

Articulating Intersectionality in the Organizing of the Delhi Queer Pride Parade

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Introduction

“Race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and class are to be treated politically as elements of a machinic assemblage, matters of a desiring production that does not reduce to an individual's desire, but rather points to the direct links between microintensities and various territories human bodies, cities, institutions, ideologies, and technologies. In this sense race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and gender are not simply matters of subject identity and surely not of authentic subject identity.”¹

Theoretically, Pride Parades have been elucidated as spaces for queer public culture, not only in the sense that they represent the taking up (and taking back) of spaces that are otherwise considered conventionally heterosexual (Johnston 2005: 56-57), but they also inscribe them with meaning wrought by the queer bodies who inhabit them. In the same way that Michel de Certeau (de Certeau 1980) invokes the walker to highlight the importance of the mapping of the speculative city that parallels the one that is physically mapped by academicians, planners and architects, the construction of queer streets is mapped by subjectivities and lived experiences of the people who walk the Pride Parades.

Begonya Enguix (Enguix 2009) provides a concise history of the concept of the parade, referring it to three generations; the first belonging to the German Scientific-Humanitarian Committee founded in 1897, the second including the Mattachine Society and its feminine counterpart the Daughters of Bilitis in 1951, founded as an alternative to the bar culture of the time, and the third, finally, belonging to Stonewall in the 1960's and 70's in the United States (ibid: 18). Influenced by the Civil Rights movement and the Second Wave Feminist movement (ibid: 18), Stonewall was a watershed moment for many Western countries on the issue of gay rights and liberation and shaped the construction, and deconstruction, of Pride Parades as mass

¹ Clough, Patricia Ticineto. 2000. *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. pp.135

movements. Central to this construction are the notions of pride and shame; to participate in a march is, in a way, to make visible understanding of space and self that were otherwise relegated to the periphery, and most importantly to the taboo. This construction can also be challenged by pointing to the nature of these Parades as events that universalize shame and pride, forgoing the everyday affective realities of individuals, and more importantly, forgetting that in an effort to construct the queer individual, societal and historical ideation is often relegated to the margins. In India, if the history of Article 377 harks back on an effort to ‘normalize’ sexuality in the colonies by the British Empire, then its continued elucidation in court cases and public events points to the overlap between colonial and post-colonial states whereby defining ‘queerness’ is important to define ‘normal sexuality’. Queer subject formation then is far more than the formation of the self and the individual; it includes the inter-connections between the idea of the nation-state and its ‘ideal’ sexuality, past and present and the influence of globalization and mass media today. This is particularly intriguing when put in the context of Pride Parades, where these very public yet intimate spaces embody the “porous zones” (Pigg 2005: 54) of social, cultural and historical variability where “interactions, connections and conflicts emerge” (ibid: 54).

Patricia Clough’s extrapolation of assemblages then points to a refusal to reduce subjectivity to a single point of origin; rather highlight the various affective and effective associations that desire often has to intersectional understandings and iterations of space, geography, event and time. This paper seeks to deconstruct the assemblages of the Delhi Queer Pride committee, as well as take a comparative approach by looking at politics of similar prides from other cities in India, ranging from Mumbai to Guwahati to Hyderabad. Thematically, the paper will look at Pride on three planes of study; Pride and Urbanity, Pride as Struggle and Pride as Celebration. Starting from a succinct history of Pride in India and specifically in Delhi, the way in which queer bodies have walked and continue to walk post-colonial cities will structure the discussions, debates, conflicts and arguments that our respondents have had over the past decade or so that Pride has come to be. These include issues of corporatization, banner representation, caste, class, language and nomenclature, NGO participation and the visibility and invisibility of certain groups of people within the larger LGBTQ community in India.

Finally, the question of the language of Pride will be brought to light; what it means to engage with Pride, as an event and as a sentiment of celebration, sadness, anger and liberation, as well as what articulation means after liberation, particularly if queerness implies the ‘remainder’.

Literature Review

“So is the pursuit of the right to the city the pursuit of a chimera?”
- David Harvey²

Positing a *Queer Phenomenology* (Ahmed 2006) to the concept of orientation, Sara Ahmed notes that to orient a queerness is to ask about what it means to take up space. She uses phenomenology as the study of experiences to highlight how it “turns us towards things” (ibid: 39), as well as how it may encourage ‘us’ to understand how ‘we’ arrived at this point where ‘our’ bodies are oriented, and what they are turned towards (ibid: 38-39). Therefore, the notion of proximity plays an important part in how bodies inhabit space, and how space is constructed by bodies through a certain “labouring of repetition” (ibid: 57) that angles it towards certain objects. Using Husserl’s writing on the table as an object, Ahmed then apprehends the notion of the “conditions of arrival” (ibid: 38) as a history of the way in which bodies (and objects) are oriented; this in turn creates a sense of the familiar in the form of certain “tendencies” (ibid: 57).

Judith Butler (Butler 1988) takes a similar path in her construction of the performative gendered body, illuminating the tendency to reify history through the cementing of certain “cultural fictions” (Butler 1988: 522) that are really just “strategies” by which gender is performed so as to fit a certain cultural reality (ibid: 522). These strategies are a continuous process, rather than stark linearity by which history is often processed. For instance, by approaching the history of anthropology and its dealings with issues of kinship and taboos, Butler posits that by constructing a sense of familiarity, these issues are cemented as ‘true’ manifestations of the body and therefore a part of the mundane every day; “performance renders social laws explicit” (ibid: 526). Identification of the proximity (and distance) of what is considered ‘normal’ is what creates a disturbance in the tendency to orient oneself towards

² Harvey, David. 2013. *Rebel Cities*. London: Verso Books. Pp. xvi

the 'known', rendering the person as 'out of place' and thereby constructing the queer body (Ahmed 2006: 51).

The idea of the performativity of spatial bodies takes a similar path in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991). In the seminal work, Lefebvre reasons that "space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction" (ibid: 12). That is, space is neither pre-existing nor a neutral entity; rather that it is very much produced materially through the production of spatial relations. Conceptually, this is tied to how space is lived, perceived and conceived of by people and institutions. David Harvey (Harvey 2013) links the connection between abstract space and differential space, pointing to the reproduction of urbanity as the site for anti-capitalist struggle (ibid: xvi). The city and the very concept of urban struggle then are embedded in the reality of the city space as deeply iconic;

"The city of God, the city on the hill, the relationship between city and citizenship – the city as an object of utopian desire, as a distinctive place of belonging within a perpetually shifting spatio-temporal order" (ibid: xvii)

The right to the city then, according to Harvey and influenced by Lefebvre, is a right that emerges for those who have sustained and built it. In the face of the consequences of the neoliberal turn, immense capital surplus and wealth accumulation and migration and varied understandings of citizenship, the question of who has a right to the city is intimately tied to the question of who has a right to life.

Citizenship in particular has been a subject of immense speculation, tied to the notion that sexuality cannot be separated from citizenship as "citizenship is inseparable from identity, and sexuality is central to identity" (Bell and Binnie 2000: 67). While previously gay and lesbian individuals were excluded from the larger narrative of the nation-state, today it is intriguing to note how some countries are employing the morality surrounding rights based LGBTQ liberation (often in the form of 'Pride Parades') in order to create a homonational space with often corporate support that is complicit in settler colonialism; termed interestingly as 'pinkwashing' (Puar 2007; Dhoot 2015). There has also been some criticism regarding the way in which negative experiences of sexuality are often employed in order to construct a discourse on sexual rights and liberation, particularly in non-Western countries where Orientalist and paternalist ones often take centre stage (Corboz 2009). This criticism also comes from a failure to acknowledge that non-Western countries sometimes do not have the same binary conceptions of sexuality, and that is often hidden away in order to construct an 'one size fits all' individualistic, human-rights approaches to LGBTQ communities all over the world.

Furthermore, queerness is often universalized in the context of globalized narratives because of the privileging of certain groups over others, as a result of which knowledge construction of varying sexualities itself is often relegated to the periphery.

“What links queer people to couples who love across caste and community lines is the fact that both are exercising their right to love at enormous personal risk.”

- Nivedita Menon³

The queer struggle in India touched a milestone in the year 2009 with a momentous feat in the legal battle of recognition. The eight-year long legal process spearheaded by the Naz foundation culminated in the Delhi High Court Judgement decriminalising homosexuality. For all its ambiguities and complications, the judgement brought a cause for celebration and pride in a movement which was hence seen to be going forward with a rather optimistic light. The declaration was naturally deemed favourable by individuals trying to grasp the reality of living under the constant fear of the state as opposed to the expected guardianship. The step thus awarded the queer people with a reassurance of their inclusion within this ambit of the citizens of a democracy. The movement then explored its expression through a reinstating of visible representation and statement. It began to assert its presence in more tangible forms, linking the cultural to the materiality of the social. The question of entitlement of space became essential and precious to the multiplicity of the ongoing battle. As undeniable as the relevance of the legality was, it was only a part of the queer struggle.

Four years later, 2013 saw the subsequent upholding of the section 377 in the Supreme Court. Efforts to draw new modes of articulation of the queer identity took a blow as homosexuality was once again, declared to be a criminal offence. Much work has been done on how this raised the question of occupation of the spaces for activism and engagement which the queer people had come to inhabit. Gautam Bhan recognised the limitations of viewing legal reforms as the end goal before the 2009 judgement. He identified that contrary to popular belief, the law does not work in an autonomous and objective space. In fact, it is ‘firmly located in prevailing social hierarchies.’ (Bhan, 2005). This research attempts to look into the mechanisms adopted by the larger queer movement in order to cope with as well as move beyond the curveballs that the law tended to hurl in its direction, especially in the context of Delhi. An observation of the

³ Menon, Nivedita. 2012. *Seeing Like a Feminist*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. Pp. 91

eventual outlook on the struggle as well as action oriented demonstrations showed us that the movement has now moved past the hesitations of carrying its presence to spaces largely governed by the 'normative' elements of the society which they are placed outside of. However, these attempts do not come easy with a fragmented view on the realisation of the urgency/need for the same.

Universally, socialist feminist writers among others have argued that queer theory is politically irresponsible in celebrating transgression to the neglect of material inequalities. In order to understand and relate the impact of this neglect to the existing narratives of the queer movement in India, our research looked into the 'geographies of exclusion' (Bell, 2000). The concept simply states that struggles over the symbolic meaning of space are inseparable from the materiality of the space. As different spaces hold different meanings, the city space enables a very unique liberation for the assertion of identity. The production of a 'queer space' in the cosmopolitan environment of a city reveals both its enabling as well as discriminating properties.

On the one hand are the features proximity, crowd, anonymity and feelings of possibility that the city carries. An absence of immediate social control allows sexualities to be materialised in the city, finding space for expression both symbolically and physically/literally. Swati Shah (Shah 2014) describes the consequences of the campaigns for decriminalisation and expanded legal recognition through the 'metaphor of heightened visibility' of the queer community. The city as an urban space is seen to provide opportunities of materialisation of this heightened visibility and a manifestation of the ideas subsumed within the ambit of sexual and gender politics. Media as well as policy discourses represent the queer presence in social, commercial and movement spaces.

On the other hand, this same occupation of space draws a fair amount of focus onto the differential access to these social and political spaces. It also throws light on the hierarchies and inequalities that this visibility permits and reproduces. This leads to the problem of who determines the criteria for inhabiting these spaces and whether intersectionality is a primary concern. The eventual result has been a new wave of scholarship on non-normative, marginal and alternative sexualities (Shah 2014). The LGBTQ subjectivities are enmeshed with other intricacies of class and caste based politics which are in turn shaped and reshaped by the neoliberalism of the city. The history of the term 'queer' itself has fought its way to finally include without staying limited to the various identities (hijras, kothis, transvestites etc) that

sexuality can take. Queer politics then stands for larger understandings of sexuality as politics and seeks to acknowledge and even demand inclusion within other movements (Bhan, 2005).

Ashwini Sukthankar writes that the hijra discourse in its full essence is radically different from other queer discourses in terms of class, caste, language and the violence faced. Apart from the lack of class privilege that other members of the queer community may have, hijras also lack the choice to 'pass', they are easily recognizable (Sukthankar 2005: 165). For the hijra community, Sukthankar notes, allegiances are difficult indeed; for the gurus who do not have complete faith in LGBT issues or the class divide in question. Yet, as Famila, a member of Vividha (an association of sexual minorities), notes, attitudes are now changing; allegiances could and should be formed with other sexual minorities (ibid.: 166).

It is also the treatment at the hands of state institutions; the police to be specific that colours the experiences of Muslim queer people and hijras very differently from their relatively privileged counterparts. Jyoti Puri writes on the Delhi police and highlights how only the communities that are thought to be hypersexual are targeted. Puri refers to racialization, 'a process where social inequality is rationalized as natural, inheritable and endurable', as a mechanism through which hijras are categorized as a priori criminals who are predisposed to transgression and crime (Puri 2016: 76).

The question of intersectionality and hierarchies within the queer community brings to fore the parameters of gender, class, caste among others. While we have briefly touched upon class and religion, it is also necessary to understand that the experiences and additional discrimination one faces on the basis of one's gender identity. Everyday life in a for lesbian women, in this context, translates into navigating their way around not simply violence faced by all women, but also violence specifically targeted at lesbians (Fernandez, N.B 2005: 155).

Fernandez and N.B, write that silence becomes a major form of violence faced by lesbians. In their study, it was emotional violence upon lesbians within families in forms of denial and hostility that informed their vulnerability. The emotional violence mostly transitions into direct acts of violence with assistance from other institutions; the police and the religious institution. Police action is often invoked by the family similar to how help from religious institutions is sought, often to 'cure' homosexuality (ibid.156-162).

In November 1998, with the release of the movie Fire, lesbianism was thrown into the public domain and the silence was temporarily broken. What the release of the movie did was bring

to the fore was people's positions regarding lesbianism. Later, after Mahila Aghadi, the women wing of Shiv Sena, disrupted the screenings many groups across the country rose to counter the vandalism. Fernandez and N.B cite this instance as specifically an example where the silence surrounding lesbians was broken.

The cosmopolitan city becomes an important site of activism for contested identities; the public sphere has started getting more democratized and issues that were relegated to the private sphere is now being dragged out – the personal has truly become political.

The first Pride walk that was organized in India, and in South Asia, was in Kolkata in the year 1999. The walk, known as the Friendship Walk, had less than 20 participants and drew activists from all over the country including some notable names. Four years later, in June, 2003, another Pride was organized in the same city by organizations like Amitie and Integration society and drew more participants. The selection of Kolkata to host the first pride speaks volumes about both importance of an historical city, it being termed as a 'hotbed' of revolution by the organizers, and that of its cosmopolitan nature.

Delhi had its first Pride walk in the year 2008. The Pride was organized in Jantar Mantar and slogans like 'Section 377 quit India' were rallied. Around 500 people, including activists from all across the country took part in the Pride. Its significance lies in not only Delhi being the capital city of the country, but also an educational and occupational hub. Delhi offers anonymity to the thousands that are away from their home and are trying to find their space within the urban. It is essentially the materiality of the space that becomes pivotal in order to assert one's identity and locate one's struggle.

In our study we have sought to explore fundamentally the questions of space, identity politics, the importance of Pride within queer struggle, and hierarchies within the larger movement. Nicola Field, in her work *Over the Rainbow*, notes how an imposed, artificial unity can contribute to a serious disunity within a movement (Field 1995: 2). There is a pressing need to acknowledge class, caste and gender divisions within the queer movement. The queer movement, at this moment in history, is at its peak, and cannot risk being fragmented. It is only by accepting the diversity within the larger community that a secure sense of unity can be preserved and a truly representative revolution is waged.

Methodology

Methodology is defined as the general research strategy or simply, the science of finding out (Babbie 2014: 4). It outlines the way in which the research has to be carried out, and provides the tools, or methods, that a researcher may utilize while conducting a study. Methods can mean both epistemology, and the strategic choices we make while doing research (Russel 2006: 21).

A cross-sectional study of a relatively minute part of the queer struggle in India, done within a very limited period of less than one month, necessitated a tactical selection of methods. The study has focused on the individuals involved in the Delhi Queer Pride (DQP), and their stories. Narratives of struggle with social acceptance and legal sanctions, experiences of exclusion and discrimination within the larger society and an already marginalized community, and a recounting of the historical trajectory as observed by the members of the DQP constitute a major chunk of the information we recorded during our fieldwork. Observations of various events and meetings organized in and around Central Delhi also was an important component.

A focus on narratives of respondents within our field meant that we prioritized human experiences and the construction of the web of meanings that individuals themselves spin (Russel 2006: 39). The humanist method we employed was closer to the phenomenological approach than anything else; a direct observation of phenomenon, and attempting to explain the perceptions and consciousness of respondents regarding their lives, and the world they inhabit.

Our study, hence, is a qualitative and descriptive one and has extensively used in-depth interviews as our main method, along with observation. As it is an in-depth study of a marginalized community, we have relied on non-probability sampling techniques; mainly convenience, snowballing and purposive.

This work was kick-started by first attending an event named 'Meri Dilli Queer Dilli' organized by the DQP on July 2, 2017, about which we came to know through a notification on the Facebook page of the organization. This was the first time we were able to get in touch with the DQP committee on the location of the event (Jantar Mantar, Delhi). After a few introductions with a couple of who we could identify as the core committee members we relied heavily on their help to introduce us to and give us the contact details of other members within the DQP, and individuals within the queer community in general. From there on we conducted

several in-depth interviews in places our respondents selected that ranged from cafes, public parks, respondent's office cubicles to ones conducted through Skype. All of our interviews were semi-structured and questions were mostly open-ended.

We interviewed 8 individuals and attended 2 events organized by DQP and Nazariya, an LBT organization, respectively and 1 pride planning meeting. Most of the respondents' names have been changed within the study.

The problems we encountered during our fieldwork were mainly that of finding respondents. Since the queer community in Delhi often seems like a close-knit circle we were often referred to the same people, and a lot of them were rather busy and could not give us time for an interview within the one month period.

This paper is a descriptive study of the *Intersectional Politics of the Delhi Queer Pride*, and touches upon the subjects of prides in other cities since most of our respondents were migrants. We have attempted to present their perceptions and experiences as marginalized individuals who are involved in an active struggle to claim their space within this city. This paper seeks to give an insight into how queer individuals locate themselves within the queer movement in India, specifically in Delhi, and comments at the urgency and essentiality of the larger movement.

Analysis

Our introduction to the Delhi Queer Pride committee was from a Facebook event titled "Meri Dilli Queer Dilli". Held on the day that marked the striking down of article 377 in 2009, the event was open to everyone as a people's retelling of the decade since the inception of Delhi pride. Organised in Jantar Mantar, the event occupied a site of protest, pointing to the larger issue of what the pride events signify.

"Meri Dilli Queer Dilli", apart from being an event about stories of struggle, disappointment and celebration, also seemed, to a large extent, an event about the reclamation of public spaces of private histories. The assertion that queerness cannot be separated from the idea of Delhi, and that that Delhi was a subjective experience was prevalent throughout. Stories of 'coming out' were expressed as enmeshed with personal stories of the background and foreground to such actions. There seemed to be a demand for space not just for representation and as a site of protest for rights but also for the fight to create a different, yet equally legitimate framework of the normative terms of identification. What we observed throughout the series of events that we attended including pride planning meetings, social gatherings and even demonstrations, was a reinterpretation of the conventional divide between public and private spaces. In the struggle for recognition by the social and the legal structures, the queer community came up with novel ways of establishing its presence in both these spheres. Since this battle is one so closely associated with identity and self-perception, the idea of public space was reconfigured for and by the members of the LGBTQ. What is reflected to the society with the expectation of an accepted normalcy is believed to be a part of the self, or what defines oneself. Public space here converges with the private as long as entitlement of space is seen as yet to be achieved by the queer community.

"Meri Dilli Queer Dilli" similarly was held in Jantar Mantar, a site considered to be largely used for public protests, demonstrations etc. At the same time, the event was about sharing personal stories of private lives about how individuals first realised as well as revealed their sexual orientation to others. It informed our research about the understanding of space by the queer experiences and that it is not limited to a conception of the physical territory that the community tends to occupy. As mentioned before, the event was open to all and was advertised through a social media platform. However, with the majority of participants English speaking, well dressed and college educated, the question of "really whose Delhi is this Queer Delhi?" ran through our minds, and guided this paper.

In looking at the Delhi Queer community through its organisation of the pride, we have tried to contextualise it through the use of concepts including urbanity and the production of Queer spaces and bodies in Delhi and the intersections of caste, Class and gender which have implications on how, where and when these identities do and do not take shape.

Pride as Celebration

One issue that we tried to explore among all our respondents was what the pride essentially has come to mean to them. One of the most accepted notions of their association to the pride was the aspect of celebration. The idea of celebration ranged from celebration of identity, belongingness to a community, or that of the historical legacy of the movement. One of our respondents, Annie, pointed out that the pride as celebration of queerness was most apparent during the years 2009 to 2013. According to her a lot more people started abandoning the masks usually worn at the pride march, in order to disguise their identities. A similar notion was provided by another respondent, Disha who could also provide us with an insight into the Guwahati Pride. She informed us that it is a jovial affair, with no sloganeering, no flamboyance but a sense of happiness expressed through music and dance. Disha also pointed out that the pride is also a remembrance of the traumatic history of the LGBTQ movement in India, and elsewhere.

The pride then seemed to form a way for the queer community to familiarise the society with their existence. While the individual dispositions varied, the larger goal of belongingness was something we observed throughout our research. One of our respondents was comfortable with the stare and the attention that their aesthetics drew. Their way of dressing and handling their appearance while might be considered ‘unconventional’ by some, was a sign by Vishal of their queerness which they meant to preserve. Belonging to the ‘normal society’ is not as big a priority to Vishal as is their belongingness to their personal conception of queer. With her own set of ideas, Annie reiterated the fact that despite its flaws and complications the DQP still manages to let the people inside their homes and houses of Delhi know of the presence queer community as such.

Politics of the Pride: Intersectionality

As a majority of our respondents pointed out, pride continues to be a largely political movement mainly geared towards the repealing of section 377. This political aspect is reflected in the

intersectionality which the Delhi Queer Pride claims to cater to. An observation of the pamphlets that are circulated before most DQP meetings, and the official parcha that comes out before the pride march revealed their solidarity towards an array of issues ranging from Bastar to Kashmir. As one of the core members of the DQP, Annie took it as a source of satisfaction, the fact of the Delhi Pride being host to a range of protests.

Another opinion on the intersectionality that Delhi Queer Pride checks off as its attributes was that of our interviewee Sughreev. Having attended the Bangalore pride for 5 years, Sughreev could look at the Delhi Pride with a comparative lens. According to him, the Bangalore pride was truly intersectional in the sense that it involved a lot of other set of people including sex workers, working class Trans-genders. It therefore represented the idea of moving beyond the rights as complicated by the sanction of Article 377. The Delhi Pride tended to be more 'upper middle class' as was noticed by Sughreev. This was backed up by our respondent by the fact that leaders like Manohar Parikar, as involved in other movements were also present in the pride march in Bangalore. Sughreev thus was of the conclusion that this solidarity expressed over various issues and the alliance with a diversity of movements though found in DQP, is not unique to it. The queer pride in itself is a largely 'political thing' which according to Sughreev many people fail to understand.

The complexity of according intersectionality to a particular city pride was voiced by Rohit in his interview where he spoke at length about the Kolkata Pride as well. The basic difference between the Kolkata and the Delhi pride was seen to be that the latter is more NGO based while DQP attempts to steer clear of any such affiliations. What the Delhi pride then acquires is more spontaneity, political bend, and even a greater academic influence owing to the gender awareness at college level and amongst students in general in Delhi. While not denying the diversity of issues and participation that the Kolkata pride accommodates and consists of, Rohit maintained that he would still place its politicization lower to that of the DQP. The need to assert an identity, different from that which prioritises identification as queer, is lesser in the Kolkata Queer Pride if seen in relative measure to Delhi. Rohit was also of the opinion that since Delhi witnesses a larger participation from various other movements, the DQP has to its advantage, a numerical strength.

From his experience of the Kolkata and the Delhi Queer pride, the Delhi pride could be seen as moving towards its attempt of appealing to and aligning with other issues and movements.

This was not to deny the lag noted in DQP's implementation of its claimed intersectionality. That the composition of the Delhi Pride members remains heavily dominated by the leftists is revealed through its supposedly unintentional yet evident exclusion of the right wing.

LBT In/Visibility

The inability of the DQP to sometimes cater to its claim was similarly elicited from another one of our respondents Binnie, an academician and participant to the DQP. Binnie held the view that this very intersectionality is felt to be an imposed solidarity by certain members of the queer community. As far as the Trans-visibility is concerned, their inability to connect with these issues can be noted from their scarce presence in the DQP. However, there can be no direct links that can be drawn between the politicisation and the Trans membership of the DQP. Our observations during the DQP meetings displayed a range of concerns that the committee members were trying to accommodate in the finalisation of the pride - from student demands to NGOs schedules that were being brought up. At the same time, there seemed to be an awkward silence regarding the Trans invisibility in these events.

Apart from the inability to identify with the alignment of the pride with other issues, the Trans representation also expressed discomfort with the celebratory factor of the pride. As our respondent informed us, for some Trans members this very celebration is deciphered as depoliticization of the movement. As Binnie reiterated, for the hijras and a majority of the Transgender community who belonged to the working class there was very little to celebrate, and a lot to still struggle for. Belonging to the working class and being hijras who are easily recognizable in our society, they are targeted more than any other queer people.

The uneasiness felt by the Trans representation at the Delhi pride events right from meetings to parties and even at the pride itself was reiterated during most of our interviews with individuals involved with the pride itself. In comparison with the Kolkata pride Rohit listed the extensive media coverage of DQP as one of the possible reasons of Trans-invisibility in the capital. The fear of being spotted and the policing is one of the many factors that go into the scarce participation of the Trans community in the Delhi pride. The Kolkata pride accommodates Trans activism at a larger scale owing to its institutional affiliations to NGOs. In fact conflicts among NGOs is what culminated into the Kolkata Rainbow Pride, a pride march organised separately by and for the *hijras*.

In our interview with Akhil, one of the members who had intervened during the 2015 pride to talk about Dalit Queer activism and caste-blindness plaguing the DQP, we found out that this very intervention had brought on accusations of attempting to dilute the larger queer movement. A DQP member, Rahul, who was also involved in Kolkata Pride informed us of similar accusation faced by participants in the latter. When a few of them tried to express solidarity with Kashmir during a march, the organizers lashed out at them for trying to trivialize queer issues. There was thus an interpretation of other political issues as not being relevant to the queer community, which according to Rohit negatively affected the politicization of the Kolkata Pride.

Furthermore, Binnie informed us about the intervention of the Trans community in the 2014 Hyderabad Pride. While talking about the lack of Trans visibility in DQP, and a felt presence of dominant voices, they talked about how such a similar problem was countered in Hyderabad with an active intervention which led to the Trans community leading the pride for the next year. So what a lot of our interviews and observations brought on was curiosity to inquire into how and why the DQP is looked at, as an elite and limited gathering where the culmination is something made by and for a very specific class of people.

Annie further informed us of the gradual alienation of the Trans community and the hijra gharanas that this explicit elitism had led to a few years back. At this point, even after being contacted by the DQP members the hijra gharanas refuse to take part in the meetings or the pride march citing reasons of work. According to her, 'the bridges have already been burnt'. This separation also seeps in through the legality of the larger struggle as section 377 becomes a matter of little consideration for the Trans community. For them, their victimisation and harassment by the institutional authorities reaches no resolution with any legal safeguards either. Further, the separate rights provided to them by the state in the last couple of years have contributed to them separating themselves from the larger queer community. All of these factors contribute to their gradual alienation and their own strand of political movement.

Dominant Voices

Our observations and interviews showed very specific factors which contribute to making the DQP seem like a closed group of a select few. More than over 4 of our respondents agreed that

the dominant voices within the DQP belonged to gay cis gendered men. This was the most apparently and starkly felt in the recommendations being passed on while we were attempting to gather our respondents through snowballing. Only a handful of names were repeatedly brought up. In our interview with Annie, she spoke of the ‘clique of gay men’ which tends to perpetuate its hyper visibility within the DQP. We also spoke to Rituparna who headed Nazariya, and organised an event for the LBT. A case in point was a separate after party held by the LBT members post the 9th DQP (2016). According to the members, this was arranged in light of an insecurity and alienation experienced by them at the main after party. A common complaint as informed to us by more than one respondent was that of harassment felt by a few women at the hands of this dominant group. However, this separation was then accused of fragmenting the larger LGBTQ movement and community by the same closed clique.

Additionally, another dominant voice that most of our interviewees admitted to was that of the academics. There was a felt presence of an academic rhetoric that most non-academic members of the DQP found exclusive. Sukhdeep, the editor of a magazine called Gaylaxy, complained of the ideological superiority most DQP core members hold over ordinary members or participants. He particularly, found these concrete ideas a little suffocating as he recalled an incident for us where he was stopped by another DQP core member from helping IIT-Delhi students organize a pride. Given that this pride was sponsored by Hero Honda, the organizers faced major backlash for carrying out this pride by a DQP member against the idea of corporate sponsorship. A large chunk of the DQP core committee vehemently opposes corporate sponsorship as they fear that their involvement would taint the politics of the movement. This absolutism again fuels the academics’ stronghold of the larger ideology of the LGBTQ struggle in Delhi.

In addition to what we were told, we also observed the barrier of language that was conspicuous in most DQP events and meetings. All of our respondents agreed that the high usage of English tends to alienate a section of the community. Annie claimed that despite an active effort to curtail the use of English, and attempting to communicate bilingually in most events, it is only a minority whose voices are preponderant and the resulting elitism and a feeling of intimidation felt by the rest is thus inevitable. This exclusion is carried forward to even the dissemination of information and platforms used. The primary mode of communication is through a google group, where most of the conversations take place in English again. Just the basic fact of the main platform used being an email chain indicates the exclusiveness of the DQP. Rohit dwelled upon the issue of language as seeping into that of class and cumulatively leading to the Trans

invisibility and reluctance to participate in the pride events. Kolkata pride being bilingual in its propagation is able to invite a voicing of opinions and beliefs by the hijra community. It thus amounts to one of the factors that lead to greater Trans presence in the Kolkata pride.

We had begun our fieldwork with the question of what the pride has come to mean to the people of the LGBTQ community with diverse backgrounds. Questions of space and belongingness played a big part in our research as we tried to understand how different people located themselves within the community and within the larger struggle. For instance, the indispensable role of the pride as seen by the gay cis-gendered men corresponds to their hyper-visibility within the movement. On the other end, the trans community's failure to identify with the purpose the pride now represents explains their relative absence. From what we gathered through the events and meetings that we attended, the locations chosen represented a certain class of the population. This selection of place indicated for many members, a stronghold of the usual dominating voices and ideologies. The translation of this domination to the space inhabited by the larger struggle formed another source of the exclusionary aspect of the movement at large.

All our observations hence implied a gradual fragmentation of the movement brought about through various strands of identity politics and general feelings of divisiveness. Naturally, this affected people's participation in the pride which stood not just for the collection of bodies unified under a similar ideology but also for a movement in space for a set of objectives. At the same time, the pride moves with a promising optimism for a certain section which acknowledges the urgency of the larger struggle. The question of sexual liberation is as precarious as it is crucial for the crisis of identity and space. Apart from the cultural significance of the pride, it also signifies the revolutionary potential of the LGBTQ movement. The pride reasserts the essential materiality of the social space that it occupies. This is a movement that cannot risk being abandoned or fragmented at this moment of history. The revolutionary character of the LGBTQ movement in India, and specifically in Delhi has to be harnessed in order to realize its full potential. In conclusion, the significance of dissent in the DQP lies in its capability to create a stronger and more united force which can challenge the hegemonic discourse.

Conclusion

In order to articulate intersectionality in the organizing of the Delhi Queer Pride Parade, it is perhaps prudent to return to the question of what it means to articulate; at this moment in time and in the future, who gets the privilege and who allows it to themselves, and why is it important? The latter could be that the larger picture requires that sexuality rights are human rights, and that to live in a democratic country means to have access to those rights. In the discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS, Article 377, sexual health programs and globalized sexualities, even this is limited in its outlook. Rather, articulation should encompass assemblages; social cultural, political and material realities of queer lived experiences that are embedded in historical actualities those themselves contain multitudes. The sentiments and affectivities of pride, shame, mourning, joy and desire should be threaded within the quilt of multifarious identity formations, legal-political discourses and institutions and ideological authenticities in order to construct, not a universal queer subject, rather an understanding of the matrix of knowledge constructions and deconstructions that are required to even bring this diversity to the forefront. For Sara Ahmed, the queer body is fashioned when it is ‘out of place’ of the ‘normal’ discourse. To be out of place and disoriented then comes from a certain orientation of the mind towards the subjectivity of the commonsensical, the natural and the normal, and impacts the ways in which knowledge creation itself emerges from that which was left behind, contested and hidden; “Queer histories and politics are histories and politics of the remainder” (Sahai 2013), and while critiquing the movement and the Pride committees does not mean dismantling them, it does mean acknowledging these criticisms, dissidences and resistances that have been spoken about above. Going forward, the ‘remainder’ may take into account what the right to the city means in terms of the Pride Parades taking place in smaller and smaller towns in India, and how affectivity, marginalities and economies of materiality come together when there are smaller numbers. It could also mean taking up sub-regional articulations of intersectionality, like that of the North-Eastern Pride, when the linguistic, ethnic and religious differences may be various. One thing is for sure, the precarity of sexuality means asking what happens after liberation, and how that translates into the intimate, everyday

meanings that people give their lives and the public manifestations of those in events like Pride, “Meri Dilli Queer Dilli” and others that make up the universe of queer articulation and subject formation in the capital city.

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