INVISIBILITY OF FEMALE STREET NAMES IN URBAN CITIES IN INDIA:

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF CULTURE, LAW, AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS*

Abstract

The article aims to offer an analysis of the invisibility of female street names in select Indian cities. This study is comprised of four Indian cities, each one representing the northern (Delhi), southern (Chennai), eastern (Kolkata), and western (Mumbai) parts of India based on the highest population (Census of India, 2011). These cities have a background of different historical circumstances, diverse political influences, skewed sex ratios, and varied population characteristics that make them a good representative sample for analyzing street names. The role of law and law-making surrounding the naming of streets is examined through this lens of political, social, and historic divisions of these cities in India. This paper then proceeds to examine the guidelines issued by these cites that provide specifications for the change of name of the street. The process for naming and renaming in these cities is as easy as moving a proposal with the state government stating the suggested name of the street accompanied by a brief write up about the accomplishments of the individual whose name is proposed- and the disproportionate number of street names of females sends out the message of the non-recognition of their achievements. The naming of streets as a political choice with traces of the legal history of the city is explored from the ancient background up to the twentieth-century spur of 'reclaiming' India by renaming streets. When read together with the denial of public spaces to women leads to the conclusion that the exclusion and bias of leaving out female names are symbolic of the visual aspects of the roles that women play in society. The present article is probably one of the first such attempts in scholarly literature that looks at female street names in India.

Keywords: female street names, political choices, law and street names

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Résumé

Cet article analyse l'invisibilité des noms de rues féminins dans certaines villes indiennes. Cette étude porte sur quatre villes indiennes représentant le Nord (Delhi), le Sud (Chennai), l'Est (Kolkata) et l'Ouest (Mumbai) de l'Inde sur la base de la population la plus élevée (recensement de l'Inde, 2011). Ces villes présentent un contexte historique différent, des influences politiques diverses, des rapports de masculinité biaisés et des caractéristiques démographiques variées qui en font un échantillon représentatif pour l'analyse des noms de rues. Le rôle de la loi et de l'élaboration des lois entourant la dénomination des rues est examiné sous l'angle des divisions politiques, sociales et historiques de ces villes. Cet article examine ensuite les directives émises par les villes qui fournissent des spécifications pour les changements de noms de rues. Les processus de dénomination et de changements de noms dans ces villes se limitent à la soumission d'une proposition au gouvernement. Cette soumission indique le nom suggéré et est accompagnée d'un résumé des réalisations de la personne dont le nom est proposé. Le nombre disproportionné de rues portant un nom de femme envoie le message que leurs réalisations ne sont pas reconnues au même titre que celles des hommes. La dénomination des rues en tant que choix politique est explorée au travers de diverses époques. L'article discute notamment de l'impulsion du vingtième siècle de « reconquérir » l'Inde en renommant les rues. Si l'on ajoute à l'exclusion des noms de femmes le fait que les femmes se voient refuser l'accès aux espaces publics, il est possible de conclure que cette exclusion est symbolique des aspects visuels des rôles que jouent les femmes dans la société. Le présent article est probablement l'une des premières tentatives de ce type dans les écrits qui se penchent sur les noms de rues féminins en Inde.

Mots-clés : Noms de rues féminins, choix politique, loi et noms de rue

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Names of streets have a strong physical presence in everyday life, brought about by the function of streets to assist in navigation or identification of a specific location.[1] Even though it remains a mundane facet of urban management, it makes up the foundations of urban spatial imaginaries.[2] The cultural and social meanings inscribed on these street names are a constant influence in the public spaces. Gender bias in street names should therefore not be overlooked. Streets that are named after females are in a low proportion as opposed to streets named after men. The proportions are so low that there is a lack of visibility of female street names. Street names also have the function of promoting significant events and historical figures by commemorating them so that it forms part of public consciousness daily,[3] and the small numbers of streets named after female names revive the principle of invisibility of women in the public space.

There is the added aspect of the naming of the streets being based on the influence of political parties that are in power which determines the directions in which streets are named or renamed, despite the participants being based on in the cultural production of shared past.[4] Once again the invisibility of female street names reflects the top-down

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[1] Charlie M. Shakleton, 'Urban Street Names: An Opportunity to Examine Biocultural Relationships?' (2018) 13 (7) PloS ONE, e0200891, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200891.

[2] Rose-Redwood R, Alderman D. and Azaryahu M, 'Contemporary Issues and Future Horizons of Critical Urban Toponymy' in Rose-Redwood R, Alderman D and Azaryahu M (eds) *The Political Life of Urban Streetscapes: Naming, Politics, and Place* (Taylor & Francis Group 2017).

[3] Georges Augustins, 'Naming, Dedicating: Street Names and Tradition' (September 2004) 15 (3) HA 289, 10.1080/0275720042000257421.

[4] Daniel Oto-Peralías, 'What do Street Names Tell Us? The "City-Text" as Socio-Cultural Data' (2016) Working Papers in Responsible Banking & Finance, University of St. Andrews <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/business/rbf/workingpapers/RBF16_013.pdf> accessed 12 June 2021.

political influence that has not shown any interest in acknowledging or participating in bringing about visibility in female street names.

Major cities around the world have low numbers of streets named after women. In Paris, it is only 6%,[5] in London, it is 27.5%, in Germany too female names are also in the minority[6]. In Italy the situation is similar: the percentage of female streets varies from 4% to just under 12%. In Milan, there are only 130 female street names. In Brussels Capital Region (BCR), it is 7%.[7] These trends reflect the reality of leaving out naming streets after women.

There are indeed numerous initiatives across countries for pursuing a more balanced presence of women in the public sphere.[8] The BCR had called for a change to be made to street names, to include female street names by public participation from its citizens to suggest these names. A draft resolution to name more streets in BCR for women has also come up.[9] These changes are also seen in Paris now, with more calls to change street

[5] According to a study by Le Figaro, as mentioned in Pamela Rougerie, 'Streets of Paris Renowned for Honoring Women' *Madame Figaro* (Paris, 26 August, 2015), <https://madame.lefigaro.fr/societe/des-rues-a-paris-renommees-pour-honorer-les-femmes-260815-97892> accessed 12 June 2021. See also, Anon, 'France: Feminists Group 'Renames' Paris Streets,' *BBC* (France, 26 August 2015) <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-34062602> accessed 12 June 2021.

[6] As revealed by a work by the daily Die Zeit, information available at: <https://www.zeit.de/feature/streetdirectory-streetnames-origin-germany-infographic-english> accessed 12 June 2021.

[7] Nouria Ouali, Pierre Lannoy, Virginie Desamoury, Sandrine Guilleaume, Fanny Mayné, Sophie Merville, Charlotte Odier et Adèle Thébaux, 'Women in Brussels Street Names. Topography of a Minoritization,' (2021) BS 1 <https://journals.openedition.org/brussels/5433> https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.5433 accessed 23 June 2021.

[8] Liora Bigon and Dorcas Zuvalinyenga, 'Urban Pulse- Gendered Urban Toponyms in the Global South: A Time for De-colonization' (2020) 42 (2) UG 226 https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2020.1825275.

[9] Pierre-Nicolas Schwab, 'The Feminization of Street Names: Useful Debate or a Political Artifice?' *INTO THE MINDS* (Brussels, 20 March 2020) <https://www.intotheminds.com/blog/en/feminisation-street-names/> accessed on 18 May 2021.

names to female names.[10] There are many more such examples of initiatives taken to integrate gender issues into areas concerning urban space.

There is no such initiative taken by policymakers in India to address the issue of consciously including female street names.[11] The only work done in this area is to access the inequalities through initiatives taken by developers like Aruna Shankaranarayanan at Mapbox[12] and through open source databases Genderlog.[13] In 2015, Mapbox found that only Bangalore had the highest number of female street names, which stands at 39 %.[14] This is not even half of the street names, and a lower proportion, though much better than other cities.

To address the gap in studies that look into female street names and the laws that surround the naming and renaming of streets, the present study aims to offer an analysis of this gender bias that exists in selected Indian cities. The present study is comprised of four

[10]Selma Franseen, 'In Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels, Feminists are Campaigning to Name More Streets after Women' *CITY MONITOR* (Brussels, 15 August 2018) <https://citymonitor.ai/fabric/paris-amsterdam-and-brussels-feminists-are-campaigning-name-more-streets-after-women-4137> accessed on 29 June 2021.

[11] The one example that stands out to address the issue of naming streets after female names in India comes from Nagaur district in Udaipur, Rajasthan. The renaming of these roads are done to facilitate toppers of board examinations from Nagaur district in order to boost education of girls in that area. See, Geetha Sunita Pillai, 'Rajasthan: Nagaur Names Village Roads after Girl Toppers,' *THE TIMES OF INDIA* (Udaipur, 4 August 2020) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/udaipur/nagaur-names-village-roads-after-girl-toppers/articleshow/77339599.cms> accessed on 29 June 2021.

[12] Aruna Shankaranarayanan, 'Mapping Female versus Male Street Names' (3 November 2015) <https://blog.mapbox.com/mapping-female-versus-male-street-names-b4654c1e00d5> accessed on 29 June 2021.

[13] Gnderlog twitter link calling for collecting the name of roads in India named after women, <https://twitter.com/genderlogindia/status/636473536626880512> accessed on 29 June 2021.

[14] Linda Poon, 'Mapping the Sexism of City Street Names' *BLOOMBERY* (Washington D.C., 5 November 2015) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-04/mapping-the-sexism-of-street-names-in-major-cities> accessed on 29 June 2021.

Indian cities, each one representing the northern (Delhi), southern(Chennai), eastern (Kolkata), and western (Mumbai) parts of India based on the highest population (Census of India, 2011). These cities provide a diverse background of historical circumstances, political influences, skewed sex ratios, and varied population characteristics that make them a good representative sample for analyzing street names. The role of law and law-making surrounding the naming of streets is examined through this lens of political, social, and historic divisions of these cities in India. This paper then proceeds to examine the guidelines issued by these cities (and the states associated with the cities) that provide specifications for change of name so that reflects the need to restore a sense of history to the people. The naming of streets as a political choice with traces of the legal history of the city is explored from the ancient background up to the twentieth-century spur of 'reclaiming' India by renaming streets. When read together with the denial of public spaces to women leads to the conclusion that the exclusion and bias of leaving out female names are symbolic of the visual aspects of the roles that women play in society. The present article is probably one of the first such attempts in scholarly literature that looks at female street names in India.

PART 1. NAMING AND RENAMING URBAN STREETS IN INDIA: COMMEMORATIVE VALUE

Commemorative naming of streets is an act of remembering the historical and cultural significances attached to the name, whether individual, collective or one based on events. The commemorative significance of naming a street is used to reflect the cultural aspects of a city and its history.[15] As one historian puts it that there is great significance in the naming

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[15] Palonen E., 'The Politics of Street Names: Local, National, Transnational Budapest' in Beyen M., Deseure B. (eds) *Local Memories in a Nationalizing and Globalizing World* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015) https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137469380_3.

street names as it constitutes the memory of a city and bear witness to its history in its varied forms, whether it is in landscapes, economic activities, cultural and political life.[16]

Retaining historical memories in public spaces is universal with street names being a reflection of the society, especially the masculine nature of society at a point in time.[17] The power of street names arises from its ability to narrate the imaginaries of the past in the numerous narratives of the urban city.[18]

Two broad categorizations of contemporary street names can be found in urban Indian cities- those motivated by real semantic meaning like the Cooperage Road in Mumbai city, Maharashtra state in India. This road was named after the cooperage activities that took place nearby, with coopers being the men who made wooden drums or barrels for the shipping industry.[19] Another example is the street names that are found in the streets leading up to a particular hospital, like the Government Hospital in Chennai has the street names after it, ie, GH street. Or the street called VP street, next to the Victoria Public Hall.

The second category is the street name having arbitrary motivations (like that of the Shantipath in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi that does not lead to Shanti or peace but commemorates the diplomatic atmosphere of the street as a result of the many embassies in the area).

The commemorative street names of interest for this paper are those that are individual names, whether fictional or historical. These names, in all the four cities, make up 2/3rd of the total street names.

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[16] Jean Bouvier,a historian, tells us about the city of Aix-en-Provence, as mentioned in Schwab (n 9).

[17] Maoz Azayahu, 'The Power of Commemorative Street Names' (1996) 14 EPD; SS 311.

[18] ibid.

[19] Aditi Rao, 'A Forgotten Profession gives this Road its Name, its History' *The Times of India* (Mumbai, 22 May 2017) <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/a-forgotten-profession-gives-this-road-its-name-its-history-4667327/> accessed on 29 June 2021.

The naming of roads was not as rigid nor organized as it is today in Indian cities. As a result of the fluid nature of the roads themselves, names of roads also did not stay. The shifting nature of roads was the result of nature, for example, plains being submerged during the rainy season in pre-colonial Bengal. Another example is the problem of identification of roads when it was sowed with paddy everywhere resulting in the impossibility of naming of roads.[20] It was only after the conquest of India by the British that roads and road names started to take the concrete shape that it has today.

Looking at the history of Old Delhi, built by Mughal emperor Shahjahan between 1639-1648, there were no public places named after individuals. Rather, it was named after places, as was the case of naming the seven gates of the city of Delhi. These were named Kashmiri, Kabuli, Lahore, Ajmeri, and Akbarabadi.[21] In Delhi, the unnamed roads and bazaars (shop areas) were named over time after what was being sold or were famous for in these areas. Like the Big Baazar street in Calicut, Kerala. This was also the same for localities and meant that none were named after individuals, except in exceptional cases like canals, gardens, and the city itself being named after the emperor, Shahjahanabad.

The naming of streets saw a shift during the period of British rule in India, the foremost reason being the definite nature of roads that was achieved as the architecture of the city and surveying and mapping that was introduced by them. This brought about the contemporary ideas of naming roads as a mode of identification and navigation. The postal system also brought about the fixing of names with a sense of permanence and stands informed of every change that is brought by law.

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[20] Smritikumar Sarkar, *Technology and Rural Change in Easter India: 1830–1980* (OUP 2014) 24 - 25.

[21] Stephen P. Blake, 'Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739' in R E Frykenberg (ed.) *Delhi through the Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (OUP 1986) 152–91.

The present-day National Capital Territory of Delhi, the capital city since 1911 having a systematic layout of streets, localities, lanes, and bylanes. The British conquest of India also resulted in recording streets and naming them with English words and European connections, for example, Kingsway, Queensway were the street names given to two streets in central Delhi. During the British rule in India, renaming of existing places did not take place, rather naming of towns and hills founded by the British were named by them. Hence, older towns, cities, streets, retained their names from the Mughal times. The marketplace of Chandini Chowk, established in 1650 CE, built in a half-moon pattern (as shops were built then) still retains the name. This is one of the oldest street names of Delhi which is still used today.[22] The British rule did bring about the concept of naming streets, roads, cities, and towns after individuals that were continued post-independence.

The present-day practice of renaming names of states, cities, and streets to disassociate with the Muslim and British period has resulted in the saffronization of these names.[23]

PART 2. NAMING AND RENAMING URBAN INDIAN STREETS: LEGAL ASPECTS

The present phenomena of renaming of streets interfere in the mandate of not meddling with road names as under the Ministry of Home Guidelines, 1975, with the renaming of roads slated to be an exception and not the rule. Renaming a street is not seen as an option and will normally not be changed. Only new streets, roads, etc., will be considered for being

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[22] Nidhi, 'The History and Practice of Naming Streets in Delhi' (2017) 2 (3) IJARD 215.

[23] Rizwan Ahmad, 'Renaming India: Saffronisation of Public Places' *Aljazeera* (Qatar, 12 October 2018) <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/10/12/renaming-india-saffronisation-of-public-spaces> accessed on 29 june 2021. See also, Vikas Pandey, 'Allahabad: The Name Change that killed my City's Soul' BBC News' (Delhi, 7 November 2018) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-46015589> accessed on 29 June 2021.

named after eminent personalities. Further, names, which are a part of history, will not be altered. A name change cannot be facilitated through the normal course of the council for the state, based on representations. Guidelines in later years have retained this exceptional nature of change of name (2006).[24] It is only the naming of an unnamed street or road finds mentions in the local laws.

In Delhi, naming a street involves section 11 clause (q) of the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 (NDMC Act) making it an obligatory function of the Council under the Act to name a street. The procedure mentioned in the NDMC Act finds mention in section 123 (1) (a) with the Chairperson and Council deciding on an action based on the representation by persons regarding a name for the street. The process remains intact in other cities mentioned in this study, Kolkata,[25] Mumbai,[26] and Chennai,[27] with the respective local bodies being involved.

In renaming, the directive comes from the Government of India rather than representation by associations or groups living in that locality. Renaming a street is an exception that has instead become the rule with multiple name changes done by each government that comes to power.[28] The street names of Kingsway became Rajpath, Queensway became Janpath, Curzon road became Kasturba Gandhi Marg post-independence of India from the British rule.

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[24] Guidelines dated 1.12.2006.

[25] Section 385, Kolkatta Municipal Corporation Act, 1980.

[26] Section 327, Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, 1888,

[27] Section 228, Chennai City Municipal Corporation Act, 1919.

[28] Siddharth Bhatia, 'Politician's Game: Changing the Name of the Street' *The Free Press Journal* (Delhi, 20 May 2016) <https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/politicians-game-all-in-the-name> accessed on 29 June 2021.

Methodology

Identification of the gender of a street name was based on the simple dictionary method identification of identifying female names that are commonplace. Internet resources were used for these dictionaries. Researchers working on this paper were residents of Chennai and well versed with the vernacular Tamil words that formed the street names (like *Manimekalai* and *Kannagi*). For street names of Delhi, it was neutral language names, which means that they were English or names that were popular and part of school syllabi. For street names of Mumbai and Kolkatta that are in the vernacular were routed through online dictionaries and google translate to help with understanding the female/ male version of the name. Gender-neutral names were considered in this study as feminine, with no evidence to prove otherwise. These include names like teachers colony, baby Nagar, etc. In all four cities, these names form around 2 % within the total percentage of female names.

Four urban cities form part of this study, each city taken from northern (Delhi), southern(Chennai), eastern (Kolkata), and western (Mumbai) parts of India based on the highest population (Indian Census, 2011). Bangalore rates higher than Chennai in the most populated, however, research exists on females street names in Bangalore and hence it is excluded from this study. Bangalore has 39 % female street names, the highest number among Indian cities.[29]

For the city of Chennai, the latest entire list was available on the official website of Chennai Corporation.[30] However, for the other three cities, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Delhi,

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[29] Poon (n 14).

[30] Street names of Chennai, <https://chennaicorporation.gov.in/others/StreetNames.pdf> accessed on 29 June 2021).

the street names were not available as a complete list on the official websites. These were procured from other resources. [31] The absence of official records means that the data available through crowd-sourcing might not be complete records.

This study is only about commemorative street names irrespective of the size of the street or its location. This is so as it was the only feasible way to tackle the analytical material, knowing well that a female street name in a central location does not have the same impact (commemorative) as a peripheral lane.

The names of the streets are categorized into individual, collective, historical, and fictional female names. Historical names include those names that have relevance at a point of time in history, an example would be the name of Indira, the first female Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi. A fictional name will include female names of characters from books (Kannagi street, from the character in Silapathigaram a book in Tamil), female names of books (Manimegalai street, named after a Tamil epic by the same name, composed by Kulavanikan Seethalai Satanar approximately around 6th century), and of female goddesses (Laxmi streets in Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata) and saints (St, Monica street names). Street names based on general occupations (Paranthewalle Galli in Delhi) are also part of the commemorative names and the one with specific motivations that lead up to a hospital or an educational institute (Ethiraj road near Ethiraj Women's College in Chennai).

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[31] Street names of Kolkata, <http://wbpwd.gov.in/files/contents/road_list_of_pwd_04112017.pdf> accessed on 29 June 2021, Street names of Mumbai, <http://www.ebookmaps.com/en/mumbai-bombay-streets-on-map-for-ebook-readers-en.php> accessed on 29 June 2021, Mapbox crowdfunding resources for Delhi street names.

Scope of the Study Delhi: Delhi has been the centre of successive dynasties from the Tomar empire in 1060 to the British empire. It was the capital city for many of these dynasties and was retained as the capital city till 1911 when the British administration moved the capital from Kolkatta to Delhi. Post-independence, Delhi retained its position as the capital city. The practice of naming streets is not clear before municipalities were formed. The formalization of street names started in 1911 with the creation of the Delhi Municipal Council.[32] The number of street names according to crowd-sourcing is 1716.

Kolkata: Today it is the capital city of West Bengal, and was developed as a colonial city by the British empire, retained until 1911 when the capital was relocated to Delhi. Post-independence in 1947, as was the trend elsewhere in India, public spaces were renamed after leaders and social reformers involved in the freedom struggle and socio-cultural transformation. As it is with other cities in India, though street name change is a request made to the Road Renaming Advisory Authority of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, it is determined through the whims of the ruling party.[33] A total of 1848 street names are examined in this study that was derived through multiple sources.[34]

Chennai: The influence on Chennai city has been of a long history of South Indian empires, including the powerful dynasties of Cholas and Pallavas[35] to the Mughals before it became part of the East India Company under the British rule. Chennai attained the role of

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[32] Nidhi (n 22).

[33] Priyanka Ghosh, 'Street and Place Name Changes in Kolkata: India's First Modern City' in S. Brunn and R. Kehrein (eds) *Handbook Of The Changing World Language Map* (Springer 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02438-3_174

[34] <http://kolkatatrafficpolice.gov.in/ONEWAY_REGULATION.pdf> accessed on 29 June 2021.

[35] <https://chennai.nic.in/history/> accessed on 29 June 2021.

an important naval base under the British administration.[36] Official records of street names are available, and the total number of street names is 43,369.

Mumbai: Mumbai has been under Hindu rule as part of the kingdom of Ashoka followed by Mohammedan rulers before the era of Portuguese colonization, and finally as a colony of the British empire. The Suez Canal enabled connections between Mumbai and the rest of the world, beginning from 1869, thereby enabled Mumbai to become a major port in India. The city expanded drastically post-independence and as of today suburbs like Andheri, Malad, Thane, etc are included as part of the city. 2652 street names are part of this study.

Findings The total number of street names analysed in the four Indian cities of Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, and Mumbai is 49,585. The average number of female street names in all four cities is 3.46. Among them in Chennai, female names in total form 2.76%. From this, fictional female street names are the maximum at 63.33% of the total female street names. This is followed by individual female street names at 22.76% and historical female street names at 10.98 percent.

Mumbai has a higher percentage of female street names from the informal list available at 3.47%. From this, fictional female street names are the maximum at 41.30% followed by historical female street names (33.70%) and individual female street names (19.57%).

Delhi has the highest percentage with 4.83% females street names, with historical female street names at 45%. Kolkata has 2.75 % streets named after females with historical female street names being the highest at 41.17% out of these numbers.

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[36] ibid.

Discussion The population of women in India is nearly half of its total population, at 48.46 %,[37] however their representation in street names is invisible. In all cities analysed in this study, the number of female street names is meagre despite critical geographic literature asserting that the representation of all sectors of a population and social inclusion in a symbolic way is required to acknowledge their place in culture and society.[38] Studies show that exclusion at a symbolic representative level result in an unfriendly environment, and further that exclusion, in most situations, affect the exercise of representative activities. Due to how gender roles were socially constructed, it appears that the social organization empowered men to play the most memorable roles of history, while feminine roles have been long ascribed to the private sphere of life; this explanation could account for the unequal division between men and women in naming streets. [39]

Historically, the political exclusion of women in India is well documented,[40] and is seen in public life also.[41] This results in less or no acknowledgment of their work, thereby making it more difficult for them to mark their presence in the public realm. In this context,

[37]Census of India (2011) https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/mp/06Gender%20Composition.pdf accessed on 29 June 2021.

[38]Emanuela Lombardo and Petra Meier, 'Good Symbolic Representation: The Relevance of Inclusion' (2018) 51 (2) PS 327.

[39] Ana-Maria Niculescu-Mizil, '(Re)naming Streets in Contemporary Bucharest: From Power Distribution to Subjective Biography' (2014), <http://www.analize-journal.ro/library/files/numarul_3/ana_mizil.pdf> accessed on 30 June 2021.

[40] As an example, see, Sanjay Kumar and Praveen Rai, 'Gendered political exclusion: Crucial Implications for Indian Democracy' (December 2007) 37 (4) SOCIAL CHANGE 180, <https://www.csds.in/uploads/custom_files/1568798182_Gendered%20Political%20Exclusion%20Crucial%20Implications%20for%20Indian%20democracy.pdf> accessed on 30 June 2021.

[41] Subrata Bagchi, *Beyond the Private World: Indian Women in the Public Sphere*, (Primus Books 2014).

the under-representation of female street names not only reflects a historical and cultural fact; it can also contribute to its perpetuation by making the presence of male names to be more natural in the public sphere. This can result in a certain feeling of exclusion from the urban space, which can further affect the emotional well-being and the urban political experience. [42]

According to the 2021 WEF Global Gender Gap report, India has slipped from 112 to 140 amongst the 156 countries.[43] The decadal review (2010-2019) shows an increase in violence against women in India.[44]Despite decades of progress closing the equality gap between men and women throughout the world, almost 90% of the world's population continues to harbor prejudiced attitudes towards women (The Gender Social Norms Index 2020).[45] Much remains to be done to challenge gender-based disparities. Empowering women has become one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, and their mention and presence in public spaces can be one of the many tools used for bringing about the visibility of their contributions and promoting gender equality.

The vast majority of female street names referred to, at least in the city of Chennai, is that of mythological characters. This pattern shows the expansive use of female stories and characters in stories, especially in ancient Tamil Literature. An example is that of the

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[42] Bigon and Zuvalinyenga (n 8).

[43] M Muneer and Chitra Talwar, 'India must Bridge the Gender Parity Gap' *The Hindu Business* (India, 26 April 2021) <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/india-must-bridge-the-gender-parity-gap/article34416513.ece> accessed on 30 June 2021.

[44] K M Pavithran, 'Decadal Review (2010-2019): Crime Rate Increases Both in the Case of Crimes against Women & SCs' *The Facilty* (India, 7 January 2021) THE FACTLY <https://factly.in/decade-review-2010-2019-crime-rate-increases-both-in-the-case-of-crimes-against-women-scs/> accessed on 30 June 2021.

[45] UNDP, 'Almost 90% of Men/Women Globally Are Biased Against Women' (5 March 2020) <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/almost-90-menwomen-globally-are-biased-against-women> accessed on 30 June 2021.

Tamil epic of *Manimekalai* (the name of the story and the character), and *Kannagi,* a central female character in a Tamil epic verse. This was composed by Ilango Adigal, titled Shilapaddikaram, where Kannaki is a woman faithful to her husband, Kovalan, even after his infidelity. Kannaki puts a king and his kingdom on fire after her husband is wrongfully executed for theft. She is worshiped as a goddess in Tamil Nadu and is a symbol of a wife's chastity, devotion, and loyalty to her husband. The story of Manimekalai is a sequel to Shilapaddikaram, written by Kulavanigam Chittalai Shattanar, dating back between the 2nd and 6th century BC and is based on the daughter of Kannaki's husband, Kovalan, and his paramour, a dancer named Madhavi. Madhavi becomes a Buddhist nun after Kovalan's unjust execution and her daughter Manimekalai too shuns the pleasures of the world. When she is pursued by the prince of the Chola dynasty, Udayakumara, she eludes him and embraces Buddhism. Going from one place to another, learning about Buddism, and at one point disguising herself as a man to debate with teachers of various religions and sects., reverses and extends conventional ideas about masculine and feminine behavior to give his account of a woman seeking to achieve the ultimate state beyond gender distinctions."[46] All three women have streets named after them in Chennai.

The mention of Christian saints in all these cities shows in a country with only 2.30 % of the population[47] as Christians show the influence of the British conquest in India for nearly 200 years. It was also the British that developed these cities and named some of these streets before the period post-independence brought about renaming episodes.

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[46] Roshen Dalal, 'Manimekalai: Seeking the Ultimate Beyond Gender' *The Pioneer* (Dehradun, 6 December 2018) <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2018/state-editions/manimekalai—seeking-the-ultimate-beyond-gender.html> accessed on 30 June 2021.

[47] Religious Census of India (2011), <https://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php> accessed on 30 June 2021.

There are also the cultural dimensions that are visible in the street names, with Delhi and Kolkata having more historical street names after females, a reflection of the freedom struggle movement against the British rule in these cities. A large number of fictional names in the city of Chennai, a temple town, that includes goddesses is symbolic of the nature of the city. The majority of the fictional names among the four cities are found in Chennai and Mumbai. These names are either names of Goddesses or from stories and are reflective of the environment of the numerous temple towns in Tamil Nadu (Chennai is the capital city) and the ancient Sangam Tamil Literature. This is similar to Marathi literature and the veneration of Goddesses in local culture.

Women born outside of India are also recognized by street names. These women include, for example, nun and missionary Mother Theresa (Mother Theresa Crescent Road, Delhi), in the field of art/ painting Amrita Shergil (Amrita Shergil Marg in Delhi) and education Sister Nivedita (Sister Nivedita Road, Kolkatta, named after Miss Margaret E. Noble who came to India to help Swami Vivekananda and established the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Sister Nivedita girl's School in Kolkatta. Miss Margaret E. Noble changed her name to Sister Nivedita after joining Swami Vivekananda in his plans to work for Indian women and their education.)

The limitation of this study is that except for the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkatta, all street names were not analysed. This was the result of the non-availability of official data, and hence this paper relied on crowdsourced information.

CONCLUSION

Unequal societies might not change as a result of renaming/naming streets after female names. Even if the renaming/naming of streets after female names might not create more

rights for women, the role of awareness creation through visibility of female names is relevant, especially to keep alive the cultural and social meanings inscribed on these street names. The presence of female street names that are in public spaces and as a place for emancipation for women will advance the image of women as people, and that need to be protected than attacked. This is relevant as public places and women have a history of intimidation and injury, with women being told not to walk the street alone and the restriction put on women in venturing into public spaces. Such a policy contributes to the UN Millennium Development Goals of gender equality, empowerment of women, and more inclusive and safer cities.[48]This paper highlights the invisibility of female street names in the four Indian cities and can be used as crucial information for urban management to monitor progress towards increasing the female share of street names, by naming new streets, unnamed streets, or renaming streets. The current position of invisibility of female street names can be used as a useful measure for the analysis of factors favoring women-friendly policies at the local level.

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[48] Dolores Gutiérrez-Mora and Daniel Oto-Peralías, 'Gendered Cities: Studying Urban Gender Bias through Street Names' Working Papers in Responsible Banking & Finance, (2021), University of St Andrews, School of Management, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/business/rbf/workingpapers/RBF21_008.pdf> accessed on 30 June 2021.