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Mapping Indian Feminisms: In Pursuit of an Intersectional Dalit Standpoint

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Abstract

This paper aims to engage with the multiple constructions of ‘women’ through history specifically with an intent to amplify the ideas pertaining to gender and sexualities in the Indian context. It postulates arguments around areas like construction of Indian womanhood and how it is problematised with intersecting structures of gender, caste, class, religion, and sexuality. The paper evaluates notions like the body and violence meted out based on gender; evolution of ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ through history and the contemporary ruminations. While tracing the trajectory of Indian feminisms through a multitude of books such as those by Maitreyee Chaudhari, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, Radha Kumar, Sharmila Rege, Anandita Pan to name a few, it seeks to identify the term Indian feminism not as a monolithic homogenous narrative, but as one rooted in different epistemic practices. The paper analyses how the notions of patriarchy as constituted of gender binarism, has come to be challenged through the intersectional lenses of caste, class, religion, sexuality and so on. The paper will endeavour to incorporate a variety of references ranging from fiction, theoretical texts, films, and real-life cases etc.

Keywords: Indian Feminism, Patriarchy, Intersectionality, Dalit feminist standpoint, Ambedkar

Introduction

Feminism as a theoretical framework along with its indicators and specifications is constantly developing and transforming. As a movement, feminism has been through a wave of reforms when adopted and adapted by both Western and post-colonial societies. Feminism in the western world focused on the legal reforms for women and worked toward equality through legislature. The core

emphasis was the public domain and the key priority was outside of home and family structure. Their central goal was to seek an equal engagement of women in the public domain. However, they did not seem to address the issue by examining the role of patriarchy as a systemic force endangering equality for women. Contemporary feminism aims to address these concerns through an investigation of the experiences of women in both public and private spheres. This helps towards an examination of women subordination within domestic environment as well. Additionally, contemporary feminism also examined problems such as the double burden of reproductive and productive labour, wage gaps, and the hierarchical nature of the workplace. It also exposed the present understanding and rigidity of social identities like femininity and masculinity, along with biological determinism. Furthermore, the support groups or people identifying as feminists have undergone a significant transition. It means that the spectrum is wider now and does cover more people than just women. It includes a wider range of anti-hegemonic groups, including LGBTQI people, non-binary people, people who question ableism, amongst others.

The study of Indian feminism has been undertaken from varied approaches and diverse standpoints. Maitreyee Chaudhuri, in her book *Feminism in India*, details conceptual parameters that locates Indian feminism at the intersection of activism and history. She illustrates a glaring disconnect between activity and theory in her examination of Indian feminism. Chaudhuri contends that feminism in India has unceasingly looked at Western feminist paradigms to grasp nuances of advance women's rights and gender equality. In the Indian context, Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha's two-volume anthology, *Women Writing in India*, stands as a monumental collection of women's literary works spanning centuries, representing a significant repertoire of Indian women's writing. In the preface, Tharu and Lalitha explicitly state that their primary objective in compiling these two volumes was to challenge "critical assumptions, historical circumstances, and ideologies that generally have been hostile to women's literary production (Tharu and Lalitha xvii)." The method employed to unearth women writers from historical periods served a dual purpose: firstly, it aimed to rectify the erasure and marginalization of women within dominant narratives; secondly, it aimed to contribute to a gendered comprehension of those overarching narratives. By actively seeking out and highlighting the works of women writers, this approach sought to correct the historical oversight and neglect of women's contributions. In her influential book *The History of Doing*, Radha Kumar discusses the chronological division of Indian feminism into two distinct phases: pre-independence and post-independence. According

to Kumar, the pre-independence phase is largely defined by the “experience of colonial rule,” which significantly influenced the nature and trajectory of feminist activism during that time. On the other hand, the post-independence phase is characterized by the “experience of democracy.” The nationalist movement’s leaders emphasised the significance of addressing women’s issues as a critical component of societal development during the pre-independence era. Partha Chatterjee in his article “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question” points out how the image of the nineteenth century modern ‘*bhadramahila*’ or gentle woman was constructed to follow the dualities of “home/world, spiritual/material, feminine/masculine.” (Chatterjee 244). This ‘new woman,’ fashioned to fit the ‘new patriarchy,’ was not only contrasted with the modern western *memsahibs*, “it was explicitly distinguished from the patriarchy of indigenous traditions” (Chatterjee 244). This demonstrates how the social reformist movement addressed the issue of women while maintaining the gender hierarchy.

Feminist movements that began to take shape after India gained its independence, aimed to address several concerns, including the sexual division of labour. The focus shifted significantly because of these issues, from supporting men’s supremacy over women to promoting women’s economic independence and bodily autonomy. Women started to speak out about issues including unequal pay, gender-based disparities in skilled and unskilled labour, and how society saw domestic work and parenting duties as fundamental obligations rather than as legitimate types of work. Post independence mainstream Indian feminism focused on the recognition that the personal is political while it took up the issues of class and gender. The intersection of personal and political spheres became evident through the emergence of issues such as dowry murder, intrafamilial rape, and custodial rape. These concerns underscored the notion that the human body is not solely the property of an individual, but rather influenced by various social, familial, and economic, and ‘oppressive machinery of the state in action’ (Desai and Vibhuti 182). All these assertions, however, were based on the erroneous assumption that the idea of an “Indian woman” denotes a single, cohesive group. Religion was never the main analytical emphasis in mainstream feminist discourse, even after the Shah Bano case acknowledged the existence of communal disparities among women.

The 1995 United Nations conference on women in Beijing, which brought together a variety of women from both rural and urban backgrounds onto the international stage, is an example of how the 1990s represented a turning point for women’s movements. Moreover, new investigations into India’s political

climate were spurred by the Mandal and Masjid occurrences. It was clear then that “one could no longer speak of ‘women’ without reference to class caste and community” (Sen and Dhawan 25).

This propels the argument further to recognise the alternate strands of Indian feminism. One of them is Dalit feminism. It is imperative to acknowledge that the matter of caste and gender can be examined from various perspectives. One approach involves incorporating the issue of gender within Dalit movements, while another entail initiating an epistemological inquiry into the intersecting mechanisms of caste and gender. Additionally, it is crucial to explore how the presence of Dalit women necessitated a paradigm shift, moving beyond viewing caste as a singular axis of operation to recognizing its intricate relationship with gender. During the latter part of nineteenth century, Dalit women contributed significantly in the non-Brahman movements. Anti-caste movements led by prominent figures like Jotirao Phule, B.R. Ambedkar, and E.V. Ramaswamy Periyar saw an active participation by Dalit women. They offered a formidable challenge to the Brahmanical caste system, effectively in fields such as education, sexuality, and labour. In the 1990s, various autonomous Dalit women’s organisations came forth, focusing on the intersecting questions of both caste and gender, nationally as well as internationally. There was a significant diversion in the approach that reformers like Phule proposed to emancipate the shudras, ati-shudras, and women from caste-based oppression from the approach of upper caste reformers who focused primarily on the concerns of upper caste women like sati and widow remarriage. As against these reformers, who neglected the issues of the marginalised groups, Phule’s vision challenged the systemic oppression faced not just by Dalits but also women (both Dalit and upper caste), encompassing gender and caste dimensions. By acknowledging the intersecting material and sexual repercussions through which Brahminical patriarchy exploits women from diverse castes, Phule highlights the stark contrast between the labour of lower caste women, both within and outside the household, and the leisure enjoyed by Savarna women. The establishment of the Satyashodhak Sangh aimed to bring recognition to the experiences of lower caste women who are disproportionately affected by the multifaceted structures of caste, class, and gender.

Mukta Bai, an eleven-year-old student enrolled in Phule’s educational institution, emphasises the relevance of knowledge accessibility using the values upheld by Phule and the objectives of Satyashodhak Sangh. Muktabai goes beyond simple education to establish a connection between the factors contributing to

lower castes' deprivation, such as the loss of land rights, internal hierarchies that are common among them, and the different experiences and situations that women from upper and lower castes have when giving birth. Elucidating the caste division within lower communities she writes in her essay, "About the Grievs of the Mangs and Mahars": "But the mahars here, no less untouchable than the mangs... consider themselves to be the superior to mangs, so much so that they do not allow even the shadow of a mang to fall over them" (Mukta bai 216). Here, the hierarchy within lower caste communities and the Dalit patriarchy are apparent.

During the Ambedkarite era spanning the 1920s to 1950s, key focal points revolved around education, sexuality, and labour. The significance of women's entitlement to education and employment, as pivotal factors in the advancement of Dalit communities, was consistently emphasized by Ambedkar within his contentious proposal, the Hindu Code Bill. Sharmila Rege, in her book titled *Against the Madness of Manu*, contends that the opposition faced by the Bill from various segments of the savarna groups substantiates its intention to disrupt the prevailing caste and patriarchal controls over the realms of production and reproduction.

Ambedkar pushed for women to develop self-respect and discouraged them from taking on jobs like devadasi and prostitution. He promoted adopting behaviours like maintaining cleanliness and dressing modestly, like upper caste ladies. These behaviours were meant to subvert the Brahminical social order, which stigmatised lower caste women with outward signs of "impurity," "sexual availability," and "immorality." Ambedkar's intimate ties to Dalit feminism can be ascribed to his understanding that caste operates by endogamy and the sexism of women is subjugated. He thought Manu's codification of Brahminic ideas of the perfect woman into state laws had a big part to play in maintaining and strengthening the hierarchical systems "by which marriage, kinship, and the degradation of women link structurally in reproducing graded inequality in society" (Rege 144). In *Annihilation of Caste*, he writes "I am convinced that the real remedy is intermarriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste" (Ambedkar 36).

Dalit women's activism has made a significant contribution by redefining patriarchy as "Brahmanical Patriarchy." This acknowledgement has demonstrated that the experiences of women in India are not monolithic. Within texts like the *Manusmriti*, the ideologies of Brahmanical Patriarchy are

intricately woven into the fabric of the caste system. This results in distinct sets of rules governing the realms of sexuality, marriage, and labour for both Savarna and Dalit women. By interpreting patriarchy through the lens of Brahmanical Patriarchy, a transformative shift occurs, as it unveils how various oppressive characteristics impact different groups of women. This perspective brings to light the intersecting dynamics of oppression and underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of women's experiences within the larger framework of caste-based power structures. Uma Chakravathy defines Brahminical patriarchy as "A set of rules and institutions in which caste and gender are linked, each shaping the other and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes... It incorporates both an ideology of chaste wives and *pativrata* women who are valorised and a structure of rules and institutions by which caste hierarchy and gender inequality are maintained through both the production of consent and the application of coercion" (Chakravarti 34).

In the 1980s, significant incidents like the Mathura rape case and the Bhanwari Devi rape case brought the subject of violence against women to light, forcing mainstream feminism to address it. These incidents had a big influence on feminist discourse about violence. The rape case involving Bhanwari Devi outraged feminists and independent groups the most out of all of these incidents. While the National Federation of Women focused on analysing rape in terms of class dynamics and the right to bodily autonomy, an important aspect that often went overlooked was the influence of caste identity. Dalit feminists, on the other hand, drew attention to how rape against Dalit women in public spaces served as a means to undermine the "masculinity" of Dalit men, while simultaneously reinforcing the notion of the sexual availability of lower caste women who engaged in social activism beyond the confines of the domestic sphere.

The 1990s is credited with the emergence of independent and autonomous Dalit women's organisations such as the National Federation of Dalit women or NFDW (1995) and the All-India Dalit women's forum (2006) which evolved out of "a strong feeling that the Dalit women need to organise themselves in order to address their special needs and problems" (Subramaniam 59-60). NFDW's participation in the UN World Conference against racism held in Durban in 2001, marked a watershed moment for Dalit women's organisations. Eva-Maria Hardtmann notes that dalit women's presence in Durban "should also be seen in contrast to the dominance of men in leadership positions within the Dalit movement locally/regionally in Indian and also in Dalit diaspora"

(Hardtmann 219). Subramaniam points out that such “assertion of the *Dalit* women’s experience through the forum of their organisations drew the attention of mainstream feminist activists and academicians and led to a major debate on the plurality vs unity within the women’s movement” (Subramaniam 60).

It becomes clear that the ideas of an all-encompassing ‘Indian woman’ or a specific ‘Indian feminism’ are false as a result of the effort to outline a whole historical panorama of Indian feminism. In India, the many components that make up the concept of ‘woman’ vary greatly depending on things like class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and more. As a result, it is crucial to have conversations about identity, diversity, and intersectionality in order to recognise and understand the heterogeneity that defines the ‘Indian woman.’ The historical trajectory of feminism has encompassed a complex interplay between the concepts of difference and sameness. On one hand, feminist scholarship has sought to establish a unified feminist subjectivity by highlighting shared experiences among women. However, this narrative of universalism has not gone unchallenged. Feminist movements emerging from non-white, non-western contexts have interrogated the application of difference, scrutinizing its role in perpetuating the self/other binary. For a considerable duration, the notion of ‘self’ primarily denoted the white western woman, while the ‘other’ encompassed non-white, non-western women. This definition accentuated essentialist boundaries between Western and Third World feminisms.

In the context of First and Third World feminisms, Chandra Talpade Mohanty has astutely observed that the colonial legacy establishes a dichotomy between these two spheres and plays a role in shaping Western feminism. This shaping occurs through a process of objectification, whereby Third World women are positioned as objects to be studied, enabling Western feminism to establish itself as the subject. Through the claim of possessing “knowledge” about Third World women, Western feminism asserts its superiority as a generator of theoretical frameworks, while relegating Third World women to the role of providers of empirical evidence. Mohanty presents a critique of the methodologies employed by Western feminism in representing Third World women, frequently resorting to cultural reductionism that reifies and confines these women as passive victims, devoid of agency and subjectivity. Mohanty argues that instead of viewing men and women as fixed entities defined solely by their predetermined gender roles within society, attention should be directed towards examining how economic structures, colonial legacies, religious systems, familial dynamics, and other institutions actively engage in shaping and delineating gendered identities.

Accordingly, Mohanty advocates for an intersectional approach within feminism, one that recognizes and addresses the interplay of multiple social categories and power dynamics.

Intersectionality encompasses the examination of how various forms or systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination intersect and interact with one another. It serves as a methodological framework for analysing the interconnections between multiple dimensions of identity and the diverse ways in which social relationships and subject formations are shaped. The conceptualization of intersectionality emerged as a response to the critiques put forth by feminists of colour, with a particular focus on the experiences and perspectives of black women. As legal theorist, Kimberle Crenshaw argues, intersectionality rejects the single axis framework often embraced by both feminists and anti-racist scholars, instead analysing "...the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's... experiences." (Crenshaw 1244). Intersectionality offers a critical perspective on the tendency to abstract and generalize the object of knowledge by advocating for an approach that centres on the lived experiences of those who constitute the object of knowledge. By doing so, it challenges the oversimplification and homogenization of categories such as 'woman,' acknowledging instead the existence of multiplicities and differences among women. It suggests that a fruitful understanding of these diversities can be achieved by commencing the analysis from the standpoint of women's experiences. A significant implication of the intersectional framework is that both marginalized and privileged groups can serve as starting points for intersectional analysis, facilitating an exploration of the interconnected systems of oppression and domination.

In this context, the significance of Leslie McCall's conceptualization of intersectionality is underscored, particularly in relation to her inter-categorical and intra-categorical approaches. By inter categorical approach, McCall refers to the identification of "relations of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimension" (McCall 1773), while the intra-categorical approach "interrogates the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself" where it shows a critical stance towards categories that are primarily seen through a single axis of identity. This helps us identify not just the uniqueness of black women's experiences, but also difference within. Within the realm of intersectional analysis, the intra-categorical distinction is not only acknowledged in relation to white women but also in relation to black men. Consequently, black feminism

serves to elucidate the intricate and distinctive dynamics of race and gender as they pertain to black women, aspects that often elude the perceptions of both anti-racists and white feminists. Black feminists assert that black women are frequently portrayed as victimized subjects by black male authors, while white feminists tend to include them merely as tokens driven by a sense of guilt. (Walker 231-32). Such assessment can become very useful for the Indian context as well. Mary E. John's "Intersectionality: Rejection or Critical Dialogue?" and Nivedita Menon's "Is Feminism About Women" explore the relevance of the methodology of intersectionality in the Indian context. Menon argues that the concept of intersectionality is redundant within the Indian context, given the preexisting diversity present in Indian feminism. On the contrary, Mary E. John supports the notion of intersectionality, as it provides an inclusive platform for all marginalized voices, without prioritizing or favouring any particular group over others. She argues that despite the apparent existence of gender, class, caste, and religion, "the particular trajectories taken by Indian feminism" have not always reflected a "successful engagement with the problem that intersectionality identifies, namely, the working out of the simultaneity of structures of oppression, especially for those occupying locations of marginality" (John 74).

The theory of intersectionality assumes a critical role within the discourse on Indian feminism. In the past, Indian feminism frequently encountered difficulties in comprehending the intricate interplay between factors such as religion and caste. Conventional feminist perspectives often employed a unidimensional lens centred solely on gender-related issues, disregarding the imperative need for a comprehensive understanding of the diverse influences impacting women from various backgrounds. Consequently, the notion of difference and intersectionality emerges as an inseparable and intricate facet of this narrative. This marks a paradigm shift as it departs from the enforcement of homogeneity and moves forward to a theory that acknowledges diversity, and aims to understand the manner in which varied social structures, along with gender, impact various groups of women in different aspects. MacKinnon in her essay, "Intersectionality as Method: A Note," emphasizes the importance of particularity within the framework of intersectionality. She argues that the knowledge gained from the lived realities of specific groups should not be understood as limited, constraining, and narrow. Instead, she asserts that particularity aims to foster a more minute comprehension of systemic dynamics. In the Indian context, Dalit feminism emerges as an intersectional political movement, which acknowledges and engages in understanding differences among groups and in the process

rework the critical lenses of mainstream Indian feminism and Dalit politics. Intersectionality, functions as a critical theoretical framework and examines the interlocking systems of operation, offering a crucial methodology for examining and critically analysing differences.

In the context of the post-independence era, feminist discourse has explored the various concerns pertaining to the notion of the “body” and its intersection with violence. Violence, as a subject of theoretical inquiry, has been approached from two distinct perspectives: physical and sexual violence on one hand, and the manifestation of more implicit forms of violence that engender mental repercussions on the other. The examination of gender violence has been handled from two approaches in feminist theorising. The first viewpoint examines the male-female dichotomy and how the fundamental sexual differences between the sexes result in various forms of violence. Researchers have since broadened their study’s focus to include violence directed at people or organisations that stray from traditional gender roles, opening new research directions. Force is seen as a power that is central to enforcing any kind of violence. However, it becomes important to access and evaluate the larger conceptual framework inhabiting violence by interrogating the authenticity of different kinds of violence. This investigation will help us to understand and differentiate between socially acceptable acts of violence and those that are not. Gender-based violence as a mechanism ensures that the individuals or groups which occupy non-dominant or marginalised positions are always at a disadvantage. The violence which results from this is deeply entrenched in the very fabric of the society, in all its social and cultural forms, framed by the specific structures, norms, and values. In addition, the manner in which gender violence is experienced across groups is not uniform. It is influenced by the social identities located at the intersections of privileges and oppression. Gender violence is witnessed in different forms, comprising physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, and socio-economic dimensions. It becomes important to acknowledge that the fundamental basis of gender violence lies in the unequal power structure perpetuated by patriarchy.

Mainstream Indian feminism has confronted the issues of gender-based violence. Issues such as dowry, domestic violence, and rape have been deliberated upon widely by feminists. The prevalence of private/public dichotomies makes the issue of dowry of great significance in the Indian context. Radha Kumar’s work, *The History of Doing* presents a collection of narratives that shed light on domestic violence and dowry-related deaths. These accounts highlight how both the community and law enforcement authorities often perceive these incidents

as “family matters,” relegating them to the realm of privacy. This perception persists across different social strata, encompassing diverse classes, castes, and religions, including even the social elites. The stigma of victimisation is one of the main reasons that such acts typically go unreported. According to Radha Kumar, the stigma stems from the patriarchal perception that “a woman’s life is necessarily dependent on a man” (Kumar 117). Uma Chakravarti terms this as a women’s social identity. In her article, “Gender, Caste and Labour: Ideological and Material Structure of Widowhood”, she writes, “A woman is recognised as a person when she is incorporated into her husband--only then does she become a social entity and in that state, she is auspicious, a ‘sumangali’, a ‘saubhagyavati” (Chakravarti 2249).

The incidence of violence against women, which usually takes place in the home, has wide-ranging effects on women, including single women and widows, in addition to married women. The idea of the domestic sphere includes a woman’s married home as well as the natal home. There has been a significant re-evaluation of what constitutes violence against women as our understanding of domestic abuse has grown. Insightful feminist scholars have argued forcefully that problems like violence resulting from dowry practises are not only private affairs but are inextricably political. Such instances of violence are deeply influenced by power dynamics rooted in patriarchy, social class, caste hierarchies, religious affiliations, and other intersecting factors. Feminist discourse surrounding violence against women has played a crucial role in highlighting the interconnected nature of gender and class-based discriminations that women face. In the context of traditional Indian social structures, where it is widely assumed that girls will eventually move to their marital households, they often experience ongoing disadvantage within their natal homes, particularly concerning educational opportunities and property rights. Consequently, issues such as spousal abuse and dowry assume a more complex form.

Within feminist theory and activism, rape has been subject to various conceptualizations. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, in her work *Real and Imagined Women* emphasizes that rape serves as a manifestation of male sexual domination. As such, it is widely recognized as a prominent and extreme form of patriarchal oppression, stripping women of any agency over their own bodies. Feminist perspectives on rape also aim to situate it within a broader intersectional framework, where they recognise that “patriarchy is not the only structure of oppression in society and that privileges and handicaps are heterogeneous distributed unevenly among categories of both men and women” (Rajan 73).

Feminist criticisms of rape in India revealed it as a systemic issue that often stemmed from an impacted a group. Thus, most of the cases of reported rapes were institutional rapes-- in the hands of the police, army, landlords, upon women of oppressed classes and castes. As Sunder Rajan mentions, “rape as a phenomenon in contemporary India more properly understood as the expression of male violence, sanctioned by various modes of social power, rather than of sexual desire” (Rajan 73). Mathura rape case is a glaring example.

Historically, in feminist discussions, the concept of violence has been theorised predominantly in the form of physical and sexual violence directed towards women. But violence is executed not just through force but also through disadvantaging, discrimination at workplace, displacement, and so on. Additionally, it would be wrong to assume that violence is a homogeneous form that is inflicted on women alone. There are different kinds of violence that affect different marginalised groups differently. One can consider dowry deaths as examples of Brahminical patriarchy and the rape of Mathura as an example of caste and gender intersection. There is also a need to examine the various ways in which different identity groups are impacted by gender-based violence. It is imperative to understand the ways in which heteronormativity and sexuality disproportionately marginalizes communities that deviate from the conventional binary norms. As posited by Nivedita Menon, normative heterosexuality is founded upon entrenched caste and gender norms. The institution of marriage, specifically a heterosexual union, primarily aims to guarantee the propagation of offspring who will perpetuate the paternal lineage. But this generating sexuality also needs to be legitimate, that is “within the bounds of marriage limited by caste and community boundaries” (Menon 34). This is the reason why Ambedkar proposed inter-caste marriages in place of endogamy to abolish the caste system. He asserted that this change would help eliminate caste disparities. In her analysis, Menon emphasises how important it is to integrate the concerns of heteronormativity in feminist investigations, particularly in relation to the institution of the family. She contends that within the realm of feminist discourse, the substantial emphasis placed on critiquing issues, such as dowry and domestic violence, inadvertently perpetuates the notion that a conventional heterosexual family unit would naturally be devoid of such forms of violence. Notably, the prevailing framework acknowledges the heterosexual configuration of the family while solely gauging the varying degrees of violence and the status of women within it. Menon posits that this analytical approach fails to interrogate the very foundation of the family structure, as it effectively endorses the heterosexual patriarchal family as an

indicator of social stability. The attention directed towards dowry and domestic violence is primarily invoked when the underlying stability of the heterosexual family unit is disrupted. She astutely observes that while it is undoubtedly crucial to confront and address these manifestations of violence, it is equally imperative to critically examine the heteronormative foundations upon which the notion of family is predicated. In this regard, she advocates for a shift in focus, urging us to divert our attention away from an exclusive consideration of homosexuality and instead scrutinize the mechanisms through which procreative heterosexuality engenders specific forms of oppression and violence. A basic review of violence within the context of feminist analysis, therefore, demands a critical assessment of the underlying assumption of heteronormativity. It not only broadens the focus of the investigation to include men and boys as well as women, ensuring a more inclusive understanding of the problem, but also, highlights the fact that violence can take many different forms and is not limited to physical or sexual cruelty. The displacement of people should also be regarded as a form of violence.

To conclude, I would like to say that, contemporary feminist thought goes beyond a restricted focus on supporting legislative changes to combat discrimination. Its present course is focused on the complete emancipation of women and explores a variety of concerns. Apart from acknowledging the gendered aspect of both the public and private spaces that women inhabit, this thought also examines the challenge that reproductive and productive labour create, the ever-increasing wage gap, the hierarchy that functions at all workplaces, and the contemporary focus and attention that social media posits on the changing face of feminism. As a fundamental concept, feminism opposes the historical rigid categories of identity construction including masculinity, femininity, as well as biological determinism. In the process, it endeavours to empower the marginalised sections that have been always constrained by societal norms and expectations, envisioning a more equitable and inclusive world. This enables us to comprehend that there is an inherent diversity among the marginal sections including women, and it is not a homogenous category. Furthermore, it recognises that there are other systems of oppression like caste and class that work in close association with gender. This recognition leads us to the concept of intersectionality. The lens of intersectionality helps us to signify a departure from the imposition of monolithic concept of gender and instead emphasize the importance of understanding how various social identities, when intersecting with gender, impact different marginal groups in distinct ways. Intersectionality functions as a meaningful tool for examining and critically analysing the

intersections of various oppressive structures. It enriches our understanding of the way different groups are affected by different patriarchal oppressions. The concept of “difference” plays a key role in recognising the diverse forms of oppression and the way it affects various groups in different proportions. This helps pave a way for a more inclusive approach in devising a methodology that is cognisant of the diversity and ensures that all groups are sufficiently represented and their concerns addressed and substantiated.

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