



**“Lower your voice, this is not your place to talk.”**

**“Be inside before the sun goes down.”**

**“Don’t go there; there will only be men there.”**

**“You asked for it; after all, who would go out this late at night and that too with a boy/man?”**

**“This is not your house; your house is the one you will marry into.”**

Some of us have heard at least one variation of the above statements. Some of us still reel under the impact these words had on us. Some of our decisions still reflect an unconscious reverence for these words. And some of us use the same words often in a ‘well meaning’ manner.

Gendered spaces are not new. Be it restrictions on accessing and using physical spaces or spaces in any other form, women are often expected to conform to predefined sociocultural notions of ‘appropriate’ behaviour. We see overt manifestations of this denial of space being exerted on LGBTQIA+ persons as well. In this edition of the newsletter, we look at the concept of space and place it in different contexts.

Therese Abraham, Research Assistant for the CMGI, had informal conversations with a few community members to understand their conceptions and experiences on what ‘space’ means to them. We provide excerpts from a few of those conversations. The names used are pseudonyms.

### **The importance of space**

*Drishti, Research Associate*

A Room of One’s Own is a feminist literary classic that I associate with ‘space’. Virginia Woolf writes a compelling essay portraying how women are held back by the lack of time, resources and a room of their own— essentially space to be in and think freely. The work resonates with me and many women around us. In our current social setup, most women do not have much to call as their space or personal time anymore. The content of the essay makes even more sense now, where we have the ‘modern’ woman who is tasked with running their homes with little or no help while simultaneously balancing a career or job. That female participation in the workforce has improved does not reflect in the division of labour within households where gender roles remain mostly rigid.



## Space in the family

*Naina, Research Associate*

Being considered an equal in the domestic space, our homes, is very important. Family has a very prominent role in moulding a person's outlook of the world and also on how they are treated. I am lucky to have been brought up in a household which encourages me to go out and explore more. My decisions are considered, and the aim is to aid me in achieving my goals and not hold me back in any way. However, this is not the case everywhere. Cases of little girls being discriminated against in their homes is not new. In fact, when Rima Kallingal, a female actor from my home state talked of not being served fish fry as a child while her brother got one, the internet went berserk and made memes saying that people should give her fish. The entire point of unequal treatment of children based on gender was missed out, or rather ignored.

An enabling domestic space without judgments will also help children feel loved and listened to. Such spaces help create conversations which can help reduce abuse that children face.



## Women Forgotten: One of our own- Dr. Kamla Chowdhry

*Abhay, Student*

The 'founding mother' of IIMA, as Prof. Chinmay Tumble aptly calls her in his article, is yet another woman whose contributions remained oblivious to most of us. Dr. Chowdhry was the de facto Director of IIMA and ran the place for all practical purposes. As per archival records, her elevation or rather recognizing the work she did was side tracked due to blatant sexism. This is a classic example of women being denied their due on account of the misogynistic outlook that people harbour.



## The 'Us' should not mean the 'I' ceases to exist: The idea of space in a relationship.

*Ravi, Academic Associate*

I say this for all genders— the individual needs to exist outside of the relationship. Most relationships that I see are hyper-dependent and space 'consuming'. No one gives space, and this has to change. While this might be a conscious decision in some cases, most of the time it is imposed on one person by the other. Popular culture mediums such as Cinema and TikTok reels often portray this 'toxicity' as the norm to being a loving partner. This needs to change or we will end up with a generation of youth who are not familiar with healthy forms of love.

## A safe space in IIMA

This is where the CMGI steps in. One of our main objectives, as has been made clear in our policy document, is to make the IIMA campus a safe one, regardless of sexual orientation and gender. Feel free to reach out to us at any point you feel need help or guidance. We will always have space for you.



## The Virtual Space- Boon and Bane

*Hannah, Academic Associate*



While cyberbullying and online trolling are not limited to any gender, non-cis-het people are at the receiving end of it disproportionately. They see increased levels of abuse on aspects men are not judged on. Cyberbullying that women face is especially visible when we look at the comments section of posts put up by female celebrities. One can see increased slut shaming, virtue signalling, and obscene comments—which is not often the case with men. Even male cricketers' match performance is attributed to their female partners leading to online trolling.

There are positives to the digital space too. It has helped more women to start small businesses and market their products through platforms such as Instagram. These spaces have helped them gain economic independence and mark out a path for other women to follow. This gains relevance as most women do not have access to lot of low-cost resources.

## Whose city is it? Urban spaces and unequal user experience

*Sampriti, Student*

Popular notions of a city and its public places posit it as a space for freedom of expression, safety, and equality. This cannot be farther from the truth for many of us. We (women) are judged on when, where, and with whom we are seen in public spaces. In most cases we need to have a 'legitimate' cause to be seen outside. I have personally seen how attitudes towards women who are outside after 10 pm change. The same extends to public transport as well. The number of sexual harassment cases that are reported while travelling is concerning. We have a safety issue that needs to be addressed. Research shows how these factors can impede the social and economic advancement of women and thereby affect their standard of living and agency. If we are to truly progress as a nation, creating safer spaces for women to thrive needs to be an important part of the agenda.



We see that space has been understood and contextualised differently. The very idea of space can be tricky as there are no pre-set concrete definitions. We can do our bit to ensure a safe and enabling environment for others by being considerate and treating everyone courteously.

May 8th is celebrated world over as Mother's Day. Take a look [here](#) to view the previous year's issue, where we talk about the ever 'loving' and ever 'suffering' mother and why that needs to change.

The monthly newsletter from the [Committee for Managing Gender Issues \(CMGI\)](#) is an attempt to initiate conversations on discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and related issues. We would love to have the community participate. Please reach out to Therese Abraham at [theresea@iima.ac.in](mailto:theresea@iima.ac.in) for submissions, queries, and/or feedback.

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual harassment or if you would like to make any suggestions regarding curbing sexual harassment or gender bias on campus, please reach out to us at:  
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Please note that any communication with the CMGI is strictly confidential.