sent for higher education. Even now once the girl*

³⁰ <https://www.livelaw.in/sc-revokes-suspension-orders-8-bhu-students-asks-university-conduct-special-exams/>

has completed her higher secondary school, she is admitted in some random graduation course and married off. During this interview while speaking to a professor, she had come to submit her assignment, and we happened to engage in a conversation with her too. Even her Professor was surprised to see her speak so vocally and articulate her thoughts so clearly. She had never seen her in this light. The girl student's response shows this dilemma of being a good girl. *"We don't speak up to keep the image of a good girl; we don't participate in a seminar or a conference and feel awkward to talk. How can we talk when we are not encouraged to speak up in the classroom itself"*. She likes to, therefore, differentiate herself from those girls who talk freely to boys and go around with them on the campus. *"I keep to myself; I attend my class and later go home"*. When asked about girls participation in academic or cultural programs in the campus her teacher responds, *"here girls are reduced to just wearing a sari and giving flowers before the program begins"*. Anamika who is a student of social work has realised that the behaviour of teachers differs from departments like social work or sociology say in comparison to Hindi or Sanskrit department. In Hindi or Sanskrit department girls can only wear a suit and have to braid their hair in two plates and look like decent Indian girls.

The second discrimination is the quality of education being provided to girls in MMV College in comparison to the university department. There is also discrimination between the quality of teaching in classes being conducted in Hindi and English medium sections. Shruti explains about her law department classes. *Those who are from the English medium get better teachers*. She also highlights that *teachers who are not an ex-student of BHU and have been educated in other universities are better teachers, but those who are children of professor are very conservative*. Discrimination is based primarily on the basis of caste. A schedule caste student narrating her incident said, *"are tum to SC candidate ho"* (oh, you are SC candidate) or taunt by saying *"humara to haq maar liya ja rha hai"* (you are encroaching our rights) as if we have all the rights. They will say *'are yaar humare sath bhut bura hua hai "* (this is an injustice to us). She often tries explaining to her friends that *" 50% is with you only, it is in your hand. Even if I qualify for the general seat, I will get SC seat only. I won't get general seat"*. She narrates another personal experience; when I took admission in MMV college, I had good grades. My friend's mother to whom I am very close still highlighted that *" Aree iska to reservation hai, usko to number nahi bhi aayega tab bhi ho jayega"* meaning I am from the reserved category so I can get admission even without scoring well in exam . Later for her post-graduation course when she qualified through general seat, her friend said: *"Tum to general kie seat lie gaye"* (you poached on the general seat). I got very angry and told them what should I do you have a problem with both the things. These caste dynamics and discrimination

between the students is accentuated further by the practices of university administration as well as the teaching faculties. Instead of teaching about equality and social-justice the university system continues with the social norm established by the larger society.

Talking about the quality of education at MMV College the classes are conducted by research scholars or professors. They mostly teach in Hindi, and their quality of lecture is poor. Many girls end up taking English coaching classes from outside the university. While boys can choose from 59 subjects, the girls can choose only 17-18 subjects at the time of admission. Not all the courses are available in the women college. Girls inside the women college don't have options to choose from foreign languages for example. There are limited combinations for girls to opt for. Most subjects are provided in the faculty for which many girls don't opt. A student while talking about her experience, *"When I checked the university website before joining the Women College for bachelors program they had mentioned French and German as one of the subjects. So I decided to take up French honours and my second option was English. After joining the course, I came to know that two years back there was a French honours course for girls. But it was started because the then principal's daughter or some relative wanted to study French. And now that she is gone the entire course has been struck off the list. So that's the level of discrimination in our campus she says with anguish.*

The discriminatory practices and attitude of the university administration get reflected at various other levels. The university till recent times had yet to form the GCASH committee. Students have been pressuring the administration but as Prakhar says *for gender-related issues it is always a handful of students in the campus who are found speaking.* He had referred a female friend who is a PhD scholar for meeting the researcher of this study. *"But she was too scared to meet you and asked me will this create problem".* Girls are reprimanded for speaking out publicly on any issue in this campus by the administration regularly. The teaching faculty will point out at such girls in the department and classroom, and often the parents are informed. A senior female faculty who has also been a member of the women committee in the campus for a long period of time says *this chauvinism and mind-set goes a long way back. When the women studies department was started everyone thought that it should function as a home-science department and on any discussion on gender issues men would ask what is it that you want".* Her colleague, a male professor of sociology who is about to retire, says the hostility towards women is occurring because of the changing nature of family and society. In this change, woman is considered as a soft target and is often assaulted.

Several students in the campus think there is a stark difference between the way girls are treated in Arts Faculty in comparison to Science Faculty both by male teachers and boys. Most number of harassment cases is reported from the Arts faculty. They explain this phenomenon in terms of where the students are coming from. A large number of students enrolled in Arts faculty are from the villages of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They are coming to a big city like Varanasi for the first time and are not used to seeing the female body in public space and so openly dressed. All the girls spoken to in the campus voiced their clear opinion about the boy's from Arts faculty and how difficult it is for them to walk near the department even in day time. And it is just not the male students but faculties too in these departments who need gender sensitisation workshops. Girls believe male faculties need gender workshops more because they can't imagine boys and girls as friends. *If a teacher sees a girl student outside the campus with a boy the next day in the class, they will tell all the details without taking your name. And remember that many times these are female teachers. They will pass comments like yaha padhne toie aaye nahi hai, graduation karke shadi karege (you have not come here to study and make a career, after graduation you will get married).* When asked about the university or department conducting gender sensitisation lectures or workshop the students were completely ignorant. They said only the English department organises such programs and boys mostly attend it. Girls are to be found in very few numbers. Overall students were not aware of or had heard about gender workshops being conducted in their department.

The situation is not very different in IIT classrooms, which is part of the BHU campus. The girls who are in minuscule number are regularly reprimanded on their dressing. Girls said they are given strict instructions about what to wear. It comes from both male and female teachers, and most teachers are male. A girl said *it is not that they are suggestively telling you but are scolding us directly. If I am wearing a three-fourth sleeves dress, they will say get out of the class. Change and come, or we won't mark your attendance. They simply harass on the basis of what we are wearing. When we are sitting in front of the male teachers, they stare at our chest. If we are wearing leggings, they look at us. Some professors want us to wear a sari.* A female teacher in the department of chemical engineering said, *first you wear such suggestive cloths, and then you complain about female harassment.*

The University Public Spaces

The Banaras Hindu University campus is a well laid out and planned area. Spread over acres of greenery it is an ideal campus for students to immerse themselves and explore knowledge. But the encounter in these public spaces by women doesn't make it an ideal place to live in. There are

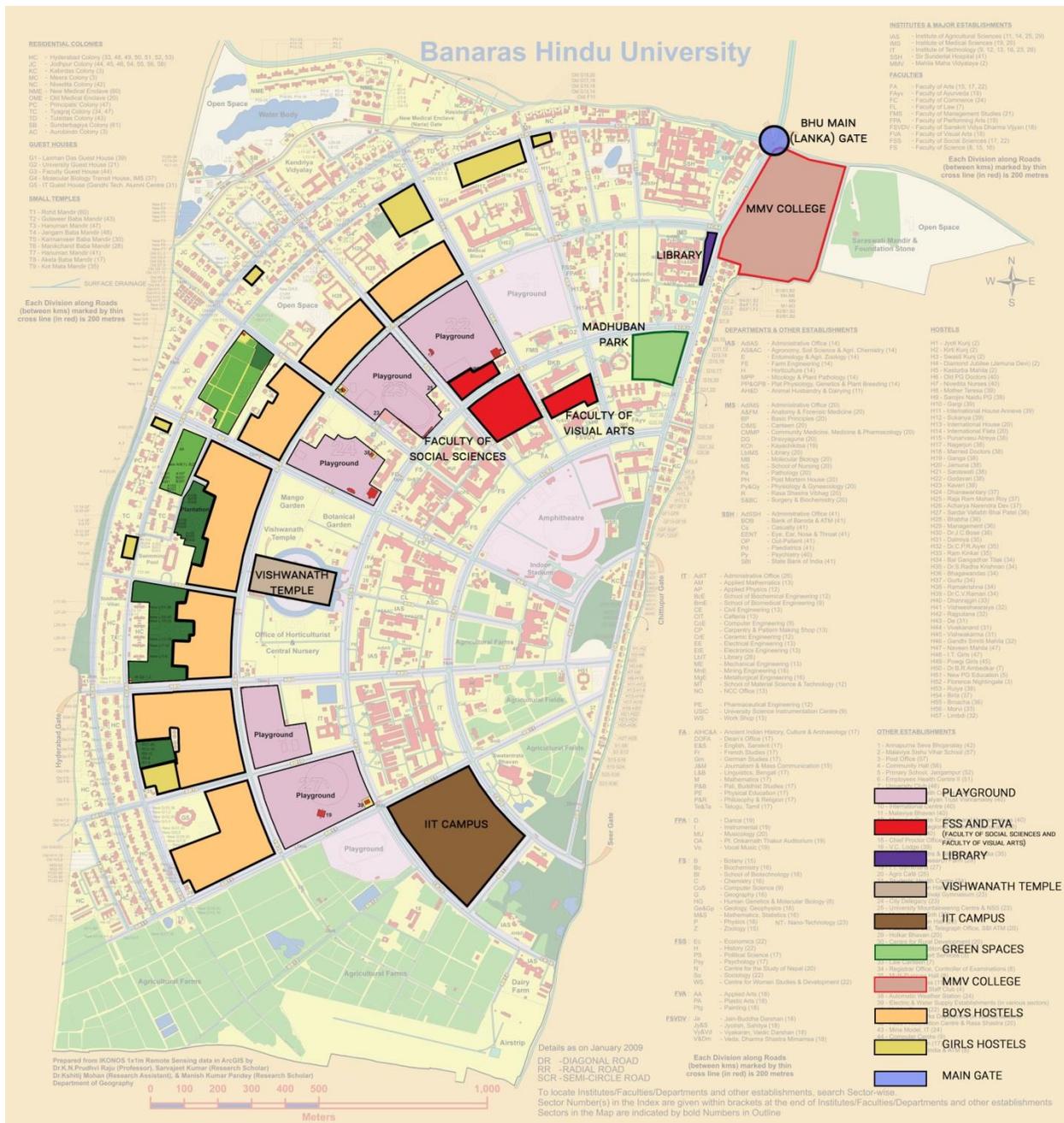
several stretches which are identified as unsafe and a no-go area for the girls. Most girls avoid the streets along the boy's hostel. Instances of hooting and being accosted by unknown men are common. A faculty from the science department thought that our campus is not like what is being shown in the media. Some boys from outside create such nonsense. *Outsiders did the incident which happened last year. We have several villages adjacent to our campus. Boys when they get bike come to the campus for a free ride and fun. It is these boys who create a problem. I have personally noticed this phenomenon. They have no manner nor are they educated. It is these boys who pass comment on the girls on the campus and create a nuisance.* It is true that the campus with the presence of some historical monuments and religious buildings is open for outsiders but not all the girls spoke to believe that they are the sole nuisance creators. The common public spaces which are technically accessible for both the gender in the campus are few and limited. It is controlled through informal rules of code and conduct specifically for females. Shruti says before the incident if she was sitting with her male friend and studying the proctorial team would ask them to leave *"They have put CCTV camera everywhere and keep a close eye. If this is the condition for a research scholar you can imagine for others"*. Swati who is a student of IIT likes to believe that *"the environment is changing. Ten years ago girls were not allowed to go to the local teashop on the campus. We couldn't talk to each other standing at some public space. The security guards were asked to keep an eye on us. If we were found talking, they would reprimand us, and we have to keep walking on the campus because we couldn't stand at one place.* This was the situation inside the IIT campus.

While travelling on the campus girls are careful about the routes they take. They avoid Arts Faculty, Birla boy's hostel and deserted stretches. Most girls said *there is no need for travelling alone. We always go with someone. It is in our nature not to go out alone; when we go anywhere together, it is nice.* Another girl articulates the same feeling, "I don't come out at night. If anyone tells me to come to Vishwanath Temple at 7-8 pm, I won't come. *Itna sab kuch ho chuka hai kie aab mujhe dar lagta hai, mujhe pehle bhi lagta tha lekin apni safety kie liye mai group me hie aana pasand krungi, akele nahi(so much has happened in the campus that I feel scared not that it was safe earlier. But now I prefer going out with my friends group).* If someone asks me to come to VT at night, I will never come. I need to think about my safety. I might come with my friends but never alone. Other public spaces in the university include the sports ground. But it is used by females only during the sports week. On other days one would barely come across girls playing in the university sports ground. The playground itself is situated much closer to the boy's hostel and is quite a distance for the girls to travel.

Varanasi city is one of the oldest urban centers in the world. It attracts a large number of tourists both nationally and internationally. It is most famous for its Ghats and the old city. The student's everyday interaction and venturing out to these ghats is limited. But there is a difference between how is the ghat accessed by the boys and girls. While the girls visit the Ghat mostly during the day time or evening during the *aarti* the same is not true for boys. They go to Assi ghat in the morning and evening for subah-e-banaras and sham-e-banaras program³¹, while the boys like going to the Ghat past-midnight. When asked have you ever been to the Ghat at night Ragini laughs out loudly, *I have only heard about such adventures from boys. You can have such desire only in Mumbai or Delhi. Our social environment is not conducive for such things. We don't even think about such things. Maybe some girls do it. I don't do. I don't indulge in such things.* It emerges from the way these girls encounter men in the city itself. Often the girls repeatedly emphasized that patriarchy is inherent here and men in Varanasi don't want women to speak. Ragini says, *"male chauvinism is normal in Varanasi. They openly comment and tease. The other day we were going out for an outing, and we were dressed up, the auto wala said that is why cases like Asifa³² happen"*. These conservative opinions about women regulate how they venture out in the city. Like a student said, *"I don't even think of going out at night. Such ideas of going out at night for tea or going to Ghat can only emerge if we are in a secure space. If you will find drunken boys and generally boys everywhere, you can't think in such a way. I can sleep hungry but not go out late at night to buy something. It is better to be limited to ourselves. Tomorrow if something happens, our parents and family will question us and not support us. They will say what the need to go out at night was"*. Her friend supports the same feeling, *"I have to worry about my parents and what they think. I don't want to trouble them. If we are outside and alone in night, my father is worried. So I don't go out. I am happy on the campus"*.

³¹ They are sound and light based puja rituals done everyday morning and evening at the ghat in Varanasi

³² Asifa was a minor girl who was raped in Jammu and Kashmir, during the time of this interview it was a very recent incident and several agitations were happening in the campus.



Map 2; highlighting the public spaces and various amenities in BHU campus

The other important public space is Vishwanath Temple, commonly named as VT by students in the campus. It is a Shiva temple and is situated in the centre of the campus. It attracts tourists and religious visitors on a daily basis in large numbers. During festivals, it is a nuisance for the girls because local men from adjacent areas come in large numbers. The girls need to be careful. There is no restriction on the movement of outsiders because it generates revenue for the university. Jenia likes to believe that in *Varanasi boys are of a typical type, it is in their genes. When I go back to Kolkata, I see girls sitting along tea shops or smoke, so I don't find it a shocking sight unlike people here.* Things are changing for better she thinks but still inside the campus none of the girls can think of smoking in public spaces. Because one is judged and there is a lot of moral policing as she likes to put it. And based on it a student can even be removed from the course or the hostel.

The other public space in the campus is Madhuban Park, but it is not particularly reputed as a decent place. It is a park for couples and girls don't like visiting it. If a girl is found coming out from Madhuban people, assume that she would have gone with "someone". There is another park called Ravidas park and is similarly disreputed like Madhuban park, so girls avoid it too. Some girls go to the IIT campus also for a walk. They find the environment inside their campus as different. As a girl put's it, There is a craze for IIT "*IIT hain bhai, chalte hain dekh kar aate hain kaise hai* (after all it is IIT, we should also visit their campus and see how it is)

Co-curricular activity and interaction between the students

The annual student festival of BHU is called Spandan. In this program, separate sitting arrangements are made for boys and girls. The annual festival of MMV College is held separately. If a girl dances in the university program, boys hoot very badly. Last year some girls had taken out a rally on women empowerment, and the boys were shouting. *Arts Faculty ka nara , MMV humara hai* meaning Arts Faculty's students slogan is MMV is our property. Sweta speaking about the Sarswati festival said when the girls from MMV took out a rally and boys were present in huge number. They were constantly shouting this slogan. *It is so derogatory and insulting for us. But we can't do anything.* Any common annual program sees a lot of hooliganism in the university auditorium. For example in the annual function boys from Arts faculty will loudly call out girls by saying, "*aap humari bhabhi hai*"(you are our sister-in-law). She say's "*during the program I have seen from my own eyes boys throwing condoms when girls perform on stage. They will throw money, and these are all university students*". For the same reason organizing any cultural event or debate is not easy. This attitude is also influenced by the presence of RSS in the campus many students feel. Regular Shakhas are conducted by RSS on the campus which is attended both by the students and faculty. If

students want to organize some Jayanti, the administration doesn't give permission, but for any puja or festival, they readily give permission. As Latika says, *they will organise programs on "Patrakarita and Narad-munni"³³. And under this government, things have changed a lot on the campus. Everything is connected with religion. They will not approve any sensible discussion, this year we had great difficulty organizing Ambedkar Divas*".

Because of this constant harassment girls, avoid going to the department where boys are present in large numbers. They are hesitant to participate in cultural programs and seminars. Aditi citing an example says, *"When I went to the administrative building yesterday for some work a boy directly asked us are you from MMV and they don't realize that it is discomforting for us". ...because of this attitude we feel alienated. At such moments we feel, wish we were in some co-education college. Kusum thinks it is in nature and such is the age of the boys that they go mad after coming to BHU. Since the boys are more in number in comparison to girls, so she cannot be friends with all the boys, and Sweta says boys feel "wo ladki nahi mil sakti hai as a friend or girlfriend to unko bhut aag lagti hai"(the boys get infuriated if a girl refuses to be his girlfriend). Unka behaviour aisa hota hai ke if a boy approaches me and I said no to him and went to another boy then I am a bitch(if a girl refuses to be friends with a particular boy but is friendly to some other boy whom she likes, she will be called a bitch). Boys will call such girls whore or slut.*

Students can't have long comfortable interactions sitting at any of the public spaces. The park is not considered as a reputable space to be found at. The temple has very few places to sit and is always crowded, while the Ghat is far and away. At these places, one can stand or keep walking on the campus. *But there is no space for us to sit together and have a discussion, or talk or do some assignment together.* For example inside the IIT campus, there is no student activity center. Therefore as Swati, a student from IIT highlights *we group for assignments based on our gender. In branch like mechanical engineering, I am the only girl, and I suffer a lot. I am not able to take help from my batch-mates, and it is a crisis for me. Pressure is too much for girls. In the library, you can't talk much. Interaction invariably becomes very limited. And lack of interaction appears in the kind of friends group we have on the campus. Boys stick with the boys and girls with their female friends. Students can never celebrate their birthday together. Girls are always denied meetings with boys. During the annual cultural festival at IIT for meetings and preparations, girls can't enter the boy's hostel. Moreover, girls need to be back in their hostel by 10 pm. If there is some meeting after that or*

³³ Journalism and the role of Naard-Munni

some decision has to be taken, we are not present. Two years back the common argument for girls not being able to hold the post of secretary was this. Boys can have meetings and take all the decisions at any time of the day. In the history of IIT, a girl was elected as the secretary of a dance club only due to such logistic issues. And it provides a legitimate argument for keeping the girls out of decision making. There is a lack of space for interaction and to be able to go out of the defined boundary she concludes.

Vishakha is in the final year of her post-graduation in social work. It is one of the few courses in the campus which conducts classes for boys and girls together. When asked about lack of space for boys and girls to interact says, *“actually it has become a mindset that why do we need to talk after 8 pm in the evening. We adjust everything accordingly. Moreover, we now have internet and phone. So we can talk and share information about our assignments. But I know of my friends who need to sit together and practice their presentations. So they need to depend on friends who live in PG and meet in their rooms. It is not possible on the campus. We have made our mind that no such work has to be done after 8 pm. We don’t keep too many common assignments. We sit together in the day time and the class and finish our work; we have decided our limits and boundaries, so we don’t even think about it as a limiting opportunity”.*

Therefore the structural arrangements through university rules and regulations are such that it segregates boys and girls student. Both the gender carry further the social norms of gender segregation and learn nothing new in the university. And this certainly defines the way a young girl and boy experience their everyday encounters on the campus and within the cityscape itself.

Public Spaces and daily interaction

The university provides daily bus service within the campus free of cost. It runs from 6 am to 6 pm, except on a Sunday. There are separate buses for girls at fixed timings. Yet many prefer using their scooty, cycle or simply walking because even in the bus boys try to lean over the girls or touch them. Students feel the bus timing is purposefully kept till 6 pm so that the girls can’t stay outside. Although the library is open till 8 pm it is not possible for them to stay back because of the same reason. Venturing out in the campus even during day time for the first year students is fraught with such interactions. Ragini says, *we were not harassed directly but indirectly it was too much. Direct to pareshan nahi karte thie lekin indirectly bahut jyada pareshan karte thie. Peeche peeche logo kie jana, har kisi ko nahi lekin jo new girls aati hain unko bahut jyada problems hoti hain(they won’t directly trouble a girl but when she is out in the campus, they will comment or follow us). hum logo kie sath bhe hua hai, aisa nahi hai ke nahi hua hai.(it has happened with us also)* Today she is a student

of Master's program and is more confident. Now we don't get that feeling of anxiety that *aree ja rhen hain bahar* (now we are not anxious while venturing out). We just go, *ab bhut araam se chale jaate hain hum log* (we go out easily without any fear) we don't even need to care for our clothes and worry about what we are wearing. After the agitation things and perceptions have changed. The mindset has changed. Now girls come out wearing shorts which were not the case earlier. *Now you wear shorts; no one will say anything to you. You can wear sleeveless, backless anything.*

For girls, going out at night on the campus is not easily possible. Even the administration doesn't want girls to venture out, therefore, some routes are purposefully kept dark at night. They simply switch off the street lights. The road from Madhuban Park to VT is kept dark to regulate the movement. Girls said earlier one could not look beyond 100m earlier. Though, there has been a perceptive change in the everyday behaviour of people in the university campus after the movement. A girl who wants to remain anonymous in the course of this interview said, "in our first year there was a lot of eve-teasing, and the roadside Romeos would randomly walk up to any girl and say do you want to be my girlfriend or say things like *paise mat lena bhabhi hai tumhari*³⁴. But now she notices that gradually it has changed and instances of *bhut zayada road per rok kar baat karne wala ladke kaam hogaye hia* (the number of instances when boys would stop girls on the road and try to talk has decreased). Narrating another story she said when I was in third-year graduation, we went for a walk and complained to the proctor when a boy started passing comment on us, but they didn't respond. *I told the security 'Uncle ye log humara peeche kar rhen hain'* (these boys are trying to follow us) He started scolding us " *aap log abhi kahan ja rahe ho, abi VT kyu jana hai kya jararuat hai*" (why are you going to VT at this hour). Today the scene has changed a lot and proctors are at the receiving end. If we say we will complain to the women cell, the boys say sorry and run away. This sexist attitude of boys towards girls females think is because of the *Bhauji* (Bhabhi) culture in Varanasi, if someone like's a girl then she will be *Bhauji* for his friends. The girl doesn't know, but among the boys, they will keep saying " *wo teri bhabhi hai*" (she is your sister-in-law)

Shivangi is from Sitapur. She has completed her schooling from Navodaya School and lived in the hostel her entire life. After class 12th she joined the nursing course in BHU. Her father is a pharmacist and is posted in Moradabad. "We avoid the boy's hostel route. We feel hesitant, although that is the main route. Most incidents of fighting or eve teasing happen on that stretch. Our warden also suggests us to avoid these routes. Often the boys fight among themselves on the road". In her

³⁴ A dialogue from hindi movie called Ranjhana, which was based in the city of Varanasi . it means don't take money from this girl, she is your sister-in-law, indirectly indicating she is the future wife of that boy.

nursing college, they are not allowed to wear jeans since it is a professional course. They are required to wear kurta and dupatta. Shivangi also finds it comfortable “because in our hospital all kind of people come. We don’t know everyone’s nature. As a professional, it doesn’t look good that I will wear tight jeans and a short top and go in front of the patient. If we go dressed as per Indian culture, we are respected and accepted too. When asked about her desire to have fun on the roads in the campus, she laughs and says with a big sigh, *“Yes, we feel like going around in the campus on a motor-bike, and we wish to be left open at night to go anywhere”*. They have never seen the campus at night. After the December agitation female police have been deployed for nurses and doctors in the university hospital. *“Now in the hospital outside the labour room, we have ladies police. It is good for us. Earlier they had male police. They are paying more attention to safety and security issues. They have deployed police outside the operation theatre.* But that doesn’t make it easy for her to navigate peacefully on the campus by herself. She says it is very common for boys to stop a girl and ask her name or try to help us. They will ask for our phone number and later call us or try to trace us on Facebook. Her friend and roommate Pallavi always go out together and never alone. Speaking of her experience, she says *“Once I was going to Arts faculty with my friend to submit the admission form. And the boys were commenting on my friend’s breast openly. There were so many boys standing at the same place, but no one protested or said anything”*. This everyday sexism and open hostility towards females discourage many girls to opt for classes in the department. Although the quality of teaching is much better than MMV College girls are scared of going to the department. Citing another example of her friend Pallavi says, *she wanted to know the syllabus from her senior and most of her classmates were boys in the department. A guy said where do you stay give me your address, if you need any help I will come. She got so scared that she came to the women college and asked me for the syllabus.* That is why even during the day time girls prefer going out with another female company. Pallavi generally feels boys from Varanasi are not very good. They will try to be friends unnecessary during NCC camps or in public spaces in the city. Overall there is a complete lack of public spaces for boys and girls to come together. There are very few Dhaba or tea shops, and there is no culture of students using these spaces for discussions or interactions. The Lanka Gate at the entrance of BHU campus is used for public protests or gatherings. Going to Ghat is neither easy nor financially feasible for students on a daily basis.

The Dilemma of a Good Girl

The students in BHU are largely from small towns of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The middle-class moralities as one of the student said is taught at home and reinstalled by the university too which is

ironical. *They should teach us to be rational and free human beings rather we are monitored more severely than our guardians.* Often the men who belong to the same town, village or caste groups behave like their guardians and try to control the girl. Ragini says, “a girl will be careful of what will she wear. At most girls will wear *kurti* and jeans. Girls who are coming from the border areas of villages in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have to be very careful. If the male members see them her parents will be informed. Many girls during the recent protests, who were living in the hostel, had covered their face and joined it. They were afraid of being noticed. They wanted to be part of it but couldn’t come out in the open. For example, Latika is the first female in her family to come out for education. She says one has to follow the culture of the place we come from. *We come from a rural background. Normally we wear kurti and wearing jeans is rarity. Here if I wear jeans and people stare, I am not bothered. But when I go to my hometown, I don’t feel comfortable and only wear kurti.* Many girls spoke to confirmed this negotiation and treading between the overall environment and freedom in Varanasi in comparison to where they come from. Everything is reported to the girl’s family. Everyone wants to be their guardian, even if they are not related to that individual. Girls who join political groups do so in hiding, and generally, most of them don’t because the family members will be informed by some male relative, brother or cousin. Pallavi does not have this dilemma, *“this is my personal issue. My family members are very liberal; I am free to choose and do what I wish to. Even then it is disturbing when one gets to know that people are talking behind your back”*. The good girl test is further reinforced ironically by the female teacher. They are always tested for their skills in household work not matter how educated she is. The teachers in the class will say a girl should know how to cook, clean and wash because in future she has to get married. Interestingly girls who are from urban areas and are financially strong which can also be categorized as upper caste and class believe it is the girls who are from rural backgrounds who reinforce the gender stereotyping roles. They are not aware of gender issues and don’t want to be involved in any political activity. These girls will not raise a voice if a boy touches her because she is scared. On the other hand, the girls from rural areas are walking a fine line between the everyday sexism in the campus and the regulated and monitored freedom provided by her family.

Caste and the Rural-Urban Divide

The articulation of gender issues and its various manifestations in the campus is riddled with caste and class division between the students. Every girl or boy spoken to explains attitude and behaviour through the prism of these two classifications. There is a general divide between those who come from a rural background and those who are from urban centers. Many even observed that girls who are vocal and at the forefront of gender justice issues are the ones who come from

financially better of families are bold, wore a different kind of cloths and are confident. Pallavi interestingly cites this variation talking about two of her friends who were from the same village in Bihar. Her other friend who was from the same village as this girl but was financially weak was timid and scared. Even if she would wear some fashionable clothes, she was shy and not confident. *Such girls have more baggage to save respect of her family.* Therefore she believes that 70% of our population which is still living in the villages will take time to mingle with the rest 30% in urban spaces. Two friends from law faculty feel since the course fee is less in BHU it is easy for boys from rural background to take admission. I am not saying that rural background is bad but *Unki harkaten thodi ajeeb hoti hain, wo gamcha le kar dance karne wala, (they have strange behaviors and dance in rural style)* meaning if there is any function in the faculty they will dance wearing a *gamcha* which is technically not bad but then if you are maintaining professionalism then it doesn't look good in college. She believes it is these boys who comment if a girl is performing or use abusive language. All this is done by a lot of *Gamche wale log*³⁵ as she summarises it. There are other categories of boys who are from a rural background and rich and feel that they are *Bade bapp ke Bigrail bacche (spoiled children of rich parents)* and don't have to worry about their future.

Ragini has done her schooling from Delhi Public School. Her father works in NTPC. She belongs to the OBC category. Highlighting the caste bias in the campus, she shares her experience. "When I am allotted hostel girls will ask are you from quota category. It is a common practice in BHU she says. Although in school I was not even aware of my caste identity. Once in a viva, my friend was asked her full name, just to know her caste. The researcher scholars experience the most open type of caste biasness. Many PhD scholars highlighted that those who are from the backward community find it difficult to get a supervisor. *If at all you get one, they will exploit you.* In law faculty, the backward community students will be refused by the upper caste faculty. They will say we don't have a seat, but they will take upper caste students. If you want to do the research you have to make relations with your committee members, and therefore most students are busying touching the feet of their professors as Vikas puts it.

³⁵ A Piece of cloth similar to a scarf used by men mostly in rural areas and is called as Gamcha in northern India. It symbolizes rural and illiterate men for the urban folks.

My name is Shradhaa and I am from Jaunpur , I am Manisha and I am from Jaunpur but from a different village. We have joined the botany lab for research internship since February in BHU. We live outside by renting a room. A number of girls have come from our college to Varanasi. Our college is co-education. We had completed our graduation from Purvanchal University. In our college if after the class girls are found hanging around the teachers would scold us. We don't go to the canteen in our college. Shradhaa said, *"I always worry that my father should not be insulted because of me. I want to do something good and make them proud. People in the village comment and say things like, we wonder if she is even studying their or God knows what is she doing. She is aware that she can't carry so much baggage, I do as I wish. Even the parents are always scared because there is so much insecurity driven by the villagers. Narrating her experience in the college in her provincial town Shradhha says, "I used to travel everyday 20-25km to my college and have faced all kinds of harassment in the local bus. I wanted to speak up but I had to be quite because I had to travel everyday on the same route. And I was the only girl. One boy would keep asking for my phone number. I use to share it with my parents, because I couldn't tolerate it. They would ask me to be quite and say nothing can be done. Her friend Manisha feels very irritated with this constant tension about their security and safety. I always worry about the way people are thinking about me. I know what my owners think about me but I don't care. How much can I worry? One never knows who will behave in what way. They have been in the city of Varanasi from last few months and wish to watch a movie. But we are scared and are building confidence to go out in the city. We want to go to the Ghat at night but our landlady says we should be back home by 7pm. It is better to go to such places with boys. We are all girls. So we are hesitant. We want to go out for shopping too.*

It is girls from a rural background who carry the extra burden of being careful about their reputation and their family's respect. During this interview, several of them repeated that it is important to have freedom, but we need to control it too. *"I think girls should have full freedom. They want to perform and they can. A girl is only worried about her respect; otherwise, she has nothing to stop. We worry about what to wear. We have come from the village. We need to think before wearing jeans or top; we need to think who will say what because in the village people comment on everything".* The dilemma for these girls is not to choose between freedom and family reputation; it is probably the realisation that their guardian has given them an opportunity to make a career and it should not be misused. This dilemma is peculiar to females in our society and men don't need to

worry about these issues. Traversing between these multiple identities of caste, class and gender notions prevalent in the society a girl makes an effort to get educated and be independent. The central question which therefore arises is does our university acts as an enabler in this process or a deterrent for a woman.

Conclusion

The everyday encounters and interactions of girls within the campus and with the Varanasi city are driven by the misogynistic and patriarchal mindset of the society. Like Latika says, *it is part of Varanasi's culture for men to behave in a hostile manner towards women. They don't believe in women having any agency and the possibility of exercising it in their everyday life.* Swati thinks *we need to normalise the idea that girls can be seen in public places. Earlier it was a rarity, so if somebody were found, she would be harassed. It was university culture to believe that if a girl is outside her hostel after 8 pm, she won't be a good girl.* The underlying of caste identity with this misogynist behaviour complicates the gender issue further. Vikas says caste identity is detrimental even for a boy and girl relationship. He says, *"Boys will never have a girlfriend from a lower caste. And they are not even ready to change their mindset"*. Highlighting the caste dynamic in IIT Swati says, *"till a few years back the first 50 roll numbers were of general category and students would figure out who is from reserved category. We protested and changed this system, so they keep asking our names and titles. It is common to grade such students less and look down upon them. It is common that such students are not willingly taken up as roommates or in group assignments inside IIT."*

Based on the caste dynamics students assign themselves to different political groups and draw their ideologies of interaction in public space with the women. For example, most girls in the course of this research work in campus single headedly blamed the presence of organisations like ABVP and RSS for the kind of mind-sets the boys carry towards the other gender. Boys from these groups do most instances of nuisance creation if some program is organised by the girls. Inside BHU there is an organisation called Joint Action Committee which has members from Ambedkarite, Bhagat Singh, AISA, NUSI and Youth for Swaraj and other ideologies who have come together to fight against the dominant right-wing presence in the campus. Most boys who are vocal about gender issues are from these committees and are openly speaking about gender issues in public spaces. But they also function in a curbed space and work on social issues indirectly and fear coming out openly. Only ABVP works openly; others have to be discreet, else incidents of violence is quite common. Akhilesh believes discussion around gender issue is negligible because of the presence of RSS, *"their ideology is against women, so most girls in the campus are wary of them"* and a large

number of boys are part of it. And he emphasises most of these boys are upper caste, *“you will rarely find a non-Yadav OBC or SC student being part of it”*. Even teachers are part of RSS meetings points out Vikas, and they are rewarded for it by being appointed as a chairman or any other important post. So the students are imbibing the same mentality. In this situation having an alternate political ideology is difficult. While ABVP and RSS get an endorsement from BHU other student’s group meet unofficially and have most of their programs at Assi Ghat, a space outside the university. Anikesh say’s *“For them this duality about caste and gender identities is so ingrained because they have been indoctrinated about it at home and even in the university the environment is the same”*. Speaking about his mother, he says, *“My mother refuses to eat with me in the same plate because I have Muslim friends and I don’t tell her that I have female friends too. When I am home, I keep my phone on silent, and I don’t pick up calls of my friends who are girls”*. Coming from such varied backgrounds, Vikas thinks *most boys have no training in how and what to speak to girls. The villages we come from we can never think of speaking to a girl. But slowly these boys are fighting for their sister’s back home although it is just the beginning they believe*. Therefore the change cannot be singularly brought in by changing something in particular. Vishakha can see that *“everyone believes that girls should move ahead in life and they need freedom. But I don’t see this in the behaviour of my classmate or teachers or even my family members”*. Her friend Anamika points out that *our parents will keep saying we are giving you a good education. As if it is a favour for us and there is a pressure to perform well. But boys don’t have such pressure. When they will have such a burden and realise our pressure probably they will learn to behave*. The family, society and the university administration put the whole onus of safety on the girls themselves. Swati says, *girls are always told that you have to be safe on your own. But boys are not told that look at a girl respectfully*. It is the individual choice of a girl what she will wear, where she will go and what time, with whom she will go. You can't disagree or attack her personal choices. *So if you want things to improve and campus become friendly for students, everyone's cooperation is needed*. Just by asking girls to be quiet and suppressing those under rules or regulations will not bring the change. She thinks the overall mentality should change too. Swati who is a final year student in IIT and the only girl in the mechanical department say’s, *“I felt very frustrated working with the students because I realised they are completely depoliticised. They don’t think rationally and they can’t make rational decisions. And if such is the condition of IIT students we can very well imagine about others”*. They have started a study group called Students for Change and is inspired by Bhagat Singh. From the past three years, they are working on the campus through this organisation. Their group is frequently targeted on online platforms by students as well as the faculties for their ideological position. She has tremendous pressure from her family for

not getting involved in such activities. *The administration has always tried to malign the post bearers of our organisations, who also happen to be all women.* Inside the IIT campus, there are only 47 girls among 1200 boys. For the first time in IIT, the secretary, joint-secretary and president of the student union are women. *The boys are very supportive. Their ego does get hurt sometimes, but they are learning.* She has encountered even girls using feminism as a swear word and knows of many females in the campus who don't like coming out openly about their stand and being called a feminist. *Even if you are raising a human rights issue, they will say you are feminist.* She thinks students in IIT draw this analogy from Chetan Bhagat who writes in his novel about the protagonist being a feminist girl and caricaturing the image. When asked do you see any hope amongst all this chaos Shruti thinks "girls from this generation are different? They are sensitive and vocal. Girls are being admitted in the department, so the dynamic is changing". The agitation in December gives them hope and inspiration.

4. Conclusion

Agitations against regressive administrative rules since 2015 in several universities in the country have been common. We have had examples of Pinjra Tod³⁶ which is spear-heading the right for female students to be free of any restrictive hostel timings across universities in India. They have had formidable success in Jamia Millia Islamia University and the University of Delhi. What the girl students emphasise simply is the need to have an equal approach of the university administration and its policies towards both male and female students. In the absence of parity between what is right for male students and wrong for females, such agitation is bound to happen. In the coming times, the number of such incidences will increase as more and more girls are getting aware of their rights as basic human rights and not as exclusive privileges. Based on the accounts of young university women students of AMU and BHU and their processes of embodying the public realm, certain conclusions can be arrived at. The ordering of the university spaces is such that just by the act of how a girl occupies a public space or withdraws from it defines her character. In the case of AMU gendered Islamic ideologies (Mohammad, 2013) defines the way her personal geography is created as well as negotiated. Even within the female students of the university, it is not a homogenous group. Depending on the socio-economic backgrounds they come from the understanding of gender norms and mental map of what is a safe space or where she should traverse is created. And due to this discriminatory practices the undergraduate girls of Abdullah Hall in AMU and MMV in BHU, the women college in the respective university feel that their gated enclaves are free spaces, makes them enjoy themselves and not worry about anything. They are not being watched or monitored for what they are wearing. They need not to worry about harassment. There is a clear spatial marginalisation in the way hostels are placed along the main road for boys in BHU or how Abdullah Hall is placed at the other end of the main campus. Spatial segregation has maintained physical discrimination between the two genders. The university fails to provide equal access and function to encourage equity in the way resources and facilities are provided.

The religious identity of the majority of girls in AMU is the central determinant of defining the acceptable norms of being in public. The Muslim identity and its associated symbols of being attired in a particular way are normalised as the symbol for a good girl. Although during the discussion girls at the same time emphasise that acquiring these sartorial attributes doesn't guarantee safe

³⁶ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pinjra-tod-delhi-girls-fight-back-to-reclaim-public-spaces-for-women/story-BIZuGdeLSiBXNE2onG40QP.html>

passage in the public realm. Character assassination of girls who break these boundaries is a common practice on the campus.

An interesting insight given by the girls from both the campuses is the change in the kind of students who are coming to these Universities for education. It has been noticed that students opting for humanities are not doing so out of choice and only because it is easier to get admitted to these courses. And ironically it is these boys as Saima one of the girl students from AMU had highlighted can be barely imagined as scholars of political science or sociology and are in reality hooligans. This change is reflective of the changing catchment area of these universities. Historically both BHU and AMU have been important centers of learning, but with changing socio-political scenario in the country post-independence, the catchment areas from where the students are coming for education has changed. It was more pan-India in its earlier era's, and at present both these universities are catering to the two least developed states in the country. While physically it is in the state of Uttar-Pradesh and a large number of students are from within the state itself. A considerable portion of enrolled students is from Bihar. In BHU it is the Purvanchal area covering a geographic region of the eastern end of Uttar-Pradesh and western of Bihar. In AMU the presence of boys in Uttar-Pradesh is from Azamgarh-Sambal belt, and the other group is from Bihar. In recent times there has been an increase in students coming from Bengal and Assam, creating a third lobby group on the campus. Most of them are from provincial towns and exposure to the outer-world view is limited. Their religious and caste affiliations predominantly define it. The broader association with the immediate neighbourhood is prominent in AMU, in comparison to BHU. Since BHU is primarily an enclosed space with one common entrance, it is easier to maintain it as an enclave. In the city of Aligarh, the university's interaction with its hinterland is more porous and overlapping. It has physically no definite boundary or a single entry gate to the campus. The hostels are spread over the campus, with intermittent residential neighbourhoods and commercial centers. The residential neighbourhoods are in several cases, quarters of university staff and faculties who have now retired and have constructed private housing. Girls believe the discrimination and gender bias is reflective of the male imagination of the university. This male imagination is not solely of the university authorities but is endorsed by the state. The state over the years has perpetuated these discriminations without changing the gender norms ingrained in university rules and regulations. Protest in some form or the other has always occurred in our campuses, but the state machinery pays more attention to the political demands of boy's student union than genuine requirements of female students. Historically the student union of BHU and AMU has played a decisive role and functions in tandem with the state government and the party to which it is

affiliated. The extensive research work undertaken in BHU and AMU gives us deep insights into the way female body navigates itself daily. The navigation is determined and negotiated both through physical and cultural mean. So, we have a good Muslim girl in AMU who is categorised and is expected to behave in keeping with the Islamic norms prescribed by the society of Aligarh and where they come from. The university does not help them develop a distinct identity or provide them with an agency. The struggle for girls coming from rural backgrounds in BHU is severe because their parents also conform to these gender roles. She is undertaking a multi-layered negotiation on the campus as well as back home.

Girls often termed the rules and regulations as an unreasonable restriction just to maintain discipline. The university doesn't believe in addressing the specific problems of girls. Though boys can make their own rules, girls need to follow and live within that frame. Female students from an undergraduate college in Women College and MMV are portrayed as desperate. Their political participation is discouraged by the university and girls to need to hide their identity while protesting on the campus. They feel the university space is limiting and confining and doesn't let them think as independent beings. The quality of teaching for girls at the undergraduate level is poor, and most of their faculties are contract faculties. The difference in teaching quality further alienates the girls and does little to act as an agency for enabling women empowerment. As a student concluded *The University should teach us to be rational and free human beings rather we are monitored more severely than our guardians*. In the given situation when "Right to the city" propagates the idea of having space to one's heart's desire looks far-fetched. It calls for large scale change in the administration as well as the teaching faculty in the university campuses towards females. Girls struggle hard to get permission to come out of their families and imagine university as a free space. Unfortunately, it proves otherwise.

University is an institution which is embedded in the given society (Bhushan 2016). Therefore the society and the city in which the university is situated should be an enabler for the woman to experience the freedom and rightfully claim her space in the city. Lefebvre's idea of space has been a triangulation of the conceived, perceived and lived experience. Therefore the same university is imagined as spaces of democracy and equality, providing equal opportunities to be able to gain education and acquire agency. But it is perceived differently by our society for both the genders. The subjective experience of a female in the campus in the way she approaches and occupies a public space as simple as a park or the library canteen differs from a boy. These spaces push the female body on the margin and are judgemental of her presence if attempted by the few. As Ranade

puts it “when tenuous structures of power are re-inscribed through space by everyday practices of moving through and occupying space, it is the body that becomes the locus of action for it is through the body that every day is lived, executed and experienced” (Ranade 2007, 1524).

Annexures

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS

1. Details of the person interviewed: name/course enrolled/where are you from/family background.
2. Why did you come to this particular university?
3. Mapping daily practices of women from different residential halls?
4. How comfortable do they feel in many common spaces in the university? Is it a limited access in terms of hours/ activities?
5. Through what activities do they occupy spaces: by sitting there, spending time with other boys of their class, can they be in these spaces alone or is it always in groups?
6. Is walking feasible, in groups /alone/which part/where is it difficult?
7. What are some of the spaces, which is in exclusive domain of girls/boys?
8. How comfortable is it for you to visit and sit in the central library of the university or the university canteen?
9. Do they feel equally assertive and at comfortable in the departments as they feel within their own residential halls?
10. Do they believe some spaces are exclusively for men and it is but natural that women should avoid such spaces? Or should they occupy such spaces?
11. Do you think moral policing is done by the authorities only towards the girl students?
12. How do others judge a girl who goes out for a movie or eats in a restaurant?
13. Are there instances of eve-teasing, molestation within the university areas?
14. Is it difficult to come out of the hostel to participate in various university programs/ or be part of cultural clubs
15. What happens if a girl student decides to stand for university elections? Does she win/is she hooted out by boys/ is she judged for being too outspoken
16. Are there sartorial restrictions when you go out of hostel?
