Archiving Care; Perspectives on Transnational Queer-Feminism from Urban New Delhi

By

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Abstract

Care is a dense and metamorphosing act when evaluated under the spatio-temporality of political machinations, resistance, and the omnipresent threat of an oppressive State. This dissertation archives practices of care that queer people living in urban New Delhi practice in their everyday lives, particularly within the context of pervasive state-sanctioned violence. By conducting interviews with six participants (aged between 18-35) who arrived in the city in different ways, I illustrate the necessity of centre care as a form of political participation and its role in political resistance against the ruling party. Delhi was chosen for its familiarity, the unique form of belonging that it generates as a consequence of the way its inhabitants arrive in it and its location as the political epicentre. Responses received from the participants are analysed to reflect patterns within the psychic imagination of what constitutes political participation and resistance. The concept of "showing up" which centres physical participation as the core element of political resistance is critiqued. In a more detailed analysis, the observations and narratives are subsequently situated within the global histories of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, atrocities against Native-American tribes, tribal communities in postcolonial India, and neoliberalism that have shaped care in the form that it is known today to warn against the fetishizing of care work and simultaneously offering a means of reimagining the tenets of care using the suggestions made by Black, indigenous, and queer-feminist scholars of colour such as Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks. Transnational influences informing imaginaries of care are essential in forming a sense of solidarity amidst the global rise of hate-based politics.

While this study is rooted in urban New Delhi, archiving practices of care is an important concept that can be broadly applied to other cultural contexts that share a history or are presently under the rule of oppressive political regimes. This dissertation also contributes to the concept of expanding upon the notion of the Global South by moving away from the

articulation of the 'subaltern' as has been established by the field of Subaltern Studies. This is a move not only to identify the nuances of internal politics that are not recognized through the homogenizing of the Global but also to establish the need for a different register to articulate the concerns of those occupying the margins regardless of the geopolitical territory.

Acknowledgements

I begin my acknowledgements with words for scholars and activists in India and around the world who are incarcerated under oppressive regimes, among them my professors and comrades. I am grateful for the work you have done and carry your thoughts with me through everything I do.

This archive is my love letter to New Delhi, the city I grew up in. This has only been made possible by the unrelenting support of communities in both India and Vienna. I am thankful to my supervisors Dr Hannah Loney and Dr Nadia Jones-Gailani for not just their brilliant scholarship but also for embodying the feminist ideals, we are continuously trying to aspire to. To Professor Francisca de Haan, thank you for not giving up on me even when I did. My gratitude to the entire Department of Gender Studies at CEU for their consistent support; I would not have been here without it. I am thankful to my batchmates who continue to challenge me in the healthiest of ways and reminding me to persevere through thick and thin.

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মা, বাবা, দিদাই, I have no words for everything you have done that has brought me here. I am beyond grateful. I love you very much. দাদু, আশা করি তুমি এটা দেখছো।

To the community in Vienna and my peers who have sustained both me and this work: I cannot thank you enough. May we be free of the tyrannies that plague us, the disciplining tendencies of gender, and the burden of performing it. May we be free to rest, thrive, and love.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no material accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no material previously written accepted and/or published by another person, except where an appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

Body of the thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 24111

Entire manuscript: 25250

Signed: Oishi Sengupta

Trigger Warning

In maintaining a feminist approach to research and extending care (Clare 10) to the readers of this dissertation, I am placing a trigger warning for mentions of Islamophobia, sexual violence, police brutality, and prisons throughout the thesis.

The mentions may trigger memories of traumatic events in the lives of the readers. This is not to dissuade readers from approaching the text but to be aware of potential points of trigger that lie ahead.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Saidiya Hartman (5) in The Plot of Her Undoing, wrote:

> The undoing of the plot proceeds by stealth. It is almost never recognized as anything at all and certainly never as significant. The undoing of the plot is blamed on foreign agents and outside agitators and troublemakers and communists. The undoing of the plot does not substitute the woman for the man or topple the hierarchy to become the hierarchy. It does not replace the bad state with the good state or supplant the villain with the man of the people. It does not craft a story of leaders and followers in which she might assume a starring role. The undoing is not for your entertainment, even if it is for your benefit.

This piece by Saidiya Hartman, which playfully moves between prose and poem was written for the Feminist Art Coalition in 2019. She reveals the collective historical figure "her" in her work and the several violent and oppressive episodes that have been inflicted on this figure. This piece itself becomes a testimony of domination, reflecting upon the reader both the tangible and intangible forms of violence driven in the name of different forms of violent powers that keep assuming different forms. Finally, Hartman completely flips the narrative in the last excerpts of the poem, now focusing on "the undoing of the plot" and further proceeds to reveal prospects for reimagining resistance The 'her' she refers to in the poem is not a singular unit but rather a collective voice containing a chorus of Black life within, which constantly disrupts and oscillates between suppression and rebellion (Brooks). This intricate connection between freedom and oppression can be understood as the case of fugitivity, which is at the heart of Hartman's conceptualization of Blackness. It is within this historical importance of the seemingly little and quotidian acts of resistance that I situate my thesis.

On the morning of the 19th of December 2019, mass protests broke out on the streets of Delhi. Police forces were prepared with barricades, riot gear, detention vans, and other paraphernalia should the protests turn 'too unruly'. Professors, students, writers, poets, friends, parents and their young children, among many others occupied the streets on the cold, winter morning in protest of the rising state-sanctioned cases of Islamophobic violence. Scheduled shortly after the brutal attacks on students and faculty at Jamia Millia Islamia University and after the Citizenship Amendment Bill passed through the court to become the Citizenship Amendment Act[1], the undercurrents of Islamophobia within the State powers gained a grotesque luminosity. In the months following the protests, media outlets that were popular for supporting the government in power were rife with discussions about the "anti-national terrorists" who were disrupting communal harmony while being unaware of the 'real nature' of the laws they were protesting. The way the 'anti-national body' emerged and was portrayed by the media only furthered the notion that dissenters do not belong to the country. Consequently, protests are no longer understood as part of democracy, but as a disruption of harmony and political stability of the country. While the protests that erupted across India in 2019 were in no way the first instance of a large-scale social movement, I argue that it marked a definitive turn in terms of social organizing and political developments in the country under this political regime. In the case of political life since then, the state strengthened the clauses of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Under this law, anyone who is suspected of having been involved in activities that could disrupt 'national integrity and harmony' could be imprisoned on suspicion alone. After several Muslim students and activists were targeted and arrested under this amended law, the initial fear of imprisonment was slowly mobilized to

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[1] for further reading on the topic, please refer to Anand, Tamara. "Why the CAA+NPR+NRC Is a Toxic Cocktail for Everyone." *CJP*, 5 Feb. 2020, cjp.org.in/why-the-caanprnrc-is-a-toxic-cocktail-for-everyone

organize a more structured system of care such as legal support[2], rehabilitation[3], fundraising[4], mobilizations, and medical support[5] among others. Additionally, the renewed series of violent events that erupted lately in April 2022 required immediate mobilizations in the same way as in 2019. Concerns around quotidian security, fundraising, and other logistical issues are being navigated using learnings from previous experiences. Additionally, the affective field generated during 2019 led to the formation of communities of support that have only grown since, allowing for a possibility to come together to plan a larger, better-organized resistance against the growing fundamentalist tendencies in the country. At present, it lends to the imagination of a protest which does not rely on demanding 'rights' for the way they are only ever brought up when they are lost. In imagining these forms of care as a consequence of a sort of affective afterlife, one can begin to create a space that can hold the possibility of accounting for hurt, grief, joy, loss, trauma, and other emotions that are rarely allowed to be expressed within the high-energy space of a tangibly public protest which demands physical presence.

It is however very important to note that I actively resist romanticising the cause, the space, or even the violence that surrounded these protests. Instead, I attempt to offer an alternative way of analysing, remembering, and learning from the narratives that have been shared by queer folks in Delhi.

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[2] This entailed creating databases that would help the detained/arrested persons to contact lawyers who were closest to them

[3] Ensuring people who had lost their homes or did not live in safe areas had a place to stay

[4] Finding safe ways to raise funds and ensure they reached those who needed it on time

[5] Ensuring injured people are not denied basic emergency healthcare at hospitals and that the legal aspect is taken care of on time.

Thesis Overview

This thesis primarily argues that quotidian practices of care can be envisioned as a queer-feminist intervention into social movements, especially in the context of rising Hindu fundamentalist violence across India. To that end, I begin by curating an archive of some of these practices collected by conducting open-ended interviews with queer participants between the ages of 18-35 living in urban New Delhi. Furthermore, in situating these practices within the local contexts of physical protest spaces and the global context of the rise in hate-based violence, we arrive at a critical insight into the different histories which shape our perception of care. I use a combination of methodological approaches, conceptually borrowing from Gopinath (22) 's articulation of 'scavenger methodologies' (explained in detail in Chapter 4) and ranging from interviews, studying them with narrative and discourse analysis, to archival research.

The analyses of the interviews are split into three sections, each dedicated to specific themes of the thesis. Broadly, they can be considered responses to the three primary questions that we seek to answer:

What practices of care and meaning-making do queer persons living in urban New Delhi engage in to navigate the trauma and violence of resistance to the state? What practices and values sustain and motivate them to continue this work?

What are some of the important themes that emerge from the interviews? What do these quotidian acts of care reveal about the nature of the space they take place in?

How have the participants come into their current imagination of what care constitutes? What kinds of global and local histories inform the politics of care as we know it now and how do we curate the radical potential of care?

The analytical chapters begin with Chapter 4 of this dissertation wherein I propose an alternative form of archive that is flexible and adaptable in terms of its site and content. This malleability enables the incorporation of diverse care practices and forms of resistance in the face of pervasive violent political conditions, which are continually evolving. In light of contemporary forms of political violence, such as cyber surveillance and police raids on resistance and rehabilitation efforts, care practices must remain flexible and responsive to meet the needs of those affected.

Chapter 5 follows up on one of the key phrases noted over several of the interviews, that is: 'showing up'. The research argues that care plays a crucial role in sustaining hope and facilitating new directions for what Sara Ahmed calls the 'disoriented body' (Ahmed 70). The study's participants embody and perform care in their daily lives, demonstrating its importance in facilitating transformative change. Additionally, the category of the Global South as has been coined aggressively in academia in recent years is found to be inadequate in the Indian context as it fails to account for the interconnections of caste with other identity categories, such as class, religion, and gender. I critique the absence of meaningful analyses of the interrelations drawn between the pervasiveness of caste within the South Asian context and other categories of class, gender, and sexuality.

Finally, the last analytical chapter aims to produce a historical trajectory to explain the existence of a contemporary understanding of care in the global context of neoliberalism. in so doing, we note that it can be traced back to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and thus we must note the discursive developments done by black and indigenous feminists in the field for a nuanced comprehension of care itself. By contextualizing the philosophical foundations and political realities that informed these ideas, we can better appreciate the emancipatory potential of care as a mode of political resistance, particularly within queer communities.

Chapter 2: A Brief Review of Literature

In this section, I note the scholarship that already exists in the field and analyze them in order to situate my contribution to the same. In their book, Queer Activism in India; A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics (2012), Naisargi N Dave traces the trajectory of the formulation of lesbian communities in Delhi and the affective elements that inform lesbian activism in India. Rahul Rao's book Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality (2019) and has since become an important scholarly work that speaks to the need for reimagining temporality in Uganda, India, and Britain: – three countries tied together by their history of British colonialism – to argue that it is possible for queerness to become metamorphosed into suiting the demands of categories like religion, nationalism, and class interests. In other words, social institutions which have a violent history against queerness are mobilized under the linear interpretations of spatio-temporality.

Both Rao and Dave define the confines and boundaries that must be drawn for the category of the 'transnational'. However, their approaches are different. Rao (48) invokes Massey's articulation of space as "the mix of social relations that constitute a place are not all included within its boundaries, with many stretching well beyond what are thought to be its confines" and later engages with similar criticisms by David Harvey to finally establish that "those asserting a particular definition of place not only offer an account that is frozen at a convenient moment in time but also masks the act of freezing to convey the impression of timelessness" (48). Dave, on the other hand, invites their audience to navigate space as a function of affect in their work. Following arguments presented previously by Lisa Duggan and José Muñoz, Dave (9) suggests that we read "structures of feeling as fields of possibility, spaces in which material constraints do indeed structure imagination—but, because those imaginings are nowhere manifest (not even, fully, in language), they are not yet determined or

limited by existing norms". Both however acknowledge that the spaces of the transnational and the local are intricately enmeshed and exist in a symbiotic relationship.

The dialogue forming within these two texts, therefore, is crucial to my thesis in the way they foreground the role of political activism, establish the historicity and centrality of the conceptual category of the 'transnational' within the discourse of queer life in an urban setting, as well as explain the importance of locating New Delhi as a transit space. Rao's book comes five years after the establishment of the BJP government with its specific agenda surrounding colonial occupation (as can be seen in Kashmir), caste atrocities, and various forms of subjugation of public intellectuals. Since their rise to power, queerness has been moulded and remoulded to fit various interest groups. The space of the transnational and its relation to the local has dynamically altered as a consequence. The dialogicality of the chosen texts lies in the way temporal positionality allows each to interact with the political context of the state and with each other. However, this is not the only point of interaction in which one can see critical junctures in discursive formations.

The importance of the texts also lies in the way they can be used to trace the expressions and manifestations of queerness within a visible urban public sphere, but also the development of political consciousness since the 1990s. Additionally, in being positioned so, a discursive analysis of the language of sex, sexuality, and desire (Cameron and Kulick 193) articulated in the texts could be fruitful for unpacking some of the complex interactions of art, activism, and NGOs within the queer communities in India. It is however important to note that I use legal histories and legal visibility only very briefly to locate the queer subject within the perception of the state. The discourse on rights and representation does not take up a place of significant importance in my research for the way in which the demand for a positive iconography fixes the imagination of the represented subject only within specific contexts in which they need to be interpellated. The consequence is the emergence of the lonely subject existing in alienation,

as these strategies of representation slowly foreclose the possibilities of negotiation outside of the paradigms in which they can be intelligible. Any imagination of queerness, particularly in the context of the geopolitical areas discussed in the texts, must imagine care and sustenance as inherent aspects of community building. This is not to discount the differences within community settings, but to hold out the possibility of imagining formulations of kinship that can resist the carcerality of the state.

What both Dave and Rao leave unsaid are the interplay of caste within the Indian diaspora and the changes within politics of transnational care that emerged thereafter (Singh; Amarasingam et al.; 'Political Imprisonment and Torture in India: Amnesty International Report'). Therefore, while alluding to and referencing a global community of support and kinship for queer Indians, there are critical political interstices that are not paid particular attention to. The potential danger of such theorization has been observed in the hegemony of upper-caste, urban, English-speaking, cis-gay men who continue to form the majority of the legal, social, and political discourse around queerness in India (Sanam 2760).

Although speaking in the context of Manila, Benedicto's (292) explanation of the cityscape hiding differences amidst its many layers of movements and convergences, sometimes overtly, other times not, is an apt description for New Delhi as well. The historical and geographical histories of the city amalgamate in ways that those who live there occupy the space but in varying capacities, seldom desiring to settle into it for their lives. New Delhi then becomes synonymous with a large number of complex forms of belonging: students from faraway places in the country, migrant labourers hoping to acquire work opportunities, middle-class persons looking for professional growth, lovers fleeing their towns for fear of persecution, and queer folks leaving behind their hometowns and cities to live in ways they so desire, people from caste and religious minorities arriving to seek political refuge, among others. While Dave's anthropological account is an incisive entry into some of these relationships with the

city, the narrative(s) that emerge from my interviews aim to situate New Delhi as a transit space, simultaneously moulding those who live in it and becoming transformed by them. The politics of care within the city is then a commitment and recommitment to critically thinking about privilege, apologies, harm, and survival strategies, especially amidst a politically turbulent landscape.

Indian Political History

India has witnessed an exponential decline in fundamental democratic ideals in the last decade, particularly since the election of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), a right-wing, Hindutva, government in 2014. [6] From legal changes to policies, public discourse and governance, the national agenda has observably shifted towards the cementing of Hindu society with married, heterosexual couples with children as its defining unit. In that light, this study draws upon interviews with queer folks in urban New Delhi to unpack the practices of care that they engage in as a way to navigate the rising Hindutva fundamentalist violence across the country. In so doing, it seeks to produce an archive of practices that can be imagined as resistance against the pervasive violence of the state. Subsequently, I argue that this archive has implications for the imagination of queer kinship and political resistance within transnational contexts.

In the neo-colonial political climate of India,[7] practices of British imperialism continue to be reworked by individuals in dominant positions (for example, upper caste and Hindu

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[6] "Global Standards, Local Knowledge." *V*, www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/VariableGraph/.

[7] The use of the term neocolonial is a reference to the growing cases of the Indian state colonizing parts of South-Asia, both discursively and literally. The abrogation of Article 370 to colonize Kashmir, the continued colonization of Nagaland, Mizoram, and other states in the north-eastern part of the country while imposing heavy

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persons) to perpetuate a similar dynamic of power by presenting it as a necessary part of the nation-building project. The ongoing Ghar Wapsi [8] campaign, for instance, which was facilitated by the militaristic wing of the BJP, such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), received widespread media attention. This has created an outpouring of 'nationalist' sentiment within the supporters of the dominant party that has subsequently belied the state agenda of homogenizing and forcibly co-opting religious, sexual, caste, and other minorities into a decisively exclusive and selective vision. The rise of homonationalism, such as the pinkwashing of Kashmir (Bég), as well as the obsession with gay marriage,[9] can be viewed as symptoms of this phenomenon.

Resistance against this narrative, as well as the growing role of queer communities in protests against the regime,[10] allows for the possibility of queer kinship in the larger resistance against the state. By focusing on spaces of nurture and practices of quotidian meaning-making, I hope to avoid a discourse wherein resistance by marginalized communities is understood only

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military presence (such as the presence of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 or AFSPA in Assam) reinforce and reiterate the carceral nature of the nation state.

[8] Literally translates from Hindi into "returning home". This is a pervasive program facilitated by Hindu nationalist organizations to convert people from Islam, Christianity, and other religions into Hinduism. The underlying philosophy is that India has historically been a predominantly Hindu state 'ravaged' by colonizers of different religions and converting its citizens is a way of reconnecting them with their 'origins'. On the receiving end of these conversions are usually tribal, Dalit and Adivasi, and economically disadvantaged communities.

[9] The Indian Supreme Court decriminalized Section 377 in 2018 after a three-member SC bench heard a petition filed by five people to revisit the Naz Foundation judgement. The shift in focus on gay marriage in the present discourse reinforces caste endogamy and the retention of caste patriarchy even within queer communities.

[10] PTI. "CAA: Transgenders, Queers Ask How Will We Prove Lineage." *Deccan Herald*, 4 Jan. 2020, www.deccanherald.com/national/national-politics/caa-transgenders-queers-ask-how-will-we-prove-lineage-791276.html. Accessed 2020.

in terms of their pain and suffering. Unpacking the processes of subject formation of queer folks in New Delhi is essential in order to situate the queer, urban body within the local and global discourses of care and resistance. To do so, I trace the different narratives of arrivals (Ahmed 148) of the participants into the city itself. In so doing, this study argues that there has been a global shift towards autocracy and state-sanctioned violence, examples of which include Brazil, the USA, the Philippines, India, and Hungary, among other countries. In archiving practices of care, this research refuses to consider state borders containing queer kinships and seeks to make visible the travel of ideas regarding modes of resistance across space. This is not to insinuate that concepts can be superimposed similarly over different cultural contexts but rather seeks to encourage the formation of larger communities based on shared principles. Furthermore, studying the transnational impact of care is also an invitation to study the interlinkages of history that have produced the imaginations of care that we are now trying to follow.

NRC and CAA

> The NRC was created in 1951 to determine who was born in Assam and is, therefore, an Indian citizen, based on the first census data conducted in Independent India in the same year. In December 2015, the Supreme Court of India mandated updating the NRC in Assam based on two writ petitions filed by Assam Public Works and Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha & Ors. To be included in the NRC, residents were required to produce official documents demonstrating their 'Indian roots' on or before 24 March 1971. (Choudhury 327)

The register follows the colonial logic of exclusion by religious and ethnic divides. The final list which was released on the 9th of August 2019 left out 1.9 million people residing in at the time in Assam. The imposition of a law such as this in conjunction with the Citizenship

Amendment Act (CAA) (*The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019 (A) Further to Amend the Citizenship Act, 1955*) would create a situation of mass displacement and mass incarceration[11]. The Act stated that those who were not mentioned on the list would be moved to internment camps (Alo).

The passing of these acts led to widespread protests across the country starting in December 2019 which was met with brutal police repression, arrests, and detention. A review of the conditions in which Hindutva ideologies were being cemented by the passing (and eventually implementing) and the larger implications of the Act itself was explained by TWAILR op-ed as:

> The 2019 CAA is seen as a precursor to the implementation of a National Registry of Citizens (NRC), which is expected to disenfranchise millions of people living in India. In the aftermath of the anti-CAA protests, the government was vague about its plans to implement a nationwide NRC. However, in the government's submission to the Supreme Court (para 47) in response to the public interest litigation against the CAA, it explicitly declared its intentions for a nation-wide NRC. There is also precedent, as a pilot NRC has already been conducted in the Northeastern state of Assam between 2015 and 2019.

This is not to argue that the passing of these laws marked the beginning of widespread social movements in Delhi in any way but to posit that much of the testimonials of the participants of this thesis rely on the context of the protests which emerged from here. Additionally, the passing of these laws generated one of the largest social movements across

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[11] For further reading, please refer to the report published by Indians for Amnesty International Trust in 2019 (Amnesty International)

the country in recent public memory. Consequently, they have become important in assessing political developments as well as Islamophobic activities such as the bulldozing of Muslim neighbourhoods and demolition of mosques (Ellis-Petersen and Mohammad Sartaj Alam), among others.

State of Archives

Brozgal (35) questions what happens when textual traces that inform collective national memory and identity are repressed. She uses the phrase 'representing absence' (Brozgal 36) to refer to the role of literature as an alternative archive which accounts for the critical signs (since archives are built of signs) that cannot be included by the state for the ways it disrupts its power. She reworks Derrida's usage of the term anarchive in the form of a noun to indicate that "the anarchive is not located in any single text but rather designates a set of works that evince an archival function and that, together, produce an epistemological system in oppositional relationship to an official archive" (Brozgal 50). Official archives in Delhi have focused primarily on curating narratives around British colonialism and a linear imagination of history since then. They have been central to the imagination of not only scholarly pursuits into colonial and pre-colonial history but also in retaining the memory of transnational engagements and interactions that have shaped the socio-political contexts of the country in its present form. Established in 1891 in Kolkata, (in pre-partitioned Bengal) as the Imperial Record Department, NAI has historically supported art exhibitions and scholars from various fields in their work. The archive's Historical Documents Purchase Committee (HDPC) has collected over 160,000 manuscripts from individual donors and is one of the only archives to house over 136,000 official documents from the Mughal era, some of them detailing grants for the construction of various religious institutions. However, even they were at risk of being demolished very recently until they were forced to halt after protests (Quint).

However, resistance to the violent dominant narratives is being actively carried out through alternate sites and methods of archiving. Archival projects such as Dalit-Queer Project[12], The Queer-Muslim Project, and Dalit Camera (Paul and Dowling) have established themselves as a form of resistance to normative histories. Addressing the need for these sites of archive Paul and Dowling (1244) argue "the high intensity of DC (Dalit Camera) as an autonomous social movement is a direct measure of the Indian government's unresponsiveness and insensitivity to issues of caste, whose chronic and protracted neglect is now exposed in unprecedented detail through the hard glare of the online archive. This is equally true in the case of many other alternate archives that are emerging.

A History of Care in India

The relationship between gender and care during British colonialism in India is a complex and multifaceted subject that has received relatively little attention in the academic literature. However, to fully understand the impact of colonialism on Indian society, it is important to examine the ways in which gender and care were intertwined during this period.

One of the key ways in which gender and care were interconnected during British colonialism in India was through the gendered division of labour (Pati and Harrison) where women were relegated to spheres such as domestic help for British households and taking care of their children, often without any economic incentives. This was also a consequence of how Christian missionaries reinforced women's position in society.

Gender and caste form a critical intersection for analysis in the conversation about care and labour. As middle-class Brahmin women did domestic work such as taking care of the

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[12] DQP has archived poetry written and performed by Dalit-queer artists among other forms of organizing for more than a decade.

children of British officials, women from lower castes faced oppression from both savarna[13] as well as the colonial authorities. In response to this double burden of oppression, Dalit radicals sought to create a new identity for Dalit women as transgressive subjects that defied the power dynamics and discourses of upper-caste oppression and differentiation, which aimed to conceal or suppress them. They understood that the interplay of caste and patriarchy resulted in dual oppression for Dalit women as both members of the Dalit caste and as women. In an effort to counteract this double patriarchy, Dalit women have historically engaged in a process of self-reflection and expansion, referred to as a "technology of the self," (Paik 3) to radically transform women's subjectivity and challenge gender inequalities within their community. To achieve this, they emphasized the importance of educating women and addressing gender disparities within the community. Care for Dalit women thus takes the form of education reforms that were pioneered by Fatima Sheikh and Savitribai Phule.

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[13] Refers to upper-caste folks.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Yvette Taylor suggests that ethnographic research on queerness could "usefully re-orientate itself to a more empirically-grounded focus on material (im)possibilities" (70). From a theoretical perspective, she raises questions about the concept of "difference" as it is understood within the framework of queer scholarship. Queer theory and methodology are often associated with the examination of the fluidity of spaces and identities and the challenge of fixed categories and dominant discourses and practices (Browne and Nash 201). However, it has been argued that while queer theory aims to deconstruct universalism and meta-narratives, it has often neglected to fully examine the intersectional material dimensions that shape the experiences of individuals (Browne et al. 109). It is in this context that I place primary importance on the presentation of narratives over their analysis. The queering of methodologies lies "in learning to see that I don't need this distinction between theory and data, opening my eyes to new possibilities." (Heckert 48).

This dissertation deploys a combination of diverse methodological approaches to collect and analyse data. The narratives were collected in a conversational manner and later analyzed using narrative and discourse analysis.

Ethics

Careful attention was paid to the way the participants were approached for the interviews and their comfort and safety were repeatedly reiterated, along with the conversational nature of the interview itself. The recruitment procedures were planned in such a way that no coercion was forced on the participants. The increase in state-sanctioned violence on marginalized communities such as those being interviewed for this research project has meant that there is a dearth of safe spaces to articulate any grief, trauma, or other experiences

that reflect a critical stance towards the regime. Owing to my privileged physical location in Vienna, which allows me to have access to a certain degree of safety and ensure the safeguarding of data acquired during the interview, I hope that the space shared between the participants and I has been cathartic in some capacity. Following the interviews, they were transcribed, translated from Hindi where necessary, and analyzed discursively to unpack the practices of care and the implications of the process of archiving.

The research was conducted through interviews in a conversational manner with queer people between the ages of 18-35 residing in New Delhi, India. My networks in New Delhi emerging from the interactions during public protests, NGOs (such as BOSCO Refugee Assistance Program with UNHCR), and universities in Delhi were used to recruit participants. All the participants self-identify as queer and have been living in New Delhi for work or other purposes. Snowball sampling was used to reach out to more participants with similar backgrounds. In many cases, the conversations with friends led to them asking if I would be open to speaking with more people about this. Some of the participants voluntarily spoke with their friends who then reached out to me, offering to share ideas and have a conversation (as was the case with Samiya). Some of the interviews went on for three to four hours at a stretch, moving fluidly from casual conversations to serious discussions about care, sexuality, mental health, and complex ways of belonging, among other subjects. The interviews have been a generous offering of time, kinship, and a space which will continue to develop and mould much beyond the scope of this thesis alone.

Eight people were interviewed for this thesis of which, of which two participants use S and B to identify in this dissertation to remain anonymous, and four consented to use their names. Two of the participants passed away in the second wave of the pandemic and in keeping with their wishes, I have not included their testimonials in my work. Participants of this research project were not offered any financial incentives to participate. However, keeping in

mind the queer-feminist praxis that the research aimed to practice, the conversational nature of the interviews helped both parties create a mutual space which was safe to express difficult emotions. Prior to conducting the interviews, I conducted an informal introduction and information session wherein I explained the research, and the role of the participants in the study, and tried to answer any and all queries and concerns they had. Additionally, the participants were asked for their preferred mode of communication for follow-up and sharing any findings of the project. This was important to ensure that they felt safe sharing and communicating with me, particularly with the increased surveillance of the state in mediums such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, among others. All participants had the option of not being recorded should they wish it so. They also had the option of remaining anonymous or using pseudonyms for security or any other concerns. This option was used by two of the six participants whose interviews have been archived and used in this thesis. A summary and short transcript of the interview(s) were provided to them after the transcription process was completed after which they were invited to suggest edits and changes but only till the stage of data processing. The safety of the participants has been a top priority and interviews were carried out primarily over Signal and sometimes on Zoom.

Participants

Maniza (she/them): Maniza and I did our MA in English from Delhi University together from 2017-19. She is currently working with TQMP ('The Queer-Muslim Project') as the editor-in-chief. She grew up in Jeddah, a Saudi Arabian port city on the Red Sea where her parents still live and work. She moved to New Delhi 8 years ago with her sister. She identifies as queer and Muslim.

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Samiya (she/her): Samiya is doing her MA at Ambedkar University Delhi in literary Arts and Aesthetics. She was introduced to me by Maniza, who is her older sister. Due to the pandemic, she was doing her courses online up until recently.

Jasleen (she/her): Jasleen is a birthday party organizer. She identifies as a trans woman. I met Jasleen while coordinating relief efforts for Afghan refugees during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

B (they/them): B chose to use their initial to avoid inviting any kind of surveillance. They graduated from Delhi University in 2020. We met in the police detention van during the protests in December 2019 and later coordinated protest-related activities across the country.

S (she/her): S also chose to use her initials. We were detained at the police station together during the protests in December 2019. She left her home when she was 16 to escape an abusive household. She is completing her BA and working at the same time to support herself.

Garima (she/her): Garima has been involved with many projects related to queer and trans rights. She is one of the organizing members of Dehradun Pride, the first Pride march in the town.

It is important to note that participants have not consented to share any more information here. Two more participants were interviewed but passed away during the second wave of the pandemic in India. During our conversations, they had asked me to not mention their names. However, this research would not have been possible without their constant motivation and insights.

Positionality

An important component of being committed to a queer-feminist approach to this research involves being cognizant of my positionality and its influences on the research. The notion of multiple positionalities that has gained currency among feminists has conventionally

focused on the researcher instead of the research participants. Scholars of colour who navigate researching their community in the Global South have argued against rigid boundaries distinguishing insider and outsider positions. This is not to deny their relative privileges as academics institutionally situated in the Global North but to emphasize their complex positionalities as simultaneously insiders, outsiders, or in-between (Mullings; S. Mukherjee).

I am a queer, nonbinary, upper-caste researcher who was born in Kolkata, West Bengal and grew up in Delhi. While my first language is Bangla, I have grown up acquiring Hindi, English, and Bangla at the same time. However, my comfort with Hindi has played a significant role in the work I have been doing in Delhi as well as in cultivating and maintaining a relationship with the participants. During the pogroms in 2019 and the ensuing violence across, the city, I was part of the community of people that helped in rebuilding the affected households. The state surveillance at the time meant that we were forced to be well-versed with the state's carceral system. The efforts to navigate these complex legal systems and the cruelty of the police (which was significantly harsher for queer and non-Hindu folks) led to many of the friendships which have been instrumental in the way participants have chosen to engage in conversation with me. There have been several points during the interviews with the participants wherein I was directly referenced and the work we did together has been referred to. I have chosen to omit them from the excerpts, not only because they interpellated me in the narrative but also because they did not serve any useful purpose for the arguments.

I have cited a lot of events from the pogroms in December 2019 and the subsequent protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (*The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019 (A) Further to Amend the Citizenship Act, 1955*) and the National Register of Citizens from my memory, having been intimately involved in organizing and other forms of resistance. The imposed silence on media coverage of the insidious degrees of violence committed during these pogroms, the lasting trauma of those who were directly affected, and the heavy crackdown by

the police that has resulted in several of our friends and comrades being arrested and harassed on false charges has only fuelled the need to archive narratives of care. The motivation for this thesis has emerged from my personal experiences as well as in recognition of the urgency of archiving narratives emerging from the increasingly violent political context in India. This is evident from my choice of Delhi as the primary site for research, in choosing to centre queer folks, and in the focus on recognizing care as a form of resistance.

The relationship with this dissertation has also required me to simultaneously develop an ethics of care for my positionality as well as the participants who chose to share their narratives. I discuss this further in the next section.

The Pervasive Presence of Care

The interview process for this dissertation has been an active reminder that care is not practised by the participants as an abstract performance but actively embodied in their quotidian lives. I have noted the following instances to highlight the same:

Towards the end of my interview with Jasleen, she quietly lets me know that she knows I am not doing very well. She tells me to put on make-up when I do not feel all that well and just go to sleep if that is what I want to do. She says she can see I am "going through something". All of my efforts to unpack quotidian care work and meaning-making are laid bare at this moment. I have only known her for a short while. We have barely ever spoken to each other about our personal lives in detail and only an hour into our conversation, she shares not only her journey, but we end up mutually assuring each other of our presence in each other's lives. She has promised to decorate my home in Delhi should I ever come back and rent an apartment. We share our knowledge about the cheapest places in the city to buy clothes and furniture.

The next instance was that of Samiya excitedly reaching out to me on Instagram to tell me she had "घरेलू" (can be roughly translated into domestic/ homely) things to share. I had already spoken to her older sister Maniza, whom I went to Delhi University with for my MA

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in 2017-19. In my quest to search for quotidian practices of care, I have often had to bring conversations around home and the different imaginations of what feels safe within the imagined space of the home. Not only has my scholarship been developed in collaboration with the participants, but they have also moulded the spaces and the language that I use to describe its different aspects.

Furthermore, on several occasions during the interviews, I have been referenced in a conversation about prisons, arrests, and detention experiences. My relationship with the participants is a consequence of a sustained engagement with the politics of the country and even more specifically the city of New Delhi which is also the capital of the country. I am choosing to focus on the ways in which the city has manifested itself as a bonding force between the researcher and the participants as well as the researcher and the subject of the research. One of the instances of the same can be observed with the case of B who, despite being a student at the same university was introduced to me when we were detained together during the 2019 riots. Their conversation with me for this project involved several references of the time that we were detained, harassed, and assaulted by the police. To imagine care under these circumstances is then has not simply been a radical act of resistance but also a way to keep the trauma of it in memory without being injured by it in the process of its recollection. For both B and me, the part of asking if it is okay to talk about the events of 2019-20 during the conversations for the thesis was not only out of care for each other but also due to anxieties around surveillance that to some degree have been internalized. This anxiety, I would argue is also a form of care for the way the exhaustion of having to potentially negotiate with the state surveillance system is mutually recognized. Thus, the positionality of the researcher themself has influenced the way participants have been chosen, the nature and intimacy of the conversations that have transpired, and the interpretative models that have been imagined for analysis.

Conclusion

Considerations of care (Clare 5) and safety have been a conscious effort at every juncture of this research. The interactions with the participants in the interviews were followed up through text messages and/or calls whenever. There were instances when the conversations caused them to be reminded of their traumas. In such circumstances, I have tried my best to support them by listening and offering access to mental health services in Delhi if they wished to avail of them. Care is then not just the subject of my research but also embedded in the way this entire process has been carried out. A lot of the subjects discussed in this dissertation have triggered me and continue to be difficult to discuss. However, having access to a safe space and a queer community around me has helped me significantly in taking care of myself through this process.

Chapter 4: Archiving Care; Carefully Archiving

In this chapter, I aim to produce an archive of care practices that queer folks in New Delhi undertake in their quotidian life. To that end, the chapter begins with a theoretical explanation of archiving and archival politics to navigate some important questions such as:

How do we read this archive within the context of the growing pervasiveness of political violence in Delhi?

Why is it necessary to archive practices of care, especially by queer people despite the existence of many archives in the country?

This is followed by a close analysis of three of the six interviews that I conducted, namely with Maniza (she/they), Jasleen (she/her), and Garima (she/her). Broadly, Maniza's account archives the relationship with the self within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, loss, and rising islamophobia within the city; Jasleen's narratives are historically grounded in the way she arrived in New Delhi; and Garima's are located at the intersections of disability and gender. The choice of these narratives is informed by the diverse archivable possibilities they open the space up to. The chapter concludes with a critical stance on archival possibilities within the context specified in this text and common themes that appear to have been generated from the interviews. These themes will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

Reading Archives

The postcolonial project of nation-building in newly independent states has historically necessitated the construction of neat categories and certain degrees of homogenization of the population to inculcate the sentiment of belonging. In the case of India, this project was particularly arduous owing to the fresh trauma of the Partition of 1947, as well as the multiple cultures, ethnicities, and religions that populated the geopolitical terrain of the new country. One of the newly formed government's strategies for unification was the introduction of historical narratives within public memory of a utopic state before the period of British

colonialism. State-sanctioned memory projects such as Indian Memory Project[14] and the State National Archives were specifically aimed at creating markers of belongingness with the state, sometimes even by inviting its citizens to contribute to it. The importance of the nation-state was upheld by assimilating all differences and co-opting those that seemed incommensurate with the 'national interest'.

The rise of homonationalist and pinkwashing tendencies can be traced back to this point of origin (Bég). In the last decade alone, India has seen a rapid decline in the democratic ideals on which it was built as can be observed in the V-Dem graph below:
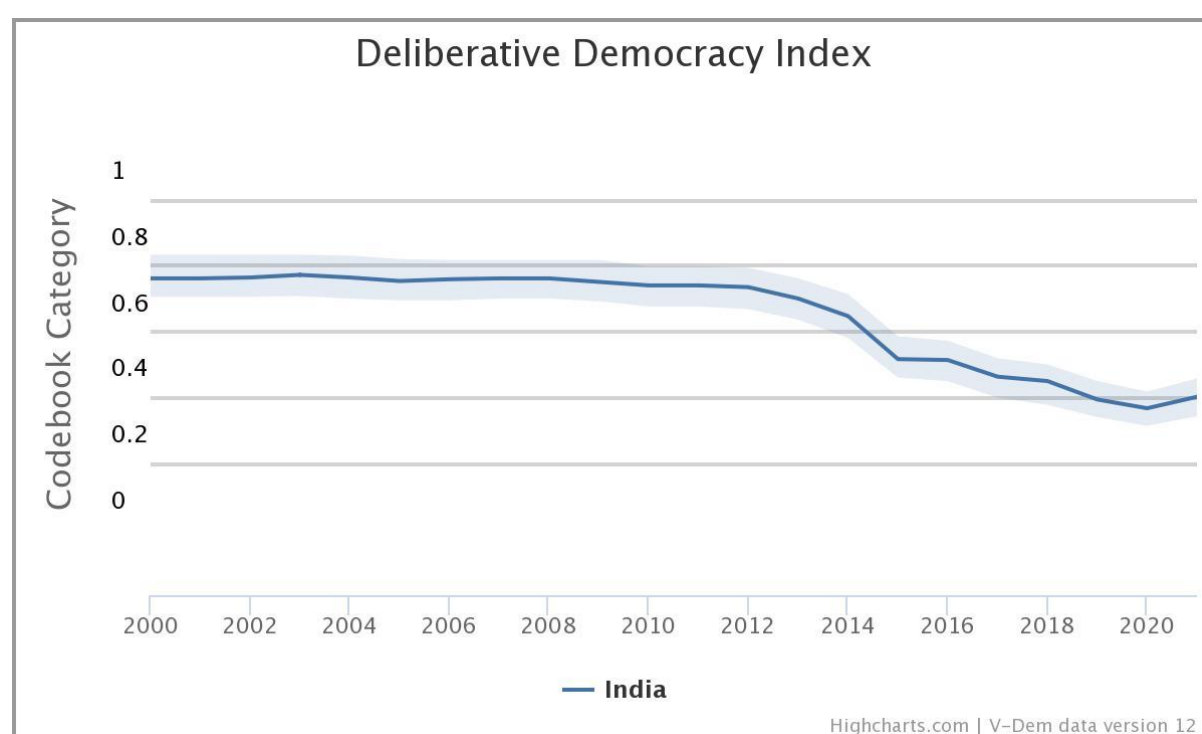

Figure 1: Gothenburg, University of. "Variable Graph." V-Dem, 2021, https://www.v-dem.net/data_analysis/VariableGraph/.

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[14] Company, T., 2022. *HOME - INDIAN MEMORY PROJECT - FAMILY PHOTOS & NARRATIVES*. [online] INDIAN MEMORY PROJECT. Available at: <https://www.indianmemoryproject.com> [Accessed 7 June 2022].

An increase in state-sanctioned violence has meant that participants in civil society have had to be creative in the ways that they criticize the state. It is in this light that this chapter stresses upon the ways in which the seeming simplicity of quotidian activities such as brewing tea and supporting friends with disabilities in their daily activities as ways that help us reimagine the emancipatory potential as a possibility beyond its grandiose stature.

Jasbir Puar's articulations are particularly important in this context. She argues that queerness as an assemblage moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and not queer subjects, and, instead of retaining queerness exclusively as dissenting, resistant, and alternative (all of which queerness importantly is and does), it underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations (Puar 122). Her way of using queerness as a temporal relay of affect and communication is important to unpack the decolonial imagination of queerness and in drawing its relationship with the state, especially in light of democratic backsliding and the swift movement towards autocracy. Using queerness as an assemblage is an attempt to shift a concept rooted in empiricism and intuitive epistemological categories to an *a priori* one. The larger function that this rethinking serves is that it paves the way for a larger demographic to be included within its definitional boundaries. Since the body of the South Asian diaspora is at the centre of Puar's thought, using queerness in the way she does serves two fundamental functions: first, she moves away from using queerness as a site of pain and its imagined purpose as what inspires any imagination of resistance towards the state; and second, it reconfigures the figure of the colonized subject as one with agentive potential as opposed to a unidimensional victim of their colonial history.

The Indian state's increased reliance on the prison industrial complex (Davis 34; Harsh Mander and Devaki Nambiar 362) to bring and maintain the illusion of order has serious

implications for queer theory and praxis. As sexual violence or at least the 'threat of sodomy[15]' becomes an ever-powerful tool used by the state in subjugating dissent, one has to interrogate what forms policing manifests in. Manalansan's study on the enforced disappearances of spaces for queers of colour, especially the account of the Puerto Rican man who "noted that there seemed to be more surveillance of the neighbourhood as evident from the increased presence of uniformed police around the public areas" (146), is a reminder that homonormativity is not just a product of neoliberalism; it also an autocratic tactic towards producing "ideologies of discreteness" (Manalansan 142). In India, this has been observed in the heightened cases of police brutality (Vidya Bhushan Rawat), arrests over petty disputes, and the continually horrifying treatment of the incarcerated[16] ('Political Imprisonment and Torture in India: Amnesty International Report').

The increased surveillance of sex work (Kotiswaran 576) and queer cultural production signals towards the writings of José Muñoz. Writing in the context of the USA, his idea of 'terrorist drag' locates desire and fetishization at the site of fear and discomfort felt by the consumers of queerness. Muñoz (82) places Davis' performances into a Gramscian discourse to argue that this kind of 'terrorist drag' foregrounds a *war of positions* wherein alternative intellectual resources are produced and sustained by cultural production. I argue that the sites of production of queer joy are essential to a queer ontological[17] imagination, as well as its role

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[15] The dominant discourse observed in social media relies heavily on the lexicon of rape and other threats of sexual atrocities onto the bodies of Muslim men and women, tribal women, and on people of lower castes.

[16] The references are only some examples of the stated arguments.

[17] Stoler (3) argues for the reimagination of ontology "as that which is about the ascribed being or essence of things, the categories of things that are thought to exist or can exist in any specific domain, and the specific attributes assigned to them." This definition of ontology helps in situating queer archives such

as a form of resistance. The archiving of these sites, especially during times of openly violent suppression by the state, becomes an important way to not only lay the groundwork for producing a legacy of queer resistance. Further, it can also help to create a sense of kinship among those who create and access it.

Why archive?

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida et al. (1) trace the etymology of the term 'archive' to its Greek origins to argue that "arkhé" refers to both a commandment as well as the point of a beginning. In that case, it follows that archives by their existence, inherently have a way of being assigned an order in specific locations (Derrida et al. 10). With the emergence of the printer and other archival technologies, we can observe a tangible shift in the way archives are imagined and located and thus "what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives" (Derrida et al. 18). In that light, I seek to construct an archive of care practices in this chapter and to situate this archive within the context of memories of quotidian activities of everyday life[18], influenced by the urban space within which the participants of this research live. In so doing, I hope to achieve two things in particular: first, to decentre fixed transcripts of resistance only as grandiose activities that take place in visible ways (for instance, mass protests and public demonstrations), especially within the context of regimes with a proclivity for violent suppression; and second, to locate care as a defining aspect of the queer-feminist negotiations with the state.

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as the one proposed here as an entity embodying emancipatory potential for the way it accords agentive potential to the actors.

[18] This thesis stresses upon the experiences of queer folks in their 'quotidian lives' (Steiner and Amabile 2)

Archiving becomes an important aspect of care specifically within this context, with the growing surveillance and censoring of formal archival institutions and methodologies. Making a case for archiving queer South Asian-American diaspora, (Gopinath 22) writes "because it is consistently under erasure from dominant historical narratives, the archive of a queer diaspora is one that is necessarily fractured and fragmented. I, therefore, employ a kind of scavenger methodology that finds evidence of queer diasporic lives and cultures, and the oppositional strategies they enact". Similarly, faced with the violence of the state which extends into the daily lives of those being archived, it follows that traditional forms of archiving in museums or elsewhere that could be supported by dominant powers would never be possible. I choose to archive practices of care precisely because archives made visible by the state or 'dominant, recognizable archives' (Gopinath 72) will not consider this aspect of queer negotiation with the state. Archives become both a roadmap as well as a historical account of the steps taken by people marginalized in different capacities within the same temporal framework and political climate. Archiving also serves the following functions:

- resistance to homogeneity: refuses to reduce persons into bodies fitting into a simple category. The nuances of each narrative that brings each person into the identity categories they identify with resist how bodies are co-opted into neatly defined categories. Boydston (560) argued that the formation of categories limits a historically varied process of *becoming* codified structures. It tends to universalize and dismiss phenomena that can be observed outside of these codified characteristics of the 'category'. This universalization is achieved by divorcing the categories from their spatiotemporal locations and situating them into a "critical utopia" (Boydston 560). The formation of categories of analysis is antithetical towards the articulation of an ethics of the discipline of history in the way it misrepresents the role of the historian and the historical process itself.

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- production of a queer genealogy: archiving processes of care is also a way of producing a queer ancestry. (Manalansan) establishes that queer archiving moves away from traditional sites of archiving and does not necessarily seek validation in the same way the former does. It does not rely on the same kind of infrastructure for its existence (this in turn allows for archives to exist in different sites) and neither does it speak to the same demographic. It also reframes the hauntology (Derrida and Kamuf 10) of the violence that is ever so present and consistently evolving in its execution by state and state actors. A queer genealogy foregrounds the need to re-evaluate how we know the things we know by virtue of its relationship with the idea of an 'origin'. An archive of care practices is then an invitation to reconsider how structural violence is remembered, stored in memory, and can be used as a potential site for the contestation of dominant narratives.

- Reconfiguring citizenship: I argue that one of the primary aims of decolonial thought and producing in essence, a form of the decolonial archive also invokes the need to not only critique manifestations of structural violence but also suggest alternate modes of negotiating political citizenship.

Archiving in Delhi

Benedicto (293) explains the cityscape as a space hiding difference amidst its many layers of movements and convergences – sometimes overtly, other times not – which becomes an apt description for New Delhi as well. The historical and geographical histories of the city amalgamate in ways that those who live there occupy the space but in varying capacities, seldom desiring to settle into it for their entire lives. New Delhi then becomes synonymous with a large number of complex forms of belonging: students from faraway places in the country, migrant workers hoping to acquire work opportunities, middle-class persons looking

for professional growth, lovers fleeing their towns for fear of persecution, queer folks leaving behind their hometowns and cities to live in ways they so desire, and people from caste and religious minorities arriving to seek political refuge, among others (TNN; Mohan et al. 6). As we can see from all the interviews in this chapter, navigation of the space of the city is an integral part of their imagination of care and survival. From imagining a metro ride as a form of meditative ritual (as we see in Maniza's case) to financially supporting a friend through their mental health crisis (as Jasleen and her friends do), we can see the various ways in which understanding care is intrinsically entrenched into understanding the perceptions around the city itself. The interventions of the space of the city are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

This chapter makes a conscious effort in both form and content to shed light over the voice of the participants over the analytic intervention of the researcher. To situate an archive of care practices that the participants embody in their quotidian lives, it becomes important to situate them as the fulcrum which determines the direction in which the archive moves. To that end, each of the sections begins with narrative accounts of the participants in focus and is followed by explanations of context and their analyses. The themes discussed in this chapter emerged as broad analytical frameworks which guide some of the fundamental values of the research endeavour itself and are not intended to isolate the participants into the categories Field. For instance, in choosing to uncover the relationship between queerness and disability through Garima's account, I do not intend to reduce her experience or personhood into the confines of these categories. Instead, I attempt to illustrate the complex relationships between these categories through the richness of her account.

Quotidian Rituals: Maniza's Account

> I am not very happy with the religious framework that has been passed down
> to me... I don't have a community of people like I had in college. Ever since
> COVID happened, I have just been a little lonely. I don't have a community of
> people like I would in a classroom, so I don't have other people's ideas
> shaping my own habits, my tastes and maybe some of my goals…

Maniza is one of the founding members of the Queer Muslim Project, an online forum for narratives told by and of people who identify as both queer and Muslim. They are responsible for carrying out interviews with the prospective narrators and then do the necessary edits to put them together and upload them. We begin speaking about practices of care, especially at a time when Muslims are being actively persecuted across the country. They choose to centre themselves as the subject of care for two reasons; out of the loneliness they feel due to the absence of a "community of people" (as they mention above) and due to the structured deprivation of care to folks residing at the intersections of Islam and queerness. Speaking of these practices, Maniza says:

> … things have been a little lonely, which is why I have been inventing my
> own rituals. I ritualize ordinary things. After getting COVID, I lost the ability
> to taste and smell... I just like doing things that reinvigorate my senses, things
> that remind me that at the end of the day I can still taste and smell things. I
> like ritualizing sensuality in some way. I like doing things that involve taste,
> colour, and sound.

The following is one of the practices they take part in:

I like the intricacies of rituals. I like brewing tea in a *gaiwan*[19] because it is not

a kettle, and it compels you to taste the tea. I have to brew it twice to enjoy

one teaspoon of tea. I like cooking now even though I did not like it before. I

like rolling pasta after a friend taught me how to. I like the process of creating

something from scratch.

They explain how they arrived at their practices by saying:

I like rituals. Sometimes I do this with a friend when we have had a long day.

Sometimes we just take the next thirty minutes to set up a circle; bring our

favourite objects, we bring symbols, or we talk about our day, and honour an

idea. I am borrowing from contemporary practices of witchcraft but we like

adding our own versions of things to it. We invent our own versions of

prayers.

Maniza (she/they) is a 25-year-old queer, Muslim, a nonbinary person living in New

Delhi. They began our interview by expressing their discontent with the accusations levied at

them by their peers and comrades that they were not physically present at demonstrations, and

of not "showing up" even when their community was being threatened. Maniza lives with their

old grandparents and is responsible for their care. They are also often misrecognized as

Kashmiri by the people they are surrounded by in protest spaces which puts them at an

increased tangible risk of being subjected to violence from both the people and police. Under

these circumstances, they can't risk the lives of their grandparents and themself just to perform

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[19] is a Chinese lidded bowl without a handle, used for the infusion of tea leaves and the

consumption of tea (Rubin and Gold)

solidarity by being present at mass protests and demonstrations. Thus, they choose to position themselves as the *subject* of care.

Loneliness has heavily shaped the queer, urban experience for Maniza in recent years. The Covid-19 pandemic and the anti-Muslim rhetoric in the public and state discourses have only served to accentuate this sentiment. Thus, centring the self as the subject of care can be interpreted as a powerful way of resisting the insidious violence of the state. Manalansan (105) argues that "part of the problem that besets the queer immigrant archive, from the perspective of traditional historiography, is the validity of ephemera, material objects that are not indigenous to a particular group". Maniza arrives in the process of ritualizing by assigning meaning to quotidian objects, as well because of her negotiation with the (in)sufficiency of the values imparted by their Islamic upbringing with their queerness. There is no traceable, tangible genealogy that can assign meaning to processes such as brewing tea in a gaiwan apart from the contextual description they perform it in.

Two possibilities emerge from this; first, it allows for other ways to "arrive" (Ahmed 142) into the rituals and practice them, paving the way for a transnational imagination of care itself; and second, it produces a queer genealogy of kinship through these processes. It also divorces the performance of political citizenship as one that relies on ableist ideals of "showing up" but one that views it as a persistent, quotidian process. In other words, it allows for the formation of a community beyond national borders and ethnic specificities and instead, on a shared imagination of queerness. I argue that Maniza's rituals redescribe the metrics of what constitutes care and formulate a version of utopia, not as a political reality that may exist in the future, but one that can potentially exist in queer silos within the same temporal plane.

Building Homes: Jasleen's Account

No matter हम कितने strong होते है एक time आता है जब भर जाता है अंदर से, आप कितना ही strong हो सकते है? जब ऐसा होता है, तब I have good friends (tr: No matter how strong we are, at some point in time we fill up too. At the end, how can one really be? I have really good friends for when that happens). I talk to them, we talk for hours for no reason, and we do not even talk about the problems but some random stuff and that helps a lot. I live in Chattarpur which is in South Delhi. When I shifted 3 years ago, I was the first trans person in the area. I told my friends that I would help them find a good place whenever they wanted to shift. Now, this street has four trans people, four gays, and we have acquired almost two buildings. Sometimes they come here, एक दूसरे के घर पे dinners plan होते रहते है, हफ़्ते में दो दिन बाहर जाना, सब्ज़ी लेने एक साथ जाना, ये अब हो पाता है। जहां भी आप है, अपने आस पास अपने जैसे लोगों का होना, एक community का बन जाना बहुत strength देता है। communities make us feel secure.

(Translation: Sometimes they come here, we have dinners at each other's homes, go out twice a week, go to get groceries together, these are all possibilities now. Regardless of where you are, it is important to be surrounded by people like you. The formation of a community gives you strength. Communities make us feel secure[20]).

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[20] Translation mine

Jasleen (she/her) was born in a remote village in Uttar Pradesh. Her parents separated when she was young. She grew up with her father in the village, but her mother brought her to Delhi when she turned 15, educated her and wanted her to become an IAS officer[21]. Her dream comes from working as the domestic help of an IAS officer. Jasleen says she has worked on explaining to her mother that success can look different for different people. She has since had to leave her home after coming out as trans. She currently works as an organizer of birthday parties for children and her work was the starting point of our conversation. The above excerpt from our conversation took place within the context of supporting her friend Vishal who has been unable to find work owing to his deteriorating mental health by buying groceries together. Various events such as helping her friends find homes in the same neighbourhood, and organizing dinners are all elements that have contributed to building her community, towards building a home for herself and those around her.

Jasleen's arrival into Chattarpur, now considered a residential area for the upper-middle class gentry of the city, along with helping her queer friends to settle into the same neighbourhood, can be read as a reorientation of the queer body with regard to its classed and caste-d construction. Of note is the usage of the hybrid language in the interview: a combination of English and Hindi interspersed with Punjabi words that are now a common part of the Hindi lexicon. This is a pattern frequently observed in most of the working-class, migrant

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[21] Indian Administrative Services are a lucrative and popular career option for a lot of folks. Jasleen's mother, like a lot of parents in India believes that the stability of a government job at a high post such as this will be their deliverance from a life of poverty and assure them of some degree of respect in society.

demographic of the city[22]. She code-switches in moments that she wants to particularly imprint upon me. For instance, when trying to convince me that care for her is something that exists in the way she navigates the world daily and stresses doing the same for me, she says "जिसके पास होता है वो उसकी कदर नहीं करता "(those who have it do not value it) referring to how I do not take care of the femininity that I was gifted by God. I do not stress upon my own gender and sexual identity to her at this moment but note the change in intonation and the switch to Hindi amidst an English sentence in hers. It remains unclear, if not impossible to determine if she switches from Hindi to English knowing that she is speaking with someone who is studying in Europe and is fluent in English. English at the end of the day signals class and gives an impression of being educated and 'smart'. I actively acknowledge the potential scope for bias to leave room to question the motivation to use phrases such as "the future is queer" despite feeling like she can curate a language around her feelings. I thus argue that language archives her history of negotiation with the city and determines the ways in which care is linguistically expressed and consequently archived through it. Furthermore, indexing phrases like "the future is queer" to imagine the utopic conditions of her survival. In Jasleen's ideal queer future, she would earn a sum of money that ensures that nobody in her family or community goes to bed on an empty stomach or wondering about the possibility of their next meal. The subsequent chapter delves into this to further analyze this imagination of utopia within a pervasively violent context.

When asked about the ways in which she builds and sustains the relationship between her friends, she mentions dinner parties that they organize. She explains that they all meet at

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[22] This is primarily from my observation as someone who has lived there for 25 years. Analysing code-switching patterns becomes interesting, particularly when we read the terms used to refer to queerness

one of their apartments and cook together. Not only does this help save costs for food but also becomes a space wherein they catch up with the events in each other's lives. If the dinner parties are the site to produce an "archive of feelings", then Jasleen and her friends invest actively in the production of joy by means of creating a space wherein they share details of their quotidian lives, sorrows in it, problems in it, and how they navigate them. On being asked to explain the atmosphere at one of their typical dinner parties, she says:

> When we meet, we are never quiet. इसका-उसका, किसिके life में क्या चल रहा है, किसिका job कैसा चल रहा है, मेरे event में क्या हुआ, कल internet पे किसिने क्या देखा या post किया, सब बातें होती है। sometimes we dance, sometimes we cook; वो बहुत fun-filled होता है, बहुत releasing होता है।
>
> (Translation: What is going on in each other's lives, how our jobs are going, how my event went, what posts were made on the internet, all these are topics of conversation. Sometimes we dance, sometimes we cook, it is a very fun-filled experience, very cathartic[23]).

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was passed in 2019 and seeks to identify, recognize, and certify transgendered persons as defined by the state. While we can observe some new and welcome changes such as the treatment of transgender children and the responsibilities of their parents, many elements are deeply concerning and have been repeatedly brought to the notice of government officials by the transgender community themselves. One such instance is the punishment for sexual violence committed on transgender persons, which is stated to be 6 months to 1 year as opposed to 7 years to life imprisonment for the same

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[23] Translation mine

committed on women.[24] The bill also imagines the category of transgender as one that is rooted in biology and accords the promises it makes only people who have undergone hormone replacement therapy and sex reassignment surgery. In a country whose economy has deteriorated significantly over the past decade and where transphobia is rampant and violence against transgender persons is commonplace (Banu), this is a reductive and regressive approach towards any hope for meaningful integration into the state.

I argue that Jasleen and her friends' shared queer identity facilitates the re-orientation towards the space of the city and the state which continues to perpetuate its violent agenda on them. In so doing, they do two things: first, they reconfigure the strict transcripts in which resistance is interpreted; and second, they create a community that sustains and nourishes each other through a pervasive period of political crisis. The transcripts quoted from above refer to the specific ways in which imaginations of resistance travel through public discourse. The phrase "showing up" was a recurring theme in all the interviews, wherein the participants were made to feel shame or guilt for not being able to present themselves physically at protests and demonstrations against the state.

Disability and Queerness: Garima's Account

Garima uses she/her pronouns and identifies as an agender person. The conversation with her was an active illustration of the roles of communities which come together on a quotidian basis. The following excerpt from her interview guides the rest of this section of the chapter:

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[24] "The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019." *People's Archive of Rural India*, ruralindiaonline.org/en/library/resource/the-transgender-persons-protection-of-rights-act-2019/.

I went to a workshop called 'Beyond the Binary: A Trans-Feminist Perspective'. You know, the environment there was so different; it was mostly all queer people, and they were all backing each other up, it was so affirming. You know, I am also a mentally disabled person and I do not have depth perception along with some physical issues. There were some stairs and it was the mountains so there were not enough lights around when it got dark. I only had to tell them once that I do not have depth perception and from there, onwards everyone would ask me "Garima, are you fine? Do you need any help?" just as if we had this unsaid agreement between us that everyone would look out for everyone. Just that alone made me feel like there was a small community where we were all going to look after each other and it was so so so nice.

Garima's narrative intervenes in the imagination of the archivable subject. The care shown by those she was surrounded with is in no way to be imagined as a substitute for state support for people with disabilities (as I argue vehemently in Chapter 6) but instead, I offer the argument that one of the roles of this form of care is to allow the possibility of organic incorporation of divergence within the discursive spaces (that are otherwise inaccessible for those with disabilities) instead of making them passive subjects on whom the discursive burden is placed post-facto.

Additionally, in imagining the queer, disabled body as a failure (Halberstam 88) in the way it refuses to "acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique, it brings with it the recognition that "alternatives are embedded already in the dominant", and that "power is never total or consistent; indeed failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities." It is in the light of these sentiments that I inquire about the need for archiving these forms of 'failures' and stress its necessity. Locating the queer

archive at a site of pathology was foregrounded in the works of Manalansan (99) who argued that "the movement from pathology to normality, from impossibility to tenability, from mess to order can also be portrayed in terms of the teleological routes of value." Thus, within the realm of the proposed archive of practices of care, Garima's presence at the conference allows us to expand upon the possibilities of consignation (Derrida et al. 10). I argue that the power of consignation (Derrida et al. 9) that unites this archive into a "single corpus of ideal configuration" (Derrida et al. 10) is comprised of at least a cursory imagination of disability and the necessity for alternate sites of queer archives.

All of this begs me to ask why this exercise is necessary, to begin with. To locate the queer and disabled body as a failure acknowledges the need for a re-evaluation of where care lies as a constitutive element of political participation (and in turn political resistance), especially in a political environment where the threat of carcerality is pervasive. The following excerpt from the conversation with Garima contextualizes her position at the time:

> Whenever this sort of thing happens, my mental health goes down the drain. I was with my parents at the time, and they would not allow me to go out late at night…but at some point, we have to act out on the field what we have only been studying in classrooms…so I started doing what I could. I wanted to go to Shaheen Bagh and also to Jamia to support them however I could, but you know, there is a lot to navigate before I can even consider going. I was still struggling with my gender identity and trying to understand my neurodivergence at the time which was filling me up with imposter syndrome. It was really heavy and there was no mental health support.

When asked about the different ways in which she felt she could support the protests that were happening across the country, she says:

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So, from the time I realized I could not physically go to the protests, I decided to take up the online parts of this work while you were on the ground. I put up stories, became the person who was always available on calls to relay information and help all of you coordinate, do fact checks on the information that was coming in, offer emotional support when anyone needed it, connect people with lawyers when they were detained/ arrested, and making sure you all had access to food and a place to sleep[25], it was so cold outside at night then. That is the kind of work I can do, and I think that is important.

Conclusion: Archival Futures

One of the primary merits of the proposed archive lies in the way it can mould and remould itself with changes in the kind of violence meted out by the political regime. In this case, an archive of care practices does not create a hierarchy of the activities but proposes their necessity in the context they were performed in. Changing forms of political violence such as increased cyber surveillance on some members and sudden police visits to the homes of people who have been involved in resistance work or even rehabilitation efforts in the aftermath of the pogroms[26] has meant that care must mould itself to suit their needs and ensure support to them.

One of the most repetitive themes from the interviews elucidated upon above as well as the rest stress on the problems associated with the idea of "showing up". As the riots of 2019

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[25] Garima is referring to the 24/7 protest sites that were led by women in different parts of the city. This took place in the peak of winter in Delhi in December 2019- January 2020. Protestors would sleep at the protest sites and eventually some started falling sick. There were deaths reported due to the cold as well (Express News Service)

[26] I cite this from memory and the experiences of those I have worked with.

reach a three-year mark, questions such as आप उस समय कहाँ थे (where were you at that time?) are thrown around in accusatory ways, simultaneously marking political ambitions and their participation of the absentees in specific ways.

The nationwide protests which resisted the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 2019, pride parades, and demonstrations against the anti-Muslim pogroms in New Delhi in 2019 were instances where "showing up" was deemed necessary in order to be considered politically active citizens. Not only does "showing up" in these circumstances carry different implications for each of the participants, but it also reiterates the carceral logic in liberal circuits wherein citizens police each other constantly, thus inadvertently encouraging the performance of active political participation. The politics of "showing up" and its implications are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Arriving into Categories; *Orienting* the City and the Self

Introduction

This chapter traces the different ways in which the participants arrive into the city of New Delhi to establish the ways in which their relationship with it is formed. This is in response to the observation of the repeated use of the phrase 'showing up' by almost all the participants of the study. Consequently, I invoke Ahmed (13)'s notion of arrivals to contextualize and situate the positionality of the participants and subsequently illustrate the relationship between the participants and the city as an ongoing process of orientation and disorientation (Ahmed 2) using parts of the interviews conducted.

Ahmed (2) argues that phenomenology "emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds". Furthermore, in thinking of showing up as an act inspired by the phenomenological impact of these arrivals, we recognize the disruption that is caused by the presence of the queer body in the urban space and provide a way of imagining "how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance" (Ahmed 3).

Subsequently, I elaborate upon the theoretical structure of New Delhi in order to explain the transient nature of the cityscape itself. I theoretically posit New Delhi as a 'transit space' to explain the complex forms of belonging that are generated by its existence and the presence of different individuals in it. 'Transit space' is conceptually built upon the notion of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 72) as well as Certeau et al. (94)'s ideas on operationalizing the cityscape. In so doing, I argue that the city essentially is a transient entity, continuously engaged in a state of moving. The event of arrival of the individuals in this space causes different forms of disorientation, momentarily destabilizing both the space and the individual. I claim that it is in this moment of instability that the tenets of the relationship are laid down

and differing forms of belonging are generated. What then becomes the subject of enquiry are the theoretical imaginations of social movements and political participation that cause friction with the ways in which the participants do the same. Thus, I delve into a discussion of the untenability of demands made by popular imaginations of political engagements to unpack the complex history of the legitimate and legitimised forms of political resistance, especially in the context of pervasive state surveillance and a robust carceral system. It lays bare the underpinnings of caste, class, disabilities, and regional politics that inform the urban landscape as well as the imagination of the valours of a social movement. Finally, the chapter establishes the need for expanding the present boundaries of what constitutes political participation and the role of queer practices of care in order to arrive at it. In situating Delhi as a transit space, we also recognize the dual location of the city. Delhi (and potentially by extension, India) was a postcolony of the British empire as well as a neocolonial (Loomba 7) city which actively uses colonial tactics and is the political epicentre for colonising other parts of the subcontinent[27]. This becomes necessary to refute what is considered the 'global south' as a homogenous entity (Waisbich et al. 2089). The decolonial impulse (Waisbich et al. 2089) to recognize multiple souths forms an important aspect of the political aspiration of not only this chapter but also the entire endeavour of this thesis itself. Additionally, in imagining care as a form of political participation, especially in politically violent environments, it becomes important to perceive the different ways in which the participants are impacted by their arrivals, the choices they make, and the frictions that are produced because of said arrivals.

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[27] India has colonized Kashmir since 2019 with the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and continues to lay active claim on parts of the northeastern tribes (through military imposition) who have historically claimed autonomy from the State.

Tracing arrivals

In Queer Phenomenology, Ahmed (159) argues that the process of arrival of a body determines the ways in which affective proximities are drawn. The experiences of three of the participants are exceptionally pertinent to further illustrate the importance of tracing arrivals. The Case of S

First, I invoke the example of S:

S left her home at the age of 13 to come to New Delhi in an attempt to escape her abusive household. She is presently completing her Bachelor's degree in English literature and also working in order to make ends meet. Her parents offer no financial support, and she lives with her partner. During our conversation, she stresses quotidian issues that she faces in her life such as landlords harassing her for being a single woman looking for households. She has been repeatedly asked invasive questions by them such as "do you have boys over?" or "do you go for a lot of late night outs?". S's choices of housing are limited to areas which are not only affordable for her but also ones that are close to the university. For context, Delhi's transport system charges passengers based on the distance travelled. Under such circumstances of persistent financial duress, she argues that it seems prudent to hide her queerness[28] in every way possible.

I refrain from attributing any quality of bravery and heroism to S's leaving her family's home simply because she refuses to do so herself. Additionally, it also valorizes the struggles she faces in her life in Delhi. Her arrival into Delhi, while a respite from her abusive household has also been fraught with anxieties and concerns that orient her in specific ways vis-à-vis the city and consequently, modes of political participation. Thus, the mixed orientation (Ahmed

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[28] S actively acknowledges that she can pass at a cis-heterosexual woman in most spaces she has to navigate in her everyday life.

154) emerging from the moment of S leaving her parents' home and subsequent negotiations with Delhi to settle into it produce S as a queer subject in the city. S's queerness is then not only sequestered within definitional boundaries requiring continuous performance but as an interactive identity which is always in a state of flux.

The Case of Jasleen

Jasleen left her village in Uttar Pradesh to be with her mother in Delhi. Her parents separated when she was young, and she grew up in her father's home. Coming into Delhi was also a way for her to be openly trans and engage in cruising and other activities she believes she could not have done in the village. She draws a clear demarcation between her life in the village and Delhi, especially in the ways the fast-paced nature of movement in the city has enabled her to exist in a way that makes her content. According to her, she is treated very well by most of her clients, and they have made an active effort to not misgender her and "accept her" (in her words) when she came out. She had been part of trans and sex-work communities before the decriminalization of Article 377 (Legislative Department of India); organizing protests and discussing ways of keeping each other safe in dealing with clients and police. At present, she refuses to actively be part of the queer protests for the way they are shaping in terms of their demands and demographic. She says that she has done her part in terms of public participation, and she chooses to focus on her friends and close community members whose well-being she is thoroughly invested in ensuring.

Jasleen's arrival into Delhi substantiates the delineation of the city as a space that produces the queer subject and one which plays an important role in shaping the ways in which they participate in its political life. Her experience is particularly pertinent to elucidate upon the need and the necessary persistence to imagine queer futurity regardless of the violence in the present. In the framework provided by Ahmed (155), affective productions during the interactions with a space orient our relation to the dominant experience. In this case, the way

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Jasleen arrived in the city as well as her history of said arrival not only colours the way she engages with it but also produces a sense of resilience against the dominant heteronormative violence of her environment. The way Jasleen has curated her choices, supported her friends through their journeys as they establish themselves in the city, and now imagines her role as someone who can spearhead towards their vision of utopia can be interpreted as a form of "regathering" (Ahmed 156) around queerness. I argue that care in these circumstances becomes a political orientation, guiding the paths chosen by those who inhabit the peripheries while the footprints they leave in the process become signposts for anyone who may need it in the future.

Maniza's Case

> So, when the riots were on (in December 2019), I remember that I got messages from 3 or 4 people asking me why they had not seen me at the protests. I could not understand where that question was coming from or rather in what spirit it was. It seemed almost judgmental as if to say "hmm, we don't see you at the protests". It felt unfair to me to have to explain that the line of control was in my neighbourhood, I live with my grandparents who are not very happy with the idea of me leaving the house while this is going on, and it is different when someone like me goes to a space like that. I mean, I have been mistaken for Kashmiri often, especially in that area and it is different for someone like me who does not appear visibly Muslim whatever that means. I still remember how it made me feel like I was put on the spot. I thought of what it actually means for me to be there, for me to actually convince my grandparents that I would be safe even though we heard gunshots because we lived that close to Jamia. I was thinking about how performative some forms of activism can be. Self-preservation seemed necessary for survival, it did not mean that we were lazy or just wanted to be at home.

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Maniza's recounting of the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Register of Citizens, and the attack on students at Jamia Millia Islamia University which began in December of 2019 allows a foray into the nature of social movements as well as the impact of violent regimes on historical urban designs. Gayer and Jaffrelot (214) in their meticulously detailed study of Muslims in India argued that in the case of the Muslim demographic in Delhi, the "social and political diversity is the result of successive waves of Muslim settlement in the neighbourhood. The first batch of residents, who settled in the early 1980s, was primarily composed of the teaching staff and students of the adjacent Jamia Millia Islamia. They were followed by merchants and retailers escaping the congested Old City, by migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and later on by cadres and activists of the JI-H in the early 1990s, after the organisation moved its headquarters in the neighbourhood." This becomes important when we note that this was the first neighbourhood to become the 'line of control'[29] (as Maniza coins it), the university to be subjected to attacks in what would later be recognized as an orchestrated series of attacks on universities by either the police or by supporters of the ruling party supported by the police. I offer these observations from memory and cannot offer citational evidence since any coverage or open discussions on the subject were curtailed by the state at the time. Under the circumstances painted here, situating the self as the subject of care seems to be the logical choice for someone who has arrived in the city the way Maniza has. Not only does the neighbourhood they live in pose a tangible threat to them but

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[29] Shaheen Bagh was the first 24/7 protest site in Delhi created by the women of the neighbourhood to openly resist the NRC and CAA after the laws were passed in December 2019. It is in the same neighbourhood as JMI and close to Jamia Nagar. The area came to be heavily surveilled by the police at all times and was later subjected to arson attacks from the supporters of the ruling party.

their misidentification as a Kashmiri[30] especially after the abrogation of Article 370 makes them vulnerable within the already vulnerable demographic of Muslim protestors. However, this does not preclude their peers from judging their mode of political participation. I argue that some elements of social movements are embedded in the public psychic imaginary which influences the dynamics between the actors of the movement. In demanding that Maniza show up to the protests (despite being a tangible risk to their life), there is a distinct refusal to sit with their friend's dilemma. This refusal thrives in policing each other, in asking आप उस दिन क्यूँ नही आए? (why were you not there that day?), and finally in losing sight of the bodies that are more precarious than theirs. It is considering this kind of refusal, one that almost all the participants reported albeit in different contexts that I propose the importance of care. In imagining care as a constitutive component of political resistance (the parameters of which I elucidate upon in Chapter 6), Maniza can be spared the hurt of feeling judged by their peers when the hurt of being in a dangerous position was already throwing its weight onto their life. Furthermore, such a model would actively engage with their identity as a queer-Muslim person who is also the primary subject of attack in this context.

Chapter 6 follows up on the implications of situating the self as the subject of care within the context of pervasive political violence.

Showing up

The question of showing up becomes important in the way the participants have been engaging with the political developments of the city. As illustrated in the previous chapter the

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[30] The perils of appearing Kashmiri are discussed in Chapter 3. At the time, the abrogation of Article 370 was still in public memory and it elicited different responses

phrase "showing up" was a recurring theme in the majority of the interviews. All the participants used the phrase in different ways while explaining their relationship with the city of Delhi. Analyzing the context and implications of this phrase within the larger context of social movements against oppressive regimes begs the evaluation of Delhi as an urban space and the histories of arrivals that have brought about these complex forms of belonging. In the subsequent sections, I situate Delhi as a 'transit space' wherein the participants arrive and subsequently its role in the kinds of acts that constitute care.

Decolonizing the 'Subaltern'

I argue that the description of the subaltern (Spivak 2010) begs to be redefined at least in the context of the present political environment in India. The rising nationalist sentiments continue to be fuelled through many different systemic ways targeting caste and religious minorities[31] and manifesting in the form of both macro and microaggressions towards them in what can be safely argued is a scathing indictment of the failure to recognize the historical processes contributing to it. Thus, the decolonial impulse to throw the limelight on literature(s) from the global south begs further nuance. This is also to acknowledge the inclination to homogenize what has been categorized as the global south (Waisbich et al. 7) and resist it to highlight the nuances within it that compromise the explanatory potential of particular analytic strategies and their political effect in the context of the hegemony of Western scholarship (Mohanty 336). The ways in which the bourgeois elite in postcolonial countries have misused the field of subaltern studies to further their agendas have been long critiqued by several scholars. Singh (97) critiqued the elite revisionist histories that scholars of Subaltern Studies have used in the way it "takes the dominant ideology, the religious principle legitimizing the

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[31] Several homes belonging to Muslims in Delhi and other parts of the country were demolished overnight using bulldozers and the inhabitants were not given less shoddy legal notices (NL). This is only one of the events in a continuing series of Islamophobic attacks by dominant groups across regions.

caste system, at its face value, and then adds to this its own populist notion of an empowering subaltern consciousness, all of which is decoupled from the social conditions of existence." The interplay of caste, class, religion and social manifestations of gender based on local cultures are not only subsumed within the register of the Global North but also reduce the nuances of the political context into one that can be legitimized by the dominant discursive models. Lau (572) calls the "curious case in which the positionality of the powerful is simultaneously that of the insider and outsider, where the representing power can be simultaneously self and other" as re-orientalism. She refers to South Asian writers who continue to "Orientalize the Orient" Field (Lau 573) to be legible to the Global North. As illustrated in the section above, the city of Delhi itself is comprised of a diverse demographic whom all have complex ways of arriving into the city. In such a context, the reduction of their narratives as 'voices from the global south' reduces them into almost unintelligible within their surroundings. I offer the argument that the scope of Subaltern Studies in its present form sketches an incomplete picture of the Global South while simultaneously producing the Global South as a category to benefit from it in the Global North. This is not an innocent by-product of the scholarship but a critical point that requires intervention in light of the active erasure and transformation into what Mukherjee (73) argued was "the category of writers called 'The Third World Cosmopolitans,' who are globally visible, who are taught in postcolonial classrooms the world over, and who are hailed in the review pages of Western journals as interpreters and authentic voices of the non-Western world [who] hardly ever include a writer from India who does not write in English." Although Mukherjee's warnings are in reference to South Asian literary production, the same can be argued for scholarly production.

Why is the reproduction of the Global South as a category harmful especially when it follows the tenets of Subaltern Studies? What impact does it have on a research endeavour such as this?

In the subsequent section, I argue for Delhi to be situated as a transit space. It is assigned a dual location: one which was previously subjected to British colonization and navigates its impact to this day and another, a city which is at the political epicentre of colonial endeavours being undertaken by the Indian government such as the abrogation of Article 370 to colonize Kashmir, commit military atrocities in Kashmir (Visweswaran 158) and north-eastern parts of the country (I Watitula Longkumer 5), among other brutalities. Without the call to shift from the categories produced by Subaltern Studies, it becomes difficult to position the city in a way that compels us to recognize this complex duality.

Finally, García-Del Moral (9) stresses the need to "examine how past and current colonial relations shape the kinds of political, discursive, and legal opportunity structures available to Indigenous and non-Indigenous social movement actors, taking a multi-scalar approach. How the formation of the collective identity of "human rights defender" is imbricated in these processes can also be a future avenue for research". Moral discusses this in the context of the indigenous women's movement in the Americas but the language of demands that were made by those who were protesting against the NRC and CAA were often misconstrued within the paradigm of anti-nationalism and hate speech (Amarasingam et al. 382). The colonial impulse to assign sedition[32] (the rampant use of UAPA is a prime example of its manifestation). Additionally, since the register that has been used caters predominantly to that of the upper caste, educated elite, the imperative to shift from identifying as a member of the Global South also corresponds with the need, to be honest about the specific cultural contexts that have shaped the political environment.

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[32] Laws around sedition in India began during the British colonial era.

Delhi as a 'Transit Space'

What purpose does situating New Delhi as a transit space serve apart from contextualizing the responses received from the participants?

Theoretically, I situate Delhi as a transit space. I primarily posit the space of the city as a temporal assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 72) which exists in different configurations for different participants and inhabitants. In so doing, it registers the complex system of the city contrary to the articulation of Certeau et al. (94) who argued that the cityscape "provides a way of conceiving and constructing space on the basis of a finite number of stable, isolatable. and interconnected properties".

Further, borrowing from Certeau et al.'s (18) characterization of the cityscape and the position of its inhabitants as one that is "instituted by others, characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations", I argue that the permutations in which the participants exist are varied and impossible to configure into a fixed pattern by virtue of the unpredictability of its parts.

An instance from the interview with S explains this further. Although we have spoken at length about her leaving her home (both within the purview of the interview and beyond), she refuses to dwell on it for too long during our conversations for this thesis, so I do not stress on it. Sometimes she admits to wanting to go back to her home just so she could watch her younger brother grow up. However, according to her, being part of the Queer Collective at her university has proven to be extremely helpful to build and sustain a sense of community and family. That does not imply that she is uncritical of the work that they do but, in her words, "it is precisely the dysfunction of QC that makes me so happy". According to her, Delhi is a great city to do everything in but call home most of the time.

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In terms of urban design, it is worth noting the warnings heeded by Susewind (12) that "Delhi's segregation indices are among the strongest of all 11 cities: D(M) ¼ 0.47 for the built-up area (which extends into neighbouring states) and D(M) ¼ 0.50 for Delhi itself. In other words, to achieve a religiously even spatial pattern in Delhi, either half of the capital's Muslim or half of its non-Muslim citizens would need to relocate to another neighbourhood." However, people who have settled in Delhi have historically chosen to segregate themselves according to religion (Gayer and Jaffrelot 160). This is important since these arrangements are the first to be targeted during Islamophobic attacks and the first neighbourhood from where policing by the state begins.

Conclusion

As can be observed from the examples stated above, the process of arrival is always in flux. In a transit space such as Delhi, the process of arrival is never complete. The different forms of negotiations between the dominant orientations of the city and the self mean that the inhabitants are always engaged in some degree of disorientation (Ahmed 158) and thus, the bodies will always be queer-ed and laden with the possibility of disrupting the comfort of the dominant orientations. However, this also comes at a price for the participants. Speaking about the effects of this disorientation, (Ahmed 158) argued that:

> Bodies that experience disorientation can be defensive, as they reach out for support or as they search for a place to reground and reorientate their relation to the world. So, too, the forms of politics that proceed from disorientation can be conservative, de pending on the "aims" of their gestures, depending on how they seek to (re)ground themselves.

While the reoriented body marks the possibility of hope and new directions, I argue that care becomes central in sustaining them through this constantly disorienting process. The

participants of this research illustrate this through the quotidian nature of the care they embody and perform. For instance, B offering their home as the streets became increasingly hostile and it became impossible to go back to the university hostels sustained the displaced students who would later stage multiple protests and later go on to play important roles in the larger movement against state violence and the laws.

This chapter also argued that the category of Global South that has been produced by the scholars of Subaltern Studies is insufficient for Delhi and even India for the way it hides the colonial tendencies within the category. Additionally, it does not account for caste and its relationship with class, religion, and gender which in turn occludes a complete contextualized picture of practices of care archived in this research.

Chapter 6: Careful Futures: Curating Care and Imagining Resistance

This chapter acts as a cautionary tale against the romanticising of care and people who perform these acts of care, particularly within the present context of rising neoliberalism and capitalist global order. It begins with a careful analysis of the role care has come to occupy in different parts of the world with the rise of the neoliberal state (Harvey 16). I argue that it is only through a historically grounded analysis of patterns of political suppression/ violence(s) can we arrive at the urgency of centring care as a way of sustaining political resistance and the actors who do so. This is not to only serve as a mode of political resistance across state borders but also the need to produce spaces and collectives that exchange knowledge(s) not only during times of crises. Furthermore, they also co-exist on shared principles/ political ideals and actively engage with the global rise in fundamentalist violence. A tracing of historical exploitations on black and indigenous communities around the world unpacks the potentially exploitative pitfalls of both care and people who do the labour of caring (henceforth referred to as carers). Following the histories of mammification (Griffin 38), exploitations of Native American tribes (Lear) and Indian tribal communities (Sigamany), I create a historical trajectory of political contexts that care has been used to exploit and marginalize communities. In light of the neoliberal market of the present, it becomes imperative to curate care in a way that does not reproduce these fault lines. Thus, I invoke ideas of care as have been articulated by Black, queer-feminist, and indigenous scholars such as Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and bell hooks among others to imagine care as a necessary political force as well as a nurturing form of labour that does not abuse those who perform it. This chapter reiterates the importance of care as not only a form of political participation but also the role of care as a queer-feminist intervention in political resistance.

Situating Care

Neoliberal values (Harvey 16) have radically shaped the relationship between the self and society. Harvey (3) argued that neoliberal logic, "holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market." Thus, terms like self-care, hope, and revolution can be reworked to serve capitalist interests. This has in turn produced an economy of affects surrounding care itself. Under such circumstances, tracing the history of the current imagination of care allows us to analyze the response of the participants and subsequently situate them in a different analytical framework.

Premilla Nadasen argues that the care economy was built in accordance with the rise of the capitalist market. She further establishes that the kind of fetishization of care work that we can observe particularly within the healthcare sector (one of the sectors that require a lot of paid care work) at present compels us to shift the conversation from worker's rights to an abstract idea of 'value' associated with the work. In the explanatory framework provided by Harvey (7), this is in perfect alignment with the values espoused by neoliberal capitalism where the individual is assigned an unreasonable moral responsibility and is expected to substitute them for any structural accountability.

Care occupies a difficult position within the global neoliberal market. When ideas such as freedom and liberty become akin to the interests of property owners and businesses, multinational corporations, and the financial capital (Harvey 6), it becomes increasingly simple to assign it a form of radicality in the way it is expected to bypass any demands of accountability from the state. Within the Indian context, post Independence in 1947, "a badly impoverished India chose to strongly support state economic policies. Concentrating on building an industrial base, these policies did not comprehensively address the deep poverty of the majority of Indians" (Sigamany 377). This is reflected in the interviews I carried out as

well. For instance, in arguing that Jasleen and her friends have not only produced a community for themselves, but their quotidian practices of care sustain the sense of a community, it becomes imperative to stress that care itself is not a way of negotiating with the state but a mode of survival that emerged in the absence of structural support from it. As we can see from the various instances of Jasleen's life in Chapter 4, care is the factor guiding her relationships with her friends, supporting her friend Vishal as he struggles with mental health in a state which does not support him in any way through it, and produces spaces of joy such as the dinner parties. Care is then not a substitute for affordable food and housing, social welfare and security, and sustainable livelihoods but a mechanism to perform this labour and mould it according to the requirements for their survival in the context they found themselves in.

Caring Critically

Imagining care demands a critical evaluation of the affective components associated with it, especially when positioned within the dominant neoliberal economy. An observation made throughout the interview process with the participants of this research was that the trans women were always expected to support their peers and eventually became parent-like figures with specific qualities as and when they performed any act of care. This leads to a rethinking of how love and care configure the body of those who habitually embody them. Should love (as framed within the neoliberal economy), morality, and a manufactured sense of responsibility be articulated as the guiding affects of care, several problems arise from it:

Firstly, the emotional labour associated with performing care is masked as a necessary but unaccounted form of labour. For instance, in offering their home during the pogroms in

2019, B's intensive emotional turmoil[33] would not only go unaccounted for in this framework of care but it would be considered inconsequential in the caregiving process itself. This seemingly sacrificial model of care wherein B's home is a refuge for their peers but not for their emotional toll begets a politics of performance of care itself. This seemingly sacrificial model of care wherein B's home is a refuge for their peers but not for their emotional toll begets a politics of performance of care itself.

Secondly, imagining care as an innocent activity within the neoliberal context configures the image of the carer. I stress the need to trace the racial and colonial histories which contribute to our interpretation of care, care work, and the person who performs the labour of care to become important components in this discussion. India is then no exception to these internalised racist and transphobic imaginaries of gender roles. A critical re-evaluation of the ways in which my participants engage with the pervasive state violence is also a negotiation of their sexual selves and expression. The trope of the 'sacrificial carer', (as I will illustrate below) as can now be observed in the current neoliberal economy in the stereotypical image of the mammy in the United States of America. The mammy is a racial caricature of African American women that emerged as a consequence of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and in the antebellum plantations. hooks and West (340) explained the figure and characterisation of the mammy as:

> "significantly the proverbial "mammy" cares for all the needs of others,
> particularly the most powerful. Her work is characterized by selfless service.
> Despite the fact that most households in the United States do not have Black

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[33] During the pogroms in Delhi in December 2019, B was one of the first people to start coordinating housing for students of the universities that were subjected to attacks by the police. Their coordination was then supported by their peers and other members who followed up and branched out in other directions like legal and medical support.

maids or nannies working in them, racist and sexist assumptions that Black

women are somehow "innately" more capable of caring for others continues to

permeate cultural thinking about Black female roles. As a consequence, Black

women in all walks of life, from corporate professionals and university

professors to service workers, complain that colleagues, co-workers,

supervisors, etc. ask them to assume multi-purpose caretaker roles, be their

guidance counsellors, nannies, therapists, priests; i.e., to be that all nurturing

"breast"—to be the mammy.

Embedded in the very logic of the caricatured mammy is the assumption that she is

perfectly content with the role she is playing, and the care comes to her as second nature. Three

broad aspects of mammification are highlighted below to argue against a case for the present

image of the carer:

Desexualisation: one of the processes of mammification is desexualising her.

Aptly (Owen 74) stated that "the perpetuation of the mammy myth lends cover for

rape on the 'racial border' of the one-drop rule and, combined with the condition of

the mother...". This trope appears to travel heavily onto the bodies of trans women in

the context of Delhi (as we can see in the case of Jasleen and all her friends who

identify as trans women) and serves a similar purpose in the way rampant sexual

violence against them (as gathered from the interviews) and the labour carried out by

them can be mischaracterised as a function of their identity. The inherently cis-

patriarchal nature of the neoliberal market (Flores-González et al.; Mander and

Nambiar) benefits from this desexualisation by way of disregarding the need for

structural transformation by normalising care as an innate characteristic of the trans

body. Consequently, any derailing from these imagined set of characteristics renders

the trans body open to being vilified and any violence justifiable. This is particularly

visible in Jasleen's case where she explains the ways in which she is perceived in different spaces: "लोग तो मुझे कहते है कि हमे सब trans लोग पसंद नहीं है पर आप ठीक लगती है" (people tell me that they are not at ease with all trans people but I seem fine to them). I position this parallel to the case of Sandy, her friend who was constantly viewed with suspicion by her landlord and the neighbours (who lived in the same neighbourhood as Jasleen) for being sexually active and oftentimes engaging in sex work. What follows is that the figure of the carer is assigned a position of moral purity which in turn governs their sexual choices.

Negotiating possibilities of the dynamics of power: Mammification entails the interpretation of care as a form of continued and unrelenting servitude that extends beyond any realm of rights since it is born out of a sense of manufactured morality and shaky ethical grounds (one which relegates only one of the two parties to an impossible standard). This discourse on care reduces the worker or the carer in this context to the sum of the services they can provide. The relationship between the body/structure/ person receiving care and the one who provides it is stuck in a specific dynamic of power that cannot change by virtue of the conditions in which they were created. It is in this light that I present the case of Vishal, Jasleen's friend who identified as a cis-gay man with severe mental health issues who could find himself unable to work owing to his disabilities. Sapna and Jasleen, both friends with him narrate that they have been getting vegetables for Vishal when he could not afford to go buy them himself. Jasleen, casually in passing says that nobody in this process imagines this as an extraordinary act. In her powerful articulation, "एहसान जताना भी नहीं पर भूलना भी नहीं।" is a wonderful way of articulating the complex ways in

which we exist in our community. I return to this instance later as well. Under the interpretative framework of care as defined within the confines of the neoliberal state (Harvey 6), the relationship between Jasleen and Vishal cannot be explained in its entirety. All the people involved will be reduced to incomplete and incoherent parts of a hypothetical whole to fit into this interpretation of care. Vishal can then no longer be recognised as a person beyond his disabilities that have rendered him in position to not be able to earn his livelihood and Jasleen's identity is reduced as a caregiver who has control over Vishal's survival. The dynamics of friendship and community that forms the context of this exchange is subject to erasure.

Belonging And Citizenship: Mammification and its associated valours such as docility, servitude, and love have shaped the relationship of the carer with the state. In particular, I trace the relationship between the state and the carer facilitated by the demand for rights. The fixed and immovable nature of the configurations of the carer, as illustrated in the point above, meant that the imagined entity of the carer becomes responsible for picking up the slack left behind by the state (Premilla Nadasen). Since the care infrastructure is built on a gendered, racial, and political hierarchy, the carer is valued in the effectiveness of the service and expectations that the state or those in power place on them. The carer's position to demand any rights from the state is already compromised since the former is not considered an agentive subject, to begin with. In so being, they are also imagined to magically configure the spaces that require care. Sylvia Federici (*Collective Learning / Collective Care: Silvia Federici* 11:45-12:11), in the context of explaining the labour that goes into reproductive care, elucidates upon the nature of wage in a neoliberal, capitalist society by saying that "wage in capitalism is not only a form of payment but it is also a form of hiding other work…what is not wage does not appear as work". Omolade (60) in response to the

expectation of Black women who are still mammified within public imaginations which results in their stereotyping in professional spaces they enter, calls for them to "lay down their land". She says that "the mammy we carry to work with us is our mothers' ethic, pattern, and dream. The demeaning and shameful aspects of their legacy must be consciously separated from the memory of their dignity and talent" (66). Histories of colonialism(s) and commodification of marginalized identities have contributed greatly to the care industry as we know it. Additionally, the basic axioms for the formation of law and legal structures do not consider sexual and racial subjects in their imagination as part of the primary constitutive fabric. Thus, the appeal (if not the desire) to 'rights' engages with a form of carceral logic (Davis 10) that does not consider the carer as a well-rounded human, to begin with. In the words of Premilla Nadasen , "we should foster a collective commitment to economic support simply because people are human, rather than relying on arguments that certain people are essential in order to claim justice for them."

The Way Forward: Curating Care

¿Qué hacer de aquí y cómo?

(What to do here and how?)

Moraga and Anzalduá (liii) posed this question in the foreword of the second edition of This Bridge Called My Back.

Care not only occupies a tricky position at the crossroads of affective and labour expectations, but it has undergone several mouldings and remoulding through time and shifting political contexts in accordance with the market norms as illustrated above. If the current notions of care are built on the exploitation of black and indigenous women around the world, it thus logically follows that the possibility of reconstructing the same should emerge from

those who have inhabited the margins. Anzaldua's question compels us to reframe the analytical frameworks of care to curate the space of the transnational [34], recognise and acknowledge the forms of knowledges that contribute to its formulation and survival, and imagine the radical lineages of care that were theorised and practised by queer-feminists at the margins. In explaining the need to establish a transnational network of kinship that helps sustains our ideas and work of care, Audre Lorde (202) in an address at Hunter College said:

> It is not the differences between us that tear us apart, destroying the commonalities we share. Rather, it is our refusal to examine the distortions which arise from our misnaming, and from the illegitimate usage of those differences which can be made when we do not claim them nor define them for ourselves.

In a narration of the story of his life, Chief Plenty Coups, the last great Chief of the Crow Nation, explained how the trauma inflicted upon his people impacted the processes of subject formation, especially within the context of a historically consistent erasure of cultural practices. Jonathan Lear (43) explained how the loss of history is also a loss of potential futurity. He does so using the example of the Crow warrior. He argues that a good Crow warrior was not simply good at performing their social role but was also equally adept at constituting the "self as a person for whom living up to the relevant ideals constituted who one was" (43).

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[34] The usage of the term transnational follows the logic laid out by Rao (36) that the "state centric ontology of the exercise reinforces the common- sense assumption that 'state- sponsored homophobia' is most appropriately understood with reference to acts of commission or omission of the state being investigated. This occludes the possibility that transnational actors and processes may be more germane to understanding the contemporary production of homophobia in several places." Transnational then responds to not only the crossing of national borders but also the travel of concepts and ideas across space and time.

Thus, subjectivity was a lifelong commitment and shaped the actions and decisions of their lives.

This sense of subjectivity formation is important in the context of discussing several of the observations made during my interviews. From the urgency of locating the self as the subject of care (as Maniza and Samiya do), choosing to ignore the self in a moment of crisis to be able to focus on the work of care that needed to be done (as B did in an attempt to account for their positionality in the conflict), to Jasleen's approach towards her clients, friends, and even me as a researcher, and the choice to centre care as an active one that they all practice in varying capacities in their quotidian lives can only be imagined as a form of resistance to the different forms of structural violence they are continuously faced with. Lear (136) narrates the fate of the Crows following the arrival of the white man in the New World. Although Crows were recognised as allies of the colonizers, never forced to walk the 'trail of tears', or undergo casualties of the nature that many of their fellow Native Americans were forced into, they were still subjected to other forms of humiliation and compromises. It can be argued that the allyship was a survival tactic, with the dynamic of power being so explicitly drawn against them. This leads us to a significantly more nuanced sensibility of politics and survival in the context of pervasive and persistent threats. Chief Plenty Coups explains the devastations faced by his people with the arrival of the colonizing government which forbade cultural practices that lent meaning to their community. Of note in particular is the case of counting coups (Lear 13). With the banning of the intertribal wars with the Sioux, the war-based rituals lost all meaning. However, Lear argues that this cultural devastation simultaneously signals a loss of a collective imagination of meaning-making itself. In other words, in saying "after this, nothing happened" (Lear 89), the loss of a shared cultural context is lost using being forced to abandon the rituals that sustained them. Imperialist and colonial violence operates by these insidious forms of erasure by either force or fear. To bring back the discussion to the Indian context, the rising

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number of incidents where Muslim-owned establishments and their homes are being threatened with destruction and some even destroyed while the media and other infrastructures that were ideally designed to demand accountability fail to serve their purpose, Maniza's rituals and the process of ritualising acquire a new form of importance. Her history of migration along with her current positionality which makes her an active subject of persecution implies that the modified and curated rituals serve as a form of subject formation. Although Crows were recognised as allies of the colonizers, never forced to walk the 'trail of tears', or undergo casualties of the nature that many of their fellow Native Americans were forced into, they were still subjected to other forms of humiliation and compromises. While Lear as well as the critics of the text position this in direct contrast to the case of the Sitting Bull of the Sioux nation, it can be argued that the allyship was a survival tactic, with the dynamic of power being so explicitly drawn against them. Not only that, the cultural contexts that defined valours such as courage, bravery, and sacrifice were also different. This leads us to a significantly more nuanced sensibility of politics and survival in the context of pervasive and persistent threats. It is here that I invoke Jasleen's ambivalent attitude towards the law and the police. She explains how it has become easier to just explain to the police and sometimes simply engage in sex with the police officer if necessary to de-escalate a situation where they threaten to cause problems. It does not mean that she and her friends do not understand the structural problems with the police; in fact, they have dealt with the consequences of it first-hand. This is reflective of the compromises queer and trans folks enter on a quotidian basis in order to survive.

Situating the Self and/as the Subject of Care

The question of survival inevitably begets the question of the self in society. The politics of situating and perceiving the self is an inextricable part of care for the way in which the relationship between the carer and the recipient of care is imagined and produced. As

illustrated in the section above, the self within racialised, caste-d (within the context of South Asia), and biologically essentialised hierarchy of the neoliberal ecosystem are imagined as a solitary entity presented with an illusion of choices as a being with agentive potential. The self in this society comes to occupy a possessive quality rather than a collective one. Under such circumstances, it becomes essential to reconfigure the constituent components of the self that cannot be completely subsumed by the assigned characteristics of the capitalist ecosystem. Black and indigenous feminists such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and Anzaldua provide us with interpretative frameworks and historical grounded-ness to interpret the relationship between self and society. This becomes important especially to understand responses where participants choose to locate themselves as the subject of care (referring particularly to the responses of Maniza and Samiya, both of whom are queer Muslim femme-presenting persons in India).

Sending Care from Lands Far Far Away: Samiya

Samiya (she/her) identifies as a Muslim lesbian woman. She is presently pursuing her Master's in Literary Art and Aesthetics in New Delhi.

The pandemic and the noticeable increase in crimes against Muslim folks (Amarasingam et al. 5) form their temporal phase in Samiya's memory. She narrates the events of her life in what she categorizes as 'time before this period' and 'the time during and through this period'. Within the imagination of linear time, I assume that this is the period beginning from January 2020. Among the many kinds of books Samiya has been reading and colouring during this time, this is only one of them.
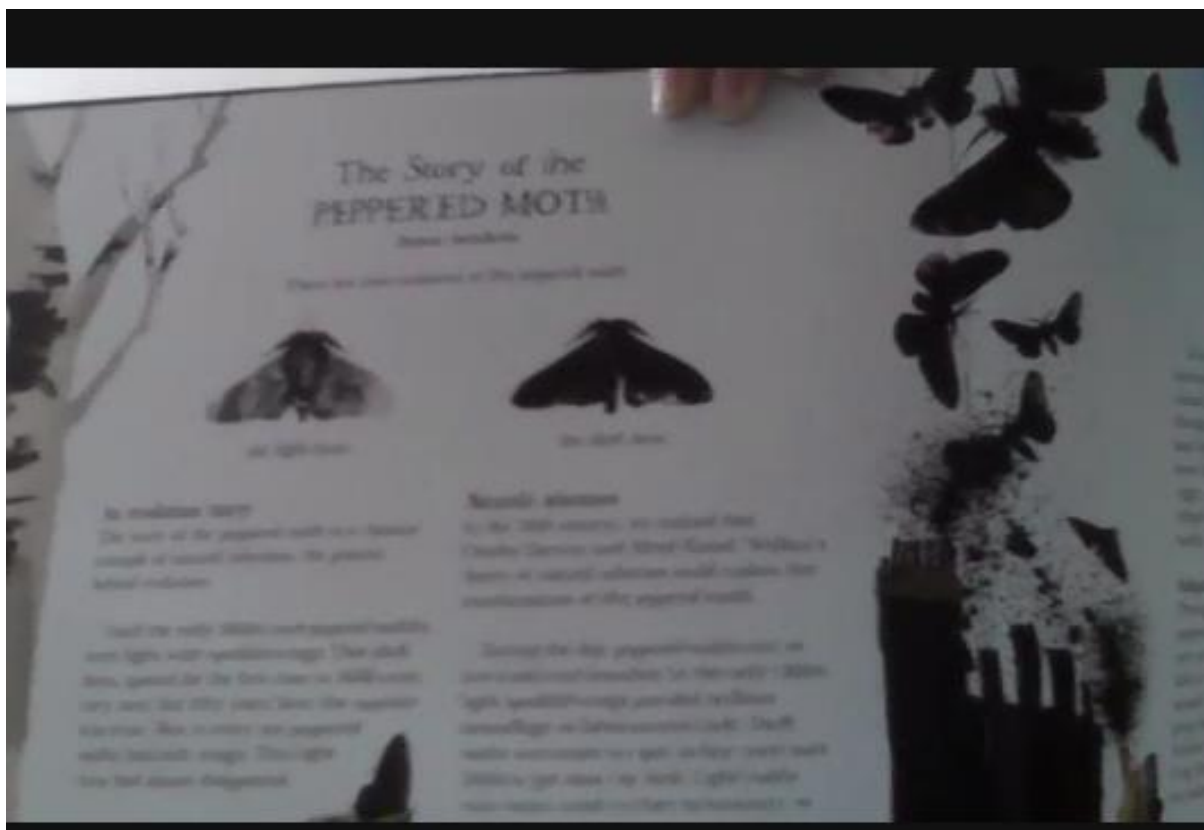
Figure 2: Image of a book Samiya has been reading. She volunteered to share this during our conversation. The title on the page reads "The Story of the Peppered Moths"

Samiya excitedly holds up the following book to tell me that she has been reading this repeatedly, especially on nights she cannot sleep. This period alone, if not the host of developments that have taken place during this period has caused the many manifestations of the underlying mental and physical issues that were already in existence to take sink their teeth deeper into her life. The body comes to occupy an important political location in this case. She says that there is a limited number of things she can do when she cannot sleep at night, and one of them is colouring books. The story of the Peppered Moths, as she shows above, is one of the colouring books which traces the evolution of moths and the different stages of life they go through. She then goes on to show me the following colouring book she found that is based on Neil Gaiman's American Gods:

Figure 3: Samiya holds up a colouring book based on Neil Gaiman's American Gods

American Gods is a fantasy novel written by, a British author known for this specific genre of writing. On his webpage, Gaiman describes it as a "kaleidoscopic journey deep into myth and across an American landscape at once eerily familiar and utterly alien." While Samiya's access to these books is made possible due to her class position and education, I argue that they facilitate her interaction with the world around her. Lorde, in *Sister Outsider* (81) asks "What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?" Lorde's questions asked as a Black lesbian woman in the US decades ago

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become important in this context where the threat of political violence looms large across the country, impacting the quotidian[35].

Conclusion: (Re)thinking Political Resistance

This chapter has been an effort to re-evaluate the paradigms of care to argue for the recognition of a wider scope of activities as political resistance. Care and its emergence, as illustrated through the drawing of historical patterns, have emerged from a history of continued, structural, and systemic violence. Therefore, the appeal to care or the act of caring itself is not and cannot claim innocence. Hence, the larger question that can be framed from this is: how does this all tie into our imagination of political resistance? How does the introduction of new interpretative frameworks of care establish the possibility of reimagining resistance within the rising global landscape of hate-based political developments? As I write this, several wars are being waged across the world, only some of which are granted the privilege of luminosity/visibility. Thus, to imagine care in the proposed framework as a form of resistance allows for a greater scope of affective expressions to be interpellated into the understanding of what constitutes resistance.

A reimagined understanding of political resistance that centres care allows for different forms of acts of resistance to existing on a parallel ground without necessarily being placed into a hierarchy of impact. It acknowledges that within the global and historical landscape of racial and queerphobic capitalism, not only can no one individually claim innocence, but rather inequalities are embedded deep within the social fabric of society. Hence the claim to equality

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[35] Muslim women have been attacked in virtual and physical spaces. An example of the virtual attack was the creation of an app where Muslim women were 'auctioned' off (Sameer Yasir)

must begin with the recognition of the pervasiveness of the structures that ensure that inequalities are produced, sustained, and propagated for the sustenance of an exploitative global order. In Equality of What, Sen (80) argued that equality exists within a finite space and is always at the expense of another space. Thus, the navigation of equality must always begin with the recognition of the pervasive and behemoth nature of inequality itself.

In recognizing the historical lineages that lend to the present imagination of care, we recognize the existence of competing histories that exist parallelly, all of which have onto-epistemic consequences. Seemingly benign and love-laced concepts such as care are then also not exempt from the revaluation of these histories themselves. The mischaracterization of these concepts has a severe and tangible impact on the lives of those who have been forced to exist on these deliberately manufactured margins and embody these concepts. To think about care then is also an invitation to reconsider how we arrive into caring, whom we imagine as the figure of the carer, and the price carers pay for doing this work consistently while living in an increasingly hate fuelled environment.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation has aimed at archiving narratives of care for and by queer folks living in urban New Delhi. Firstly, in the archive that has been proposed in the first analytical chapter, I not only lay the groundwork of an alternate form of archive in terms of site and content but is also malleable in the way it invites changes in its form to incorporate a wider range of care practices and forms of resistance in pervasive violent political conditions, the manifestations of which are altering at a fast pace. This also implies that forms of resistance and the tenets of what constitutes care in such circumstances are also constantly in a state of flux. Rather than creating a hierarchy of care practices, the archive recognizes their necessity within the context in which they were performed. With evolving forms of political violence, such as increased cyber surveillance and police raids on individuals involved in resistance or rehabilitation efforts, care must adapt to meet the needs of those affected.

Secondly, chapter 5 argued that care plays a critical role in sustaining the potential for hope and new directions offered by 'reoriented bodies' (Ahmed 170). The participants of this research demonstrate this through the everyday nature of the care they embody and perform. Additionally, it is argued that the category of the Global South, as produced by scholars of Subaltern Studies, is inadequate for Delhi and India as it obscures colonial tendencies and fails to consider the interconnections of caste with class, religion, and gender. This, in turn, limits a full and contextualized understanding of the care practices archived in this research.

Thirdly, the present imagination of care within the global context of neoliberalism can trace its roots back to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the discursive developments made by black and indigenous feminists. In ascribing an emancipatory impact to care within queer communities and as a mode of political resistance, it becomes imperative to contextualize the philosophical ground on which these were built and the political realities which shaped them.

As we can see in chapter 6, these historical lineages become important in the way interpretative frameworks are produced and sustained, and transnational associations come into being.

I have specifically avoided theorizing a consolidated definition of care throughout my work. This is because care has been positioned in a complex relationship with political violence throughout this research. However, the nuances of stated violence are undergoing change with time and changing aspects of the political agendas they are trying to enforce. A consolidated theory of care precludes the possibility of incorporating a wider range of practices within its purview.

Scope:

Povinelli and Chauncey (442) argued that "homogenization, diversification, hybridization; the local, the global, and the global; locality, localization, and translocality; globalization and transnationalism; flows, linkages, scapes, and circuits: we are witness to a proliferation of conceptual conjunctions and neologisms that describe, or more simply that demarcate, the dense, variegated traffic in cultural representations, people, and capital that increasingly characterizes the social life of people around the world." While this dissertation makes claims based on primary data collected in the Indian context, the global rise of violence of imperialist nature (such as can be seen in the Israeli colonization of Palestine, Brazil's treatment of its indigenous tribes, India's continued military and political violence in Kashmir, and Chinese imprisonment of Uyghur Muslims, among other instances) indicates a pressing need for a radical imagination of community beyond the sense generated by its buzzword-like status. The offering of care as a radical praxis in political participation thus becomes important in two main ways. Firstly, it refuses to compete with the very people we are in a community with despite existing in the same global capitalist order. Second, it supports a political imaginary wherein rights are not the central demand of social movements. Sylvia Tamale, speaking within the context of Africa asked:

As part of the formal legal system, the enforcement of human rights is executed

by the capitalist-patriarchal state. How realistic is it then to expect

such a regime to protect the rights of subordinated social groups

such as women that are oppressed by capitalist-patriarchal power

structures? (Tamale 189)

If the systems we are part of never accounted for the way queerness, caste, gender, and class

intersect in our lives, it is safe to argue that the bodies in question within this dissertation were

not governable by the laws, to begin with. Thus, to demand rights is an exercise in vain. In

imagining care as a queer-feminist intervention in political participation, perhaps it could be a

useful tool that can be deployed across socio-political contexts to strategize a different kind of

resistance.

In contending for an archive of practices that queer people in New Delhi, we can

envisage it as a form of linkage connecting us to similar political contexts that can enrich and

expand upon the existing model and propel us towards imagining a transnational imagination

of solidarity.

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