

Camp Cartographies of Violence: Structural And Spatial Dimensions Of Gender-Based Vulnerability After Cyclone Bhola (1970)

Nithyashree Narayanan, First Year, M. A. English, The English And Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

In: *Book of Abstract REVA University*. edited by DR. C Chamundeshwari Associate Professor, Dept of English, REVA University, Bengaluru, India. ISBN 978-93-341-7423-6.

The 1970 Cyclone Bhola disaster and the subsequent establishment of refugee camps revealed complex intersections of spatial structure and gender-based violence (GBV), exposing women to heightened vulnerability within these temporary settlements. This paper investigates how camp layouts—characterised by enforced restrictions, limited privacy, and pervasive surveillance—functioned as a system of control that systematically restricted women’s agency and intensified patriarchal dominance. Through the lens of feminist geography, this study illuminates how the physical spaces within camps replicated and enforced societal hierarchies, producing gendered cartographies of vulnerability.

Drawing on Johan Galtung’s theory of structural violence, the analysis critiques relief structures that, lacking gender-sensitive frameworks, inadvertently perpetuated dependency and systemic inequalities. This exploration reveals how ostensibly neutral relief systems can institutionalise harm and contribute to a “secondary disaster” of entrenched inequality and violence.

The paper contributes a framework for understanding the interaction of spatial and structural factors in post-disaster environments, advocating for gender-responsive strategies in humanitarian planning. By re-envisioning these spaces, the study calls for collaborative, equity-focused approaches that challenge traditional hierarchies and support resilience and agency for affected women.

Keywords: Gender, Space, Violence, Structural Violence, Refugee Camps