

Worlds of Contrasts: Gendered Experiences from “Khalashitola” – A Space for Intoxication

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Abstract

In this study two authors document and compare their experiences as two different 'subjects' regarding an overtly masculine space deliberately chosen for intoxication, famously known and frequently mentioned in Bengali literary tradition as “Khalashitola”. The first author, being a woman, married to the family in 2016 which runs the business of the shop for more than a hundred years now, has the everyday experience of living adjacent to that masculine space and encountering the same in her own way. While she lives inside the sphere of the 'domestic', she goes through the 'liminal' space of the footpath and shop premises of *Khalashitola* where the intoxicated masculine bodies lie deep into their alcoholic slumber. She has to navigate through them while they remain onlookers through the car window throwing jibes which are a mix of alcohol effects and attraction towards opposite sex and class. The second author, who has frequented this place quite often as a customer, became an insider of the space and yet remains an outsider to the world of a woman the first author is living through. Here we document our mutually exclusive experiences centering around the space. We argue that the experiences of the sight, smell, and different dimensions of the space has a deep gendered connotation which are culturally learned, experienced and lived out.

Key words: Gendered Space; Production of Space; Space and Place; Liminality.