

Queering Indian Sociology

A Critical Engagement

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt towards queering Indian sociology by incorporating the perspective of the hitherto ignored 'publics'- the sexual minorities- whose lives are waiting to be recognized as a 'sub-field' in South Asian Sociology. It also dispel the myth that alternative sexual orientation is a purely western idea and issues of 'erotic justice' are alien to Indian and South Asian cultures. Further, queering here is not equated with only protests through queer art, avant-garde experimentation and life-style identity politics but includes a 'critical sexuality perspective' which foregrounds experiences of subaltern sexual subjects like 'working class lesbians', *hijras* and *kothis* to map the agenda of sexual transformation and erotic justice. In this sense, the LGBT movement has to be critiqued for not engaging with the issue of caste and class. The paper seeks to broaden the concept of 'erotic justice' by delineating and emphasizing its connections with class, caste and global politics of sexual liberation.

In Khoemeni's Iran they booked you for being gay, sodomised you in gang rapes at the police station all night, dragged you out at dawn, shot you in the yard, and sodomised the warm body one last time! Ah justice! (Merchant 2009: 9)

[F]ew college and universities bother to teach human sexuality... stigma adheres even to scholarly investigation of sex (Rubin: 154)

In making sexuality a political issue feminists conceptualised it as changeable and therefore challenged the prevailing assumption that sexual desires and practices were fixed by nature (Jackson and Scott 2002: 6)

Sexual and Intimate: 'Private Troubles' as 'Public Issues'

I begin this essay with Michael Burawoy's (2006) ideas of 'private troubles and public issues'. Burawoy takes this expression from C.W. Mill's *Sociological Imagination*. What constitutes sociological imagination for Mills is transforming *personal troubles* into *public issues* (emphasis mine). Personal troubles as Burawoy describes are those individual experiences which result from unemployment, disease, murder, poverty and similar other difficult conditions of life. The sociological horizon expands with sociologists' commitment to constantly accepting and accommodating the 'unfamiliar' and 'new' *troubles* and also in their forging alliances with dissident groups engaged in challenging variety of power and dominance (ibid).

Some of the most private of the 'private troubles' in my understanding are possibly the sexual and erotic aspects of human life which are missing from sociological concerns in India and South Asia. Study of sexuality in general and subordinate sexualities in particular has received little attention in Indian and south Asian sociologies. The latter have failed to notice two decades of protest and burgeoning countermovement of 'multiple erotic subjectivities' in the region.¹ This can only affirm an inherent heterosexism within the body of the discipline and its practices. If venturing on to this landscape makes one 'morally suspect' to use Ken Plummer's (1975) expression, it is better to take this 'risk' and 'hazard' in the spirit of a social scientist's quest for justice (see Wallerstein 2004).

To Jeffery Weeks (2010), sexual and intimate life are socially organised and hence are deeply implicated in power relations. This necessitates the growth of dissenter groups like gay and lesbian. As Weeks (ibid) writes that subordinate sexual categories and subjectivities are attributed to artificial constraints on potentially radical play of desire. This necessitates turning the sufferings of diverse erotic subjectivities into public issue by identifying how desire is *socially organised* and simultaneously regulated by state power.

Sociology and Sexuality

In western sociology 'sexuality' as a field of study only emerged during the 1960s. Ken Plummer (2012) maintains that for the first hundred and fifty years of its existence, sociology paid very little serious attention to the study of human sexualities. The development of a new and critical sociology of sexualities began in 1960s and since then become an emerging field (ibid)². In Indian sociology, feminism makes its visible presence in the late 1980s (Rege 2003). It would be an exaggeration to argue, however, that gender is fully mainstreamed in sociology though gender within sociology has become a significant sub-field. This is reflected in optional courses on 'women and society' offered by a large number of universities and colleges along with vast amount of research and publications accumulating since 1980s (see Chaudhuri 2011).

Just as mainstream sociology tends to ignore 'gender' as a serious concern, feminist sociology in India fails to move beyond heterosexism. When feminist concepts and theories offer a radical critique of gender binary, then, it is pertinent to ask how feminist pedagogy ends up reproducing the same binary. Feminist sociologists and their pedagogical practices challenge the sex-role stereotypes and sexual division of labour and even goes on to disrupt the coherent articulation of sex, gender and desire. I quote here from V. Geetha's (2006) *Gender* which is a popular and widely circulated text. While explaining the concept of gender feminist arguments she argues, come close to queer contestation of binary assumptions. She writes

[T]here are many young men who feel uncomfortable having to prove, insistently and unhappily, that they are macho. These men probably dislike fast bikes, do not want to tease girls, nor do they feel that world is theirs to appropriate and own. Such young men are bound to feel uneasy with the shadowy ideal of a powerful and authoritative masculinity that looms large over them... We need to ask ourselves whether there is anything 'normal' about our world being arranged this way, and if there are other ways of arranging it (V. Geetha 2006: xiv-xv).

V. Geetha (2007) also touches upon 'compulsory heterosexuality' in her small but brilliantly written volume on 'patriarchy'. She quotes Chayanika Shah, a queer feminist who writes – 'is compulsory heterosexuality only about controlling desire or is it about dictating that the world can have only two kinds of people—women and men'. (ibid: 197)

Despite such awareness of sexuality as a significant issue and dismantling sexual roles and attributes based stereotypes, feminist pedagogy and praxis in general and feminist sociology in particular, do not stretch sexuality beyond

an initial explication of a 'sex gender' binary. Feminist sociologists put their anti-binarism agenda to rest after some initial ritualistic discussion while dealing with the problematic of 'sex and gender'. In the remaining part of the curriculum, gender becomes synonymous with women and the latter emerge as compulsorily heterosexual. Normative heterosexuality thereby circulates within the surface of feminist sociology (Ingraham 1994). Ken Plummer (1994) attributes this omission to what he calls as the unfortunate tendency to conflate gender and sexuality. So, sociology in India and South Asia lacks 'sexuality' as a separate sub-field and even the engendered sociology recognizes only men and women as legitimate subjects. The presence of gender identities beyond heterosexual binary is rendered invisible. Studies that highlight power and dominance exercised in regulating 'erotic' aspects of human life is not generally considered as sociological subject matter even within feminist sociology.

Maya Sharma's (2006) writing on the plight of poor working class lesbian women in contemporary India constitutes a radical break and ought to be included in mainstream feminist politics and pedagogical practices. The course 'Women and society' in sociology and feminist studies within different disciplines have yet to consider what Sharma describes as 'lives lived outside definable and bound imagination of our society'. Sharma points to the apprehensions expressed by feminist activists on inclusion of the sexually marginalized in feminist agenda. Through anecdotal accounts she throws light on the views of a leftist women's group on 'Lesbian Rights'. In the opinion of this leftist group as Sharma mentions - 'sexual difference is responsible for confusion'. It also implies that lesbian women and poor women are distinct categories of women (ibid). And if a lesbian woman is poor, it is her poverty that will be foreground and addressed, not her sexual orientation. Probably for such reasons there has been in the west a call for analytical separation of gender and sexuality: Gayle Rubin in 1984 argued for an autonomous theory and politics specific to sexuality and Eve Kosofsky Sedwick (2008) in her *Epistemology of Closet* wrote that it was axiomatic that 'the study of sexuality is not co-extensive with the study of gender; correspondingly anti-homophobic inquiry is not co-extensive with feminist theory (see Cossman 2012)

Though feminist sociology in India do not share the heterosexist apprehensions expressed by left feminism, and some eminent feminist sociologists since 1980s have done commendable ethnographic studies on female sexuality, none of them takes the issue beyond a heteronormative framework³. We still do not have sociologists and social anthropologists in India who are exclusively devoted to the field of sexuality like Jeffrey Weeks and Ken Plummer in British Sociology and Gayle Rubin in US anthropology; Sanjay Srivastava's works (2004; 2007) attempt to bring the 'erotic' as a legitimate subject of concern in social science. Yet sociology curriculum and pedagogical practices in India

are yet to fully incorporate it. The issues of caste, class, ethnicity and social movements dominate Indian sociology but many other aspects of domination and subordination and voices of dissent do not find a place within the body of Indian 'science of society'⁴. Is 'sexuality' contaminating or threatening to the aura of Indian sociology? Or is Indian sociology ready to open its aperture to 'sexuality' with Srivastava's edited volume on *Sexuality* recently out from the Oxford University Press?

Sexuality and Sexual Stratification

Erotic desire and practices are stratified. They are defined high or low, natural or unnatural, pure or polluted. Moral meanings are attached to erotic desires and practices which, in turn, bear implications in terms of power and legitimacy on the one hand and exclusion, stigma, violence, discriminations on the other. Weeks (1986) emphasises the need to view sexuality not as a primordially natural phenomenon but rather as a product of social and historical forces. According to Weeks (quoted in Bristow 2007: 5) sexuality as nature oriented correctness of heterosexual genital intercourse is a 'fictional unity' which once did not exist and may not exist in future.⁵ To Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (1996: 2), the term sexuality is generally broader in meaning, encompassing erotic desires, practices and identity. In their understanding, gender covers all aspects of what it means to be a woman or a man and refers to social and cultural distinctions between women and men. 'Sexuality' is then reserved for aspects of personal and social life which have erotic significance. In this sense, the concept of 'sexuality' remains somewhat fluid, in part because what is deemed erotic, and hence sexual is not fixed. Sexuality is not limited to 'sex acts' but involves our sexual feelings and relationships, the ways in which we are or are not defined as sexual by others, as well as the way we define ourselves (ibid). There are 'intricate and multiple ways in which our emotions, desires and relationships are shaped by the society we live in. The physiology and morphology of body provides possibilities for human sexuality. But it does not cause the patterns of sexual life. It should be noted that sexuality cannot be reduced to reproduction. Freud did not envisage the sexual instinct, drive or libido as innately oriented towards procreative, genital heterosexuality, but rather towards polymorphous pleasures- and that is what is often now seen as potentially radical view (quoted in Jackson and Scott 2010).

One needs to look into how rules provide permission, prohibition, limits and possibilities through which erotic life is constructed (ibid). Describing sexual realities in contemporary India, for example, Brinda Bose (2007: xii) writes—'Contemporary Indian sexual identities, it may be said, are constructed

out of peculiar, particular, multiplicitous effects and perceptions of traditions, modernity, colonization and globalisation that are more often than not in confrontation with each other'. Weeks (1986) mentions how five broad areas stand out as being particularly crucial in the social organization of sexuality: kinship and family systems, economic and social organisation, social regulation, political interventions, and development of 'cultures of resistance'. In the realm of social regulation there could be formal and informal methods of control. Weeks further highlights the more secular modes of organisation of sexuality through medicine, education, psychology, social work and welfare practices. Informally, there could be many customary patterns e.g. the language of sexual abuse (see Cameron and Kulik 2003). But history of sexuality is not a simple history of control; it is also a history of opposition and resistance to moral codes⁶.

Here I draw upon Gayle Rubin's (2011) *radical theory of sex* aiming to identify, describe, explain and denounce erotic injustice and sexual oppression. Rubin talks of erotic pyramid in western society which appears to be broadly applicable to South Asian societies as well. At the top of the pyramid are marital, reproductive and heterosexual; below are unmarried, monogamous heterosexuals in couples followed by most other heterosexuals; solitary sex floats unambiguously. Stable, long-term gay male couples are verging on respectability⁷ but bar dykes and promiscuous gay men are just hovering above the groups at the very bottom of the pyramid. The most despised sexual castes currently include transsexuals, transvestites, fetishists, sadomasochists, sex workers such as prostitutes and porn models and lowliest of all, those whose eroticism transgresses generational boundaries. Individuals whose behaviour stands high in this hierarchy are rewarded with certified mental health, respectability, legality, social and physical mobility, institutional support and material benefits. As sexual behaviours or occupations fall lower on the scale, the individuals who practice them are subjected to a presumption of mental illness, disreputability, criminality, restricted social and physical mobility, institutional support and economic sanctions. Rubin writes:

In its most serious manifestations, the sexual system is a Kafkaesque nightmare in which unlucky victims becomes herds of human cattle whose identification, surveillance, apprehension, treatment, incarceration and punishment produce jobs and self satisfaction for thousands of vice, police, prison officials, psychiatrists and social workers (Gayle Rubin 2011:161).

To Rubin (ibid), sex is a vector of oppression not reducible to or understandable in terms of class, race, ethnicity or gender. A rich, white male

pervert will generally be less affected than a poor, black, female pervert. But even the most privileged are not immune to sexual oppression. Others, however, emphasise the need to examine sexuality in connection with race, class, gender (cf. Weeks 1986; Mishra and Chandirmani 2005). Jackson and Scott (2002) write-‘gender and sexuality intersect with other social divisions such as those based on ‘race’ and class, so that we each live our sexuality from different locations within society’. In India, queer movement is mostly about abolition of Section 377 and less about caste and class and political economy (Tellis 2012) but a sociological understanding of sexuality issues in Indian context or elsewhere in South Asia cannot distance from the issues of caste, class, religion, ethnicity, rural, urban and a complex interplay of these institutions for homoerotically inclined individuals.

In Defence of the Term ‘Queer’ and ‘Queering’

Queering is the process of reversing and destabilising heterosexuality as a norm (Nayar 2010). I speak in defense of the term ‘queer’ which should justify my engagements with queering sociology in India. It is easier to dismiss a term if it is construed as ‘western import’ in popular wisdom. By using this term, I stress upon the absence of any ‘pure’ indigenous term to describe and capture both the powerlessness and assertion of non-heterosexual erotic desires, practices and identities in South Asia. The term ‘queer’ stands here as an umbrella term to include both who are closeted and who are public about their non-heterosexual inclinations; to those who prefer to label themselves and the ones who choose to reject labelling or unable to choose a label and name themselves (Narain and Bhan 2005). These may be the sexual life lived outside definable and bound imagination of society (Bhan, 2006). It is opposed to all kinds of hierarchies and sexual violence. It constitutes a specific fight against human rights violations resulting from AIDS/HIV based stigma, and discriminations. Queer includes activism and protest through art, literature, academic criticism and inclined to forge alliance with any counter-hegemonic project (Nayar 2010).

As already mentioned, it is not unusual to argue that queer is an expression borrowed from the west and it cannot capture the realities in non-western contexts⁸. Reacting to this Narain and Bhan (2005: 6) surmise- ‘For a country that lives under a constitution and a penal code modelled on the nations of the West, and which firmly and desperately seeks to be a larger part of a western, globalised consumer culture, the larger question here is why the ‘tag’ of western (however wrongly applied) is construed as an invalidation of

passionately felt sexual desires and strongly defended identities *only* when it comes to sexuality'. To recapitulate, queer includes those who openly wear sexual identities like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and those who use indigenous terms like *hijra*, *kothi*, *panthis* to describe themselves. In addition to this, there are regional identities of sexual non-conformity, such as *jogappa* and *jogtas* in northern Karnatka and Maharashtra or the *shivshaktis* and *ganacharis* in parts of south India who are real and potential participants in 'queer azadi' (Narrain and Bhan, 2005, Pande, 2004 Menon 2007).

But in using the word 'queer' and 'queering' I wish to draw attention to the readers towards the fact that as a political and emancipatory term 'queer' loses its radical potentials when it takes a purely *cultural* turn and tends to neglect the pervasive impact of political economy. By cultural turn I mean the queer protest which takes place through art, avant-garde experimentations and identity politics without incorporating material conditions in which subaltern sexual subjects like hijras and working class poor 'lesbians' are entrapped. (Sharma op.cit) Bereft of both larger issues of political economy as well as specific issues class it tends to draw close to the neo-liberal celebration of individual consumption and pleasure. In this sense life style performance of sexuality seeks to create a fetish of freedom without radically altering the hegemonic social and sexual order. The 'success' of queer political movement also coincides with the market's 'celebration' of sexual diversity with specific products and specific avenues of queer entertainment and queer pleasure in restaurants, bathhouses, pubs, clubs, parties and exclusive queer tourism (see Kumar 2012).

It seems pertinent here to discuss the main ideas of Rosemary Hennessy (2000) where she looks at the role of 'cultural ideology'⁹ that displace, condense and mask the basic inequality of capitalism. She attempts to demonstrate how urban gay culture of western middle class along with 'performative theories of sex' of Judith Butler leave aside the materialist dimensions of human reality and international division of labour. In fostering 'consumptive pleasure', neo-liberalism replaces critical (sexual) citizenship with shopping malls (ibid). She mentions the interpretation of sexuality exclusively in terms of 'discourse', 'performance', 'difference' and 'life style' as disrupting heteronormativity inflected from issues of political economy and class should be seen in connection with corporate funding for research reshaping academic agenda.

Sexuality becomes a fascinating field in cultural studies where interpretation and analysis of culture is severed from fundamental structures of capitalism. In the western context, Danae Clark (1991) observes that the intensified marketing of lesbian images is less indicative of growing acceptance of homosexuality than of 'capitalist appropriation of gay "styles"'. Ashley Tellis

(2012) argues that new liberal economy and the consequent practice of global funding has turned “queers into entrepreneurial and consumptive citizens who play by the rules of state-market nexus”. Taking from these arguments it appears that a critical sexuality perspective needs to harness the question of political economy and envision erotic justice from the vantage point of those who are on the lowest of sexual hierarchies in Rubin’s *pyramid of sex* in whatever specific ways they manifest in different cultures. Similarly queer movement needs to forge alliance with anti-globalisation and other radical movements and need to be enlightened on critiques of neo-liberalism and new forms of exclusions. Queer activists might need to know the exploitation of labouring bodies through the global flow of capital and how elite gay men constitute ‘privileged customers’ of ‘pink tourism’. They need to think through the issues thrown open by organisations like National Federation of Dalit Women emphasizing intersection of caste, gender and class oppressions so as to define their agenda not solely in terms of identity politics and reading down Section 377 of IPC but also by linking of ways to foreground the material conditions of hijras and working class lesbians while mapping liberating agendas. By the same logic, the other isms and ideological counter currents should acknowledge that ‘erotic’ aspect is equally important vis-a-vis other issues of exclusions, and, those who suffer on account of their different ‘erotic desire’ and subjectivity constitute ‘counter publics’ in the similar way as any other ‘counter public’ on the basis of minority status, ethnicity, religion, caste and gender. I also express my concern here about the practices conferring legitimacy to certain subject matter to be defined as ‘core’ aspect of a discipline like ‘caste’ and ‘urban’ or ‘stratification’ and ‘social movement’ and not to gender, dalit and/or minority, sexuality and ‘erotic’. Clearly a struggle remains to be accepted as a legitimate field of sociological inquiry!

Squinting through Queer Eyes

Satish Deshpande (2004) defines the task of sociologists in terms of ‘squinting’ which implies seeing through a ‘double vision’. Sociology looks at common sense—or unexamined prejudices—and also moves beyond them to challenge the universalist appeal of any commonsense. Squinting through a critical queer perspective is attempted here to investigate a few institutions of common interest in Indian sociology—caste, class, social movement and globalisation. I specifically focus on the issue of violence to bring the ‘sufferings’ of ‘non-heterosexual subjects’ and press for the legitimate inclusion of *sexuality perspective* in Indian sociology.

Hetero-normativity of Caste

Caste is rarely discussed in queer movement. It is rare to find any literature or empirical study which talks about non-heterosexual sexuality and caste. Nivedita Menon's (2007) volume on *Sexualities* does contain a section on 'caste and sexuality' but it does not touch upon caste beyond the realm of heterosexuality despite the fact that majority of the essays in the book are concerned with queer issues. Tellis's (2012) deconstructionist reading of queer movement also point towards the absence of analysis from the viewpoint of caste but fails to move beyond this broad recognition¹⁰. It is my contention that caste as an institution is based on endogamy and hence predisposed to heterosexual parturition.

Though dalit perspective challenges the notions of 'purity', 'untouchability' and 'materialist' dimension of caste but it fails to accommodate voices of 'sexual outcastes'. My own studies (ongoing) among the *kothis*- a 'feminised masculinity'- in small towns of western India reveal that not only among 'upper' castes but even among the 'untouchable caste groups' these 'feminised' men are subjected to exclusion and violence in their everyday life. Dalit families are hardly any less coercive to their non-heterosexual 'members'; the latter have to negotiate their 'existence' within their family and community life by regular supply of cash and everyday performance of domestic labour (see Kumar 2007, 2009). When it becomes too coercive to live with the oppression of family and community life the *kothis* leave their families and homes and migrate to metropolitan city where they find no other option than taking on *hijra* identity and sustaining themselves primarily through sex work (ibid). It shows that sexually 'reproducing' bodies within heterosexual binary are as important to dalit groups as it is to the upper-castes. 'Non-heterosexual bodies' are barely contained within lower caste families. Narratives of a dalit non-heterosexual youth from rural India demonstrate the inadequacies of both dalit and feminist sociologies to capture the entrapments and exclusions on account of non-heterosexual 'erotic desire'¹¹.

'A' from rural India narrates 'his' story as a 'low caste' and a 'non-heterosexual' youth. He begins his story with spatial segregation of caste settlements in his village. He is addressed by his caste name- 'chambhar' by an upper caste landlord and by his own principal in the school—the latter himself being dalit! But 'A' also has experiences of sexual violence which he finds difficult to articulate; he is raped and sexually assaulted. His fault—possession of a self—a sexually non-coherent self—his male anatomical sex and his masculine gender mismatch with his same-sex erotic desire. His gestures do not correspond to his masculine gender and he fails to conform to local homosociality¹². He cannot look for community support when his body is violated unlike a woman of his (dalit) community¹³. He fears being branded

as *gandu* (bugger) and prefers silence to retain his existence within family and community. Dalits as a group can organise against caste and state power; dalit women mobilise against dalit patriarchy and Brahminical feminism (see Rege 2004) but 'dalit faggots' cannot vouch for justice within their community or dare to garner community support. Their demand would carry stigma, and, justice from their perspective could even be perceived dangerous.

Dalit women are oppressed but they are incorporated within family and community life; 'dalit' as a community cannot reproduce itself without harnessing the 'reproductive power' of their women. The community, however, can survive without 'non-reproducing bodies' of its 'faggots' and hence treats it *natural* to dispense with the 'persons' who fail to show a coherent articulation of sex, gender and desire.

The upper-caste queer in rural and semi-urban spaces are invisibilised. Gay, lesbian and bi-sexual identities are mostly articulated in metropolitan spaces. Probably, respectability articulated through upper-caste norms and lack of anonymity in rural and semi urban spaces invisibilise upper caste homoerotically inclined persons. In certain senses, metropolitan cities provide anonymity and 'individual' space creating conditions for certain westernized queer identities to emerge. This has happened due to diasporic connections of South Asian queers along with NGOs led initiatives towards eliminating AIDs/HIV related stigma since early 1990s (see Bhaskaran 2004; Kole 2007). Mr. D from a metropolitan city and a member of a social networking of queer online-offline community surmises that majority of the members of the queer networking group are Brahmin and upper-castes which could be deciphered from surnames of the members; the members of this group discuss 'Stonewall Gay Riots' triggering modern gay movement in the US, safe sex, gay erotica, queer films and organise theme parties and picnics. It is pertinent to ask—'is Stonewall Brahmanised or if not exclusively 'Brahmin' then do elite queers symbolically appropriate Stonewall while subaltern working class homoerotic subjects, who might also belong to lower castes, generally fail to associate with Stonewall, gay film festivals, erotica and gay art'.

Divided 'Erotic Subjects': The Question of Class

Does my sleeping with rickshaw- wallah bridge the class-divide? Yes, but only in bed: not outside it (Rao: 2003, quoted in Merchant, 2009: 12).

Satish Deshpande (2004) underscores 'class' as a social science concept that suffered sharpest decline in popularity and prestige in post 1970s and 80s due to the arrival of new concepts and categories like gender, race and ethnicity,

new social movements around issues like environment and peace, rise of identity politics and also due to the internal inadequacies of the class itself as an explanatory tool. In Indian sociology, despite a general indifference to class as an analytic tool, its various subfields viz. agrarian, development, caste, tribe and stratification have obliquely engaged with the issue of class. In other words, Indian sociology could not fully erase class as an issue even though Marxist framework nurtured by A.R. Desai failed to institutionalise as major theoretical concern (see Patel 2012).

There seems to be a growing sociological concern with 'middle class' in globalising and liberalising India (Jafferlot and Peter van der veer 2008; Baviskar and Ray 2011) as this segment of society exerts significant ideological influence. Sexuality studies, as highlighted earlier, tends to draw closure to 'identity politics' downplaying and even naturalising material dimension of social reality. The politicisation of queer identity in India is mobilized more around *law* than the issue of *class* and *political economy*. There is hardly any debate on why the lower caste-class men who find trapped in a feminine desire invariably choose hijra and kothi identity? Why modern gay identity becomes the prerogative of upwardly mobile urban middle class? I discuss here the ways alternative sexuality is connected to class where membership and entry into privileged class enables easy access to cultural resources. These cultural resources, in turn, enable both articulation and cultivation of 'individual self' quite akin to Anthony Giddens' (1992) views of 'plastic sexuality' where *inter alia* a person can reflexively grasp, interrogate and develop his/her own sexuality.

It seems, however, equally pertinent to counter the popular notion that issues of sexuality and sexual identity concerns only modern westernized English speaking queer in urban India. I reiterate here Maya Sharma's (2006) account of working class 'lesbian' women from urban slums and rural India which defies any such understanding that uncritically associates sexuality issue with westernisation. Sharma narrates the story of Guddi and Aasu who live in congested resettlement colony of Delhi; Rekha and Dolly from Indore who are from very poor families; Sabo and Razia from Kasganj village in UP and many others like them. Sharma writes-'[F]ocusing on working-class women...we wanted to dispel the myth that lesbians in India were all urban, westernized and came from the upper and the middle classes. And we wanted to create a space for voices with little or no privilege.' Considering this, issues of class and gender without incorporation of sexuality will continue perpetuating exclusions which hardly enters public debate and visibility. For working class lesbian subjects the disadvantages of class, gender and sexuality are simultaneous; suffering on account of sexuality becomes more intense due

to stigma and community policing and lack of familial love and privacy in congested settlements. Describing Rekha's situation as a 'lesbian' in a family of construction workers from Jawahar Nagar of Indore, Sharma writes: 'Rekha had transgressed the boundary of 'normal', hence she had forfeited her right to familial love and care. Guddi, another 'lesbian' woman from working class background was mocked at by even a local women's group supporting women's cause! When a connection was formed between Guddi and the local community women expected to support women of their own class in the locality, the group failed to show any solidarity with Guddi; the latter found herself alone among a group of women similar in class background but unenlightened and probably 'innocently' unsympathetic to Guddi's 'intimate life' and 'bodily needs'. Sharma writes about the heterosexist response of working class women towards their own 'lesbian' sister thus:

[W]hen she had described her situation to the community group, initially they listened to her in complete silence. Then suddenly someone's repressed giggle escaped. Gradually all women began to laugh together. "For them it was a joke, an opportunity to ridicule us, while for us it was a question of our lives", Guddi remarked furiously.' "One of the women said in puzzled manner, "If this practice becomes common, how life will be passed on?" 'Another exclaimed, "what evil times have come, that these girls should be involved in such pursuits...". A third philosophised, "this is just a temporary fixation, it will pass. Let it be for now". A fourth concluded "This is the result of giving girls freedom".

The above instance shows the plight of working class lesbian women who wish to lead their intimate life outside the boundary of defined, imaginable and predetermined. In comparison to the upwardly mobile lesbians in urban spaces with relative control over their life situation, these women are completely unacceptable because of their lower class position and their feminine gender. No class analysis in Indian sociology or even gender sensitive approaches to class have ever considered sexuality as a factor affecting certain segment of population in specific ways and thereby naturalised the hegemonic binary of gender and sexuality. Working class lesbian and poor men of homoerotic desire are invisible publics whose perspective needs sociological imagination stretching its boundary to accommodate and incorporate their voice in its project of social justice.

In contrast to working class lesbians and lower class *kothis* there are upwardly mobile middle class and upper class gay men and lesbian women who in post liberalised India have experienced new affluence and new

freedom like any other member of 'urban middle class' and have been vocal against the anti-sodomy law providing strong support base to queer movement in India¹⁴. It is interesting to see how upwardly mobile queer who affirm their membership in 'urban middle class' and also affirm a different sexual morality in opposition to the 'heterosexual conjugality' grapple with clash of moral values and conflation of material comforts? Minna Saavala (2010) writes- 'What is typically middle class are the claims of high moral value combined with the monetary means to practice morally high standards'. Does a non-coherent, non-reproductive sexual self pose a real and potential threat to a coherent identity of self and respectability of middle class? Carol Upadhyia (2011) demonstrates how the new urban middle class is recruited mostly from upper caste and middle caste base; in Upadhyia's understanding, the new middle class of IT professionals also hold on to a conservative Brahminical world view. It is sociologically interesting to see how a 'conservative' new middle class reacts to counter heteronormative 'individuals' of their own class. The recent Supreme Court Judgement to reinforce Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code can be viewed from this moralist discourse even though all the members of middle class including members of judiciary and intellectuals remain divided in their opinion on the issue.

Patricia Uberoi (2011) notes a lack of comprehensive history of the 'transformation of intimacy' of Indian middle class—a subject which awaits attention of social scientists. If 'individualisation' amounts to undermining the very possibility of *acting socially*, of questioning society first and then following that critique with a shared social practice (Bauman 2001: 106) then many queer 'individuals' of upwardly mobile middle class are engaged in a heightened critique of social institutions and norms with counter-hegemonic intellectual impulse. When a dalit scholar or a dalit commoner critically engages with Brahminical religion it is read as an act of politicising from dalit perspective (cf. Ilaiah 1996). In a similar spirit, can we incorporate a dialogic engagement of a queer self with heterosexist social institutions such as family or religion? Does this inclusion add to a feminist and dalit critique of hegemonic project of religion and religious practices? Or else it could be easily dismissed and trivialised as 'out of ordinary'? Here I bring in an excerpt from an upwardly mobile Muslim queer's subject's dialogue between his religious self and sexual self. It shows his access to cultural resources and his confident articulations of his sexual identity. Ali Potia (2005) calls himself a Muslim and a queer. The identity as a 'Muslim' for him is an enforced identity as he is born in a Muslim family and certain part of his anatomy reminds him of his Muslim identity. Expressions in the following excerpt reveal a heightened sense of

‘individualisation’ of Potia in interrogating Islam and reaffirming and authenticating his queer self and subjectivity. He writes:

I choose not to be a Muslim just I make a choice to be gay...I drop the word ‘Muslim’ from my list of identities precisely because...I can’t be a correct and proper Muslim and also be a homosexual...The two term Muslim and queer are mutually exclusive right now...If my religion reinforces that I am sinning every time I kiss my boyfriend then I don’t want the religion to be around. I would rather look for a worldview that is little more supportive of my choices... (Potia, 2005)

With such heightened critical engagement the middle class queer intellectuals have galvanised LGBT movement in India but their criticality falters to investigate class and political economy aspect which is equally relevant to any identity politics and transformatory movement.

Alok Gupta (2005) highlights two different worlds of homosexuals in metropolitan city like Mumbai who though articulate a collective self of LGBT are confined to two opposite material realities of life. On the one hand, the elite class of gay men create and access ‘erotic pleasure’ through support meetings, eating out, film festivals and collective celebrations (also see Kavi 1993; Shahni 2008), on the other hand, the working class homosexuals sometimes recruited as outreach workers by NGOs, distribute condoms at railway stations and public toilets, a subaltern job to which the elite gay men would never associate.

Social Movement, Sociology and Queer Movement

In this part, I argue that Indian sociology should include queer movement within its inventory of social movements. It may be regarded as one of the ‘new social movements’ which *inter alia* aims at autonomy, plurality and difference, individual and ‘community’ freedom. Rajendra Singh (2001) writes that the nature of New Social Movements (NSMs) is expressed not so much in socio-political as in socio-cultural domain. Singh (ibid) highlights the co-existence of pre and post-modernity and certain post-modern struggles in contemporary Indian society. Under the latter conditions, body, sexuality, health and gender identity becomes very crucial. The sites of NSMs are generally transnational; the field of their action, strategy and mode of mobilisation is global. Despite the broad and universalised social base of actors there is an impression that the participants in NSMs generally belong to ‘new middle class’ which is a valid proposition in case of sexuality based identity politics in

India and elsewhere. But, for a critical sociology as well as for critical sexuality studies we need to interrogate sexuality movement from the viewpoint of sub-altern sexual groups like *hijras* and *kothis*, lower middle class homoerotically-inclined and sometimes also heterosexually married gay persons (see Rao and Sharma 2009) who are disabled to participate in identity politics, and, working class 'lesbians' who are the subject of Maya Sharma's (2006) illuminating book. We do need to incorporate aspects of religion, age, disability, rural and urban to make the movement more inclusive. The most important aspect is 'political economy and international division of labour and how the sexuality movements associate themselves with structures of global inequality?

Queer movement in India has taken up the issue of AIDS and human rights, decriminalisation of sodomy law, issues of transgender and other subordinate sexual identities including the problems of women-in-prostitution. Blackmail and violence of sexually marginalized have prominently figured in the mobilisations. Like any other social movement, queer movement has a history in India (Vanita and Kidwai 2008; Bahskaran 2004; Kole 2007). The movement has produced a large body of documents on LGBT issues, documentary films on sexual minorities, academic writings; it has institutionalised, for example, Summer Institute in Sexuality organised jointly every year by CREA and TARSHI- Delhi based NGOs working on sexual rights and reproductive health issues. Some metropolitan universities have seen the emergence of Queer Study Circle and Queer Collectives (like *Anjuman* in JNU): parallel to dalit autobiographies there exists *hijra* autobiography (see Revati 2010) narrating the violence and dehumanisation of a very different nature; there are gay poetry, gay fictions, gay short stories redefining romantic love and sexual desire; LGBT magazines of both on-line and off-line initiate the readers into the world of gay consumerism and cultural politics of sexuality providing the readers a sense of 'collective' pan-Indian 'gay self'. Queer readers and writers from Chandigarh to Kolkata to Mumbai to Bangalore to Chennai and Hyderabad – are all Indian in the 'Pink Pages' – an online magazine of Indian LGBT as is also evident from the name of Indian gay-travel agency- 'INDJAPINK'.

NGOs working around 'sexual minorities' have created activist manuals and have offered training programmes for outreach workers to work with real and potential victims of HIV/AIDS and sexual minorities. A social work professional has written on 'community work with 'Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)' (see Joseph 2005). The presence of a large number of civil society organisations working with MSM and sexual minorities assisted through global funding is a reality today. Autonomous groups around sexuality like LABIA, PRISM and Nigah Media Collective have also sprung up which

keep away from donor loop and articulate radical sexual politics being aware about how money influences the quality of politics. Institutionalisation of courses on sexuality particularly in English literature at Pune University and the University of Hyderabad are in no way insignificant. Hosang Merchant, the leading gay poet has recently retired from the University of Hyderabad whose course on 'Gay Poetry' has been very popular. Exhibition of queer art and queer erotica, of course, classy and counter heteronormative, are no more 'uncommon' and 'odd' among activist elites and intellectuals in contemporary urban metropolitan India (see Tondon 2012). The skits and soliloquy on 'coming out' and 'living as queer/s', the NGOs drop-in centers for MSMs, the queer film festivals, and pride marches, social networking and cruising sites within cyberspace are recurring features of urban gay life in globalising India. Conferences, seminars and workshops on sexuality have been organised since mid-1990s and research studies are carried out by civil society groups and a few intellectuals. Recently the research journal of Jindal Global Law School has brought out a special issue on queer. 'Queer Ink' is an exclusive publishing and marketing agency on LGBT literature located in Mumbai. Above all, we witness a strong articulation of *language of rights* and critique of heteronormative law from queer perspective (Menon 2007; Narrian and Gupta 2011). All these should qualify queer movement to be included as a social movement (Menon 2012). Sociological community should not ignore such developments and mobilising of marginalised and hitherto invisibilised groups; to my understanding, queer movement does stand parallel to women, dalit, tribe and minority movements in its mobilisational tactics, it has an agenda of sexual liberation, it represents broadly defined groups; it celebrates pleasure to erase guilt and shame among its members through events such as pride marches and it works on issues of sexual health and counselling which have been neglected areas: It does occupy a considerable part of cyberspace; of blogosphere and social networking and web-based cruising; a self-critique is also emerging from within the queer movement (Khole 2007; Tellis 2012).

Tracing the emergence of queer consciousness in early 1990s Suparna Bhaskaran (2004) mentions three interrelated moments in India involving accelerated privatization of Indian economy, the growing diasporic cultural connections (with United States, United Kingdom and Canada), and marked effects of trans/national governmentality in postcolonial India. A detailed analysis of these interrelated processes is beyond the scope of this paper. Here I concentrate very briefly on some significant landmarks and a few crucial moments in the two-decade journey of queer movement which galvanized LGBT groups in pressing for 'queer azadi' in terms of reading down Section

377 of the Indian Penal Code. Here I substantially draw from the research article of Subir Kole (2007) published in *Globalisation and Health*.

1. The first academic book on Indian homosexuals authored by Shakuntala Devi was published in 1977; the mathematics wiz kid treated homosexuality in positive light.
2. In late 1980s and early 1990s many gay and lesbian individuals with diasporic linkages “came out” through their writings
3. Formation of South Asian support groups in the same period in U.S., U.K. and Canada in response to experiences of racism from white gay communities resulted in publication and circulation of newsletters like *shaktikhabar*, *trikone*, *khushkhyal* having subscribers in many countries of South Asia.
4. “Coming out” of Indian gay, lesbian intellectuals through writings and confessional literature in early and mid-1990s. Some of the important authors include Giti Thadani, Ashwini Sukhathankar, Hosang Merchant, Saleem Kidwai and Ruth Vanita.
5. India’s first gay magazine Bombay Dost was launched by Ashok Rao Kavi, an “out” gay journalist who later in 1994 established his own NGO-Hamsafar Trust in Mumbai.
6. In 1991, a human right activist group AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) published its first report ‘Less Than Gay: A Citizens Report on Status of Homosexuality in India’ advocating civil rights of LGBTs to include same sex marriage, parenting, decriminalisation of homosexuality and repeal of IPC 377, amendments in Special Marriage Act and AIDS Prevention Bill of 1989 and providing a positive homosexuality education in school.
7. In 1994 ABVA reported the incidence of rampant homosexuality in Tihar jail of New Delhi and recommended the jail authorities that condoms should be made available to prison inmates for preventing transmission. In the same year the ABVA challenged the constitutional validity of section 377 of IPC.
8. In 1994, death of a gay activist Siddhartha Gautam, a young lawyer instrumental in preparing the report ‘Less Than Gay’, led to establishment of a yearly film festival in his memory organised by an informal group called ‘Friends of Siddhartha’.
9. In 1991, with the initiatives of an Indian HIV/AIDS activist in London, Shivananda Khan of the NAZ project helped formation of several NGOs like Bharosa Trust (Lucknow), Manas Bangla (Kolkata) and several others in different cities. Kole (2007) mentions that the largest number of Gay-Lesbian-AIDS NGOs got registered in the history of Indian sub-continent

- between 1994–2005. Hamjinsi (2002)-a Resource Book on LGBT organisations was published by Mumbai based India Center for Human Rights.
10. On July 7, 2001, in the city of Lucknow, the police raided a park frequented by men who have sex with men (MSM) and also raided the office of Bharosha Trust and Naz Foundation International, two NGOs working with MSMs under the charges of running a “gay club” and a “call boy racket” in the city. A few days later NGOs working in the field of HIV/AIDs came together in New Delhi to form an alliance whose primary purpose was to defeat and repeal the very section of IPC under which the two NGOS were arrested. The two prominent members of this alliance were Naz Foundation India Trust and Lawyers Collective. The alliance took over the case of challenging constitutional validity of section 377 of IPC.
 11. In 2003, Gay Pride Parade was organized in Kolkata in which activists from all over India as well as from other countries participated in street march followed by a week long programme of film screening, workshops, book reading, seminars etc.
 12. Towards late 2001 Naz foundation filed a Public Interest Litigation; on September 2, 2004, Delhi High Court dismissed the petition; Naz foundation then filed a Review Petition with the Delhi High Court dismissing it on November 3, 2004; a Special Leave Petition was then filed with the Supreme Court of India. The Supreme Court on February 3, 2006 referred the case back to Delhi High Court.
 13. With the pursuance of NAZ Foundation and pressure from the LGBT movement the Delhi High Court on 2nd July, 2009 gave a revolutionary judgement which has a decriminalising implication for homosexuality. This is celebrated as a landmark in the history of queer struggle. This was challenged by Suresh Kumar Koushal who filed a Special Leave Petition¹⁵ (SPL) in the Supreme Court, followed by other fifteen SPLs by religious leaders and the matter was referred back to Supreme Court by the Government of India; Though there were equal number of concerned citizens which included academic scholars like Nivedita Menon and Ratna Kapur filmmakers like Shyam Benegal and several mental health professionals and parents of LGBTs who filed petitions supporting the Delhi High Court Judgement. The Supreme Court of India on 11th December 2013 overturned the landmark judgement of the Delhi High Court and effectively re-criminalised millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals (Shiekh and Narain 2014). This led to an outburst of protest by the LGBT communities across India and triggered public debates on alternative sexuality with print and electronic media continually supporting the cause of LGBTs. The LGBT community argued that

many of the members ‘came out of closet’ and became very open and comfortable about their sexuality after the Delhi High Judgement and now they cannot go back to the closet.

‘Homophobic’ Violence

It is evident from the writings of Vanita and Kidwai (2008) that homoe-roticism was tolerated in precolonial India even if it was not normativized as parallel to heterosexual love and courtship (Chatterjee 1999; Merchant 2010). It has been argued that hetero-sexualisation has been integral to colonial modernity; formation of middle class morality and articulation of a nationalist self re-strengthened heterosexuality as norm (Vanita and Kidwai (2008) Srivastava 2014). A final triumph of sexual conformism and/or conservatism during colonial phase and afterwards is held as simplistic reading of a complex process (Srivastava 2007; Gupta 2012) but violence towards homoerotically inclined persons was instituted through Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code enacted in 1860. Drafted by Lord Macaulay the section gave enormous power to the police and judiciary to penalise and punish same sex relations. It is interesting to note that Section 377 of IPC has hardly been used to prosecute cases of consensual adult male sexual relationship (Gupta 2002:9). The true impact of 377 on queer lives is felt outside the courtroom. Numerous studies including both documented and anecdotal evidence, tell us that section 377 is the basis for routine and continuous violence against sexual minorities by police, the medical establishment, and state (Narain and Bhan 2005)¹⁶. A report by Peoples Union for Civil Liberty, Karnatka in 2003, showed that section 377 was used by the police to justify practices such as illegal detention, sexual abuse, harassment and extortion. According to Narain and Bhan (*ibid*), the law is not simply a space of enforcement, but is an active arbiter of force and morality. In other words, law is internally manifested within its subjects, and not just externally imposed on them. Section 377 shapes people’s beliefs about non-heterosexual sexuality, and, homophobia is inherent in the law itself. The real danger of 377 lie in the fact that it permeates all parts of society- the medical establishment, family, media and the state and becomes part of ordinary conversation and ultimately a part of the very social fabric in workplaces, hospitals and popular press (*ibid*).

It is not just section 377 that affects LGBT community but a host of other law like- laws against obscenity, pornography, public nuisance and trafficking are also often invoked in policing of sexuality. One also has to pay heed to the civil law regime where LGBT people are deprived of basic rights

such as the right to marry, or to nominate one's partner and the whole series of rights based on the assumption of one being a member of heterosexual family (ibid). Revathi's (2011) autobiographical narrative demonstrates how every aspect of social, political, cultural and economic life is adverse for a (trans)hijra body. When the language we speak is heterosexist and where the libido and gender identity of a child is organised as per the rules of kinship (see Rubin 1975, Weston 1991) homophobic violence are much deeper and ingrained—they are interior to the way we conceive and (de) naturalise 'personhood' and human relations. Gail Mason examines how knowledge of homophobic hostility interacts with other factors such as class and ethnicity to engender deeply embodied practices of self-surveillance as a means of negotiating safety. (quoted in Fernandez and Gomathy 2005)

In this scenario, the recent Supreme Court Judgement upholding section 377 of IPC has come as a shock to not only sexual minorities but also to all citizens who believe that sexual orientation and its expressions between consenting adults must not be criminalised (*EPW*, Dec. 18, 2013). It will also shake the citizens' faith in upholding constitutional morality as opposed to "public morality" (ibid). The Court's order will also affect the painfully worked out and fought for awareness about HIV/AIDS and its prevention. Since Men who have sex with Men (MSM) form one of the most vulnerable sections as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned the order will only drive them underground making it even more difficult to reach them, in turn, to access health services (ibid).

Globalisation: 'Liberation', Governance and Queer Consumerism

It's the Church creeping into gay bedroom. Worse, it is consumerism. Thou shalt have babies who consume goods. Though shalt allow yourself to be consumed by consumerism. Though shalt not abandon the path of glorious consumerism. Though shalt never be non-bourgeois. If you are a proletarian gay you deserve to perish with the straight proles... (Merchant, 2009: 7)

Globalisation has become an integral element in the sociological imagination. Sociologists in India have not lagged behind in analysing the impact of globalisation on different aspects of social life. They are rather indifferent towards examining how globalisation affects 'intimate life'. Research has shown that sex is the most searched/queried term and topic on internet search engines: we have entered the era of cyberflirting and cybersex (Nayar 2012).

Parmesh Shahani (2008) locates growing queer culture in Mumbai in 1990s with the advent of cultural globalisation under which constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding. Dennis Altman (2007) demonstrates how 'traditional' ways of regulating and controlling 'sexuality' decline under globalisation. He also talks of 'global gay' identity which is imported in non-western part of the globe and co-exist with traditional sexual identities. Mankekar (2004) looks at internet as a site for reshaping sexual identity with simultaneous burgeoning gay lesbian movement in India. Whereas NGOs working around sexuality issues celebrated sexual freedom with the reading down of Section 377 by the Delhi High Court, many academic critiques viewed these developments as an exercise in global governance and relate it with growing commercialisation of sexuality in South Asia (Kole 2007; Tellis 2012). Here I discuss albeit briefly on AIDS/HIV and global funding and growing gay consumerism in India.

LGBT movement in India has coincided with liberalisation of economy; the funding of AIDS/HIV related projects and injecting the language of sexual rights through NGOs have been made possible through the World Bank, McArthur Foundation, Bill Gates International, Packard Foundation, Pathfinder International, Naz Foundation International and many other International funding organisations. Kole (2007) brings out several interesting developments in sexuality movement in globalising-India. He writes that AIDS discourse largely produced India as "sexually repressed" and "sexually tabooed" society. Thus, to be eligible for getting funds, say from McArthur Foundation or Bill Gates Foundation, one must promote sexual rights, and work with marginalized communities such as queer, sex workers and drug users. Fund was also available in HIV reporting and media fellowship for study abroad and producing films and documentaries. Availability of funds on HIV/AIDS changed the agenda of many NGOs who gave up working on other developmental issues and shifted to HIV/AIDS and MSM. This also resulted in exaggerating the incidence of HIV/AIDS in India. Kole (ibid) further mentions that toolkits, handbooks, guidelines, strategic plans, resource materials, training manuals and virtually every truth and norm about the programme were straight imported from the donor's home country.

If global funding articulated the language of rights for sexual minorities, expanding global market did find gay as potential consumers of sexual pleasure. Market in sex surfaces on cyberspace and is commercialising gay sexuality in India and other parts South Asia. India has witnessed queer consumerism which has intensified after 2009 judgement of Delhi High Court. An IBN

live post on internet recently mentions—”India is becoming more popular with gay travellers since the Delhi High Court decriminalised sexuality in 2009...the tour packages will often include gay nightlife or interactions with local gay business people...The biggest difference between normal and gay friendly tour operators according to Bhuwan Mehta of Pink Escapes, is “Pink tour operators can anticipate the requirement of gay travellers better, compared to normal tour operators” ([http://ibnlive-in-com/news/pink tourism](http://ibnlive-in-com/news/pink_tourism), 22nd November, 2012). It is worth mentioning that Delhi hosted South Asia’s first Gay Tourism conference in November 2011.

Based on some LGBT online magazines and internet resources I list out certain developments towards the commercialisation of gay sexuality in India and many parts of South Asia. The online magazines—‘Gaylaxy’ and ‘Pink Pages’ take the readers to the world of gay dating, world class cuisines, scientific breakthrough about producing babies outside heterosexual intercourse, skin care, travel, puppy vaccination, cultures of sexuality, gay friendly tourism, national and international events and growing significance of ‘pink money’ in Asia. Cyberspace is also a cruising site where people seek partners and sexual service providers put their profile and details. Gay tourism include saunas and bath houses, gay friendly hotels manned by gay friendly staffs, gay friendly resorts along beaches are becoming a South Asian reality. Gay escorts and massagers are not very rare on web pages; one needs to do city wise search to get a response. Some of the messages read—‘cute guy @ 1500’; ‘I want sugar daddy with whom I can stay and...’ (www.dating.vivastreet.co.in). After the Supreme Court verdict on 11th December, 2013 reinforcing Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) anxieties were expressed by Indian gay business ventures and travel agencies like Pink Vibgyor, Pink Escapes, Indjapink and Out Journeys about the impact of the judgement on their business (see Thomas and Arora 2013).

Conclusion

To conclude, Indian sociology should consider heterosexism as a form of power as the latter bears implications for non-conforming ‘erotic subjectivities’. By bringing ‘multiple erotic subjectivities’ into disciplinary practices sociology not only compensates the ‘information deficit’ (Mishra and Chandirmani 2005) on the issue but can have practical impacts on individuals’ lives. Dalit and feminist perspectives have enriched Indian sociology but the trauma of even a dalit subject whose erotic subjectivity does not conform to heterosexual binary cannot be captured and described either through dalit

or feminist sociology. Caste as an institution is 'endogamous' and thereby remains heterosexist; anti-caste movements need to pay attention to this aspect to democratise their theory and enrich their praxis. Similarly, sexuality movement should also target caste in its articulation which is seriously missing from its agenda. 'Erotic subjectivities' are also divided along class lines. A working class lesbian is marginalised on account of class, gender, and sexuality; her suffering is not shared by her 'normal', heterosexual sisters of similar class position who giggle at the idea of 'erotic intimacy' between two women. Superior class position, on the other hand might enable others to negotiate sexual life in a better way. As 'normal' dalit citizens share hegemonic sexual constructs and participate in sexual exclusion, an elite queer may be marginalised in sexual terms but is able to access the material comforts of her own class-group. The queer 'individuals' in superior class position actively participate in politicising sexual identity without incorporating aspects of class privilege and political economy converting sexuality movement into politics of *difference* and politics of *performance* of (sexual) identities. Such queer individuals can equally choose to remain apolitical and enjoy material comforts with 'intimate relations' of their choice which is evident in collection of gay short stories *Pink Sheep* authored by Mahesh Natrajan (2010). Many of the characters in the stories hold good positions in the corporate world and are able to undermine heterosexism in significant ways. These highly educated upwardly mobile gay people are not much into LGBT activism either.

When social movements as a sub-field is almost as old as sociology itself and when the queer movement in India has a two decade old history, why do movement studies fail to include mobilisations active in challenging sexual power. Since movements around alternative sexuality are also linked with globalisation and global funding; why should the political economy of global funding on HIV/AIDS not be a matter of debate among Indian sociologists? Do we really need to debate and map out the trajectory of sexual liberation or analyse these developments as an exercise in global governance? Do we also need to debate growing gay consumerism and neoliberal model of free-market transmission of glamorized western gay culture (Eng-Beng 2005) or simply pretend that these things do not exist in India just to sustain a sexually sanitized image of Indian sociology? I end with a humble submission that every sociologist in India who considers 'social suffering' and 'marginalisation' as authentic subjects and auto-ethnography as one of the reflective methods of sociology must read *Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* by A. Revathi written originally in Tamil and translated by V. Geetha in English. This autobiography by a person marginalised by class, sexuality and gender poses many questions to a discipline committed to unravel power, domination, oppression and resistance.

Notes

1. By multiple erotic subjectivities I mean the 'counternormative non-heterosexual publics' as proposed by Menon (2012). This will be further explained while discussing 'queer' and 'queering' in subsequent part of the paper. Also see Bhaskaran (2004) Narrain and Bhan (2005) Vanita and Kidwai (2008) who use 'queer' for homoerotically inclined persons and collectivity.
2. In 1994, the *British Sociological Association* could devote its entire Annual Conference to the theme 'Sexualities in Social Context' with over 250 papers being presented. In 1996, *American Sociological Association* set up its own section group for the study of sexualities (Plummer 2012).
3. Anuja Agrawal's (1997) article on 'Third Gender' stands as an exception. As a participant in Radhika Chopra's course on 'Masculinity in South Asia' in 2006 I could observe the discussion around non-heterosexuality and subordinate masculinities. Her edited volume 'Reframing Masculinities' (2007) talks about diverse masculine subjects. Patricia Uberoi has also made a substantial contribution in terms of investigating control of female sexuality in specific context of popular culture. She initiated a dialogue on sexuality within feminism and within sociology with an interdisciplinary focus. See Uberoi (1996). Sexuality and erotic politics remain salient in her essays put together in a volume entitled 'Freedom and Destiny' (2009). The older works on sexuality in sociology and social anthropology might include Ghurye (1973), Gough (1955), Yalman (1963); some of the post 1980s texts include Dube (1988, 1997, 2001) Kolenda 1987, Ganesh (1993), Raheja and Gold (1994) Palriwala (1996), Kapadia (1997)Thapan (2009), Rege (1996), Abraham (2006), Nongbri (1994), Agrawal (2008).
4. See Visvanathan (2011) who argues how sociology of science and mobilisation against hegemonic tendencies within the practices of science has almost no takers in sociology. He also highlights the domination of caste and religion as subject matter of sociology.
5. Successive surveys conducted by India Today-AC Neilson and ORG-MARG in 2003, 2004 and 2006 revealed that 37 percent single young men have had a homosexual experience in 2006 compared to 31 percent in 2004. For historical accounts on existence of homoeroticism see Vanita and Kidwai (2008); Merchant (2010) and for bisexuality in Indian culture see Pande (2004).
6. Foucault (quoted in Bristow 1997) also talks about power as paradoxical; as sexuality was controlled, named and subjected to surveillance it entered the public debate. 'Sexually outlawed' groups and identities were motivated for protest as a result of growing discourse on sexuality; Raj Rao, an Indian gay studies scholar pointed out in a personal communication that colonial governance was not able to implant guilt culture in India parallel to the Christian culture of 'confession' in the west despite Macaulay's introduction of section 377 of IPC; India could only experience a shame culture as a result of Section 377 of IPC which de-naturalised homoeroticism. Vanita and Kidwai (2008) also mention that introduction of 377 did not fully control homosexual practices in India. Mobilisation of sexual minorities in the capital city of Delhi began during 1990 against police torture and detention of gay men (see Bhaskaran 2004).
7. Indian gay middle class respectability appears in the gay short stories (see Natrajan 2011). See Rao and Sharma's (2009) interviews with the urban elite gay men in their volume *Whistling in the Dark* and also see *Yarana* the first gay anthology in India edited by the out gay poet and academician Hoshang Merchant (1999) for class contradictions and middle class gays' material comforts and articulation of sexual self and sexual pleasure.

8. I also wish to submit here that before dismissing 'queer' as *western* one needs to see the painful history of western queer movement which experienced overt hostility, pathologization, ignorance and refusal to be recognised as equals (see Blasius and Phelan 1997).
9. Cultural ideology according to Hennessy (2000) is an array of beliefs, norms, narratives, images and modes of *intelligibility*. For neo-liberalism and sexuality also see Sircar and Jain (2012).
10. In my informal discussion, a young enlightened queer person who is an active participant of online and offline activities told me about an online-offline queer group in a metropolitan city x of western India that most of the members of this 'online-offline' community are from Brahmin and upper caste groups. See Shahani (2008) for online-offline group 'gaybombay'.
11. See Project 'OUTCASTE', Sangama, Bangalore. Here 'out' indicates 'coming out' of a non-heterosexual person and caste implies here a low caste body. See 'Etch it upon yourself: This is what I am' (<http://project.outcaste.blogpost.com> 22nd November 2011)
12. See Flood (2008) on how homosocial relationship among men becomes a powerful medium to exercise masculine power.
13. Sexual violence against dalit women constitutes a recurring issue within dalit movement in India. Dignity for dalit self is always framed in terms of dignity of 'their' women. The discourse of dalit feminism however contests this assimilationist masculine rhetoric and articulate dalit women's agency both as dalit and as women (see Rege 2004)
14. There are persons with homoerotic desire in middle- middle and lower middle classes who are non-elite with relatively humble existence; 'middle class queer' is not a homogenous group. See interviews of SushilPatil and Manish Pawar in Rao and Sharma (2009).
15. SLP or Special Leave Petition of India under Article 136 vests the Supreme Court of India with special power to appeal against any judgement or order or decree in any matter or cause passed or made by any court/tribunal in the territory of India. SPL can be filed against any Judgement of High Court within ninety days from the date of Judgement.
16. There is enormous literature accumulated on violence against sexual minorities. It is not only the *hijras* and *kothis* who face violence but the members of middle class whose sexuality do not match with prescribed norms have to struggle hard in the sexist world. See Slevadurai's (1994) *Funny Boy* and Mirchandani's (2010) *You are Not Alone*, Roy's (2012) *Travails of Entrapment*. On violence to *hijra* community see Revathi (2011); ethnographic account of violence on hijra body see Reddy (2005). On HIV/AIDS and sexuality related violence see AIDS-*Sutra* (2008). Also see the documentary *Plain Truth* directed by Pohjola. The PUCL Karnatka Report on Sexual Minorities and *KothiHijra* sex workers (2003). See Special volume of HIMAL on *Sexuality* (2008 volume 21, no. 3). India MSM Situation Paper Series 2011, Future Group International by Chakarapani et.al and Boyace et.al. Also see CREA's Working paper (2006) 'Sexual Rights and Social Movements in India'. See Fernandez and Gomathi (2005) and Sharma (2006) on violence against lesbian women. This is only a very selected and small list on homophobic violence and resistance against the same. For section 377 and violence also see Kannabiran (2011).

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