

Neo-Liberalism, Post-Colonialism and Hetero-Sovereignties: Emergent Sexual Formations in Contemporary India

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India's post-colonial present pushes, prises and protests the conceptual limits of postcolonialism. It has long since ceased to be living in the shadow only of the moment of independence (August 1947). What of the (after)lives of processes that do not neatly confine themselves to dates or moments? Of communal movements; the decline of communism; the rise of an aggressively neo-liberal capitalism; or of campaigns for the rights of women and sexual minorities? The latter two have gained increasing attention for the way in which they attend to the complex intersections of religious and cultural traditions, criminal and religious law, personal and private realms, local and global processes, rights and norms, and the consumption and production of gendered and sexed identities.

Given the richness of this field of study, we decided to host two symposia at the University of Nottingham examining gender and sexuality in contemporary India from historical perspectives.¹ The discussions exposed many of the tensions inherent in such diverse fields and over such an expansive geographical region, namely between unstable binaries such as: South Asia-India; gay-straight; masculine-feminine; historical-contemporary; regulation-desire; reality-fantasy; virtual-actual; and representational-material. We decided to collect these papers together on the less-studied dimension of sexuality, which forced the omission of papers on Bangladesh and Pakistan which had originally provided a broader South Asian focus. This loss of geographical diversity is, we hope, compensated for by the genuinely interdisciplinary nature of the collection. The contributors number two sociologists, a geographer, an anthropologist, a historian, a lawyer, and scholars of women's studies and language studies. The methodologies are appropriately diverse, spanning socially and historically situated literary criticism to legal studies of social movements, to film and institutional studies. We found, however, that five themes, with associated questions, recurred throughout the papers.

The Indian Postcolonial: what is the relevance of postcolonialism in the Indian post-colony?

Just as India proved to be the '... greatest, most durable, and profitable of all British colonial possessions' (Said, 1987, 8) so it has also had an impressive and profound (and possibly disproportionate and distortive) impact on postcolonial studies. Said's postcolonial discourse

¹ The *Symposium on Gender & South Asia: New Directions*, June 2008, featured papers by Yasmin Saika, Nayanika Mookherjee, Srila Roy, Parvati Raghuram, Sarah Hodges, and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley. The *Symposium on Sexuality & South Asia: New Directions*, March 2010, featured papers by Ashwini Tambe, Sanjay Srivastava, Stephen Legg, Svati Shah, Prabha Kotiswaran, Akhil Katyal, Paul Boyce and Gargi Bhattacharyya. Both events were generously sponsored by the University's Schools of Geography and Sociology and Social Policy, the Gender-History Network, and the Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies, while external funding came from the British Association of South Asian Studies.

analysis was tested and expanded by Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha in the 1980s and 1990s, just as the Subaltern Studies Group pushed for a postcolonialism from the silenced margins of the colonial and post-colonial archive. Scholars of India have since explored the archive as an experiential space (Burton, 2005), while others have examined the nature of sexuality in colonial archives (Arondekar, 2009). What the papers in this special issue explore are a diversity of different archives in which sexuality is stored, created, and re-formed: from laws and court cases (Kotiswaran) to humanitarian organisations and women's support groups (Govindan); from biographies, Urdu short stories and websites (Katyal) to the fictions and road side hawkers of Hindi novellas (Srivastava); from documentary films and photography (Shah) to popular imagery and forms of spectatorship (Tambe). But what the papers also suggest are the limits of colonial heritage and postcolonial forms of analyses (Loomba, et al., 2005).

Katyal's study of *laundebaazi* ('habit for boys, inclination to play with them') is the only paper to focus on the colonial period (1920s-30s), exploring the colony as a laboratory of modernity. While other interpretations of 'Chocolate', Ugra's homoerotic short-story upon which Katyal draws, have emphasised the colonial conditioning of Indian homophobia (Vanita, 2009, xxxi), Katyal moves to ways of framing same-sex desire beyond the colonial archive of sexological texts and juridical edicts. Srivastava takes care to avoid colonial (and even post-colonial) readings of Indian sexuality through the lens of tradition (most commonly the *Kamasutra*), emphasising instead the importance of nationalist politics and transnational discourses. He acknowledges the colonial origins (in terms of period and place) of 'pulp fiction', but emphasises that the distinctive and vast sub-genre of Hindi pulp lacks postcolonial analysis; going so far as to suggest that the author under study, Ved Prakash Sharma, may be bringing contemporary urban heterosexual masculinity into view just as Ugra did for alternative historical, urban, male sexualities.

If the remaining papers are less explicit in terms of postcolonial analysis, this is not for want of striking parallels and connections. Govindan respectfully but forensically analyses the American-run anti-trafficking organisation International Justice Mission (IJM). This self-described evangelical Christian organisation explicitly claims to continue the traditions of the nineteenth century abolition movement. Having campaigned against military brothels in the nineteenth century in India, the abolitionists took forward their campaign against tolerate brothels into the twentieth century, in the face of vigorous opposition from Indian women's groups and 'prostitutes' alike (Burton, 1994, Legg, 2010). Claims about the links between trafficking and prostitution, the presumed powerlessness of Indian women, the insufficiently

critical faith in the regulatory and reformatory powers of the police and rescue homes, the self-image of the rescuers, and the centrality of the age of consent debate all chime with imperial campaigns by Christian humanitarian organisations.

If there are continuities in these campaigns, there are also continuities in statute and social work. Despite the 2009 repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (the anti-sodomy law, introduced by the British in 1860), there are still other postcolonial legacies that impact upon sexuality and sex work. Kotiswaran shows how Indian sex workers still have to contend with the 1956 Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA), which built directly on the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Acts which were passed, province by province, throughout India from the 1920s to the 1940s (D'Cunha, 1987). Kotiswaran uses Partha Chatterjee's (2010) recent work to consider how sex workers in 'political society' (which he counter-poses to civil society through reflections on India's colonial heritage) have used the law in various phases of their development.

Tambe and Tambe's paper also has clear resonances with colonial debates about white, female sexuality (Tambe, 2005), evoked through the use of the 'white mischief girls' as cheerleaders. However, it is now India that is the rich, capitalist nation, able to purchase Euro-American sexual (public) performances. Likewise, while the international media displayed faintly orientalist overtones in their coverage of 'prudish' and traditionalist complainants against the cheerleaders, the debate was much more complex than simply that of modern West versus orthodox east. Shah's examination of filmic representations of sex workers explicitly draws on the 'postcolonial affective politics of the visual discourse of prostitution in India' and the old story of white, Western saviours of Indian women. But she goes beyond visual analysis to analyse the American, documentary film-making traditions informing the depictions of these particular red-light districts. Moving between institution, representation and segregation, she exposes the complexities of, what some would call, sexual geographies.

Sexual Geographies: what is the role of space in sexual formations?

While there are signs of an emerging spatial consciousness within studies of sexuality in south Asia (one thinks of Sinha's (2006) work on *Mother India* and imperial social formations, or Srivastava's (2004) work on *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes*), this has not engaged with the substantial literature on feminist, gendered, sexual and queer *geographies*. Geographers examining sexuality have moved from early examinations of segregation, discrimination and 'gay ghettos', to consider heteronormative spaces and the everyday geographies of a variety of sexual identities (Browne, et

al., 2007). In particular, this work is beginning to attend to sexuality and scale in new ways; considering not just the ways in which trafficking, tourism, migration and internet pornography subvert the boundaries of the state, but the ways in which sexuality itself is inherently transnational (though *not* necessarily cosmopolitan or liberating). As such, the brothel itself can be explored as both a domestic and international site (Legg, 2009), while gender formations are increasingly recognised as always already globalising (Basu, et al., 2001). With some notable exceptions (see Brown, et al., 2010) this literature has not engaged fully with the non-European/American world. The papers here selected present a rich array of geographical sites and scales, and refuse to separate out the study of race, class and sexuality from each other, or the geographies of their production and performance (Brown, 2012, 543).

Katyal's study of laundebaazi makes clear the geographical conditions of this particular form of desire, action and speech. It was associated with a region (north India) as much as the domestic scale of chat, relaxation and banter (on the 'adda' combination of carefree talk and place in colonial Bengal, see Chakrabarty, 1999). Campaigns against laundebaazi demonstrated its place in the imaginations of the Hindi literati, but also highlighted the spaces thought to encourage it; it was suggested that boarding schools be banned, and that boys seats in school should be at a minimum distance of two yards from each other. Laundebaazi was associated with environments of indulgence, a sentiment also displayed concerning the presence of brothels (or their absence) in stimulating sodomy and homosexuality (Legg, 2012b). Srivastava also looks at north Indian cities, tacking between the fictionality and the materiality of the urban. Pulp fiction is sold in train stations, bus stands, and footpath book stalls in the poorer areas of these cities, but the writings themselves offer insights into nationalist politics and transnational flows of capital and imagination. Traditional notions of *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), which had been evoked and elevated by Gandhi to the centre of the vision of a new, superior India (Prakash, 1999, 123), are here reworked into the pacy micro-dealings of Sharma's urban universe.

Shah also makes clear the links that representational strategies and technologies can forge between urban-domestic interior intimacies to global-national exterior analytical judgments. Her analysis of the *Born into Brothels* documentary film links representations of Calcutta's (Kolkata's) red light districts to the International Centre for Photography in New York. This international dimension exposes a 'geopolitics' of the contrasts the film makes between Indian national wealth and local poverty, and of the hegemonic frame of trafficking for inter-governmental conversations about sex workers, represented at the urban scale in moral topographies of good/bad Calcutta (meaning good/bad people). Govindan also explores links between America and India's red-light districts

through the IJM, for whom '... India has become a place where issues of international funding, foreign non-profit investment, national policy, and local activism collide.' There is an inherent scalar logic to the IJM's analysis of oppression and suffering, which is not linked to global economics or structured marginalisation, but to local failings of law enforcement. National-level institutional connections between sites of sexuality and judgment are also highlighted through Kotiswaran's consideration of courts as spaces in which sex workers may, or may not, chose to engage, exploit, or resist efforts to craft their making a living in the red spaces of the city. Beyond these spaces, Tambe and Tambe explore the scandalous sites of sexuality for women more broadly, from the cricket ground to public bars. While the former caused outrage, the latter were sites for attacks and abuse which remind us that our sexuality is not just exposed to nudges, correctives and encouragements (normalization) but is also subject to law, banishment, violence, and spectacular shamings (sovereignty).

Hetero-Sovereignty: who has the luxury of only being normalized?

As is abundantly clear above, sexual formations are always and everywhere power relations. The nature of these power relations has been theorised, by Judith Butler (1990), as 'normative'. As such, 'heteronormativity' works to regularise the binary sex division, normalise heterosexual desire, and marginalise other sexualities by positing heterosexuality as normal, natural and moral. The concept has been enriched by studies of homonormativity (the way in which homosexuals are encouraged to conform to a different set of norms) and critiques that have questioned the spatialities of these normativities and the suggestion of 'a' heterosexual or homosexual ordering (see Hubbard, 2008).

Though having its own complex philosophical genealogy, normativity was popularised by Michel Foucault (1979) as a way of thinking beyond juridical, violent, extractive or negative forms of power (referred to as sovereign powers). Modern, bio-powers, in contrast, could be non-violent, productive and positive (Foucault, 2007). What Foucault's lecture courses make clear, however, is that sovereign powers were not supplanted by bio-powers, but augmented by them. States, councils, families, communities and individuals maintain, of course, the capacities and desires for violence, humiliation and punishment. From Guantanamo Bay (Hussain, 2007) to the plantations of colonial Assam (Kolsky, 2010) and international anti-trafficking campaigns (Legg, 2012a), the ever-presence of sovereign force within and around normativities is abundantly clear.

Despite this, the study of heteronormativities does not always equally reflect on the presence of, and interlinkages with, what we might call 'hetero-sovereignties'. What the papers here collected do is bring together examples of the capillary circulation of norms (images of brothels,

short stories about habits for boys, sexual fictions, and institutional reports) with evidence of the precarious exposure to sovereign powers to which sexual non-conformers are exposed and against which they are forced to resist (although without reference to homophobic, or what could be called homo-sovereign, stigmatisation, violence and legislation). Kotiswaran, for instance, shows how the ITP Act of 1956 used the sovereign powers of the law to juridically forbid certain types of non-heteronormative behaviour, joining laws that target sexual acts stretching back to the Indian Penal Code of 1860 and forward to the Gujarat Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act of 1985. But sex worker groups have, at times, used the sovereign space of the courts to challenge laws, to mediate new sexual forms and even to use the language of democratised sovereignty; that of rights (Chatterjee, 2010, 228)

But hetero-sovereignties just as often operate through a clenched fist as through the long arm of the law. In this sense the language of Tambe and Tambe's paper is instructive. Their description of reactions to the performance of non-heteronormative female sexualities (cheer leaders and bar attendees, amongst others) stretch from 'vocal protests', 'calling them prostitutes' and harassments, to police crackdowns, 'seeking to drive them out of the pub', and banning, to the attacks in Bangalore on western dressed women who were '... punched, chased, and had their clothes pulled off.' Govindan lists an example of resistance to the claiming of women's bodies through the example of a sex-worker organisation whose employees took to keeping sachets of chilli powder in their sari blouses, which was thrown in the eyes of raiding officials from the IJM. This is evidence of the possibility to resist hetero-sovereignties physically, of the expansive sexual geographies of the IJM, but also of one of complex outcomes of both American and Indian neo-liberalism.

Feminist studies: how has feminism dis/en-abled the study of sexuality?

Feminism has been an important resource for the study of sexuality in India, as represented by the many engagements with critical postcolonial Indian feminist scholarship in this special issue. But the relationship between feminist studies and sexuality studies has not always been a straightforward one, just as activist relations on the ground have been strained especially with the rise of minority (lesbian) feminisms in recent years (Achuthan, Biswas & Dhar 2007). Postcolonial feminist theory has been accused of paying insufficient attention to the sexual subaltern or the relationship between sexuality and culture even as the relevance of its analytical tools for the study of sexuality has been acknowledged and employed (Kapur 2005). More worryingly, activists of the Indian women's movement have been accused of homophobia from within (Menon 2007).

Having said that, feminist informed sexuality studies has come a long way from initial attempts to redress 'the question of silence' around sexuality in India (John and Nair 1998) to now fairly routinized inclusions of sexual desires and transgressive, subaltern or marginalised sexualities in sexuality readers (Menon 2007) or indeed in mainstream feminist scholarship (Azim, Menon & Siddiqi 2009; Loomba and Lukose 2011; and Roy 2013). In early feminist engagements, sexuality came to be associated with sexual violence; female sexual experiences, even within a heteronormative framework, were scarcely explored (see, however, Puri 1999). Heterosexuality – as distinct from patriarchy and gender – was not up for questioning. The current impulse, in contrast, is to move beyond violence to desire and even beyond the bounds of heteronormative desire. Scholarship on marriage and conjugality – longstanding staples of Indian feminist critique – has moved in more recent times to 'de-centering the heterosexual couple, tracing desires and identities that flourish beyond hegemonic dictates', as a recent special journal issue on Indian sexualities and conjugality (Reddy and Tambe 2011:7) notes.

More radical has been the impetus to question and de-stabilise compulsory and normative (hetero)sexuality in India from a 'queer' perspective. Both the terms 'queer' and 'counter-heteronormative' are being used to encompass a range of desires and identities that signify a critical questioning of heteronormativity rather than the mere inclusion of minority sexual identities (Bose and Bhattacharya 2007; Menon and Nigam 2007; Narrain and Bhan 2005). For these critical commentators on queer politics in India, an identity politics that is invested in rendering queer identities visible, urgent as it is, does not necessarily make obvious the productive power of heteronormativity in legitimating 'normal' and 'abnormal' sexualities. In contrast, queer politics does not advocate on the behalf of minority sexual identities/communities and their issues alone but 'speaks of larger understandings of gender and sexuality in our society that affects all of us regardless of our sexual orientation' (Narrain and Bhan 2005:4). We suggest that this recent and enormously enabling critique of heteronormativity does not have to be limited to queer issues and identities. It can be further expanded to theoretically rework gender and patriarchy, thereby initiating an expansion of the feminist project via sexuality studies. The recent arrest of the accomplished female athlete, Pinki Pramanik on the charges of raping her female partner and then being accused of being biologically male reveals the urgency of a feminist politics that is able to unmoor gender from biological 'sex', and question, thereby, the very subject of feminist politics (Bhan and Narain 2005; Menon 2007).

The situation on the ground is thus rapidly changing in ways that critical responses are not always able to match. Sexuality is today one of the most visible and politicized issues in India (Bose and Bhattacharya 2007:xii), not least because of the repeal of Section 377 in 2009. Whilst unprecedented, this legal landmark also marks the beginning of an Indian sexual politics that is centered on normalization. It is also striking how even these legal victories continue to elude Indian sex workers. On the contrary, as Kotiswaran's contribution shows, such sexual subjects were further abjected given the increasingly abolitionist turn of the Indian state's policy towards prostitution fuelled by a global sex panic. Making the same argument, Shah (2013) elsewhere shows how the current moment of sexual politics in India seems to operate through the splitting of one form of 'legitimate' minority (queer) sexuality against another 'illegitimate' form (sex work) (see also Kotiswaran 2010 and Kapur 2005). Part of the problem is the (feminist) use of the law as a 'subversive site' for delivering social justice on behalf of the subaltern subject, as Kotiswaran's paper on the role of the law in the Indian sex workers movement in this volume confirms.

Sex work has indeed emerged as one productive site upon which feminist scholarship and sexuality studies have come to bear upon. Three of the essays included (Shah, Kotiswaran, Govindan) track the material emergence of India as a site of prostitution, trafficking and slavery via national and international policy, ethnographic and filmic narration, and social movement activism. But inevitably these sites produce very different, often competing versions of the same story of 'prostitution in India'. As Govindan and Shah's essays make clear, such narratives not only force a reconsideration of the assumptions underlying abolitionist global policy around sex work and trafficking but also feminist discourses of women, sexuality, politics and agency.

In underscoring the striking absence of the materiality of the production of sex work in a variety of cultural representations of the same, these articles (re)focus our attention to questions of structural inequality, female labour and sexual economies. Though cognisant of the importance of aesthetics and representations – and a cultural study of sexuality more generally – they are committed to sociological analysis that considers questions of power, policing and coercion. A postcolonial materialist feminist approach to questions of sexuality is emphasised in all the contributions, especially in the Tambes' call for a critical feminist response to sexual violence that does not reproduce social divides. Together with Srivastava, they theorise sexual identities as always and necessarily classed identities in ways that make manifest the tensions between different forms of class and gender-based capital especially given India's recent economic liberalisation.

Neo-liberalism: what is the relationship between economic liberalism and sexual liberation?

The sexual politics of neoliberalism – by which Diane Richardson (2005:517) refers to the manner in which the ‘sexual politics, communities and identities are shaped by economic processes’ – has not been the subject of sufficient academic attention. The little work in this area is located in the West and fairly limited to questions of queer political mobilisations around equal rights. Richardson cites contemporary lesbian and gay movements in the US that employ the language of citizenship and equal rights to gain equality- if not sameness- with the heterosexed majority as one instance of what she terms a neoliberal politics of normalization.

When it comes to South Asia, there has been even less by way of reflecting on the sexual politics of neoliberalism which is all the more surprising given the recent integration of these economies into the global economy. In the case of India, neoliberalism is inevitably used as a shorthand to signal the opening up of the economy since the early nineties accompanied by processes of de-welfarisation and privatisation. Part of the difficulty here is with the use of the term neoliberalism and how well it travels outside of the Anglo-European context. One of our contributors, Kotiswaran (2010) has persuasively argued in a different but related context that while neoliberalism might be associated with the rise of new forms of sexual commerce, it may not be the most apposite lens to apply to a postcolonial setting like India. For one, the neoliberal framework might end up overestimating the newness of forms of sexual identity and labour. More generally speaking, it might overestimate the withdrawal of the state from welfare service provision in countries like India; the Indian state continues to be developmentalist *and* neoliberalising (Sharma 2008). While new forms of sexual commerce can be understood as being shaped by neoliberal forces, they cannot be reduced to a neoliberal impulse or be seen as entirely new to India.

Besides the ideological instability and locational specificity of neoliberal projects, the Indian state, Kotiswaran (2010) shows in comparing bar dancing with sex work, varies its regulation of sexual markets and forms of labour, drawing on local and global registers alike. Beyond sex work, contemporary sexual identities in India are, as a recent reader on the politics of Indian sexualities says, ‘constructed out of the peculiar, particular, multiplicitious effects and perceptions of tradition, modernity, colonisation and globalisation that are more often than not in confrontation with each other’ (Bose and Bhattacharya 2007:xii). As all of the articles in this volume show, the sexual cultures that accompany changing economic processes in India rework familiar and pre-existing modern, liberal and nationalist discourses; none of which are singular

or coherent. These are sexual cultures constituted out of 'hybrid transactions', as Srivastava puts it in his contribution. Secondly, the sexual and cultural politics of neoliberalism might dovetail with its economic imperatives in certain instances and not in others. For both Srivastava and Tambe and Tambe, economic liberalism in India does not translate into sexual liberalism for women in any straightforward way. Changes in the experience of sexuality may themselves not always be liberatory, especially for women, as Denis Altman (2005) notes.

None of this is to suggest that economic liberalisation in India has not had significant ramifications on contemporary sexual life and identities even as these cannot be understood through the neoliberal lens alone. The articles in the volume map the cultural and sexual politics of economic liberalisation in India taking as their point of departure a range of gendered and sexualised subaltern subjects, and their interpellation by discourses of nationalism, liberalism, globalisation, modernity and tradition. Economic liberalism is viewed in a productive sense – as enabling new kinds of sexual subjects, subjection and politics whilst (re)configuring existing forms of regulation, labour and desire. Katyal in his contribution traces the manner in which the idiom of *baazi* travels from its history in the north Indian vernacular to the 'vernacularization of the internet' as *gaybaazi*. Contemporary gay identity in India (as elsewhere in the non-Western world) is constructed in conversation with and resistance to a 'global gay identity' (Altman 2005:151) and local idioms and registers of same-sex desire.

The articulation of same-sex desire as gay identity in India has of course been propelled by neoliberal governmentality around HIV/AIDS prevention in India (Menon 2007). Kotiswaran's contribution equally maps the manner in which sex workers movements have been enabled by HIV prevention efforts, paradigmatic of globalization (Altman 2005). The particular governmental and non-governmental technologies engendered by the opening up of the economy have thus created spaces for political expression even as they have created new 'docile subjects' of/for the governance agenda. Menon (2009) draws out a key paradox of such an agenda which relates to its tendency to stabilize and thereby domesticate gender and sexuality and to radicalize the same in unexpected ways.

While the experience of gay mobilizing might be symptomatic of this paradox, the increased reliance on a liberal agenda of ending discrimination and including sexual minorities into the mainstream reflects Richardson's neoliberal sexual politics of normalization. Yet, unlike in the context of Europe which Richardson speaks of, such a politics of normalization is not exclusive to queer mobilizations in India. It is salient in the reshaping of discourses of respectability that are centered on women's sexuality, for instance. Srivastava's reflections on the twin demands

of modernity and tradition on Indian women in his reading of Hindi detective fiction in this volume resonates with recent work on the gendered politics of consumption in post-liberalization India. Smitha Radhakrishnan (2011), for instance, shows that professional women in metropolitan centres in India restate a normative sexuality in negotiating the pressures of an excessively materialist culture and changing sexual freedoms. The association of economic liberalism with the emergence of new forms of sexual identities and freedoms has to, then, be tempered with a consideration of how these reaffirm the regulatory powers of the nation-state and the patriarchal family. But the demands of preserving tradition in the face of globalised modernity are not exclusive to women. Srivastava turns our attention to hybrid constitutions of subaltern masculinity in urban India as both 'Indian' and 'modern' for proper participation in consumerist modernity.

The contribution by Tambe and Tambe further complicates any straightforward association between economic liberalisation and sexual liberalization besides undercutting the 'newness' of the neoliberal moment. In considering two recent 'critical events' (Das 1995) – the proposal to ban cheerleaders in cricket performances and the vigilante attacks in pubs and streets on women in southern India – they show how economic liberalisation in fact entails more vigilant policing of women's bodies through a reconfiguring of normative sexual morality. The targeting of women's sexual conduct may be seen, they argue, as a symptomatic – even deliberate, we would say – response to the cultural shifts that have accompanied India's integration into the global economy over the past two decades. In an age of unprecedented economic and cultural globalization, women face newer forms of coercive control as they enter previously male-dominated public spaces as waged labourers (Siddiqui 2010), developmental workers (Mayaram 2002 and Rai & Madhok 2012) or even as emancipated middle-class women (Oza 2006 and Mitra-Kahn 2013). Besides gender, Tambe and Tambe argue that sexual liberalism is also class differentiated. The tensions of economic liberalism amidst high social inequalities are most manifest, for them, in those who are unable to partake of the fruits of a new market economy, readily cooptable by aggressive rightwing ideologies and practices of moral guardianship. 'At the heart of this kind of vigilantism is the paradoxical relationship of the Hindu right to economic liberalization', they write. In showcasing how current conceptual and political resources are contending with new modes of governance and regulation in tandem with new assertions of sexual rights, experiences and identities, the collection presents ways of (re)thinking sexuality for the predicaments of the present, globally.

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