

A Critical Examination of Sexuality Discourses in India

A Summary Report

Key findings:

Sexuality and its Intersections with Caste, Class and Religion: The report examines the ways in which desire and pleasure are constructed by caste, class and religion. It analyses the ways in which caste and urbanization and a shifting economic realm have changed the ways in which Dalit women's desire is imagined and discussed to how women from bastis and rural areas seem to have greater ease with regards to talking about sexuality as opposed to women from middle class, urban backgrounds.

Sexuality and Sex Work: About sexuality as it relates to the labouring body primarily within the particular context of sex work, while also employing a broader sexuality lens to interpret the various manners in which sexuality converses with women's work.

Sexuality and Health: On how the health sector has, or has failed to, engage with issues and questions of sexuality. It begins with the challenges the sector poses to individuals from certain gender and sexual identities due to certain harmful assumptions and inherent biases in priorities. Following this, the section turns to examine the extent to which the health system and existing interventions are able to engage with sexuality and cater to all women, whether or not they are breaking or seen to be breaking sexual and gender norms.

Young People and Sexuality: This mapping brought to light the importance of recognizing and addressing needs of young people with respect to sexuality, particularly as they relate to their learning desires and the education sector. It also draws attention to the engagement of young people and what it brings to any issue they are involved with, such as new leadership.

Sexual and Gender Identities: The emergence of LGBTQ movements across the country has brought forward a new discourse and language to articulate issues of gender and sexuality in a rights-based framework. A large section of this struggle has been for citizenship of those that find themselves on the fringes of "heteronormative" gender and sexual identities. These groups have also articulated themselves not only in terms of rights but have also brought a political and intersectional lens to the sexuality discourse.

Way Forward:

This report enabled us to identify points that required further examination and conversation to help us build and nuance our current discourses on sexuality.

The Need to Develop a Sexuality Lens: A key aim of the Sexuality Mapping report was to broaden the frame and understanding of sexuality itself beyond sexual identities, to develop a

lens of sexuality, much like gender, class or caste that has implications within and across various socio-economic groups and structures.

Centre vs. Margins: The mapping highlights the existence of a centre and margins within the sexuality space- groups and issues that align themselves either at the core or periphery of the sexuality domain.

Critical Conversations With Identity Politics: Identity has come to be a crucial binding point around which we rally and rage, collectivise and mobilise, make and contest claims. The feminist movement, LGBTQ groups, Dalit uprisings all draw their support from the common identification of their base- from a united ascription to a particular construct. While acknowledging the crucial role the politics of identity has played in launching and cementing struggles, it is necessary that we question whether identity is indeed the ideal basis for movement building, particularly within the sexuality agenda.

Breaking Binaries: A key struggle of the movements built around gender and sexuality has been centred around demolishing dichotomies and binaries of gender and sexual expressions and behaviours.

Engaging with Marriage: A critical engagement with the institution of marriage is essential to taking forward the sexuality discourses and interventions. The women's movement in India has ceased to critically look at the institution of marriage per se, an examination which was a lot stronger in the eighties. In the present context, marriage is debated mostly within the limited, albeit highly contested frame of same sex marriage as previously discussed. This, however, remains a limited frame, and lacks the ability to unpack the institution as it applies more broadly to all of us.

Tensions and Possibilities between Movements: The mapping reflects various struggles between and within movements, while also pointing to strong potentials for collaborations and deepened engagements.