

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AND SOCIOLOGY FOR EMANCIPATION IN INDIA

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FEMINIST pedagogy is a rallying term for educators who believe in a conscious praxis in the classroom. The roots of this discourse are to be found in Paulo Freire's explication of the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (Freire 1970). Most feminist pedagogies are rooted in the standpoint that women by their social experience or nature are better equipped to know the world. Such a standpoint presents some contradictions for those of us engaged in feminist pedagogies in the Indian context. The present paper is the outcome of experiences in tackling such contradictions and developing 'feminist standpoints of interlocking oppressions' in classroom practices. In the first section of the paper, the concept of feminist pedagogy and interlocking oppressions is discussed. In the second section, the development of sociological discourse in India is sketched out, the focus being on the construction of gender in this discourse. In the last section, the limitations and possibilities of such feminist standpoints in classroom practices are discussed with the help of examples. It is argued that such classroom practices could in the present state of crisis in sociology in India (Das 1993) offer the much needed revitalization to and emancipatory interpretations of sociological concepts.

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY: A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

Feminist educators have developed their practices within the context of the widespread developments in theories and practices of teaching since the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the dominant worldview of the 'oppressors' possessing the only version of reality came to be seriously challenged. Feminist pedagogy seems like a contradiction in terms because feminism refers to an alternate worldview while pedagogy in its conventional sense suggests education for entry into the patriarchal system (Martel and Peterat 1988). Both the teachers and the students are likely to be enmeshed in such contradictions which may generate changes both in the educational system and in the larger structures of gender arrangements (Cully and Portuges 1985). Feminist

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principles and academic structures present such severe contradictions that often 'academic feminism' may seem to be an oxymoron. Yet, within the given limitations, feminist practices in the academy serve to subvert the academy as the sole custodian of higher learning (Johnson 1987).

Feminist pedagogy explicitly confronts the popularly understood divisions between public and private, between reason and emotion and legitimizes personal experience as an appropriate arena of intellectual activity. It is recognized that teachers and students alike bring 'texts' of their own to the classroom which shape the transactions within it. The teacher is only the main contributor and delineator, not the sole authority (Maher 1985). Pedagogies such as the feminist ones which are to voice and explore the unexpressed and marginalized perspectives, have to be collaborative, cooperative and interactive. This requires that concepts be treated not as 'given' but that common vocabularies be built by making explicit connections between theory, research and experience. For feminists, located as they are in the position of being both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to the discipline (Westkott 1988: 213), the explicit connections between theory, research and experience lead towards gender-sensitive perspectives and feminist pedagogies.

In a review of the nature of feminist pedagogies, Martel and Peterat (1988) identify four common themes: a) an enduring connectedness to the living and the concrete, b) emphasis on participation and interaction, c) collaboration and cooperation and, d) teaching with a vision. *Connectedness to the living and concrete* is not narrowly interpreted as applied knowledge, but rather calls for a historical perspective on knowledge which then invites students to personalize the domain of study through *participation and sharing* of life and experiences. Small discussion groups, contact outside of classrooms, sharing of reading materials and use of drama and theatre techniques are found to initiate *collaboration and cooperation*. *Teaching with a vision* involves 'passionate pedagogy' (Dubois 1983: 112) which emerges out of being involved in the issues that we study and is different from either indoctrination or preaching. Such pedagogies therefore strive towards 'authenticity' as a notion of empowerment and not a mere reversal of social power (Martel and Peterat 1988).

Briefly, then feminist pedagogies raise the important questions about how knowledge has been/is constituted, by whom, for whom and for what purpose, and answers to these are sought through the interrelations and mediations between personal experience, subject area and its social and political contexts. In the Indian context, feminist pedagogies have to initially encounter the androcentrism of our discipline and subsequently feminist critiques. Further, as sociologists trained in English with little indigenous feminist theoretical discourse to base ourselves on (Uberoi 1993), it is not easy to locate oneself amidst contestations of castes, classes, patriarchies and communal identities. Standpoints that homogenize 'women' as an analytical category do not hold ground in the Indian context. A feminist standpoint of interlocking oppressions

that would recognize the complex mediations between caste, class, ethnic and gender oppression would be more connected to the living and the concrete. In a multi-caste/class/religion classroom a conscious attempt needs to be made to give political value to daily life. Narrations of what each student went through to make it to the class on time itself could be the first lesson (Russell 1985). Such narrations help to delineate the 'texts' that we bring to the classroom and a sustained effort at such activities helps in piecing together identities. A discussion on the deliberate ways in which schools marginalize the voices of working-class women and lower caste female students by insistence on either the brahmanical vernacular or Queen's English, often helps students from diverse backgrounds to shed inhibitions and reveals that the 'best orator' of the class need not be the one who is its 'star'.

Introductory sessions often lead to women students viewing themselves as the 'oppressed' and men students being viewed as oppressors, who may then become hostile to the classroom. Privileges of the dominant class, caste, religion, region, race, its specificities by gender have to be fleshed out. Such exercises strive towards a dialogue in which the experience of Dalit women students are seen as relevant to understanding not only the situation of Dalit women, but also in grasping the situation of *savarna* women and indeed that of Dalit and *savarna* men. Our feminist pedagogies therefore have the complex task of analysing caste from the standpoint of Dalit women and class from the standpoint of working-class women, *hindutva* from the standpoint of minorities and heterosexuality from the standpoint of lesbians. Recognizing multiple subjects of knowledge and history requires that all our subjectivities be transformed. Just as one 'becomes a feminist' one can learn to see the world from the perspectives rooted in experiences and lives that are not ours. This does not mean speaking 'as' or 'for' the marginalized but being aware of and taking cognizance of one's caste, class, ethnic and gender location in society (Harding 1992). Following Harding, the epistemological standpoint of our feminist pedagogies is off/for rainbow-coalition politics for emancipation.

The feminist pedagogies that we underline bring up a series of issues pertaining to vulnerability, authority and power in classrooms. We are faced sometimes with the incompatibilities of academic sisterhood and collaborative research. Our attempts at liberating pedagogical practices and alternatives may sharply conflict with the structured model of our academy. All this presents contradictions, with which we must cope and against which we must struggle. Over enthusiasm for non-hierarchical classrooms may lead to chaos; a sense of personal vulnerability may arise at the loss of authority and our opposition to the schism between emotionality and intellectuality may sometimes have to be curtailed. Despite the limitations and the struggles, such pedagogies will revitalize sociological discourse and make it more sociological. In what follows, the contours of the major trends in sociological discourse in India are traced from such a standpoint.

THE 'WOMEN'S QUESTION' IN SOCIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE IN INDIA

Considering the recent proliferation of empirically oriented studies on women, the charge that women are invisible in sociology may seem to be out of place. Yet an exercise in sketching the construction of gender in sociological discourse is much needed. As Niranjana (1992) has argued the analytical frameworks have not been subjected to much review. Gender studies have not affected as such the paradigms in mainstream sociology, and to that extent new gender-sensitive perspectives remain neatly peripheralized as 'optional courses'. One is placed at a critical juncture where 'gender' apparently seems to have attained visibility thanks to the phenomena of 'publishing gender', the trend in offering new courses on 'gender issues' and the increasing frequency of seminars on that theme. Yet the gender-blindness and insensitivity which exists in foundational courses goes unquestioned. It may be counter-argued that 'gender-sensitive' criticisms of sociological discourse are exercises that read history with hindsight and that to critique projects whose explicit aim has not been to study gender is to overlook historical limits. The exercise undertaken here is more of an attempt to see the ways in which the history of sociology in India has been one of shifting paradigms; the shifts being linked to the changing social and historical contexts of Indian social reality (Singh 1986). To the extent that gender as a structural feature of this reality has been ignored, our understanding of reality has remained partial and 'gendered'. It is important to note therefore how some of the major developments in the women's movement and in gender studies in India could restructure our 'sociological' understanding.

British colonialism set in motion several ethnographic enquiries to gather details of numerous castes and tribes. This proved to be a political project, which stripped from the people and institutions their agency. The fact that the early works on land systems, religion, castes and tribes were a part of the process of the West's construction of its image as the epitome of the 'modern' (Inden 1990) is well accepted. But crucial to such critiques is the recognition of the fact that the lives of women exist at the interface of caste and class inequalities and that female sexuality is crucial to the maintenance and reproduction of these inequalities (Sangari and Vaid 1989). Critiques of land revenue settlements overlook the processes through which matrilineal systems of land control were transformed into patrilineal ones as well as the differential consequences of commercialization of agriculture and de-industrialization on men and women of the productive castes and classes (Bhagwat 1990). The collusion and contest between upper caste patriarchies and colonial rulers is crucial to the understanding of land relations in India (Chaudhari 1990).

The 'Indian renaissance' gave expression to the indigenous sociological imagination or the 'pre-sociological reference groups' (Mukherjee 1979: 6).

Within these 'pre-sociological reference groups', some advocated a liberal reformist position while others advocated a revivalistic rejection of colonial domination. The 'Indian woman' that emerges from these debates is upper caste or middle class, and these debates most often centre around tradition and 'modernity', with women being merely namesakes for such debates (Mani 1990). The nationalist discourse further essentialized Indian womanhood in terms of the middle class, upper caste woman, the torch-bearer of tradition. Social legislation was seen as a cure to corruption in tradition (Chatterjee 1990). It is the carry over of this 'Indian Womanhood' that one finds in the early sociological discourse which drew its premises from the nationalist reformation. The more radical of the proto-sociologists such as Mahatma Phule were ignored by the sociological discourse except (Omvedt 1976); 'issues' relating to the survival of lower caste and working class women did not come to the fore, as 'violent' subjects get hidden under the rubrics of 'social problem', or the 'changing status of women' in India and so on. The reproduction of brahmanical prescriptions continues through graduate and post-graduate courses on 'Indian Society' and 'Indian Social Institutions' or 'Status of Women in India', which are based largely on indological studies (see the list of recommended readings of the universities of Poona, Kolhapur, Marathwada, Nagpur and Bombay of 1992). The voices of dissent, of struggle and resistance, the agency of the masses of women were neglected.

As sociology in India entered the phase of institutionalization in the 1960s, there was a proliferation of village studies. But the 'empiricism' and 'focus on tradition' of these village studies paradoxically missed out the 'torch-bearers of tradition' who constituted more than half of the total landless agricultural labour. Desai's book, *Rural Sociology* (1959), led to a series of critical studies on the displacement of the productive castes and classes affected by planned change. The significant issues of 'Who sows? Who reaps?' (Agarwal 1988), land reforms and witch-burning (Kelkar and Devanathan 1991), agricultural technology and displacement of women as sustainers of agriculture (Shiva 1988), increased agricultural prosperity (and malnutrition, female infanticide and dowry deaths) among women (Agarwal 1988), point towards the crucial importance of gender in land relations and the immediate need to integrate feminist critiques of 'development' in our courses on 'rural sociology' and 'agrarian societies'.

The decade from 1960-70 was also the period of studies on 'modernization'. The impact of modernization on women was that it invariably concentrated on the role-conflict of the middle class working women (Desai and Patel 1989). In these studies, women remained encapsulated in their roles, while critiques of the family were sidelined as the sexual division of labour was naturalized. The studies of mediations of relations of production and reproduction and the restructuring of patriarchies (Dube and Palriwala 1989) have led to a wider understanding and critique of capitalist development in India.

Family studies in India had by and large focused on the structure of the joint family and the impact of urbanization and industrialization. The important links between work, property and kinship relations, which in fact structure the productive and reproductive domains of women's lives, are crucial to our understanding of caste and class boundaries and their continuation (Patel 1993). Female-headed households and the increasing number of deserted women have posed a challenge to family studies. Important links between the households and the state have been shown in the context of increasing intervention policies (Agarwal 1988; Sardamoni 1992).

The 1970s saw a growth in the studies on social movements. Most of these studies focused on movements in which the roots of the women's liberation movement can be traced. Women's participation in these movements had remained invisible and to that extent ideological aspects of organization and management of the movement had been pushed to the background. The slogan of the women's movement which declared the personal as political had sensitized the discourse on social movements to subtle forms of power and co-option (Patel 1993). The documentation of women's active participation in the Telangana, Tebhaga, anti-price rise, Chipko, and Shetkari Sanghatana movement (Gandhi 1990; Omvedt 1990; Sen 1990; Stree Shakti Sangatana 1989) was taken up in women's studies in India. Such studies have been significant in restoring the agency of women and in going beyond the paradigm of women as 'always and already' victims (Mohanty-Talpade 1984).

The meaning of 'femaleness' within specific cultural-symbolic realms was explored by several studies (Khare 1983). The concepts of purity-pollution, honour and prestige have been analyzed to reveal the controls on female sexuality (Das 1976; Jacobson 1978). As Niranjana very succinctly points out, studies which have explored diverse modes of conceptualizing and constructing femaleness have proceeded along lines parallel to those focusing on gender asymmetry. Such a dichotomous vision leads to an incomplete conception of the specificities of gender meanings (Niranjana 1992). Within the broader context, studies on women have proliferated in the mainstream sociological discourse but these, by and large, run parallel to the developments in gender studies and therefore it may appear as if women have attained visibility in sociological discourse. In reality the mainstream paradigms and concepts have remained largely unaffected. This trend is an obvious outcome of the University Grants Commission's (UGC) policy on women's studies, wherein more than twenty women's studies centres were granted to universities without much orientation regarding the theory and research in gender studies and without attention to the developments and issues in the women's movement. The present crisis in sociological research in India is seen as located in three institutional structures: the universities, the UGC and the professional bodies of sociologists (Das 1993). Das underlines the general lack of self-reflection and critique of the ethics and practices of the craft among sociologists. It has been argued that the 1980s ought to have belonged to sociology because the decade witnessed the

growing salience of social issues, much as secessionism, communalism and casteism. But the response from the sociologists nowhere matched the gravity of the challenge (Deshpande 1994). Feminist pedagogical practices pose a major challenge to the weariness that is manifest in the discipline and could be a step in indigenizing, decentralizing and revitalizing sociological discourse. In the next section some illustrations of feminist pedagogical practices used in a foundational course in sociology on the concepts of deviance and caste are discussed.

DEVIANCE AND CONFORMITY

The origins of sociology are closely linked to the call for social reform and to the moral issue of establishing and maintaining a social order. The concept of 'social deviance' has its roots in the large-scale social change brought forth by the Reformation and the commercial, scientific and industrial revolutions. It was the moral issue of establishing and maintaining the social order that motivated Comte, Saint Simon and Durkheim alike. Deviance, therefore, came to mean that which violates the normative rules, understanding or expectations of social systems. Seen in this way, deviance is strategic to all ideas of morality and politics, yet writings in sociology on deviance tend to be partisan. The varying approaches to the study of deviance represent four distinct theoretical perspectives: (a) the functionalist; (b) ecological; (c) interactionist; and (d) the conflict-oriented. A focus on the institution of punishment in the study of deviance would lead undoubtedly to the perspectives of Foucault and Elias (Garland 1990).

A review of the different perspectives on social deviance and punishment reveals that most of them exclude female deviants. When a woman is defined as deviant, her act comes to be interpreted as one of greater violation, since it is viewed as violation of the gender role. This serves to perpetuate and reinforce the conception of 'over-socialized' women. In the few discussions on female deviance the focus has been on sexual deviance, promiscuity or on women's alleged inability to control their emotions (Morris 1989). Male deviance pointedly aimed against women within the family, such as in cases of child abuse or wife abuse which have received much attention. What one comes across in most texts on the sociology of deviance is the discussion of categories such as 'homosexuals', 'lesbians', 'transsexuals' and 'transvestites', and the lack of a critical discourse on sexuality (see, for example, Wolfgang, et al. 1964). The sociological discourse on deviance hence reiterates the dominant discourse of patriarchy and it may be argued that the categories labelled as 'deviant' are those that are crucial to the maintenance of patriarchal relations.

We begin this discussion with two newspaper reports: one on a lesbian 'marriage' (*The Times of India*, 10 December 1987) and one on 'transvestites' (*Indian Express*, 6 December 1992). In December 1987, policewomen Lila

Namdeo and Urmila Srivastava of the 23rd Battalion stationed on the outskirts of Bhopal married each other in a temple. Both women were discharged from duty without a show cause notice and were subjected to a medical examination. The verdict clearly declared the policewomen as 'deviants' and their marriage as null. The response of students, asked to comment on the news item, seemed to focus on the idea that 'lesbianism' was unnatural and Western. Hence we proceeded to pick out historical references to lesbianism to decode the 'unnatural'.

References to lesbianism can be found in both brahmanical scriptures and popular literature. In the *Manusmriti* there are references to punishments like loss of caste, heavy monetary fines and strokes of the whip for homosexual and lesbian behaviour. In the case of married women, it is mentioned that 'luring of maids' is to be punished by shaving the woman bald, cutting off two fingers and then parading her on a donkey (see Doniger 1990: 191). In the *Mahabharata*, Yudhistira, in a dialogue with Narada, argues that there is no man in the world that women would not go to and when there is no man in the world, they even fall on each other. In another dialogue, Karna condemns the sexual freedom enjoyed by women in the Madra and Balhika countries, and describes the pleasures that they indulge in with each other (Meyer 1980). In the Prakrit verses of the 'Gatha Saptshati' too, there are references to lesbian relations (Joglekar 1950). Manu's specification of more severe punishment for married women who lure maids can suggest either a wider prevalence of such relationships among married women or a greater acceptance of these among unmarried women. In either case, these references point to the tensions in the norms of compulsory heterosexuality prescribed by brahmanical patriarchy.

If we once again view the marriage of the two police women and its 'nullified' status, then what emerges is that 'heterosexuality' is not just a matter of sexual preference but it is an institution imposed by patriarchy. For a woman, this institution means that her life will be organized by and defined in relation to a man. Social practices and structures force a woman in this direction. Women who resist 'heterosexual alliances' may be labelled 'spinsters' (so labelled for their failure to attract a man,) or 'lesbians' (seen as man-haters). Sexual identity is socially constructed and therefore lesbianism is not outside of time and place but a critical space within social structures (De Lauretis 1990). Hegemonic heterosexuality is not a natural fact but an ideological practice of 'naturalizing' gender. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), enacted in 1861, refers to homosexuality as an unnatural offence. However, lesbianism is not explicitly mentioned, though by invoking other provisions of the IPC, Ismat Chughtai's story 'Lihaaf' was charged with obscenity for portraying a lesbian relationship. The discussion in the classroom then focused on 'lesbianism' as an 'alternative life-style' and on 'political lesbianism'. It pointed out the danger of over-emphasizing the former, which tends to individualize and overplay the lesbian as a 'free agent' thereby undermining the constraints and pressures of compulsory heterosexuality. Lesbian relationships, it must be underlined,

challenge the assumption that enduring commitments are only to be found in the domain of kinship based on blood or marriage. In the light of these arguments the label 'deviant' attached to lesbians was seen as political conservatism, and the necessity of viewing the sociological discourse on deviance critically was highlighted.

The other newspaper clipping entitled 'The Painted Men' (*Indian Express* 6 December 1992) was on 'transvestite' performers in Bangkok. Transvestites are another category labelled as 'deviant' which needed to be reviewed in the context of the discourse on sex and gender. The discussion with the students began with much confusion about the terms transvestites, transsexuals and *hijras* (hermaphrodites). Most *hijras* are men who are forced or lured into emasculation. They are actually eunuch. But *hijras* are institutionalized in India — they are given social space on the fringe of society. Transvestites are different from *hijras* in that they are males or females who for diverse motives may dress according to the standards and norms prescribed for the other sex. Transsexuals are yet another category who identify completely with the other sex and believe that they are trapped in the wrong body and seek surgery to correct this error. Once again, most students commented that this category of transvestite was Western and related stories about Boy George, Michael Jackson and Rene Richards to support their argument. They obviously were not aware of Cikhandi in the *Mahabharata* (who exchanges her womanhood with a *Yaksha* (male demon) or of the Jaina texts that refer to three psychological sexual inclinations (Vedas) which may be regardless of the biological (*linga*). In present times the *potraj* presents an example of transvestism.

The word *potraj* comes from the Tamil word *potraju*, believed to be the brother of the seven goddesses who constitute the *gramdevta* in south India (Joshi 1981). In the Maharashtra, *Mariaai* or *Laxmiaai* are symbolic of the virgin *gramdevta* and the *potraj* belonging to the Mahar or Mang castes is the official worshipper. The *potraj* wears feminine attire (a long skirt) *haldi-kumkum*, green glass bangles and leaves his long hair loose on the back. Mahadevshastri Joshi has argued that this feminine dress of the *potraj* is symbolic of the patriarchal takeover of priesthood from women in matriarchal cultures. He argues that women alone enjoyed the status of priests of the *gramdevta*. With the patriarchal takeover, fearing the wrath of the virgin goddess, the male priest adopted the feminine dress in worship. The *potraj* in the worship, therefore, seeks to appease the goddess by drawing blood, by whipping himself, poking himself with needles or biting himself. This drawing of blood is seen as symbolic of male sacrifice which was an apologia of the patriarchal takeover. Many of us argued in the discussion that such a reading of the *potraj* tradition is limited due to the Western anthropological tradition and it is possible to explore whether transvestism among lower caste men was institutionalized through the negotiation of upper and lower caste patriarchies, since it poses a threat by pointing towards the incongruence between sex, gender identity and gender role. Such a reading is possible if we observe the

ways in which *hijras* have been customarily institutionalized into *devas* so that the threat they pose to sex-gender is nullified.

Such critical analyses not only foster a caste, class and gender specific reading of deviance but also point to the 'inclusive definition' of deviance which works to the benefit of reactionary and conservative trends—the dominant construction of sexuality in this case. Theoretically, it leads us to question sociological perspectives, since they explain how individuals become gendered persons but do not explain the structural origins of gender inequality.

GENDER, CASTE AND VIOLENCE

We began by taking up two of the most recommended approaches to the study of caste in our M.A. syllabus: the six features of caste as outlined by G. S. Ghurye (Ghurye 1932) and 'Sanskritization' as conceived by M. N. Srinivas (Srinivas 1989). In the light of an incident of upper caste violence in Chunduru (Andhra Pradesh) and Gothala and Pimpri Deshmukh (Maharashtra), the caste factor in violence against women and the gender factor in caste-based violence were discussed.

G. S. Ghurye's analysis of caste in India takes the form of six features of caste (Ghurye 1932). We attempted a gender-sensitive reading of these features. The segmental division of society is seen as resting on the autonomy of each caste, which is maintained through its caste *panchayats*. The major offences dealt with by the *panchayats* were those of keeping concubines of another caste, seduction, adultery, refusal to fulfil a promise of marriage and refusal to maintain a wife (Ibid.). This list is a clear indication of the control exercised over the sexuality of women, through the caste *panchayats*, since the main threat to the purity of the group came from the sexual contact of lower caste men with upper caste women. The restrictions on feeding and social intercourse and restrictions on marriage need a careful analysis. The restrictions on social intercourse did not include sexual intercourse and the upper caste men had a customary right over the bodies of lower caste women. What is often concealed behind the rubrics of 'endogamy' is the fact that women were and are gateways to the caste system (Das 1976). Women are not gateways in the passive sense but there are points of consensus between patriarchies and castes and in this sense upper caste women consent to brahmanical patriarchies and in return are sanctioned power over lower caste women. This issue was more than apparent as we shall see later in the caste-based violence both in Chunduru, and in Gothala and Pimpri Deshmukh.

At Chunduru (Guntur district) on 6 August 1991, 21 Dalits were massacred. The incident that triggered off the massacre was the accidental touching by a Dalit youth's foot of a Reddy boy in a cinema theatre, and of a Dalit boy being knifed because he was supposed to have grazed his body against two Reddy girls. Vasantha and Kalpana Kannabiran (1991) argue that this confrontation should not be trivialized by seeing it in the light of the happenings at the

cinema-hall or in terms of homogenized notions of oppressive relationships between upper castes and Dalits. On 14 August of the same year, a female Golla agricultural labourer was beaten up by Reddy men and paraded naked at Chilakurti. Demonstration of control through humiliation of women of another caste is seen as reducing the 'manhood' of the caste, the manhood being defined in terms of the control that men can exercise over women and the passivity of the women of the caste (Kannabiran and Kannabiran 1991).

In two incidents in Maharashtra, lower caste (Dalit) males were hacked to death by upper caste villagers (assisted by upper caste women) solely because they had abused some upper caste women. The Dalit males were believed to be of 'loose' character. It was reported that upper caste women incited the manhood of their men to protect their honour (Bhagwat and Rege 1993). It was not clear whether the Dalit men had really abused the upper caste women. If we take it that they had done so, then the incidents must be interpreted in the following way: Dalit men, when they gain access to power (these Dalit men were *kotwals*), take to the methods of the upper castes—namely, threatening the manhood of their oppressors. If the alleged abuse and molestation by these Dalit men of the upper caste women was only a ploy, the incidents show the power derived by upper caste women in consenting to upper caste patriarchies. In either of the analyses there are important clues for both the women's movement and the Dalit movements (Dietrich 1992).

In the concept of Sanskritization (Srinivas 1989), the relationship between caste and status of women has been noted but there is little analysis of why caste and gender might be related in this way (Liddle and Joshi 1986). The sexual division of labour and caste-based division of labour are intermeshed, in that there is a definite relationship between the position in caste hierarchy and the control over women's labour. Any elevation in caste status leads to the withdrawal of women from productive processes outside the private sphere. This is linked to control over the sexuality of upper caste women and the 'accessibility' of the bodies of lower caste women which is linked to their participation in social labour and which, in turn, is seen as the 'failure' of lower caste men to control the sexuality of their women, seen as the root of their impurity.

In a patrilineal society, caste determined not only the right to property but also the right to occupation. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas were not related directly to the land, and monopoly was developed through clear cut ideas of purity and pollution. It became essential to prove that the upper caste women were 'chaste' and control over female sexuality became a matter of anxiety for the brahmanical law givers. Severe controls came to be placed on upper caste women in the form of pre-puberty marriages, seclusion and widow burning. These controls were enforced by the implementation of the concept of 'pativrata' though which women themselves not only accepted the controls imposed on them but imposed these on themselves (Chakravarti 1992). The brahmanical texts also prescribed the use of force and coercion by the family

and the king in the enforcement of controls on the sexuality of upper caste women thereby implying that controls were achieved through both the compliance of women and sometimes through force and coercion. Chakravarti has argued that upper caste women too subscribed to the ideology of the caste system and their perpetuation of it was achieved to some extent through their investment in a structure that rewarded them in some ways even as it subordinated them (1992: 25). Brahmanical patriarchy views the 'inability' of the lower castes to control their women's sexuality (lower castes allowed widow remarriage, for example) as a part reason for their impurity thereby reinforcing caste divisions. Hence the gender ideology legitimated not only structures of patriarchy but also the organization of caste (Liddle and Joshi 1986). Women's lives, it may be argued, exist at the interface of caste and class inequalities and management of female sexuality is crucial to the reproduction of these inequalities (Sangari and Vaid 1990).

We discovered one such interesting instance of 'ideological' management of upper caste female sexuality in our reading of the social history of Pune city. In the post-World War II period, severe economic crisis required Brahmin women to work outside the home. Many of these women began to work as cooks in upper caste households. During the same period the ideology of 'Adarsh Mata' began to be propagated by Brahmin caste associations. This was done mainly through the institutions of awards and prizes (revealed in interviews with 'Adarsh Mata' award winners of the Konkanastha Brahmin caste association). Such ideologies, it is possible, ensured that the entry of women of the upper castes into the labour markets did not erode 'caste purity' and 'patriarchal controls'. The participation of upper caste women in violence against the Dalits (at Pimpri Deshmukh or Chunduru for example), the prominent role of 'upper caste' and 'middle class' mothers in the anti-Mandal agitations have all pointed to the complex intermeshing of the caste and women's question. And the decline in absolute power of the upper castes often manifests in the mediation of intercaste relations through a reformulation of gendered spaces (Kannabiran and Kannabiran 1991). This further highlights the crucial importance of gender to the sociological discourse on caste.

The Family: Haven or Cradle of Violence

We began our discussions on the family by writing out the cases of violence and abuse that we had seen, heard of, or experienced in our families. We then documented the popular sayings that refer to domestic violence in the Indian languages that we know were enlisted. This was an exercise in realizing the processes through which violence against women in the families is normalized. We then made a note of the different forms of violence against women in the family at different points in the life cycle and narrowed the focus to cruelty by the husband and his relatives and to understanding family through this form of violence. The statistics for 1987-91 reveal that the number of registered cases of

cruelty by husbands or their relatives have shown an increase of 37.5 per cent (National Crime Records Bureau 1991).

Broadly three kinds of definitions of violence and cruelty against wives emerged: a narrow legal definition which often left out acts which many women consider as violence, as for instance rape within marriage. Second, expert or professional definitions of violence, for example, those of sociologists and psychologists who often focus on the 'breakdown' of the family, and third, a broader, feminist position which focused not only on the actual manifestations of violence against wives but also the ever present 'fear of violence' through which compliance with the patriarchal family norms is sought. Such a position reveals that across caste and class boundaries there is a continuum of violent practices against wives. At the first level there are linguistic clues, violent language and vulgar abuse, or again violence against wives for financial and economic reasons, which may range from demands for dowry and gifts, control over her labour power and resources, considering her a culprit in case of shortage of household finances, or withdrawal from work and employment into the kind of work that is believed to maintain the family prestige. At yet another level is the violence experienced by women who have entered the spheres of higher education and employment and operate within an ambivalent context. At the most obvious level is the violence that is manifested at the physical level, such as battering, kicking, burning; only a modest percentage of this type of violence gets registered as crime against women.

The newspaper headlines that we analysed ranged from news of a housewife killed along with her lover, to a housewife stoned to death for making salty food (*Sakal* and *Pune Plus*, October-December 1992). Reported cases further revealed that in a majority of cases the agency does not rest with individual males and that other male and female members of the family share it, their agency ranging from incitement of the male to actual physical participation in the violence. Discussions with feminist activists working with 'speak-out' and 'legal guidance' centres revealed that justifications and rationalizations given by the husbands for their violent behaviour most often were that of controlling the sexuality and labour of their wives. It is important to note that what is seen at the individual level as a 'rationalization' of violent behaviour is at the broader level a patriarchal ideology that permeates the state, its policies and practices.

Under the Indian law, a victim of domestic abuse has theoretically three different types of remedies: matrimonial relief, a suit for civil wrong and recourse to criminal law (Keshwaar 1991). The lack of shelters for women leaves the woman with no option but to cling to a violence-ridden marriage since the right of the woman to reside in the matrimonial home, the right to be maintained and the right not to be abused are not specifically laid down. The freedom to move, to express her feelings and the right against forced labour are being denied to women within the family itself. Modern rationalizations like 'cultural legitimacy' and 'maintenance of law and order' are put forth for accommodation of traditional interests of a patriarchal society. This is most

obvious in the failure of the Indian state to provide a uniform civil code. In the event of the conflict between a woman's claim to her fundamental rights and her status under personal laws, the court upholds the primacy of the latter (Balasubrahmaniam 1983). The refusal of the state to see women in any context other than the familial is most clearly seen in its approach to women and work. As Aparna Mahanta (1994) has shown, what has been emphasized in the state's policy is only the 'management oriented' language. The emphasis remains on the woman's nurturing role as the provider of nutrition, health care and education. Women in the family are responsible for the care of the old, sick, unemployed, for the maintenance of health and socialization of children; most of the functions have long been at least a partial responsibility of most welfare states. The state which utilizes the services of the women endorses the patriarchal ideologies and powers in the family (Banerjee 1992).

Viewed thus, the family emerges as a site of contestation, struggle and politics and such a discussion then provides a point of entry for deliberations on the conceptualization of 'family' and 'household' in state programmes and policies. Coercion, threat and practice of violence in societies with a wide social consensus in favour of patriarchies obtain different degrees of consent from women and as Sangari (1992) argues, these conditions governing the consent of women are wider than patriarchies and these consensual elements function to divide both women within the family and between caste and class boundaries.

The experiential issues and practical politics of family life in India have been overlooked by sociologists and these issues must be confronted if the field of study is to be meaningful and relevant.

Matters of Immediate Concern

The undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in sociology Maharashtra reveal an emphasis on introductory sociology courses based on popular American text books, and courses on Indian society based largely on indological writings (*vide* syllabi of Bombay, Pune, Kolhapur, Marathwada and Nagpur universities). The number of students opting for sociology as a major has declined, the main reason being that the course contents and the quality of teaching and instruction are unable to sustain the interest of the students (Dhanagare 1993). There is no doubt that radical innovations are required. At the workshop on curricula development held in 1988 at the S.N.D.T. Women's University, Bombay illustrations to incorporate gender perspectives in sociology had been discussed and suggestions for syllabi reformulations had been put forth.

Inter-textuality and communicative codes are possible means of innovation (Andersen 1989). And this would mean looking upon the discourse of sociology as a vast network of texts and interactively shifting interpretations and taking a critical look at acceptable means of communication. Gender sensitive perspectives and feminist pedagogies are one way of moving towards inter-textuality and communicative codes and towards acquisition of knowledge and formulation of theories for political action and social change. There is need

to restructure the entire education policy in regard to social sciences for which a community of discourse must emerge. Such a community will have to guard against the danger of dialogues being limited to metropolitan centres. A series of local and regional level workshops on syllabi and pedagogical reformulations must precede any national level deliberations. This could be a step in revitalizing the 'tired discipline' (Deshpande 1994: 515) of sociology in India.

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