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"WITH A HOME NOWHERE, I BELONG EVERYWHERE": TRAVEL AS A HETEROTOPIC SPACE OF FEMINIST RESISTANCE IN SHIVYA NATH'S *THE SHOOTING STAR* (2018)

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Abstract: *In India, male dominance historically prevailed in the realms of travel and travel writing due to their alignment with ideals of masculine courage and sexuality. However, in the post-millennial era, Indian women began to emerge as solo travelers in the tourism industry, facilitated by increased access to higher education and diverse professions. By analyzing the travel memoir of Shivya Nath, a prominent Indian female travel blogger, titled* The Shooting Star (2018)*, this article explores the concept of solo travel as a heterotopic space—a realm of resistance and negotiation that empowers women and offers an alternative form of liberation. Nath's memoir celebrates female emancipation, defying narratives of victimhood. The argument presented is that solo travel represents an active form of resistance against gender stereotypes, enabling women to overcome personal fears and logistical obstacles.*

Keywords: *female solo traveler, heterotopic space, travel memoir.*

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"As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (Woolf, 1938, p.129).

1. Introduction

In her best-selling travel memoir, *The Shooting Star* (2018), Shivya Nath celebrates such chainless emancipation of a female self as reflected in Virginia Woolf's essay, "Three Guineas" (1938). Selling most of her possessions, even giving up her home, Nath embraces a nomadic life. She projects an unconventional discourse of female emancipation using travel as a tool. Across cultures, travel functions as a defining space of agency, which has been predominantly occupied by men. Despite an upsurge of female travelers and their travel narratives in India since the late 19th century (Chaudhuri, 2019), travel had always been restricted and circumscribed for women. Over the 1990s, due to the increased rate of women's participation in the economic market (Ghosh, 2004), globalization, and the eventual growth of multinational companies led more (urban) women into the public sphere and thus, traveling became their agentic choice of lifestyle. Another factor that has significantly contributed to women's mobility is the improved education system and access to different professional spheres. However, gaining equality and equity along with their male counterparts still throws them to the forefront of challenges.

At twenty-three, Nath quit her cubicle-bound corporate job and decided to live a peripatetic life. Settling down with a decent job was not an option she wanted to get stuck with. Instead, she chose to break the shackles of age-old conventions and explore places. Usually, one of the main deterrents for women traveling alone is the concern for safety. Public spaces[1] always act as unsafe places for women, restricting them within their domestic boundaries (Phadke et al., 2011). While the patriarchal prejudices in India stigmatized women for being alone in public spaces, it is very obvious solo female travelers feel secluded and discriminated against (Chawkhani, 2021).

Traveling offers an escape not only from everyday life but also to a space that fosters self-development and interaction (Wearing & Wearing, 1996). Hence, it has been considered as a potent cultural domain and process that both shapes and is shaped by the gendered

[1] The public space according to Phadke et al "...includes 'functional' sites such as streets, public toilets, bus stops, railway stations, marketplaces and modes of public transport, such as buses and trains, as well as recreational areas, such as parks, maidans, waterfronts and promenades" (2011, p. 65).

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representations of people, places, nations, and cultures (Aitchison, 2001). However, the idea of a tourist is rooted in an inherent male prerogative. Male-preoccupied tourism theories focus on the subject and object relationship between host and guest as an observer and observed. Wearing and Wearing (1996) proffer that tourism must be conceptualized as a diversified and dynamic space of social interactions that would produce different relations and meanings. Since women and men view tourism experiences and their meaning from various viewpoints, gender is an essential factor that influences visitor behavior (Wang et al., 2016). Therefore, women's interactions with space and other people are different from that of a man, hence, the relationship between host and guest changes with different gender interventions. Therefore, studying the travel experience from a gendered viewpoint to comprehend the variations in meanings associated with tourism and places becomes crucial and imperative (Khoo-Lattimore & Yang, 2018). Men having a solo trip to a remote place can never be considered as daunting as it is for a female solo traveler. While women travel independently, many transformative factors appear as they feel empowered as a result of their enhanced strength, independence, and confidence—especially after navigating obstacles and achieving goals (Jordan & Gibson, 2005).

According to the Foucauldian notion of space, the space of tourism also has the potential to exercise the power-knowledge hierarchy, which is still dominated by men. Therefore, according to Wilson & Little (2005), women still confront hindrances while they seek freedom in travel, especially in leisure pursuits. By traveling alone for pleasure/leisure in the offbeat places in India and abroad, Nath creates a heterotopic space of female resistance, which provides her with an agentic voice conquering the restrictions raised by travel. In his essay, "Of Other Spaces" (1986, based on a 1967 lecture), Foucault defines heterotopia as a lens through which the enactment of power/knowledge can be examined. To talk about heterotopia, Foucault opines there are two types of heterotopias, the heterotopia of crisis (forbidden or sacred space) and the heterotopia of deviation that creates a space for those individuals who deviate from societal prescriptions/norms. Through her narratives, Nath (re)presents female solo travelling as a heterotopia of deviation where established norms get challenged. While almost every woman's travelogue projects the narratives of victimhood by raising the issues of sexual gazes or harassment (Chaudhuri, 2020), Nath's *The Shooting Star* delineates a narrative of empowerment and celebration of a feminine self, although not ignoring all the safety concerns. Through a critical qualitative analysis of Shivya Nath's travel memoir, *The Shooting Star* (2018) this article deals with how the Indian female solo travelers create heterotopias, a transgressive space of negotiations and resistance for women.

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2. Traveling as resistance

For the first time after economic globalization due to the restructuring of the labor markets, women in developing countries started getting access to relatively steady remunerative employment (Luke & Munshi, 2011). The liberalized Indian economy has caused macro-level alteration in the Indian organization and therefore, over the past thirty years or more, Indian women have begun to enter all professions and have diversified into fields such as finance, marketing analysis, public relations, police, and the armed forces, as well as numerous newly developing IT and communication-related sectors (Budhwar et al., 2005; Nath, 2000; Sircar, 2010), which were previously thought to be exclusively customized for men. Due to such socioeconomic changes, the living style and parameters of these women have changed, and thereby, traveling more, both to escape and to explore, becomes a solicited trope to navigate (Wilson & Little, 2005). The trending market segments of tourism nowadays center around solo travelers, most of whom are women, who wish to manage their travel aspects by themselves. Studies confirm that in recent years, solo travel has become one of the fastest-growing tourism trends contributing significantly to the growth of the travel industry (Huang, 2021; Laesser, 2009; Terziyska, 2021; Thomas, 2019).

A growing sector of the international travel market is based on solo women travelers, and this niche market segment has gradually gained popularity in recent years (Heimtun & Abelsen, 2013). The number of searches for ‘solo women travel’ on Google rose by 59% in 2018 and 32% in 2017, while in 2019 the search increased by 230%. In 2023 such findings grew by 36%, according to Kayak (a travel search engine). This increased search is significant for tour operators since it indicates a change in consumer interest in the travel sector (Kow, 2018). Solo travel has been trending upwards since 2016, showing a percentage growth of around 131% in Google searches for ‘solo travel’. Seventy percent of Indian women travelers have either taken a solo trip or are considering one, according to a new survey commissioned by Skyscanner (a top global travel search engine). The Skyscanner survey, which studied the travel habits of Indian travelers, highlighted that 37% of Indian women travelers have done a solo trip while 33% are open to this idea (‘Breaking Stereotypes’, 2015). According to recent data released by the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Punjab is leading the nation in terms of solo female travelers, followed by Telangana. One of the major intentions of these women travelers is related to their urge to push themselves to have self-actualization by finding an alternative sense of determination and independence (Jordan &

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Gibson, 2005). This trend of women traveling solo has been accelerated after the pandemic (Dar, 2023). However, Nath began her journey as a solo traveler in 2011, much before this trend has seeped into our country.

Nath aspires to become a traveler in its true sense, an absolute carefree cosmopolitan who would never be circumscribed by the constraints of stability but rather move quickly but not in haste. Nath is a slow and conscious traveler who endeavors to utilize and relish her every footstep. Her initial foray into solo travel was catalyzed when she won a contest which granted her two round-trip tickets to Paris. This contest was organized by Air Asia airline while she was working at the Singapore Tourism Board as a media strategist. Taking the sabbatical for two months, first, she travels to Europe with one of her friends and in the next month she decides to explore Spiti all alone. After those two months, she understands the futility of the confinement of a "comfortable cubicle and steady pay cheque" and defines her own *normal*. At the age of 23, along with quitting her job she gives up on having a permanent home in a big city and chooses a life "belong(ing) to the road" (Nath, 2018, p. 40). After six months of living off of her money, she starts working as a freelance writer and social media consultant where her entire content is solely devoted to traveling and exploring various unexplored places of India and abroad. Keeping away from all the negative perceptions of traveling alone, Nath conquers the travel-space as a responsible and conscious traveler. In her treatise on socio-spatial relations, Massey (2013) engages in the ways in which the entire notion of a flâneur who strolls around the new modern cities is a masculine one where he only observes without being observed. The feminization of the concept of modern flâneur comes into possibility along with the employment of women and their relative freedom of societal choices.

In her national bestseller travel memoir, *The Shooting Star* (2018), Nath celebrates a self that conquers her deepest fears by revisiting her adventurous journey almost throughout the globe. Over a month after its release, the book sold over 10,000 copies on a seemingly simple premise: *A Girl, Her Backpack, and the World* (Nath, 2018). In her opening chapter, she narrates, "I saw snippets of my rebellious teen years…how I had spurned the selfless affection of my parents as I desperately broke away to pursue my dreams" (Nath, 2018, p. 6). In Indian society, women cannot avoid the perception people possess regarding traveling unaccompanied due to the stigma related to it. Therefore, societal and familial prohibitions always act as the first hurdle to crossing the threshold when it comes to women traveling alone. Nath's memoir reconstructs the performative role that has defined her when she puts up "I write candidly about my struggles of transitioning from an average Indian girl to a free soul who

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wanted to live on her own terms, explore the world meaningfully and smash stereotypes along the way" (Nath, n.p.). In India, women who travel without company are still treated with wonder or deemed a transgressor. In one of her blogs, Nath shares how her decision to travel solo aroused diverse emotions in her co-visitors ranging from pity and wonder to resentment and admiration. Sometimes, she was even threatened with the prospect of a complaint to her parents. In her travel memoir, *A Woman's Journey through India* (2019), Madhu Veena, another female solo traveler, also portrays how people get astonished and react when they know an Indian woman is traveling alone. She shares one of her experiences while staying at Zen Monastery in Bodh Gaya, where a young man asked her if she had come alone. Veena narrates: "He asked me, 'Are you Indian?'…I haven't seen any Indian girl on her own at this monastery…generally girls come with their partner or with their family" to which Veena replies, "Well now you have seen a miracle!" (Veena, 2019, p.76).

On her first decision to embark on a solo trip to Spiti, located in India's northern Himalayas Nath has to come across such a barrage of questions, "…do you know what it's like to travel alone as a young woman in India?" (Nath, 2018, p. 26) Her mother tries to implore her to imagine how much her family might get anxious at the thought of "...(their) young daughter traversing across big bad India alone" (Nath, 2018, p. 27) and how her family reputation might get affected due to her deliberate hazardous choices. Cultural geography affirms that space is always already socially constructed (Mowl &Towner, 1995) and gendered. Therefore, safety issues associated with traveling solo becomes a huge deterrent for their choices. Most of the problems that women encounter are caused by masculine aggression such as male sexual gaze or objectionable advances, harassment, violence, and so on. Whenever women travel, their choice of traveling and perception of using public space are influenced by the violence that comes from men (Valentine, 1989; Valentine, 1992). When a man gets assaulted, his assault is treated as an assault – he may be maimed, injured or even killed - their family will definitely be upset, but their social status and family reputation will remain unaffected (Phadke et al., 2011). With her very first step towards her daunting passion of traveling alone, Shivya unbinds that shackle of patriarchy and indulges in the mission of finding her true self and thereby creating a heterotopic space of deviation. She puts it: "…I had unknowingly taken my first step – a step away from my protective upbringing, societal conventions, and the fear I had learned to live with but never truly accepted" (Nath, 2018, p. 67).

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By stepping off all the prescribed pedestals for women, Nath paves a heterotopic space of resistance throughout her arduous journey. Wearing & Wearing (1996) and Warner-Smith (2000), among others, show that the reconstructed space of female solo traveling can be considered a heterotopia, a space of potential negotiation and resistance for women. Such independent forms of travel deliver a space that "permit[ted] the re-writing of the script of what is meant to be a woman" (Warner-Smith, 2000, p. 44). Nath's travel memoir delivers a case study of such heterotopic space (re)constructing a different relation with geography. Unsettling the established *order of things* revolves around the idea of heterotopia. Foucault describes heterotopia as a *transgressive* practice that represents "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that are found in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). Such counter-sites are established to resist the dominant and normalized order of spaces to which heterotopias can be connected (Foucault, 1986). He introduces the concept of heterotopia to refer to unique spaces that starkly contrast with conventional spaces. These counter-arrangements not only mirror the normal spaces they are associated with but also confront and subvert them. Heterotopias are tangible locations that exist within actual societies, and they are inhabited in manners that diverge from the societal norms and expectations imposed as the standard. *The Shooting Star*, both Nath's blog and her book, fabricates and consolidates that a woman can celebrate her own passion on the voyage of exploring unacquainted spaces and her own self. The sociological reading of heterotopia opines that heterotopias provide a perfect space for individuals who aim to counter the dominant ordering of society, raising their voices against it (Hetherington, 1997). Nath's indulgence in the space called 'solo travel' undoubtedly shapes a heterotopic space through which she raises her voice against the constructs associated with it.

The real sites of the image of Indian women abound in impediments and constraints. Women always experience contested claims to public spaces due to the lack of legitimacy for their presence in public spaces (Phadke, 2007). Women are usually expected to focus on household chores and taking care of children, while men typically take charge of matters related to the outside world and material interests. These societal expectations based on gender roles often lead to women being marginalized as they are confined to certain specific roles determined by social scriptures. Such concealed politics of private/public dichotomy reside within the very notion of power which is (re)consolidated through a dynamic and multifarious set of situations and practices (Bhattacharya, 2015). Such determination of power-role is determined by the social space which is a by-product of social practices (Lefebvre, 1991). To

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surpass all those ingrained societal prescriptions is both delightful and dangerous. For ages, the entire travel-space has been dominated by men. Therefore, travel writing was only preoccupied with the visceral accounts of male traveler with sporadic references of women traveler being minor or non-existent. Conquering that space by traveling alone and subverting all the possible stigma related to this, 'female solo travelers' as a consumer of the tourism industry undoubtedly counter the stereotypical hegemonic convictions and break the established order. Like other Indian female solo travelers, Nath's every little step in her self-actualization process through traveling alone creates a heterotopic space that re-orders and re-constructs an anomalous image of women. Foucault reflects on heterotopia as a "(physical) space for bodies to inhabit, sites of crisis, or of deviation within the social order…(that) stimulates fundamental re-ordering" (Dennis, 2017, p. 169). This re-ordering disposition of heterotopia is itself counter-hegemonic, which affirms a site of resistance. Edward Soja (1986) discusses Foucault's heterotopia in his own formulation of "third space" (p.154-63) as a means of bringing rigor and definition to the Foucauldian treatment. According to Soja, third space is: "the assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality […] that directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking" (p. 163). It was Homi. K. Bhabha (1984) who first addressed the association of identity in a third space. The word 'third' connotes the construction and (re)construction of identity and a spatial fluidity where identity is mutable. A *third space* deals with a space where one can negotiate with identity, celebrate the very own version of selfhood, and formulate a different way of *seeing* (English, 2004). This reformulation of a different way of seeing enables Nath's self-actualization process wherein the detailed narrative of a solo traveler becomes a tool in creating an alternative third space for women.

3. Traveling as transformation

The entire narrative of *The Shooting Star*, be it the interface of her blog or the pages of her memoir, explicates how Nath as a solo female traveler performs the role of a perfect flânerie – traveling, strolling, and observing places slowly to understand the people and culture, and shares her experiences through her blogs and book (Chaudhuri, 2020). Throughout the narratives, Shivya produces an alternative sense of freedom, of home, and generates her way of looking at *others*. Such looking at others through the consumption of space produces the female gaze that itself is a way of challenging the consuming male gaze. On the roof of a watchtower in the salt desert of the Little Rann of Kutch when in the company of a male

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stranger Nath relishes the miraculous beauty of the Milky Way and huge green meteors across the sky, she flashes back to her childhood day in her hometown Dehradun. Nath remembers how the "crooked teeth and a hungry, fearsome look and 'vulgar eyes' of men forge the familiar narrow street in front of her school into an unfamiliar space causing her nightmares for a long time. She recounts that traumatic experience while a "figure of a man…appeared in the distance… (he) was rubbing it (his penis) vigorously" (Nath, 2018, p. 78).

Those lascivious sexual male gaze(s) and fear of getting harassed always keep looming in her mind but her memoir never delineates the narrative of victimhood. The presence of women in the public space has always been fraught with fear and anxiety. Concerns about women's safety mostly revolve around sexual safety rather than safety from accident, theft, or even murder (Phadke et al., 2011). The socio-cultural construction of gendered representation of space is vividly manifested by the division between the private and the public space. Public spaces are historically shaped by patriarchal norms, often defining how men and women should navigate or occupy them. When women tread these spaces traditionally associated with men, they invite public glances because they have invaded a territory challenging the established norms. To provide a discourse of fear that surrounds women being in the public space, feminist geographer Valentine (1989) maintains a remarkable concept called "geography of women's fear" (p. 385) where she puts forth that women's usage of space is significantly impacted by the association of male violence with particular environmental circumstances. According to Valentine, those mental maps of fearful settings are created by images received from hearing frightening experiences, and the opinions of others, as well as through media reports (p. 386). Such fear always pulls women back from traversing the public space.

In India, women's presence in public space can never be permitted without any legitimate purpose – "women don't loiter" (Phadke et al., 2011, p. vii), and their access to public space can never be uncontested. Moreover, this geography of fear restricts women's negotiation in different public spaces, deters women from loitering in any place independently, and perpetuates the patriarchal system. Being a woman taking the pleasure of roaming unknown places has always been linked to the possibilities for taking risks, seeking anonymity, and of course, stretching the boundaries. Nath's entire mission pivots around an unexplored representation of women who can flee to and generate unmapped territory to escape or transgress the fixed grid that confers upon the image of an Indian woman. Those spoken and unspoken constraints and restrictions always preclude women's possibility in seeking thrills and pleasure by accepting enhanced risk as a potential negative outcome (Phadke, et al., 2011).

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Nath's travelogue explicates a winning story of overcoming that geography of fear and shares suggestions regarding how to cope with this fear. She wants Indian women not to get shrunken with the 'fear' of traveling alone due to the ascribed codes of their gender but to focus on their daring passion to explore.

In the opening chapter, Nath begins with "Ayahuasca" (Nath, 2018, p.1), a psychedelic drug, once a fringe psychological medicine that has gradually gained popularity as a therapeutic tool for personal growth through the process of psychological healing or expanding consciousness in Western countries. The effective emergence of ayahuasca as a drug began with the European countercultural movement in the early 1960s when an anti-establishment cultural mindset started to come into the vogue. By beginning her memoir with experiences of having ayahuasca, Nath, on the one hand, begins her self-actualization journey with high consciousness, while on the other hand, she deviates from the established stereotypical structures that fettered the shackles around women. Throughout the narrative, in a non-linear fashion, Nath recounts events that dramatically range from lyrical and lush such as her experience of tasting "warm, dark, unprocessed chocolate" (Nath, 2018, p. 113) to picturesque and magical such as when she "lay under a million twinkling stars and felt goosebumps on (her) body each time a green meteor dashed through the sky" (Nath, 2018, p. 74). This entire critical edge comes from the feeling of reimagining herself in the new world and portraying herself between home and away, here and there, and reworking the connections between the world and her identity through this journey as a woman.

In various cultural situations, restricting women's mobility, with respect to space and identity, has been a key tool of subjugation (Massey, 2013). In Indian society, even after financial independence, women are considered as the custodians of domestic care work (Roy, 2021). In most cases, family vacations for women, mostly after marriage seem to appear as a continuation of the same routine in another environment—mostly as mothers with young children. But, women as tourists vis-à-vis traveling or loitering around and experiencing the local culture are definitely more likely to construe travel as a space for resistance rather than women as vacationers. Astonishingly, despite having amenities, choices, and opportunities, when it comes to traveling for leisure pursuits, women still face many hindrances (Wilson & Little, 2005). Like most Indian women, Shivya has grown up under patriarchal dominance where she was not easily allowed to bend for her choices. She expresses: "I didn't get permission to leave home… If a longing to explore the world that lay behind me then, it remained buried under a heap of fear, insecurity, and paranoia that I had imbibed at home"

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(Nath, 2018, p. 21). Being at home, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty aptly puts it, refers to a place where one lives within a protected territory while not being at home makes one realize that the coherence of home was only an illusion (Martin & Mohanty, 1986). Home has always been for Shivya, though subtly, a site of social relations structured by power and inequality. In retrospect, Nath puts how at home her capability and existence since childhood has been compared to her brother. When Nath says that she could do many things but was prohibited from doing so because of the gender roles she was assigned, the discriminatory nature of gender is evident– "...there were bicycle routes that he could take and I couldn't. There were friendships he could justify and I couldn't. There were family affairs he could be entrusted with and I couldn't. In high school, when I did well academically, I was often told it was expected, for I was his sister. When I did not, I was reprimanded for spoiling his legacy" (Nath, 2018, p. 71)

Nath herself states that her "desire of [solo] traveling had sprung out of the embedded frustration of an Indian girl's sheltered upbringing that provides her with a comfort zone without giving permission to take control of her life" (Nath, 2018, p. 72). Here, the demand for the safety of women is inevitably articulated with regard to protectionism and surveillance that otherwise subscribes to reducing than aggravating women's access to space outside their comfort zone. Power structures and the oppressive patriarchal system together define, mold, and constantly change the world of women. By rejecting hegemonic societal prescriptions, Nath embraces a dynamic version of women's identity that (re)consolidates the notion of a third space, a space dealing with a dislocated form of discourse (English, 2004). In her texts, not only narrates a straightforward account of traveling but also provides a detailed description of the struggles and obstacles of an Indian woman breaking away from the pre-set code of conventions and tradition. According to Susan L. Roberson (2009), women have historically traveled more comprehensively than men. Gender inequality was used by patriarchy to inscribe spatial differences by constructing some areas as feminine and others as masculine. Nath depicts in the book how she sees and explores places and makes a world of her own, purer, more local, and untraveled by others for instance when she spends her time at a nunnery in Ladakh as well as when she travels to Odisha to catch a glimpse of its famous tribal markets (Nath, 2018, p. 185- 194). Hence, Nath like other female solo travelers reconstructs the notion of flânerie, which only conveys a loitering man's observations in a modern urban city where he observes others, he was not observed himself (Urry, 1996).

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Disseminating and promoting knowledge about different places and cultures has always been a part and parcel of travel writing. Nath's non-chronological multi-layered narratives not only provide lush and picturesque descriptions of the places but also illustrate her journey towards increased self-assuredness and the conquering of her apprehensions regarding interpersonal connections in unfamiliar surroundings. Unlike other travel accounts written by women, Nath through her travelogues delineates an alternative discourse of emancipation instead of projecting a narrative of the victim. She maintains, "[u]nbeknownst to me, it had become my mission to prove that the world isn't the horrible place we often make it out to be" (Nath, 2018, p. 79).

Along with breaking with the stereotypical gender norms through traveling, Nath shatters the age-old notion of a decent profession by choosing traveling and blogging as a different mode of being economically independent and acquiring an alternative sense of agency. In this post-millennial era, urban women need to face fewer regulations than earlier in terms of settling down with a life-sustaining occupation. However, moving forward to a nomadic life and venturing into the adventure of traveling solo in order to sustain life out of it imposes a lot of furor in the familial and social space. As female subjectivity has been historically managed by the hegemonic discourses and by the institutions, feminists have fought long for their right to reclaim the 'space' according to their choice. Through her travel blogging, Shivya establishes herself as an entrepreneur who along with traveling off-beat spaces provides essential tips for other women who dream of traveling solo. The purpose of her entrepreneurship was "to bridge the gap between authentic travel experiences across the country and travelers who seek them…" (Nath, 2018, p. 51). Nath also mentions that she found a purpose in traveling within the country with 'India Untraveled', the tourism and travel company founded by herself in the year 2012. The company provides Nath with a new "thirst to find unique stories to pitch to travel publications…(she) began to seek remote regions about which little was written online, and locals who in their own creative ways, were using tourism to drive environmental initiatives and provide an alternative source of income for marginalized locals" (Nath, 2018, p. 52). In India where the concatenation of time and space becomes a usual understanding in relation to safety and danger for a woman, where it is very commonsensical to be told a woman that she should not go out at night as the spaces around her are not safe, Nath's unfathomable daunting spirit pushes her forward for exploring places off-beat and untrodden. Along with exploring several places, Nath attains a different 'self' who earlier "was afraid to break rules or challenge the conventions, who was afraid to venture beyond the

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imaginary boundaries of right and wrong and success and failure defined by someone" (Nath, 2018, p. 67). Her journey, therefore, reflects a shift from a sheltered entity in a homogenous space to an open-minded one in a heterogeneous outside world. First of all, by traveling solo and narrating her experiences Shivya is transgressing the kitchen space which is traditionally meant for women. Secondly, by choosing travel as her professional trope she deconstructs the notion that not only economic independence but also the choice to decide the way of independence is also important.

Nath recurrently reconstructs and redefines the space of tourism where she creates her own meanings and uses them for her self-development in her own way. Tourism for the solo female traveler produces a heterotopic space that provides a different side of everyday life and thereby allows women to resist the hegemonic discourse embedded in the concept of traveling where they celebrate a sense of agency and independence (Wearing & Wearing, 1996; Jordan & Gibson, 2005). In one chapter called "Strangers", Nath shares one of her epiphanies, asserting

> ...after all, we were not put on earth to be prisoners of an unpredictable future. We were put on earth to live our present with fierce courage so that when the future comes we can look it in the eye without a hint of fear and charm it with the adventures of the past (Nath, 2018, p. 151).

Throughout the narrative, Nath gives a voice to her inner soul that aspires to be a nomad by challenging the typical representation of subjectivity and also by refusing to adopt socially acceptable modes of behavior and thoughts. As Braidotti (1994) defines a nomad as "a transgressive identity, whose transitory nature is precisely the reason why s/he can make connections at all…" (p. 35), Nath declares herself as a "nomad" where (un)stability becomes her destination in all aspects. For an unpredictable and uncertain life on the road, at the age of 25, she risked giving up her apartment and selling off whatever she owned (Nath, 2018). For survival, however, she started to capitalize on her passion by embracing the life of a digital nomad who works remotely from anywhere.

4. Conclusion

Nath's entire book promotes an alternative emancipatory discourse where she destabilizes societal constructs navigating through travel as an agentic space – firstly by deciding to explore the places all alone, secondly by choosing 'travel' as a profession. Moreover, along with her entire traveling through different places, she becomes a conscious

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traveler who takes care of a sustainable eco-system and converts into a complete vegan for the sake of the environment. When she chooses a place to travel, Nath shows her sensible commitment to her choices of where to eat, what to do, where to stay. Her selection of a mindful environment not only aims at soothing a restless soul but also at showing how her stay draws a positive impact on the local communities and their culture. When Nath travels, she always makes a sincere effort to support the local economy, takes public transportation whenever possible, stays away from plastic water bottles and other single-use plastics, refuses to visit unethical animal attractions, avoids consuming animal products, chooses to eat local foods whenever possible, gets permission before taking people's pictures, and tries to form her own opinions about the people and places she encounters. In that way, being geographically far from her home and mentally far from the world she was familiar with, Nath begins to feel "a sense of belonging" (2018, p. 65). Nath is breaking free from all the ingrained stereotypes that used to define her quintessential self. Now like an omnipresent being, she is all set to write her own norms, and cracking the glass ceiling becomes the empress of her free will.

Being an Indian girl hailing from a typical conservative middle-class family, excavating some anomalous spaces for life sustenance and prioritizing passion over a 'normal' acceptable life undoubtedly form a heterotopic space where the constructs get dismantled. Thus, Nath asserts her victorious voice at the end of the epilogue where she sums up: "After all, I am a descendent of someone who once moved with all her possessions, without a permanent roof above her head. I am a nomad" (Nath, 2018, p. 197).

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