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Abstract

This Ph.D. thesis explores the nature and significance of student activism in Georgia and India. This research focuses on the political activism of students, with a particular emphasis on student-based organizations, which at times contribute to larger social movements. The aim of this thesis is threefold: to explore the nature of student activism and how students embark on a journey into activism; to investigate the ways gendered structure is embedded in student activism; to identify where student organizations and its members position themselves within a particular oppression or ideology or within systems of multiple oppressions simultaneously; and to analyze the ways in which these systems impact their feminist stance and activism.

The study predominantly focuses on left-wing student activism, as well as on complementary cases of right-wing organizations in Tbilisi, Georgia and at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi, India. These student organizations share several fundamental structures related to their ideological stance, enabling the organizations to be compared. This research examines the ways in which these elementary structures or ideologies change and become increasingly complex after they have been established in a local context.

Theoretical components of very different origins have been adopted for this research. The fundamental premise of the framework is based on feminist theory, postcolonial criticism, and social movements theory. First, I elucidate the process of engagment of students into activism through the elements of the «transcending pyramid» that entails social networks, rationale, and

action. Second, based on Klatch's (2001) theoretical model, I develop a trichotomy of the constitutive elements of the feminist stance: declaration, rationale and action.

The broad methodological framework for this qualitative study is feminist. The research consists of several research types, namely, participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and material (books, social media, articles, pamphlets, posters, and visuals). For examination of data I predominantly employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which aims to reveal the relationships between language, power, ideology, and politics.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

All India Students' Association (AISA)

All India Students' Federation (AISF)

All India Backward Students' Forum (AIBSF)

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

Crime Investigation Department (CID)

Democratic Students Union (DSU)

Democratic Students Federation (DSF)

Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH)

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)

National Students' Union of India (NSUI)

Students' Federation of India (SFI)

Students for Resistance (SFR)

United Dalit Students' Forum (UDSF)

Youth for Equality (YFE)

Chapter One: Introduction

> "One of the greatest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness." (Freire, 2005, p. 51)

Student activism is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and this Ph. D. thesis intends to unravel some of its essential characteristics in Georgia and India. This study investigates how student activism is conceptualized overtly in relation to gender and attempts to consider ways in which gender becomes articulated tacitly in this activism. The aim of this thesis is threefold: to explore the nature of student activism and how students embark on a journey into activism; to investigate the ways gendered structure is embedded in student activism; to identify where student organizations and its members position themselves within a particular oppression or ideology or within systems of multiple oppressions simultaneously; and to analyze the ways in which these systems impact their feminist stance and activism.

I predominantly focus on left-wing student activism, as I endeavor to explore the possibility of feminist activism within the progressive left-wing politics. The relationship between Marxism and feminism has been described as "the marriage of husband and wife depicted in English common law: Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism" (Hartman, 1981, p. 2). Feminists criticized Marxists for subsuming the feminist struggle into the struggle against capital, whereas many Marxists and neo-marxists view feminism as "mental" and therefore less important than class conflict, which is "material" and therefore "primary and determining" (Bernstein, 2005). In this

thesis, I aim to investigate left-wing student organizations' strategies apropos of feminist issues such as gender inequality and sexuality.

Student organizations can be considered terrains of struggle and transformation, which are engendered with far-reaching consequences depending on their ideological affiliation. Student political activism did not start in the 1960s, though new social movements were sweeping the globe at that time. The earliest student movements in both Georgia and India were related to nationalism. The nationalist ideology was a powerful force in the independence movements, and students played a key role in its articulation. Historically, student political involvement was sporadic, which is one of the key characteristics of student movements worldwide. Student movements are generally short-lived, though they may be based on more sustained student political activism. This research aims to focus mainly on the student political activism, particularly to explore student-based organizations, which at times happen to be part of larger social movements.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgia as well as other post-soviet countries quickly embraced neoliberal economic reform agendas. In the new millennium, neoliberalism has become a hegemonic mode of discourse in Georgia. In India, after it gained its independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, initiated a socialist pattern of development articulated in five-year plans. However, due to the debt and fiscal crisis in 1990s, India had to confirm to International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank orthodoxy, which was promoting neoliberal economic reform. The process of neoliberalisation has entailed the privatization of higher education. Public institutions (universities) have been privatized to some extent across the capitalist world (Harvey, 2005). This resulted in the decline of a proportion of national resources for universities. In a neoliberal state, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own well-being. These principles extend into the realm of education, where individual success or failure is interpreted as personal failure and is not explained by any systemic property (Harvey, 2005).

Goswami (2013, p.32) argues that neoliberal agendas have increased inequalities and "the goal of these policies is to prepare skilled and cheap but slavish workforce for meeting the requirement of profiteering, greed and hegemony of the global market substituting constitutional principles of equality and social justice" (Goswami, 2013).

Left-wing student activists in both Georgia and India have expressed their discontent against the privatization and commodification of education. They have objected to treating education as a domain of capital accumulation and demanded equitable access and quality in higher education. In addition, the propensity to portray student politics as undesirable for the university has been prevalent in the discourse of government and university authorities in India (Krishnan, 2007).

During the past few years, a reawakening of student activism and political concern has taken place in Georgia. Students have emerged as new social actors and have taken up a pioneering role in the formation of new forms of social protests. This research revolves around both left- and right-wing organizations, with a particular focus on left-wing activism. Pronouncedly, a left-wing organization called Laboratory 1918 emerged amongst students of Tbilisi State University in 2011. They have been attempting to protest what they perceive to be injustice and inequality either in university or in national politics. In the milieu of post-Soviet left-wing nihilism, the organization endeavored to make left-wing rhetoric relevant in public life without the stigma of being pro-Soviet and aspired to bring change through collective action. Laboratory 1918 pioneered in raising social issues and bringing them to the forefront.

Student activism such as this contributes to social change by focusing national attention on political and social issues that might otherwise be ignored. It is not enough to be aware of grievances; it is more important to be able to express discontent and turn it into action. However, the students who

take part in political activities are actually a minority. The main focus of this study is on students who do not conform to the overwhelming majority and instead speak out.

Further, this study centers on the student activists from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which is well known as a hotbed of student politics. Since JNU's inception, being a JNU student makes the student a potential dissenter. The university has been a site of frequent student political demonstrations concerning a wide range of issues. It should be noticed that student activism, which took place on the campus, was responsible for bringing about sweeping social changes that increased opportunities for groups that historically had been disempowered. For instance, JNU students played a key role in the anti-rape protests, which took place after the horrific gang-rape of December 16 (2012) and launched a campaign striving for women's "freedom without fear." In addition, JNU students were part of the Anti-Corruption movement. At the campus level, students criticized JNU administration for not fully implementing the OBC (Other Backward Class) quota and finally achieved their goal in 2011 by going on a hunger strike. The student demanded that the university to pay at least minimum wage to the JNU construction workers, who were paid half of it. Moreover, the JNU Student Union (JNUSU) had been demanding that gender sensitization should be a primary responsibility of the university, and after negotiating with the administration, they have made significant efforts for strengthening gender sensitization processes in the campus by introducing new initiatives.

The student organizations selected here share some elementary structures in terms of their ideological stance, which permits a comparison (Obeyesekere, 2002). On the one hand, it may appear universalistic, but on the other hand, it is the richness of the local context that this research aims to unfold and to inquire into how these ideological frameworks are played out in a particular setting. How do they unveil the world of oppression, in particular, patriarchal oppression? These

elementary structures or ideologies, once built in the local context, become complex, but even at the level of complexity, they intersect.

Non-western research is always comparative since it always refers to the West implicitly, which is symbolically present in most of our research. Georgian student activists, when in need of references, always invoke Western students movements, while completely ignoring specific regional (for instance, Turkey) student movements. JNU student activism can serve as a successful archetype for comparison. This juxtaposition may bring some meaningful insights into the field of study by identifying and analyzing patterns of student activism and their strategies apropos feminist issues.

One of the reasons for studying this issue is the conviction that student activists are serving as vanguards of political dissent and are fighting for the concerns of larger groups in the population that are worth understanding. I endeavor to make a theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge pertaining to the locus of gender oppression within the progressive left-wing movements. In addition, this thesis contributes to the emerging literature on the student political activism in the Global South. This thesis aims to contribute not only to an academic, but also to a non-academic audience through undertaking a social justice agenda. I strive for a political commitment to identify the strategies that enable various progressive student activists to address gender oppression. This research study will have direct and indirect implications for gender justice. For example, ascertaining which strategies of student activism might best eliminate gender inequality and which patterns of student activism might reinforce oppressive structure. Secondly, it aims to unveil the oppression that inhibits each aspect of our lives and illuminates myriad of ways student activists attempt to turn their discontent into action.

An Outline of the Ph. D. Thesis

In the following chapter, *Literature Review*, I focus on the theoretical concepts and literature review, which pave the way for an analysis of student activism. First, based on the model created by social movement theorist McAdam (1986), I hypothesize that **social networks** operate at all levels and are essential for students' engagement in activism. In order to explain the process of "becoming an activist," I propose a "transcending pyramid" that consists of three elements: **social networks**, **rationale** and **action**. Secondly, in order to interrogate on the student organizations' feminist stance based on Klatch's (2001) theoretical model, I develop a trichotomy of the constitutive elements of the feminist stance: declaration, rationale and action. The literature review establishes a theoretical background to which I refer iteratively throughout my thesis.

Chapter Three elucidates the methodologies I employed for my research and outlines the research types: participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, etc. This chapter illustrates the strategies of critical discourse analysis that I predominantly employed for examination of data. Chapter Four, *Inception – Student Organizations*, describes the *inception* of the selected student organizations and of vociferous left- and right-wing activism in Georgia and India. It provides the background analysis of their political agenda and activities. This recount of the development and characteristics of the selected student organizations is indispensable in locating their position within a particular oppression or ideology or within multiple systems of oppressions, in particular, to identify their feminist stance. Each of the organizations' analyses follows the same set of structures.

Chapter five, *Encounter – 'Making an Activist,'* aims to explicate the ways prospective activists encounter the organizations. This chapter investigates the process of "making an activist" and

explains it through the elements of the "transcending pyramid." It primarily focuses on the organizations' mobilization strategies, whereas Chapter six, *"Transcending vs. Preserving – 'Becoming an Activist,' "* explores the process of "becoming an activist" as it is viewed and interpreted by activists. This chapter illustrates how discontent, aspirations and political encounters spurred activists to action and what difference this engagement made to them and to "the worlds they inhabit" (Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 1990).

Chapter seven, *Gender Battleground – Student Organizations' Feminist Stance and Activism*, illustrates how left-wing student organizations position themselves in relation to gender oppression and how it impacts their feminist stance and activism. It explores how organizations with the same elementary structure of left-wing ideological framework address feminist issues such as gender inequality and sexuality. This chapter also looks at the complementary cases of right-wing activism, which enter into the frame. The concluding chapter draws the threads of the discussions in the previous chapters to a close.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter explores literature and the theoretical concepts that pave the way for an analysis of student activism. I draw on insights from a wide range of literature about student movements, social movements, and feminist theories. Firstly, in order to understand how students embark on a journey into activism, I have to look at the conventional literature on social movements. The theoretical literature pertaining to social movements is extensive. I will focus exclusively on those conceptions of social movements that I apply to student protests. There is no consensus on what constitutes a social movement or how to theorize it. One of the earliest definitions of social movements describes it as "a collective acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in society or group in which it is a part" (Turner & Killian, 1957). The synthetic approach to social movement theories provides a better insight than working within only one theoretical model. Therefore, I draw primarily from rational choice, new social movements, and resource mobilization theories. Marx's primary contribution to the study of social movements is the emphasis on social conflict and the explication of the linkage between social change and social movements. Marx revealed the nexus between changing economic conditions and mobilization of social groups as being negatively affected by these changes.

In the 1960s and 1970s, identity-oriented new social movements (NSMs) and resource mobilization theories emerged in Europe and North America, respectively. In contrast to the Marxist framework, NSM theorists argued that "postindustrial societies no longer have an 'economic' basis" (Melucci, 1985). NSM theorists asserted that NSMs were a product of the shift to a postindustrial economy, and hence, that they were fundamentally distinct from the class-based movements of the industrial

age. NSMs were perceived as focusing on struggles over symbolic and cultural resources (Pichardo, 1997).

Resource mobilization theorists viewed grievances as omnipresent; in order to explain how movements sprang up, they looked at their organizers, who had the task of channeling discontent into action. As a result, resource mobilization theory had a propensity to overlook processes at the micro and macro levels by diminishing the importance of grievances in comparison with the processes occurring at the level of the organization. The resource mobilization approach was fundamentally concerned with the strategic and tactical decisions and mainly focused on the way movements utilized various human, economic, cultural, and political resources (della Porta & Diani, 2006).

NSM perspectives did not reverberate in the same way outside the Western context. Applying NSM theories in Latin America implied recognition of economic inequalities as key dimensions of collective action (Edelman, 2001). Moreover, many theorists focusing on Latin American movements substituted NSM terminology with "popular" (people's) movements (Edelman, 2001). Similarly, Larsson (2006) argued that there was not a strict division into "new" and "old" movements; instead, there was continuity between them in places like Latin America and South Asia (Larsson, 2006).

Rao (2000) eschewed NSM terminology and offered several criteria to classify social movements in India. First, he noted that social movements can be classified based on the nature of their consequences, their loci, and their dominant issues of interest. The consequences of a movement may include reform, transformation, or revolution. Further, the locus of a movement refers to the social domain in which it operates (e.g., religious, feminist, peasant, caste, or student), whereas the dominant issue of interest is a political or social concept (e.g., women's liberation). Rao (2000)

argued that “the locus of a movement” and its “dominant issue of interest” provide a substantive aspect of the movement, but the criteria of ideology and “the nature of consequences” are critical in defining its nature and scope (Rao, 2000).

In order to explore the recruitment process in social movements, McAdam (1986) shifted the focus of analysis from movements to specific demonstrations and campaigns, which, in turn, is applicable to the process of engagement in a particular instance of student activism. McAdam (1986) distinguished between “low-risk/cost” and “high-risk/cost” activism. The term “cost” entails spending of time, money, and energy required for participation in activism. For instance, attending a demonstration or public meeting or signing a statement would be considered a “low-cost” activity, whereas mounting campaigns, organizing protests and demonstrations, or writing and distributing leaflets requires substantial amounts of time and energy.

In order to address my first objective, understanding the process of students’ engagement in activism, I largely draw from McAdam’s model of recruitment. McAdam (1986) suggested that, at first, “family socialization” and “other socialization influences” can create a fertile ground for “receptive political attitudes.” However, individual-leaning or ideological affinity without “the structural contact to ‘pull’” an individual into protest activity is not sufficient for intense participation in the movements. Thus, combination of susceptible political disposition and “contact with activist(s)” prompts “initial low-risk/cost activism.” In such a way, a “structural connection” functions as the bridge between prospective activists and the movement (Passy & Giugni, 2001). At this juncture, “biographical availability” may serve to short-circuit the process of recruitment. “Biographical availability” or “personal availability” refers to the absence of personal constraints such as marriage and full-time employment. Finally, participation in “low-risk/cost activism” along with “biographical availability” culminates in the cycle of socialization into “activist networks,” “deepening ideological socialization,” and “playing at” being an activist. These “tentative forays”

into the new role of an activist are regarded as a requisite for engagement in high-risk/cost activism. (McAdam, 1986).

Based on McAdam's (1986) model, I hypothesize that social networks operate at all levels and are essential in the process of "becoming a dissenter." Social networks entail both "strong" and "weak" social ties. By "weak" social ties, I mean being acquainted with student activists, whereas by "strong ties" I refer to friends who attend low-cost/risk activities such as demonstrations and meetings as well as friends who are involved in intense activism.

Strong ties encompass the affectual networks or "libidinal constitution" of social movements. Social movement theorists avoid issues of emotion and sexual passion in the analysis of social movements, because they are viewed as irrational and expressive, whereas scholars aim to establish the rational character of social movements (Goodwin, 1997). Sexual relationships as well as strong emotional ties may erode the solidarity and function as an antidote to leaving (della Porta & Diani, 2006). Thus, activists may be held together not only by shared interests, ideologies, and rationales, but also by affectual ties that comprise everything "under the word love" (Goodwin, 1997). For instance, among Maoist cadres in Nepal, marriage is a means of controlling female cadres and making it difficult for them to leave the party (Manchanda, 2004).

Engagement in student activism entails learning and unlearning, breaking old habits and "going beyond the limits of ordinary experience" or transcending. In order to explain this process, I propose a "transcending pyramid" that consists of three elements: social networks, rationale, and action. **Social networks** entail socialization and/or activist(s) networks that lead to predispositions toward action, ideological affiliation, and engagement in low-cost/risk activism. **Rationale** entails articulation of grievances and the development of an ideological framework that elaborates systems of meaning and transforms discontent into action. **Action** implies participation in low-risk/cost

activism, which in turn facilitates broadening of activist(s) networks and reification of ideological affinity. This "transcending pyramid" should elucidate the process of "becoming a dissenter" and of engagement in intense activism.

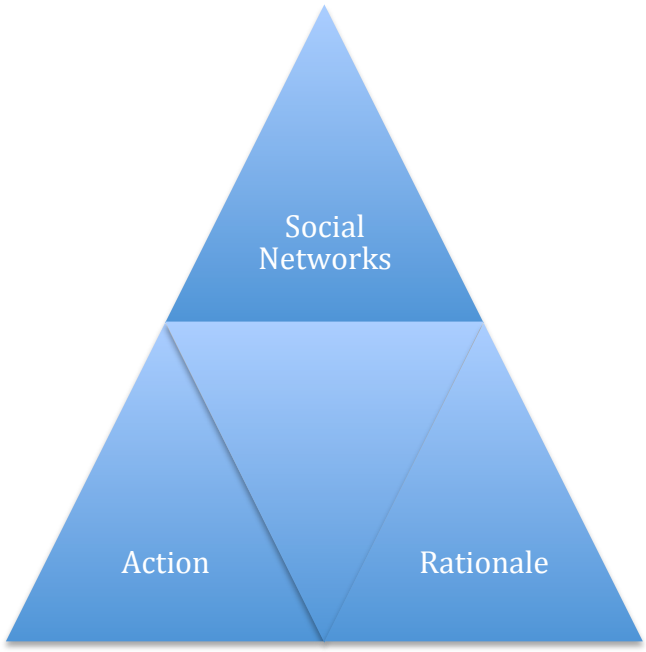

Figure 1: Transcending pyramid.

The second aim of my thesis is to interrogate left- and right-wing student organizations and activists' feminist stance. I hypothesize that both left- and right-wing activists may recognize gender inequality and condemn it, but that their interpretation of the particular events of gender inequality and/or their actions, both personal and collective, may prove the opposite. Klatch (2001) argued that there are three stages in the formation of feminist consciousness: identification of inequality or mistreatment, discovering a language or framing by which to interpret these experiences, and the social construction of a collective identity. Klatch (2001) used the term "feminist consciousness" in the same way Ethel Klein (1987) defined group consciousness. It is "the belief that personal

problems result from unfair treatment because of one's group membership rather than from a lack of personal effort or ability" (Klein, 1987).

Based on Klatch's (2001) theoretical model, I develop a trichotomy of the constitutive elements of the feminist stance:

Declaration implies the recognition of gender inequality and repudiation of women's oppression. It includes not only feminists but also those who assert gender equality, whether or not they identify with the term "feminist" (Klatch, 2001).

Rationale pertains to the ways in which organizations depict and activists articulate and interpret gender inequality. Activists acquire a vocabulary to perceive, identify, and label their experiences. Women start recognizing the systemic and structural characteristics of their "personal" problems. Activists develop a framework that explains their discontent and guides them to action.

Action entails individual- and organizational-level acts that sustain or challenge sexism and gender inequality.

Finally, the aim of this thesis is to explore how gender shapes student activism. Gender is embedded at all levels of social movements. Most research on social movements and gender focus on movements that revolve around gender-related issues, particularly women's movements; however, gender hierarchy is persistent even in the movements that are less explicitly centered on gender and/or purport to be gender-inclusive (Einwoohner, Hollander, & Olson, 2000; Roy, 2009; Manchanda, 2004; Taylor, 1999). Social movements are gendered at individual, interactional, and structural levels (Einwohner et al., 2000; Risman, 2004). Einwohner et al. (2000) offered a typology of the various ways in which social movements can be gendered: gendered composition, gendered goals, gendered tactics, gendered identities, and gendered attributions (Einwohner, Hollander, & Olson, 2000). A gender-skewed composition of the movements can be a result of mobilization along gender lines. Gendered goals indicate that some movements may have goals that challenge

gender hierarchies, whereas other movements may reflect traditional gender stereotypes. Social movement tactics are behaviors such as marching, characteristic slogans, the language used by the protesters, and their appearance (clothing). West and Blumberg (1990) argued that by making political women invisible, "men reinforce the dualistic world-view of themselves as political and women as apolitical" (West & Blumberg, 1990). Due to men's political domination in society, their language and perceptions are also dominant, which prevents women's perceptions and language from being publicly adopted; women are compelled to adopt the systems of understanding, language, and behavior of the male world-view in order to participate in public life (Kramarae, Thorne, & Henley, 1983).

Gender hierarchy is manifested not only through the construction of manhood and "exalted motherhood" (Taylor, 1999) as icons of nationalist ideology, but also through the domination of masculine interests in the ideology of social movements. In this thesis I look at left- and right-wing organizations and explore how ideological affinity shapes student activists' political trajectories, and, in turn, how activists themselves reshape the ideological frameworks within which they operate. The term "ideology" has been given various, often opposed, functions and meanings, which can be divided into two groups: positive and negative. The positive use of the term refers to rational systems of beliefs and ideas, which are rationally accepted and are not immune to everyday life or evidence. The negative use of the term refers to something like "false consciousness," when agents' ideas and beliefs are constructed in such a way that they oppose their own interests (Weberman, 1997). An ideology may serve a social movement in two ways: as a map providing "a simplifying perspective through which the observer can make sense of otherwise overwhelmingly complex phenomena" and as "a guide to action" (Turner & Killian, 1972; Wilson, 1973).

The gendered nature of social movements has been discussed in the feminist and social movement literature (Kuumba, 2001; Manchanda, 2004; Roy, 2009; West & Blumberg, 1990). Recognizing

that much of the social movement scholarship was male-dominated and neglected gender, scholars began to identify gendered patterns in social movements. However, the research often centered only on female activists and did not reveal the whole picture (Roy, 2009). West and Blumberg (1990) identified three patterns of gendered integration in social movements: independent, gender-parallel, and gender-integrated. Gender-independent movements and/or groups are those in which women and men participate in completely separate actions and their organizations are with different projects and ultimate objectives. In contrast, gender-integrated organizations and movements engage both women and men who pursue a common goal, which is usually not gender-related. Finally gender-parallel movements include both men and women in the same movement but in separate structures and activities. Laboratory 1918 was a gender-integrated group, while AISA, a left-wing organization in JNU, combined both gender-integrated and gender-parallel patterns.

One of the illustrations of gendered patterns in the left-wing social movements is the article "Magic Moments of Struggle: Women's Memory of the Naxalbari Movement in West Bengal, India (1967-75)" (Roy, 2009). Roy (2009) explored women's memories of participation, experiences, and everyday struggles in the Naxalbari Movement in West Bengal. The author distinguished between the experiences of peasant/working-class women from those of middle-class women from smaller towns and upper middle-class metropolitan women. The article's title came from a Naxalite activist from the Birbhum district, who referred to the years of her activism in the Naxalbari movement as "magic moments." Roy (2009) argued that in order to conceptualize women's memoirs of "magic moments," it is necessary to look at their "moments of nightmare" too. She explored how, despite experiences of violence, those years are still remembered as "magic moments," and how those years of activism shaped their identities as women and as Naxalites.

Roy argued that "though the studies foreground the Naxalite protagonist from different perspectives, the maleness of the protagonist remains constant"; hence, the history of the Naxalbari

movement is almost always "his story." Roy aimed to recover the figure of the woman Naxalite. The author clarified that the meaning of "magic moments" was not just an uncritical celebration of the years of activism. The period was magical because it promised that all kinds of structures of oppression, including gender, would be torn down. This expectation was supported by their initial success in breaking certain social taboos and aspects of patriarchal domination, but, as the author argued, they could not sustain it later. Exclusion of women's memories from the dominant social memory of Naxalbari reveals how the politics of the gender hierarchy affects representation of the past. By bringing these marginalized memories back into the discourse of Naxalbari, Roy helped scholars to conceptualize the Naxalite protagonist as a gendered identity and illustrated how gender politics have been inextricably linked with Naxalite politics.

Rita Manchanda's (2004) article on Maoist Insurgency in Nepal is another example of analyses focusing on gendered dynamics of social movement. Manchanda (2004) looked at the tension between women and male leadership and explored the emancipatory potential of the participation of women in a militarized movement. The author questioned whether visibility of women can translate into protagonism and empowerment. Manchanda (2004) expatiated on women's mobilization and participation in the movement at all levels.

The relationship between left-wing movements and feminism has been ambiguous. Their differences mainly pertain to the source of oppression, strategy, and understanding. The debate over identity politics has been illustrative of these differences. The term "identity politics" encompasses a wide range of movements, including the women's movement, and frequently is used as a "derogatory synonym of feminism" (Fraser, 1997, p.113). Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches distinguish identity politics from class politics, and they view class inequality as the real source of exploitation and oppression. Fraser argued that the division of cultural politics of recognition and social politics of redistribution ignores the intersection of the axes of oppression, namely, the

interrelatedness of socioeconomic injustice that is rooted in the political-economic structure and cultural injustice. She stated that race and gender constitute "bivalent" collectivities that are affected by both the economic and cultural structures of society (Fraser, 1997).

Nandy (2010) argued that stress on culture is a response to the "modern idea" that "even resistance be uncontaminated by the 'inferior cognition' or 'unripe' revolutionary consciousness of the oppressed." It is a repudiation of the belief that "only that dissent is true which is rational, sane, scientific, adult and expert – according to Europe's concepts of rationality, sanity, science, adulthood and expertise" (Nandy, 2010). One of the criticisms of identity politics is its essentialism, which is considered to be a hindrance to the united struggle. Critics have argued that particularistic claims for "group-based benefits" divide the left and lead to its decline (Bernstein, 2005). Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches to identity politics and, particularly, to feminism, have been criticized by the same writers, but with "reversed arrow": first, feminists argued that not the differences but the inability and reluctance to recognize those differences divide the movement (Lorde, 1984). For instance, Rao (2003) complained: "while the left party based women's organizations collapsed caste into class, the autonomous women's groups collapsed caste into sisterhood, both leaving Brahminism unchallenged." Dalit women are "subalterns among the subalterns." After realizing the fact that no one could speak for them, Dalit women decided to set up the Dalit Women's Federation. Leftists viewed Dalit women's organizations as "setting up a separate hearth" (Rege, 1998). Thus, Dalit feminists promoted intersectionality, which was not welcomed, either by leftists and Dalit men or by feminists, who viewed their attempts as "narrow identity politics" (Rege, 1998).

Second, the left has failed to focus on questions like how and why women are oppressed as women; it has not addressed the woman question adequately nor inserted it into existing work or revolutionary practice (Bernstein, 2005; hooks, 1981; Kumari & Kelkar, 1989). In response to

Marxists' arguments on "division of labor" and "production," Hartmann (1981) stated that the problem is not merely a division of labor between men and women in the family, the labor market, and society, but a "division that places men in a superior, and women in a subordinate, position." Countering the argument that women's work "appears to be for men but in reality is for capital," Hartmann (1981) started that "women's work in the family really is for men – though it clearly reproduces capitalism as well." Similarly, Rubin (2011) states that to illustrate women's usefulness to capitalism is one thing, but to argue that this usefulness elucidates the genesis of the women's oppression is quite another (Rubin, 2011). Moreover, feminist theorists variously explained and criticized Marx's theorizing, which locates the first social division of labor between mental and manual. Rose (1994) argues that while Marx insists on the social division of labor – between that of the "hand" and that of the "brain" – he misses that of the "heart" (Rose, 1994). She argues that caring, intimate and emotionally demanding labor always involves personal service and is predominantly gendered. Hartsock (1998) also criticizes Marx for dismissing the sexual division of labor. Hartsock (1998) states that Marx's argument that the division of labor becomes "truly such" when the division of mental and manual labor appears, indicates that he undermines analytic importance of sexual division of labor (Hartsock, 1998).

Oppression is a central category of political discourse for both leftist and feminist groups. However, they theorize it differently. Young (2005) offers five faces of oppression, namely, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young, 2005). Thus, oppression is often implicit and omnipresent as it is structural and systemic, but its manifestations can be explicit as it entails identifiable agent, who discriminates. While explaining the implications of exploitation, Young (2005) argues that women's oppression does not consist merely in an inequality of status, power, and wealth resulting from men's privileged position, but gender exploitation is twofold: first, transfers fruits of material labor to men and second, transfers nurturing and sexual energies to men. Thus, Young states that women's exploitation does not consist merely

in division of labor, but in the fact that they perform tasks for the one on whom they are dependent (Young, 2005).

The relationship between the left and feminism in India has been also uneasy, as leftists have attacked local feminists as "bourgeois" and "Westernized." Similarly, right-wing activists have labeled the women's movement as "Western," suggesting that Hindu women should stand in solidarity with Hindu men (Baccheta, 2004). The reason behind the ignorance of gender issues in the left movements may be the male leadership's self-interest as well as patriarchal interests in their ideological formulations (Omvedt, 2004). Despite all the differences between Marxism and feminism, Omvedt (2004) argued that the two ideologies are compatible and do not contend with each other, as they do not operate on the same level.

The relationship between right-wing movements and feminism is immensely vexed. Prior to exploring the literature on the intersection of gender and right-wing movements, I will elucidate what I mean by "right-wing" in India. Hindu nationalism emerged in the 1920s in western India. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a main ideologue of Hindu nationalism, systematized the ideology and proposed definitions of Hindu-ness (Hindutva) based on territory, race, and culture. Further, in the mid-1920s, Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an organization promulgating Hindutva ideology along with physical training. RSS defined itself as a "cultural" organization, but it was a political project that utilized cultural and religious discourses to gain power (Bedi, 2006). RSS created "family organizations" (Sangh Parivar), which encompassed professional unions such as teachers, students, workers; issue-based organizations like cow protection and temple "reconversion"; and two political parties: Jana Sangh and the BJP. RSS aims to "unify" Hindus and promote social cohesion over class struggle (Bacchetta, 2004; Jaffrelot, 2007).

Hindu nationalists hold an ambiguous relationship to traditions and modernization. On the one hand, they are in favor of rapid modernization (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012); on the other hand, they embrace traditional values and culture. The limitations of nationalist ideology in promoting liberal and egalitarian social change in terms of gender and sexuality may not be viewed as a "retrogression" (Sarkar & Butalia, 1995), but instead as a result of the process placing the woman's question in an "inner domain" of national culture (Chatterjee, 1989). Partha Chatterjee pointed out the traditional−modern dichotomy and argued that the conservative position rests on deployment of "tradition," which masks patriarchy within and places women under the sign of privatized tradition that must be defended against the corruption of "decadent Western culture." "Modern" groups may reject "conservative" traditional culture, but they collaborate with the patriarchy by reinventing "tradition" to produce new forms of gender oppression. There is a belief that the modern construction of gender and sexuality is an indirect promotion of Western permissive values, which are contrary to the local culture. In such a way, there is a direct encounter between "modern" culture and traditional gender norms and values that claim to be authentic and local (Chatterjee, 1989). Lukose (2005) argued that colonialist and nationalist categories such as "tradition/modernity" and "public/private" shape the conditions under which young people negotiate new consumer identities and spaces. The notion of "homogenized globalization" operates as much through the production of differences as sameness and produces another category−a resistant "local" (Lukose, 2010).However, while resisting globalization, the "local" can take the hegemonic form of cultural nationalism that both dominates and marginalizes non-conformist groups.

The literature on gender and right-wing movements primarily is concerned to explain women's participation in the right-wing politico-religious movements characterized by strongly "patriarchal" authority structures that "assign women subordinate social and symbolic roles." Bedi (2006) explored the individual and collective motivation of women of right-wing movements and the ways

in which they perceive themselves. She focused on the women's wing (Mahila Aghadi) of the right-wing Shiv Sena party in India. Many Aghadi women joined the movement because of economic hardships they were facing–namely, they were concerned by the "joblessness of their fathers and brothers" (Bedi, 2006). While some feminists scholars have tended to consider right-wing women activists as alienated from their own interests, Bedi (2006) tried to show that women's participation in religious right-wing politics is actually motivated by "active choice." Similarly, Bacchetta (2004), in order to explore how "active choice" operates, focused on the life of a particularly committed woman activist of Rashtra Sevika Samiti who revolts against dominant norms of domesticated femininity and appears to be a "fiercely independent woman" (Bacchetta, 2004). Sarkar and Butalia (1995) argued that Hindutva ideology places women within the home and, hence, reifies a patriarchal model of the family. However, Bedi (2006) argued that this reification does not necessarily imply the "domestic, female 'non-subject.'" Bedi (2006) argued that 'political' is not restricted to the public space anymore; consequently, Hindu women's mobilization is an example of how "political" space has been extended.

Most literature on social movements, particularly student movements, in the third-world countries applies Western European or North American paradigms to explain the movement dynamics. Moreover, often these paradigms that are deployed have the tendency of universalizing and cannot reflect the realities of the third-world countries (Altbach, 1984). Altbach (1984) argued that the Western "bias" has distorted analyses of student politics in the Third World and instead, it should be looked at as a relatively independent phenomenon. Connell (2007) and Chakraborty (2000) have widely discussed the tendency of making claims about universal knowledge and values, which they found problematic. Connell (2007) argued that these universal claims are made from the position of privilege; hence, they serve as reinforcements of hegemony. Similarly, Dipesh Chakraborty (2000) stated that thinkers shaping social science have produced theories embracing the whole of humanity, but in relative ignorance of the majority of humankind – that is, those living in non-

Western cultures. This problem persists not only among scholars, but also among some student activists in Georgia and India, who replicate the ideological frameworks and social movement paradigms relevant in the Western context without considering the local circumstances, rendering their activism ineffective.

In order to emphasize the Western−Third World relations in the realm of knowledge, Connell (2007) used the term "Northern/Southern theory," while for the same purpose Chakraborty (2000), as well as the Indian periodical Subaltern Studies, uses the term "subaltern" in order to highlight relations of power. Thus, the West produced theoretical insights, whereas the non-Western countries retained a "practical" character as sources of data. This Northern−Southern dichotomy and the consequently derived differences have become the focus of study for sociologists. There was a tendency to construct two poles for comparisons: the "civilized" metropolis and "primitive" cultures (Chakraborty, 2000; Connell, 2007). Thus, the societal biases and privileges for and against certain cultures are quite pronounced in the field of social sciences. According to Chakraborty (2007), the problem of "asymmetric ignorance" has been persistent in academia. It refers to the tendency of Western thinkers to ignore non-Western social thought without the quality of their work being affected, whereas non-Western thinkers cannot reciprocate this kind of "ignorance" without appearing "not relevant" or "outdated" (Chakraborty, 2000). For instance, in his book, Giddens provided a reading list of 51 books, and all of them are published in the "metropole," with only one concerning a non-metropolitan point of view (Connell, 2007). However, this kind of ignorance of third-world thinkers does not seem to diminish in any way the Western author's work. While claiming to put forward theories that apply to social processes of global scope, the Western social scientist rarely cites non-metropolitan thinkers and never builds his or her work on social theory formulated in third-world countries. Instead, what we see are the data from the periphery, but concepts, debates, and research strategies from the metropole (Connell, 2007). However, it is an interesting paradox that third-world social scientists find these theories, in spite of their inherent

ignorance of "non-western social thought," eminently useful in understanding their societies (Chakraborty, 2000).

Connell (2007) and Chakraborty (2000) depicted how Europe and North America have declared themselves as cradles of modernity and prescribed to themselves all the achievements, while ignoring the socio-political thoughts of non-Western countries. Thus, the colonial and post-colonial period established Western social thought and ideas and concepts in the third-world countries. These ideas were promoted as valid for universal consumption, whereas existing non-Western works were considered as exotic pasts, which could be easily neglected. In view of this criticism, I attempt to avoid biases and keep balance in the literature from which I have derived my theoretical framework; however, it is an arduous task.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study investigates how students become involved in activism, how activism is conceptualized overtly in relation to gender and how gender becomes articulated tacitly in this activism. For this purpose, a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, method has been chosen. The broad methodological framework for this qualitative study is feminist, which is the most appropriate and fruitful method for exploring how students unveil the world of oppression and where patriarchal oppression stands in it. The overriding value of feminist approach is the efficacy with which it can draw out detailed information without ignoring gender factors and the structures of power during the data collection and its analysis. For data collection, the feminist ethnographic methodology will be used, which seems to be ideally suited to feminist research, because it eschews dualisms and allows for a non-hierarchical, egalitarian research relationship between the researcher and her 'subjects' (Stacey, 1988). In my view "feminist ethnography" is an appropriate methodology, as it allowed me to acknowledge the importance of my own interest and personal experience. By drawing on direct observations and perceptions, I was able to translate personal into the social and political.

This research consists of several research types: participant and non-participant observation conducted from 2012 through 2013, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, systemic observation of the online activities of my respondents and of the selected organizations I focus on; and materials (books, letters, newspaper articles, pamphlets, and posters). The fieldwork upon which this thesis is based was conducted in 2012 and 2013: from January to May of 2013 in India and two phases in Georgia, from September to December of 2012 and from May to October of 2013. However, even after the fieldwork, data collection has been a permanently ongoing procedure, although with less intensity.

The thesis predominantly focuses on left-wing student organizations; for this reason, I've selected, first, the only pronouncedly left-wing organization, Laboratory 1918, to emerge at Tbilisi State University in Georgia, and second, vociferously left-wing student organization, All India Students Association (AISA), which has been dominating since 2007 in Students' Union elections at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, which in turn is considered a "bastion of left." These left-wing organizations share the fundamental structure of left-wing ideology, which permits a comparison. I am interested in exploring how these fundamental structures become shaped and articulated apropos to feminist issues, such as gender inequality, patriarchal oppression and sexuality, once they are built in the local context. However, these left-wing organizations are different in size and operate differently. The average size of AISA's decision-making body is approximately 45 (the number changes every year), whereas there were 14 founding members of Laboratory 1918, which increased subsequently. But, only those who attended meetings made decisions; the average number of attendants was 15-20. These differences are reflected in the number of interviewers. In addition, AISA's activism was systematic and frequent, which implied at least 2-3 activities in a week, whereas Laboratory 1918 was less regular, sometimes without a single activity in a month. This variance is reflected in the size of the data, which is richer in case of AISA than Laboratory 1918.

The selected left-wing organizations were rooted in context and did not operate in isolation. The interplay between various shades of left-wing organizations and the relatively low number right-wing groups is particularly pertinent at JNU. In order to view left-wing activism in context, I decided to observe complementary cases of right-wing organizations: National Front in Georgia and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) at JNU in India. Since I've chosen JNU as my field site, I've decided to observe the voice of the far-right at JNU – ABVP. In the case of Georgia, my selection criteria for a right-wing organization included that it be completely or predominantly

student-based, as is the case with all other selected organizations, and that it share the elementary structure or far-right ideological framework with ABVP. However, these right-wing organizations are not present to the same degree as the selected left-wing organizations; in particular, their gendered composition is highly skewed, with only 1 and 3 vocal female activists in National Front and ABVP, respectively.

At the same time, during my fieldwork, I had to reflect on my position, since oppositional organizations on JNU campus were waging an ideological war and, as a participant, it was impossible to be natural on both fronts. In the past, I studied at JNU. I had acquaintances and friends, mostly among left-wing activists, and even participated in some left-wing student activism. If I wanted to be a participant, and not just an observer, I had to choose one of the organizations for my study. At the beginning, I tried to observe both left- and right-wing organizations equally. I realized, in that case, I was seen as a mere researcher, so I lost access to the "insider's view" of the backstage dynamics of the organizations. To avoid this, as a feminist researcher and participant, I've mainly focused on one selected left-wing organization, AISA, for my participant observation at JNU; however, I continued to observe activism of other left- and right-wing organizations, which enabled me to understand how they interlock and enter into the frame. Similarly, in case of the Georgian far-right, I had been merely an observer because of my feminist standpoint, which was overtly unacceptable for National Front members. So, it was impossible for me to be simultaneously honest and engaged. For instance, immediately after the interviewm most right-wing respondents in both Georgia and India asked me about my stance on feminism and other issues of national concern. At that juncture, I was taken aback, because I knew my honest reply would repel them and I would lose access to the respondents. So, I replied, "Since I'm doing research on this issue, I would prefer not to take explicit sides." More intense engagement with right-wing respondents implied that I had to deceive them, which I did not intend to do, so I decided to restrict myself with interviews and observations, instead of participation.

First and foremost, participant and non-participant observation allowed me to be part of the social context and to understand "the totality of the social, cultural and economic situation, regarding the context" (Walliman, 2011). During my fieldwork in Tbilisi, Georgia, I attended protest demonstrations organized by Laboratory 1918. I also went to the public meetings, where Laboratory 1918 activists were invited as guest speakers. However, Laboratory 1918's activities were frequent only in September 2012. The rest of the year, they were irregular and intermittent, whereas in India, student activism was extremely vibrant with almost daily activities. I participated in various protests and public meetings, as well as in the everyday life of JNU student activists in Delhi, India. Engagement in the social reality and informal interactions were important methodological tools for me. It aimed to entail both being with students to see how they respond to events and experiencing for myself these events and the context in which they occur. This kind of first-hand relation with the researcher and those studied provided clues to understanding the more subtle, underlying meanings that are often not explicit in semi-structured interviews. This will allow us to see how meanings and understandings emerge and change through talks. During the fieldwork, I maintained a personal diary of real and online observations, conversations and reflections. However, for data analysis, I largely employed Critical Discourse Analysis, which implies no line between collection of data and analysis, and I collected my data almost until the date of submission (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

Keeping a diary of my observations and reflections enabled me to recognize and reflect on my own positionality. For instance, I thought about reasons for my interest in student activism, which has been developed and shaped by my past experiences. I considered how I felt about student activism before starting my research and how the process of fieldwork and subsequent analysis impacted those feelings. I was inspired by the positive potential of left-wing student activism as a powerful political movement that raises questions about social injustice, hierarchy and privilege. I aspired to explore the possibility of feminist activism within the progressive left-wing movement. For this

reason, I've selected left-wing student organizations that share the same fundamental structure, such as the left-wing ideological framework in India and in Georgia. However, I noticed that, sometimes, oppositional, far right-wing activism could enter into the frame. Therefore, I decided to include right-wing organizations as complementary cases.

I also conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 42 male and female activists in India and Georgia. The study used selective sampling to recruit research "subjects." It did not occur simply because of convenience, but for rational purpose. The research mainly focuses on zealous and committed student activists, so it was more adequate to choose respondents selectively, rather than randomly. The sample consists of 19 left-wing activists (9 female and 10 male) in India and 11 left-wing activists (7 male and 4 female) in Georgia. As a complementary case, I have interviewed 8 right-wing activists in India and 4 right-wing activists in Georgia. All people chosen were active for at least the last two years. Importance was placed on left-wing activists, as they are the primary focus of my studies. In Georgia, the interviews were conducted in the Georgian language, while in India, interviews were conducted in both Hindi and English, sometimes intermingling both to various degrees. My respondents can be identified as youth, whose ages were between 19-31 years old, with one exception who was 35. These interviews, firstly, enabled me to reflect on student activists' political trajectories in their own terms and provided information about selected organizations' activities. Secondly, semi-structured and unstructured interviews helped me to cover identifiable research questions and, at the same time, facilitate a free conversation. This is also a preference for feminist research, because "the traditional interview is not only as paternalistic, condescending in its attitudes towards women and not accounting for gender differences, but also based on a hierarchical relationship with the respondent in a subordinate position" (Punch, 1998). Thus, feminist methodology generates equal, reciprocal conversations that allow for talking about mutually relevant topics, instead of structured interviews.

I have taken into account metadata, including respondents' spoken and unspoken thoughts and feelings articulated not only in their interview responses, but also through evasions, silences, denials (Fujii, 2010). For instance, Abhishek, a right-wing activist in India, deceived me while recounting how he became engaged in student activism. He narrated an incident, which occurred on campus, and projected it as triggering his engagement in activism. However, through other students who knew him in the past, I came to know that it was not the incident that triggered him to engage in activism, since he had already been active in right-wing politics in the past. He confused me, because he wanted to convey that he joined politics because he discovered the nefariousness of left-wing politics at JNU.

Another discursive strategy I encountered in the field was evasion. Most right-wing respondents avoided answering questions on gender and sexuality at length or directly; to a certain extent, this was true for most left-wing, Georgian respondents, too. This tendency may indicate that they are uncomfortable talking about gender issues, they do not have much to say about the issue, or they do not want to make a mistake, so they prefer brief answers. However, being inevitably implicated in the social reality of the people studies raises ethical considerations, dilemmas and choices. Activists are cautious with how they speak about gender and with whom they speak about it. Sometimes, I was forced to infer meaning from ambiguous remarks and silences, which runs the risk of over-interpretation.

In this thesis, I highlight the importance of emotion in what "makes" and sustains an activist. For a feminist account of student activism, feeling must surely remain a pivotal principle in how I conceive activism. Focusing on emotions does not simply reify the association of femininity with nurture and irrationality; on the contrary, it questions what is rational and, secondly, challenges the values attached to "rational" and "emotional." Finally, feminist research should not suppress emotions, which are imbued in the process of writing.

Thus, in-depth interviews, along with participant observation, observation of online activities of the selected student organizations and respondents, a review of pamphlets and wall posters, and other materials, such as media interviews, newspaper articles, and video and photo resources, helped me to analyze the data within the context. As far as what people say they do is not always the same as what they do, the consideration of different circumstances and settings contributed to a better understanding of students' activism and their feminist consciousness.

The main research question and other guide-questions derived from it formed the basis of the conversation and discussion. The aim of this thesis is threefold: to explore how students engage in student activism, to examine the ways gendered structure inhibits student activism, and to identify where student organizations and its members position themselves within a particular oppression or systems of multiple oppressions and how that impacts their feminist stance and activism. The interview focused on three sets of issues:

1. *Background and political involvement*, which included questions on activists' demographic backgrounds, early political socialization, how and why students engaged in activism, and the effects of their involvement in activism.
2. *Organizational experience and key issues*, which entailed questions on elaborating the main agenda of the organizations, what the issues they address are and why they are important, and what the structure of the organization is: composition, decision-making process, protest forms, and mobilization strategies.
3. *Gender and feminism*, which included questions on gender inequality, whether or not the organization addressed issues of gender and why or why not, how activists and organizations articulate feminist issues, such as gender inequality and sexuality, and what the strategy is for handling these issues.

For examination of data, I largely employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in particular Discourse Historical Analysis, which is a methodology for analysis of text and talks. CDA provides insight into the relationships between language, ideology, politics and power. CDA aims to unravel the underlying implication of the discourse. The language student activists choose reflects their intentions, ideology, and thought. The context of language use is crucial for CDA. CDA is concerned with various forms of social inequalities "as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse)" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Critical Discourse Analysis does not merely say something, it accomplishes something in its enunciation. The CDA concerns not just the content of discourse, but its performative effect, which in turn implies what the discourse produces and how it operates. Thus, Van Leeuwen identifies two relations between discourse and social practice: First, "discourse as the instrument of power and control" and second, "discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality" (van Leeuwen, 1993).

In this thesis, the language of the student activists and the discourse of their organizations, manifested in wall posters, pamphlets and statements, is scrutinized as a site of ideology. The focus on ideology for Thompson (1990) is a study of "the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds" (Thompson, 1990). This entails the study of the social contexts where the symbols are embedded. It requires a theorization and description of both the social processes that produce the text and the social processes within which social and political actors create meanings in their interactions with texts.

The processing of the material included the following steps:

1. Overview of the "rhetoric of gender":

Ideological statements:

i) What notion of gender equality do the organizations convey?

ii) What kind of understanding of gender underlines the organizations' agenda?

2. Strategies of self-and other-presentation (Meyer, 2001):

i) Referential strategy, metaphors and metonymies: How are persons/issues named and referred?

ii) Predication that appears in stereotypical, evaluative attributions of positive or negative traits: What traits, characteristics and qualities are attributed to them?

iii) Argumentation, which is reflected in certain topoi used to justify particular actions: By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific individuals or social groups justify and legitimize the exclusion of others?

iv) Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation: From what perspective are these labels, attributions and arguments expressed?

v) Intensification and mitigation: Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated?

Not all chapters are examined equally thorough gender, but they are examined through the feminist lens. As Lazar (2007) notes, "Not all studies that deal with gender in discourse are necessarily feminist;" moreover, feminist criticism has addressed distortions of women as objects of knowledge and "patriarchal bias" in the content (Westkott, 1990). Instead, feminist researchers argued that "feminist research should be not just on women, but for women, and where possible, with women" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2007). Further, the feminist methodological challenge is in the diversity of methodological and epistemological approaches and, finally, it is concerned with issues of social justice (Doucet & Mauthner, 2007). This thesis is enkindled by the idea of social change and challenges methodological conservatism; each stage of study, from data collection to analysis and writing, is suffused with a feminist quest. I avoid rigid literalness and acknowledge my respondents' "imaginative capacity to transcend the present" (Westkott, 1990).

Chapter Four: Inception – Student Organizations

Introduction

Inception is the word that describes the major theme of this chapter: inception of student organizations and of vociferous left- and right-wing activism. This chapter recounts the development and characteristics of selected student organizations in India and Georgia. First and foremost, I explore the dynamics of student activism at Jawaharlal Nehru University regarding left- and right-wing organizations, such as All India Students' Association (AISA) and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). Further, I unravel both left- and right-wing student activism by looking at Laboratory 1918 and National Front in Georgia. The main focus of this thesis, as well as of this chapter, is to explore how left-wing student organizations position themselves within a particular oppression or ideology, as well as within systems of multiple oppressions simultaneously; how these ideological frameworks impact their feminist stance and activism or the ways gender is embedded in student organizations' agendas and functioning.

Introduction to Student Activism at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has been a hotbed of student politics; in fact, since JNU's inception in 1969, being a JNU student is to be a potential dissenter. JNU was established on the fifth anniversary of the death of the first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru. Student politics is an inextricable feature of JNU; it is embedded in the founding vision of the university. The idea was to make it a model university in India that stands for "social justice, secularism, democratic way of life, international understanding, and scientific approach to the problem of society" (Jawaharlal Nehru University Act, 1966).

The formation of JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) sparked student activism at the university. The JNUSU is the organization recognized by university authorities as representing students' interests. The first group of students who were captivated by radical left-wing ideas were the architects of the JNUSU constitution. The university authorities had no say in the process of drafting the constitution, and they were restrained from any "unwarranted interference" in the matters of JNUSU after its adoption (Constitution of Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union) .The purview of the JNUSU constitution is comprehensive and encompasses students' daily problems as well as wider issues pertaining to the democratic student movement within India. The JNUSU constitution ensures student representation in various committees and councils, such as University Court, Executive Council, Academic Council, Finance Committee, and any other permanent body connected with academic matters (Constitution of Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union).

Romila Thapar (1996) depicts JNU as a place with "free and liberal intellectual perspective" (Thapar, 1996). It is a place where many contending ideologies coexist, but the Marxist ideology prevails and has a large number of adherents. JNU has been described as a "bastion of Marxist revolution," "preserve of a left ideology," "breeding ground" of political leaders asserting social

change, and a place where "Marxism and revolution is a fashion" (Pattnaik, 1982; Chowdhury, 2013). The vociferous left-wing essence of JNU politics has deep roots in the JNU Students' Union constitution; it was preceded by fierce and long debates, dominated by left- and liberal-minded students. The leftist constitution facilitated the "hegemony of the Marxist theoretical idiom and the dream of socialist practice" (Lochan, 1996).

JNUSU emerged as powerful political platform as well as an instrument of resistance. As one of the radical universities in India, JNU was the target of intense government repression during the entire period of the Emergency. Massive arrests of resisting student leaders took place, and university authorities further restricted the functioning of the Students' Union by intrusion into the structure of the organization. For instance, the JNU Students' Union was completely independent of university administration prior to the Emergency; during the Emergency, academic authorities obtained the power to nominate individuals for Students' Union positions. Moreover, JNUSU was provided with an advisor who had veto power over all decisions (Jayaram, 1979). In the aftermath of the Emergency, in general, India's higher education once again became more politicized. Hence, universities have returned as sites of sporadic unrest (Altbach, 1978). Gradually, "intended to be a 'think tank' for Mrs. Gandhi's Congress" was transformed into a "citadel of opposition to her regime" (Pattnaik, 1982).

Three elements – namely, contention, dissent, and concession – now prevail in JNU student politics. Diverse student organizations with diametrically opposed ideologies challenge each other in Students' Union elections: Among the many organizations at JNU are All India Students' Association (AISA), All India Students' Federation (AISF), All India Backward Students' Forum (AIBSF), Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Democratic Students Union (DSU), Democratic Students Federation (DSF), National Students' Union of India (NSUI), Students' Federation of India (SFI), Students for Resistance (SFR), United Dalit Students' Forum (UDSF),

and Youth for Equality (YFE). Students' Union comprises of "office bearers"—namely, president, vice-president, general secretary, and joint secretary (central panel) and the thirty-one councilors elected from different schools (departments). A myriad of student organizations nominate their candidates for the central panel posts as well as for the posts of councilors. University politics is largely determined by the organization that wins the majority of central panel and councilor posts.

Predominantly, different shades of the left have been triumphant in the Student Union elections since their inception in the 1970s; however, right-wing organizations have also made advances in the polls a few times, in 1991, 1996, and 2000. While election-related expenditures are kept to a relative minimum, the electoral process entails debates; particularly remarkable are the presidential debate, campaigning, and meetings, which are regulated by the Students' Union constitution (Shakil, 2008). Student politics in JNU remains free of "muscle and money power." The competition is primarily on the basis of ideology and various national and international issues.

JNU has a reputation for being a "unique and admirable island," where students live in an "escapist heaven" (Pattnaik, 1982; Shakil, 2008). However, many of my respondents argue that it is fallacious to depict JNU as a utopian place free of faults. Nevertheless, JNU's political scenario is antithetical to outside campus politics because often the norms and rules prevalent outside do not find support on campus. For instance, as an illustration of student activists' disobedience and nonconformism, many respondents cited an example that occurred in 2005 when JNU students opposed the installment of a Nestlé outlet on campus. Activists resisted the "corporate takeover of university space" (Hard News, 2005). Earlier, the campus space for business was allotted to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Activists considered giving public space to one with tremendous wealth and power was a deprivation of opportunities to those already deprived and giving more opportunities to those who already made a huge turnover every day. Activists distinguished among the products of multinational corporations: which can be sold by a local entrepreneur and an outlet

like Nestlé and which get direct contracts with the university administration at the expense of local small-scale entrepreneurs. In addition, some of the activists pointed out that it accentuates differences between those who can afford to consume at the expensive brand outlet and those who cannot since a scholarship is the only source to meet their ends.

JNU not only encourages alternative and radical political imagination but also appears as a safe place for radical political practice. The most marginalized voices, demonized political organizations, and ideologies find JNU as a place where dissent wins over suppression. For instance, on February 9, 2013, the government of India secretly hanged Afzal Guru, who was accused in the attack on Parliament in December 2001 and spent 12 years in Tihar Jail. Some left-wing groups from JNU that had been demanding abolishment of the death penalty, including Kashmiri students, went immediately to Jantar Mantar (the main protest site in Delhi) to condemn the hanging. They were beaten by right-wing Hindu nationalists, and the police were lenient with the culprits. On the same day, one of the radical left-wing organizations – Democratic Students Union (DSU) – called for a protest march on campus. Their poster read that the protest march is "against the cold-blooded murder of Afzal at the hands of repressive Indian state!" (DSU, 2013). Radical students often refer to the government as repressive, killer, and even hail the national liberation struggle in Kashmir.

At the meeting, activists expounded on the distinctions between the Indian state and the Indian people. The state declared that it hanged Afzal Guru to satisfy the "conscience of the nation" (Vij, 2013). The activists claimed that the when the government refers to the "nation," it does not mean the Indian people but rather a particular "patriarchal Brahmanical state". Kashmiri students also spoke up at the meeting and criticized the Indian government and army. These Kashmiri students – probably somewhere from outside JNU – could talk so freely and fearlessly against the government

without being suppressed or *lathicharged*[1] by the police. While returning from the meeting, I stumbled upon an all-male gathering of right-wing activists expressing their indignation at the fact that JNU "anti-nationalists" (read: radical leftists) dare to protest the hanging of Afzal Guru. They welcomed the hanging Guru and expressed gratitude for receiving "justice" that was "delayed [but] not denied" (ABVP, Poster, 2013). Subsequently, posters on the walls of red-brick hostels in JNU became were filled with slogans around the terrorist–martyr dichotomy. These instances illustrate the idiosyncrasies of JNU, where the radical voices of diametrically opposed ideological groups can be uttered boldly. Left–right semantics are commonly invoked by the media, academics, nonactivists and activist students, apropos of JNU student activism. In this chapter, I will first explore the ways in which these ideological labels are enacted by student organizations and activists at JNU. Second, I will investigate the ways gender inhibits student activism.

[1] A *lathi* is a heavy stick used by police in India.

All India Students' Association (AISA)

AISA is a left-wing student organization that came into existence in the 1990s. It was a period of communal polarization and the Babri Masjid mosque demolition in 1992.[2] In addition, it was the first phase of an anti-reservation movement.[3] Finally, it was also a time of economic liberalization, when doors were open to foreign goods and other economies. AISA was set up on different campuses, including JNU.

AISA is a student-wing of the Communist Party India-Marxist Leninist (CPIML) (Liberation). Some activists describe AISA as a "movement" (andolan), which stands up for students' rights and against commercialization of education and the fee hike. The main vision of AISA is democratization of higher education in India through a transformation from "being accessible only to a few" to being "accessible to everyone." This is the analogous goal held by most student organizations at JNU. Every year, activists anticipate the new Union Budget of the government and scrutinize its main points, including funds allotted for higher education. Due to the student activists' vigilance, the tuition fee at JNU is the lowest (Rs 300–350 annually) in India. The low fee structure does not discriminate against students who come from marginalized sections of Indian society in pursuing high quality education. Student activism is not only "inward looking" but envisions what is happening outside of JNU. My respondent, AISA activist Agnitro, states that AISA is not restricting its struggle to the student issues because they think the "student movement has a responsibility to other progressive movements: women's movements, workers' movements,

[2] In 1528, the Babri mosque was built on the site. According to Hindu mythology, it was the birthplace of God Rama. Some Hindus determined to liberate it from Muslims and build a Hindu temple at the site. In 1992, they demolished the mosque, which led to nationwide riots between Muslims and Hindus.

[3] In 1989, the Indian prime minister decided to implement Mandal Commission recommendations, which implied 27% quotas for other backward classes (OBCs) in government jobs. This resulted in anti-reservation protests.

struggle for the environmental issues." For instance, AISA female activist Shweta's reminiscences of her early days at JNU describe her encounter with protesting students who had embarked on hunger strike to demand minimum wages for workers. At first, Shweta was perplexed and mistrustful to hear "*chatra-mazdoor ekta zindabad*," which translates as "long live to the unity of students and workers." Since it was not a student issue, she did not understand the need to protest. However, after socialization with student activists, Shweta gradually became aware of "the real face of student politics that embodies the voice of the most deprived sections."

This interconnection of students' national and international issues is well illustrated in the following quote by Singh (2013): "When we talk about mess bills in hostels, we can't but talk about gas prices and food prices. None of which is fixed at the level of hostel or university but is determined at the national and international level." This propensity among the left-wing student organizations, in particular, to connect campus issues with the larger dynamics of society—or even to the international issues—has deep roots in the JNU Students' Union constitution. It endeavors to "promote and safeguard the genuine interests of the student community and link it up with the democratic movement in the country" (Constitution of Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union).

The conspicuous feature of AISA, as well as of few other left-wing organizations at JNU, is its intersectional approach. It has been a contentious issue among left-wing groups that compete with each other for being the most radical and orthodox Marxists. At this juncture, student activists have to negotiate their ideological affiliation and often reshape orthodox ideological frameworks depending on the circumstances and current reality. For instance, along with the students' and workers' issues, AISA has raised issues pertaining to caste, gender, religious minorities, and sexuality. Critics consider too much emphasis on the status-based issues of caste oppression, communalism, and sexuality as a betrayal of radical left-wing politics in favor of identity politics.

However, this criticism is not prevalent and does not affect the overall political discourse on campus, where slogans against patriarchy, Brahmanism and Capitalism are uttered in unison.

AISA's emphasis on the multifaceted oppression – through deployment of the discourse on struggles against communal, patriarchal, and capitalist forces in everyday political practice – is a purposeful tactic. Marxists and Neo-Marxists have criticized so-called "new social movements" (such as for women, LGBT, and anti-racist) for being fragmentation and a decline of the old social movements, whereas new movements responded with the "reverse arrow," incriminating Marxists and Neo-Marxists for burying their heads in the sand and superseding gender or sexuality issues with class conflict. To eschew the divorce (Hartmann, 1981) from feminists, religious minorities, and anti-castists, some left-wing groups at JNU, including AISA, endeavored to encompass a wide range of issues pertaining to the marginal sections of the society and acknowledge specific ways in which various downtrodden groups experience oppression.

To be an apologist of affirmative action (namely, deprivation points and what is called "reservations" in India) is one of the cornerstones for progressive politics in JNU. Deprivation *points* are given mainly to other backward classes (OBCs) that are socially and educationally disadvantaged and regionally backward areas, and are doubled in the case of female candidates. After the written and oral examinations, "deprivation points, wherever applicable, are added to the total score of the candidate," whereas *reservations* are assigned irrespective of the percentage of marks to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and the physically handicapped (Admission Policy). Student activists monitor implementation of reservations with a vigilant eye, and in cases of its subversion, they claim to be prepared to take up the struggle. In 2007, AISA was also part of the successful campaign to recognize madrasa certificates.[4] Until the recognition of madrasa certificates, those students who graduated from madrasas were not eligible for higher education.

[4] A madrasa is a traditional Islamic school.

Agnitro states that it seemed to "close doors for students who are coming from a particular community." Rival left-wing groups at JNU compete with each other for claiming a bigger role in the struggle for affirmative action. Nevertheless, initially, the issue of reservations was contentious among the left-wing organizations because of the reformist essence, whereas right-wing groups (YFE, ABVP) have unequivocally opposed it. However, opponents incriminate left-wing organizations for vote-bank politics, which refers to voting along community characteristics. For instance, since 2007, AISA has reemerged as a dominant student organization, largely determined by winning the majority of the posts in the Student Union elections. In 2007,AISA won all four central panel posts for the first time, whereas the Students' Federation of India (SFI)—traditionally a powerful political organization on the campus—did not win even second place. The major reason for the defeat die not lie at JNU but far away in the village of Nandigram in West Bengal, where a massacre took place under the communist (CPM) government of West Bengal. SFI is backed by CPM and justified the action; this sparked Muslim students' discontent because Nandigram was a Muslim-dominated village and many were killed (Singh, 2013). This created fertile ground for AISA to entice new members and sympathizers, including Muslims, into its ranks. Therefore, the annual JNU Student's Union elections compel student organizations to introspect their methods and ideological frameworks, which in turn may entail betrayal of dogmatic and orthodox formulations. By fighting for deprivation points, OBC reservations, or the recognition of madrasa certificates, AISA activists illustrate their commitment to the struggle for social justice.

Justice and *interlocking axes of oppression* are the most prevalent topoi employed by AISA activists when recounting their struggles. AISA activists strive against oppression of the most downtrodden people in the society, those who experience marginalization, exploitation, powerlessness, violence—and still rise. Who are the "downtrodden people" according to my respondents? These are the poorest of the society, farmers who commit suicide, tribals (adivasi), women, people in Kashmir and Northeast who fight against *Armed Forces Special Powers Act*

(AFSPA), religious minorities, people who belong to the lower caste and who come from "backward backgrounds," marginalized and deprived sections and, finally, all those who fight against any manifestations of oppression. AISA activists envision their role as promulgators of social justice. Activism pertaining to student issues is merely a vehicle for politicization of the students "against communalism, against neoliberal economic policies, against opportunist left . . . against displacement, against fee hike, against gender violence . . . and for the revolution" (Sucheta, AISA activist, female).

The topos of *gender justice* became strikingly vital during the anti-rape movement, when JNU Students' Union (including AISA) spearheaded a mass protest in response to the December 16, 2013, rape case. This movement brought women's freedom to the political agenda. Activists chanted slogans demanding women's freedom (azadi) from the shackles of oppression, freedom to move freely anytime and anywhere, freedom to marry in defiance of caste and community norms, and freedom from patriarchal control and protectionism: "women demand freedom, to walk on the streets, to go out at night, to wear anything they wish . . . freedom from fathers, brothers, and the khap" ("*mahilaein mange azadi, sadak pe chalne ki, raat mein nikalne ki, kuch bhi pahenne ki… bap se bhi, bhai se bhi, khap se bhi azadi"*). It was neither the first nor last time when AISA and other left-wing organizations in JNU spoke up for gender justice; however, the intensity and extent of the protests were unprecedented:

- February 19, 2013: street plays revealing women's wretched conditions;
- February 21, 2013: Protest at Jantar Mantar: "People's watch over parliament" to "keep the flame alive . . . against rape and sexual violence";
- February 24, 2013: movie screening on issues pertaining to gender;
- March 7, 2013: protest on the eve of International Women's Day;
- March 8, 2013: Women's Day March;
- March 14, 2013: street play on gender discrimination.

Freedom without Fear (*Bekhauf azadi*) emerged as an independent platform, yet it was endorsed primarily by AISA activists. It turned gender roles upside down as women activists were in the vanguard of the movement: predominantly women were delivering the speeches in front of TV cameras and providing rationale for the movement, while male activists campaigned for the movement and were involved in backstage activities. The reasons for this movement were numerous: First, it was AISA's strategy to cultivate subaltern leaders and increase their visibility so the protest would appeal to the target group. For instance, to engage women, Muslims, or Dalits in student activism and elude from the danger of schism, AISA ideologues cultivate prospective activists who belong to these subaltern groups. These aspiring activists are trained in both identity politics and Marxism; subsequently, they become natural spokespersons who, on one hand, understand the grievances of their own communities through their lived experiences and, on the other hand, "are equipped with Marxism." They build a "natural bridge between identity politics" and Marxism; this, in turn, culminates in the major confluence of struggles based on diverse axes of oppression.

This strategy has been adopted by other student organizations in JNU, whereas some groups criticize them for practicing identity politics and vote-bank politics. This is quite relevant during the JNU Students' Union elections, as candidates for nomination are selected on the bases of the following criteria: (a) candidate's involvement in the organization's activism; time one devotes to activism; (b) candidate's capacity to articulate the organization's ideological framework and politics; (c) candidate's social networks and the way he or she has been perceived in the public; and (d) belonging to a subaltern group such as women, Muslim, Dalit. In this list of criteria, belonging to a subaltern group, social networks, and public image are pivotal and can outweigh the relative absence of involvement history or capacity to articulate. It is not a coincidence that most of the contesting organizations nominate a woman candidate for one central panel post out of the four

(president, vice-president, general secretary and joint secretary). My respondent from AISA avows that this strategy "makes [their] politics more inclusive": Having a vocal subaltern activist among the ranks suggests that the grievances of that subaltern group will not be neglected; this, in turn, attracts activists and sympathizers from that group. Further, a communist subaltern activist's mission is to traverse narrow community interests and lure subalterns into the confluence of struggles against diverse manifestations of oppression. On one hand, this maneuver illustrates the ways my left-wing respondents reshape their ideological framework depending on the circumstances and local context; this implies an expansion of their political agenda and deployment of a strategic essentialism by incorporating grievances of various downtrodden people and subalterns. On the other hand, there is the danger that deployment of status-based subaltern activists with an expanded political agenda may be a mere superficiality without any radical alteration of the power structures.

For instance, AISA's manifesto reads that at each step, they have upheld women's equality and "stood for their participation and leadership in both the student movement and social life" (Manifesto). However, in speaking about a woman activist's nomination in JNU Students' Union elections, one of my male respondents stated: "We also put a woman [on the list for central panel posts]." Even if this male activist did not mean to diminish the woman activist's role, his language revealed the opposite. He refers to himself and other male activists as "we" who deign to "put" a woman—depicting her as a mere instrument to demonstrate the organization's pro-women stance.

Some male left-wing activists were still reluctant to embrace Freedom without Fear unequivocally. They were not convinced of the liberating aspect of the anti-rape movement, as it did not accentuate class conflict. However, they were hesitant to express criticism in their own words, which would have depicted them as biased or sexist. Instead, upholders of the dogmatic approach invoked the

authoritative leftists intellectuals to make a critical argument. For instance, one of the activists cited Kollontai's (1909) statement:

> Class instinct – whatever the feminists say – always shows itself to be more powerful than the noble enthusiasms of "above-class" politics. So long as the bourgeois women and their "younger sisters" are equal in their inequality, the former can, with complete sincerity, make great efforts to defend the general interests of women. But once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the "rights of all women" become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave the younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realize some "general women's" principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful. (Kollontai, 1909)

Kollontai attacks above-class feminist demands that create privileges for the "bourgeois women," but strengthen the shackles of economic slavery for their "younger sisters." In response to the male comrade citing Kollntai, an AISA female activist named Abhiruchi claims that the ongoing Freedom without Fear movement is leaps ahead of suffragist demands. In Abhiruchi's words:

> Capitalist production relations get reproduced by the ideology of patriarchy. This movement, therefore, questions the modality of operation of patriarchy in the form of marital rape in family, sexual oppression by state, harassment in workplaces, et al. It is the tribal women, Dalit women, women of oppressed nationalities, religious minorities, who bear the brunt of sexual violence. . . . Women's bodies as carriers of purity and pollution only enunciate the patriarchal control of their body. (Facebook post, 2013)

Abhiruchi and her comrades disdain the misapprehension that they demand "bourgeois reforms" demonstrate their pronounced left agenda. It is manifested through the intersections of caste, class,

and gender issues, and the recognition that they are not distinct and isolated realms of experiences; rather, their relationship to each other brings them into existence (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Kavita Krishnan, eminent feminist and former AISA activist, expresses gender politics as being interlocked with caste and class politics:

> Women's bodies are the borders of the castes, and they need policing if the castes are to be maintained. . . . Women's bodies represent their domestic, reproductive and sexual labor—and it is this, too, which caste, patriarchy as well as capitalism needs to control. (Facebook, 2013)

Although student organizations at JNU primarily aspire to devote themselves to the issues pertaining to students, they cannot restrain themselves from bringing in national and international issues, as they construe students' grievances as an epiphenomenon of capitalist, castist, and patriarchal politics that operate at all levels of social structure.

Indian Students' Association – Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)

The ABVP was founded in 1948 by *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) cadres based in Delhi. It has endeavored to combat the communist influence on university campuses (Jaffrelot, 2007). The RSS is the oldest Hindu nationalist organization, founded in the mid-1920s by Hedgewar. The main aim of that organization was to propagate Hindutva ideology along with physical training.

ABVP activists at JNU repudiate the label "right-wing" in reference to their organization. They claim it does not describe the crux of their politics and is a mere imposition by others. They portray themselves as a nationalist organization but object to be branded as right-wing, a term used extensively with a negative connotation and carrying discontent about right-wing politics. Particularly at JNU, "right-wing" implies a stagnant, traditionalist, anti-minority, and anti-women stance, whereas my ABVP respondents describe it "as a very progressive organization." Santosh, an ABVP activist, elucidates the reason for his objection to the label of right-wing:

> I also had this dilemma of defining myself. I never called myself a right winger, but others did. They made an image for us, and we started defining ourselves through the eyes of the others. When someone else is saying you are right-wing, then you kind of subscribe that notion for yourself without knowing what it actually means. That is why I was very particular about not calling me right-wing. Why do people say ABVP is right-wing? I think because when there is a left-wing, then there has to be a right-wing. (Interview, 2013)

ABVP activists portray themselves as upholders of Indian philosophy and Hindu Rashtr. They skillfully deploy the language of Hindu nationalism to formulate and articulate their agenda. ABVP activist Santosh explains that the term "Hindu *Rashtr*" is not restricted to those who go to temple and worship; instead, it connotes a way of life, "unique notion about life" (interview, 2013). The

Hindu is a total of all the civilizational values practiced in the Indian sub-continent. ABVP respondents define nationalism in terms of their "civilizational values," which in turn implies taking pride in Indian philosophy and, hence, being distinct from "jingoistic idea of nationalism" (interview, 2013). The ABVP poster reads that cultural nationalism comprises of "pride in history, pain of present and dreams of future" (ABVP, Poster, 2009). Naxalism, Maoist insurgency, Bangladeshi infiltration, separatist movements, and Muslim reservations are the key enemies generating "pain of present." Hence, ABVP activists' pivotal mission is to resist these menaces, both on and off campus, and to cultivate students with "a firm knowledge about their culture, their society, and their heritage"(Mamta, interview, 2013).

ABVP activists at JNU aspire to challenge the left-wing organizations' dominance in campus politics. Abhishek, an ABVP activist, refers to JNU as a "safe haven for groups who support Maoism, Naxalism, and terrorism" (Interview, 2013). Therefore, ABVP's sacred duty is to curb the promulgation of such anti-national mentality. The group even appealed to "impose a ban on AISA, DSU, and other communist terrorist outfits" (ABVP, Poster, 2009) present on campus. As yet, left-wing activists maintain the status of unbeatable dissenters. ABVP activists employ various tactics to attack leftists, including reverse incrimination. For instance, if leftist organizations describe ABVP as "patriarchal and communal," ABVP in turn marks these left-wing groups as "anti-women, communal, and castist." Thus, ABVP activists declare themselves as pro-women, anti-communal, and anti-castist—but the crux of the matter is the meaning they attach to these terms. For ABVP activists, being pro-women implies being protective and supportive of women. In contrast, AISA activists call for "not patriarchal "protection but equal access to public spaces". ABVP refers to leftist students as communists who "abuse Durga Mata and Bharat Mata and insult the idea of womanhood" (ABVP, Poster, 2014). ABVP constructs the communists and Muslims as dangerous, particular to Hindu women. For instance, the ABVP poster (2009) reads: "Trapping naive Hindu girls in the web of love in order to convert to Islam is the modus operandi of the said organization

[Love Jihad]. Already more than 4000 girls have been converted to Islam by these Jihadi Romeos [in India].” In addition, ABVP describes left-wing organizations—in particular, AISA—as being communal since the group is in favor of additional affirmative action for Muslims in JNU, whereas ABVP vehemently opposes it as “a reservation on religious basis” (Mamta, interview, 2013).

Further, ABVP activist Santosh exposes left organizations for their hypocritical practice of secularism and selectiveness: “Left parties are very much okay with the ritualistic practices of Muslims, but when it comes to practices of the Hindu, they always make it a point to attack them” (interview, 2013). ABVP activists shun this kind of identity politics that threatens national integrity and generates divisions. Their vociferous avoidance of “divisive politics” manifests the propensity of far right to “treat cleavage and ambivalence as illegitimate” (Lipset & Raab, 1970).

The prevalent topoi employed by ABVP activists at JNU are *threat* and *danger*. The *threat* is haunting India—the *threat* of Naxalism and Maoism, the *threat* of Bangladeshi infiltration, the *threat* of separatism, of Love Jihad, as well as the danger of caste and minority politics. To safeguard the Hindu Rashtr from the pain of present, ABVP activists prioritize the issues pertaining to national identity, national integrity, and culture. Umesh, an ABVP activist, complains that only a few organizations at JNU work on campus-based issues, whereas the majority merely take “a political advantage of the outside issues.” Thereafter, Umesh makes a seemingly contradictory statement, asserting that nation and religion should be the main focus of discussion of student activists. However, he adds that leftists “do not believe in culture and religion” and instead address issues pertaining to the “caste system and deprived sections and all that things.” His reasoning elucidates the primacy of certain issues related to culture, nation, and religion and the extraneousness of issues such as “caste and deprived sections.” ABVP activist Mamata asserted national integration, integral humanism, and cultural nationalism to be her issues of primary concern. Mamata frequently referred to the alleged invasion of Bangladeshi immigrants as the core

issue, framing it as the abuse of the generosity of India and a threat to national identity: “Bangladeshi infiltration is growing like cancer cells. Now we need strong government for radiotherapy of these cells” (Mamta, Twitter, 2014).

Student Organizations in Tbilisi, Georgia

The rise and fall of Laboratory 1918

After the fall of the Soviet Union, left-wing political discourse passed into oblivion and neoliberal and nationalist discourse has instead become prevalent in Georgia. Laboratory 1918 was one of the first student organizations that attempted to rehabilitate the left-wing discourse in Georgia. The promulgation of this discourse has endeared Laboratory 1918 to some, whereas others label them as pro-Soviet because in the Georgian context, leftist ideology alludes to a Soviet influence. The activists of Laboratory 1918 had to perpetually prove that they have nothing to do with Soviet politics. Khatia, a Laboratory 1918 activist, notes: "Freedom, Equality, Solidarity is not a Soviet remnant, instead, it is an achievement of French Revolution" (Khatia, media interview, 2013). In the milieu of post-Soviet left-wing nihilism, the group attempted to make left-wing rhetoric relevant in public life without the stigma of being pro-Soviet. Laboratory 1918 aspired to bring change through collective action.

The group emerged among students of Tbilisi State University in 2011. The title of the organization is symbolic: 1918 is the year when Tbilisi State University (TSU) was founded. In the manifesto, activists lament the lost eminence of TSU and intend to make it a vanguard of civil society. "Laboratory" refers to a place where new discoveries happen, new ideas emerge, and new decisions are made. On May 11 in 2011, Laboratory 1918 activists presented their manifesto in front of TSU's VI block building. The activists standing on the stage numbered 14 (7 boys and 7 girls). The manifesto was read out loud and speeches were given by two of the activists. Both were boys. A female activist held a megaphone for the speaker (Figure 2). This invokes the traditional gendered conception of activists: men as active spokespersons and the "makers of revolution," with female

activists as “revolutionary secretaries (Sargent, 1981).” Since its inception, gendered patterns were infused in the activism of Laboratory 1918.

Figure 2. Some of the Laboratory 1918 activists reading the manifesto.

The organization was not hierarchical and was based on horizontal decision-making principles. The guiding idea was that all the members could express their interests and participate in decision-making, with a decision made by consensus. During the decision-making instead of attracting the maximum number of activists on their side, the activists were motivated to persuade each other and thus achieve consensus. This was a highly democratic form of decision-making, where even a single voice mattered. Notwithstanding, it had several limitations: First, during debate, activists with diametrically opposed views on the various issues had to make concessions, sometimes on the cost of very important ideas. Second, this tactic became arduous as the number of activists

increased, turning into high-cost activism that required more time and energy for to consensus and ensure everyone's willing participation. Finally, it had a possibility of being a mere semblance of horizontal decision-making since some of my respondents avowed that there were "centers of power" in the organization whose words were considered more significant than, for instance, those of novices or women.

Laboratory 1918 strived against the system at a grassroots level. Activists incriminated Students' Union representatives at TSU for their neglect of students' grievances. For instance, when students demanded a Georgian translation of the reading materials, Students' Union representatives sparked a fight with complaining students instead of addressing the issue and taking it forward. In response to an accumulation of discontent, activists of Laboratory 1918 expressed their dissent and concern over students' problems as well as issues pertaining to national politics. They inculpated the Students' Union for not taking action to resist the high tuition fees, which had increased from GEL 1500 to GEL 2250 (Meeting, 2011). Activists argued that with the wretched socioeconomic conditions in Georgia, this amount was untenable.

Discontent is the word that describes Laboratory 1918's dissent. They expressed *discontent* with the quality in education, *discontent* with the pedagogy, *discontent* with the inaccessibility of education for all, *discontent* with the functioning of the Students' Union. They held responsible not only the university administration for these errors but also viewed these issues as reverberation of national policies for education. As George, a Laboratory 1918 activist, elucidates: "Education was an important issue [for Laboratory 1918], in particular, free education. Education should not be a market product, commodity, which you can sell. Education is a basic right and should be accessible for everyone. Inaccessible education creates unequal society" (Interview, 2013).

Student grievances were epiphenomenon of macro problems, which had various manifestations. Activists believed that fighting only the outcomes of deep-rooted oppression was not enough. At the national level, Laboratory 1918 opposed the government's politics, strived for issues pertaining to social and economic inequalities, and worker's rights. In September, 2012, Laboratory 1918 played a vanguard role in massive protests in response to the prisoners' abuse scandal in Tbilisi. On September 18, 2012, the violent abuse in the Georgian prison system was exposed. Shocking videos showing torture, rape, and sexual humiliation of prisoners that sparked street protests. Laboratory 1918 spearheaded the movement, although it was not the only organizer; numerous active and inactive groups and organizations joined the movement. "The system must be destroyed" slogans reverberated over the air in front of TSU. The scandal arose just before the parliamentary election on October 1, 2012. The ruling party blamed for the prisoner abuse was defeated.

In September 2012, the valorous activists of Laboratory 1918 engaged in high-cost risk activism, chanting the slogan "destroy the system." They still acted within permissible society boundaries and did not confront issues outside the permissible boundaries, such as sexuality, gender, or authority of the Orthodox church. Striving against the United National Movement—a political party that formed the parliamentary majority and the government until October 1, 2012—involved high-risk activism, but it was a permissible issue, as it did not challenge the virtue of the nation such as values and tradition. For instance, during the protests against prison abuse, Sandro, a member of Laboratory 1918, was detained by the police and fined GEL 400. The family members of the activists were worried about group's safety but simultaneously proud of their courageous activism, whereas raising issues of sexuality or religious authority would have threatened their image as righteous dissenters. For example, on September 21, 2012, during the prison abuse protests, the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Ilia II, instructed students not to participate in the demonstrations. Once it was announced, many students obeyed the Patriarch's instructions, but others refused to abide by it. At this juncture, an artist who was thought to be a member of

Laboratory 1918 shouted the blasphemous slogan "Down with the Patriarch." As a result, many students repelled and revolted against the artist. Subsequently, Laboratory 1918 elucidated on its Facebook page that the artist who chanted that slogan was not a member of Laboratory 1918. It is not that Laboratory 1918 activists disagreed with the ethos of the slogan, but it was outside the permissible boundaries that, in turn, would have kept away many protestors.

Laboratory 1918 lost its momentum after the parliamentary elections in 2012. Afterward, they protested in solidarity with mining workers for their labor rights and safety; they also proposed a new model of the Students' Union but could not practice expanded progressive left politics for several reasons: First, it was a heterogeneous organization, which embraced a wide *omnium gatherum* of activists, ranging from anarcho-syndicalists to Social-Democrats. The latter simultaneously were members of youth wing of the Social-Democratic party, a sector of the newly elected coalition government. This precipitated the ambivalent position of Social-Democrats with regard to certain issues. As one member explained to me, they were bewildered: On one hand, the main "enemy"—the United National Movement party—was defeated, and the Social-Democrats' representative was in a newly formed Parliament and some even started working in the machinery of new government. On the other hand, the Social-Democrats of Laboratory 1918 acknowledged that, despite the changes in the political scenario, their voice was not significant enough to bring radical change. Second, working within permissible boundaries affected the trajectory of their activism: First, it shaped Laboratory 1918's tactics and strategies. Practicing less radical tactics within permissible boundaries was a guarantee of their "righteous" reputation. As soon as they employed more radical means of protest and crossed that boundary, both government and society punished them. For instance, on May 1, 2013 (International Labor Day), Laboratory 1918 organized a demonstration. The students' demands were not too radical; they primarily asked to declare May 1 as a public holiday and make amendments to the new draft of the Labor Code. They employed unsanctioned methods such as blocking the street and graffiti slogans such as "Down with

Capitalism" on the walls of banks and public buildings. As a result, the demonstration turned into a confrontation with police, followed by mass detentions of the activists. Crossing permissible boundaries affected their righteous reputation and precipitated public criticism.

Further, the specter of permissible boundaries largely shaped Laboratory 1918's agenda and reduced viability of multi-issue, progressive politics. Identity-based issues, such as LGBT rights and gender equality, have been referred as identity politics, which "divides [the] workers' unity." On one hand, they were aware that left-wing activism should encompass all the downtrodden, including women and LGBT minorities; on the other hand, they firmly tried to stick to a dogmatic approach and shunned identity politics. This ambiguity and indecisiveness was manifested in the Laboratory 1918's activism. At the May Day demonstration organized by Laboratory 1918 in 2013, it was the feminists' Independent Group that voiced slogans such as "Equal Salaries for Women" and "No Sexist Labor Code." Levan, a Laboratory 1918 activist, states: "Gender equality was never a main issue, but we always remembered it. . . . There was a small group of feminists who were making all this [posters]. We also sympathized with them" (interview, 2013). The debate on identity politics became especially contentious on May 17, 2013. On this day, Georgian LGBT activists assembled for a peaceful rally to mark the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO), when thousands of counter-protesters violently attacked them. Laboratory 1918 activists were divided on this issue—some urged intervention as part of the IDAHO solidarity protest, but others marked it as identity politics and objected to join it in any form. This was the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back, and Laboratory 1918 was brought to its end.

The main contribution of Laboratory 1918 is the promulgation of left-wing discourse and politics. Laboratory 1918 also went against the conventional image of politics as a "bad thing, according to Mate, a Laboratory 1918 activist. He felt being apolitical had become a fashion; however, he also felt that it is impossible for a person to be apolitical. "In the past, politics was considered to be a

‘bad thing’ because the way it was done by politicians was not fair” (interview, 2012). Instead of challenging established means of doing politics and proposing an alternative way of political participation, the alternative to “bad politics” has become “apolitical.” Laboratory 1918 succeeded in depicting politics as indispensable by bringing the discourse of social justice, yet it remained mostly gendered, with issues of sexuality and gender justice never receiving importance in their loop of legitimate grievances.

National Front

The National Front was founded in January 2013. It was born out of efforts of young Georgians in Tbilisi who were touched by the distorted "effects of rampant economic transformation" (Rydgren, 2007). Since its inception, National Front activists have been critical of the economic marginalization in the rapidly neoliberalized Georgia. The group constituted themselves against a changing array of "others." Their articulation of religious, linguistic, ethnic, and moral differences between Orthodox Christian and ethnic Georgians and, on the other side, Muslims, ethnic minorities, and migrants served the purpose of generating the firm categories of "us" versus "them." The threat from others is the most common topos used by National Front activists. The group's resistance revolves around safeguarding the Georgian nation's existence from the myriad of threats, which can be divided into two groups: (a) the threats to homogeneity and unity such as immigration, foreign investors, regional languages, and religious minorities and (b) threats to virtue, such as abortion, LGBT, and "extremist, atheist feminism" (ეროვნული ფრონტი, 2013).

First, National Front has been protesting against the land acquisition by foreign investors, in particular Indian and Chinese businessmen and farmers. According to National Front activists, this threatens the existence of "the Georgian people" as they lose ownership of their ancestors' land and become a minority in their own country. National Front demanded (a) a ban on acquisitions of agricultural land, forest, and other resources; and (b) strict visa rules and immigration regulations. Subsequently, the Georgian Parliament passed a bill imposing a moratorium on land acquisition by foreign citizens until December 2014; however, in June 2014, the constitutional court pronounced this moratorium unconstitutional. In response to this, National Front restarted its protests.

Secondly, National Front has been resisting Chinese investment; namely, the building of a New Special Economic Zone in Tbilisi. National Front activists met with area residents where construction is planned and discovered that it is detrimental for local people, who live in poverty. Activists tend to employ techniques of intensification and aggregation to attack "the other." For instance, the current hardship of local residents living in that construction site is presented as "the violation of rights of *Georgian people* by the prospective *Chinese investors*"(emphasis mine). It is not the "hardship" that makes the case so important but the "foreign investor," who can cause a "demographic catastrophe" (Evgeny, interview, 2013).

Further, National Front endeavors to protect national interests from alleged Turkish "religious–economic expansion" in Georgia. The group organized protests against plans to build a mosque in Batumi, Georgia. Members are worried that the number of Turkish citizens in Batumi is increasing. In addition, they believe there is no necessity of a mosque in Batumi because even the existing one is empty, with some sections rented out or turned into cafés. Activists claim that the proposed mosque is designated to serve new migrants from Turkey. Evgeny refers to Turkish migration in Germany, and to justify his fears, states that "even Germans, who are around 80 million, are afraid of Turkish migration and losing their own uniqueness" (interview, 2013). National Front raises worries that migration may pose far greater threats to the Georgians, who are few in number and susceptible to "national extinction."

The members of National Front are comprised of youth who are united by the idea of nationalist ideology. The most vocal and visible activists in National Front are predominantly men. Evgeny, one of the founders of the organization, draws a distinction between ways in which they identify themselves and how they are marked by others. He skillfully manipulates the widespread Eurocentrism in Georgia, and to present his politics as justifiable, refers to the "European essence"

of his ideology. Among like-minded organizations worldwide, Evgeny cites Front National in France and National-Democratic Party in Germany. He elucidates:

> We are called as Fascists, Nazis, without knowing the actual meaning of these terms. Nationalism is just a healthy response of the small nation to safeguard its uniqueness. Nazism is propagation of supremacy of one nation over others, propagation of one nation's authority over others and misappropriation of others' territories. (interview, 2013)

National Front activists define "their nationalism" as follows: "Our ideology is nationalism, which implies the protection of our own nation's interests, be devoted to our nation, addressing pertinent problems that our nation is facing" (Evgeny, interview, 2013). In addition, Evgeny draws a comparison between a strong family and a strong nation, concluding that only stable families create strong states. He objects to the promotion of regional languages in Georgia as it may trigger dissemination of regionalism instead of nationalism and thereby pose a threat of division.

The threats to virtue primarily entail issues of gender and sexuality. National Front activists are extremely worried about the demographic state of Georgia. In this regard, they organized a protest demanding criminalization of abortion. They envision criminalization of abortion first as the solution to the "possible demographic catastrophe" and, second, as the prerequisite to avoid God's wrath and "devastating punishment of the whole country for the sin of abortion" (Front, 2013). The threat of degradation and degeneration is quite persistent in the discourse of National Front: "Georgian nation is under the edge of degeneration, degradation and extinction. . . . The enemy tries to impose unnatural and inflicted ideologies and values." Liberal, feminist, and secular ideologies and values are referred as "unnatural and inflicted" and imposed from abroad. In the view of National Front activists, "extremist, atheist, feminist activists" threaten Orthodox Christian values and traditions (ეროვნული ფრონტი, 2013).

Another threat to national values and traditions is LGBT activism. On May 17, 2013, Georgian LGBT activists scheduled a peaceful protest on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO). The counter-protesters, highly exceeding in numbers, violently attacked the peaceful demonstrators. The organizers of the counter-protest were traditionalist and religious groups, including National Front as one of the main organizers of the violent mob. Their main slogan was "ban the propagation of LGBT values" as it is a threat endangering "Georgian values and traditions", referring to heterosexuality. National Front went into the streets on May 17, 2013, to defend the national pride – heterosexuality – though they never mention this term and instead purport to protect Christian values (aka Georgian traditions). In 2014, National Front has refrained from participation in the protest against LGBT rights. The reason behind this is not National Front's transformation to a pro-LGBT stance but rather because of Russia. They suspected that protestors against LGBT were backed by Russian forces, the same forces that intent on isolating Georgia from Europe. Eugeny warned his Facebook followers not to "fall into the trap of enemy." National Front was compelled to choose between the threat to virtue and the threat to national security; at this juncture, the group chose the latter.

Summary

This chapter has explored different shades of left- and right-wing student organizations in Georgia and India. The juxtaposition reveals how left-wing organizations in both countries address the issues of education, worker's rights, and identity politics, including gender. Demand for accessible education for all is indispensable for left-wing activists in both countries, whereas it is totally missing from National Front's agenda in Georgia and only vaguely present in ABVP's agenda in India. "Right-wing" activists in Georgia and India refrain from the term right-wing and instead employ words such as nationalist and we-love-our-culture to describe their ideology. Ideological animosity is endemic to AISA and ABVP in India, who strive against each other on and off campus; however, it is not pertinent in Georgia between Laboratory 1918 and National Front, as their protests are never directed at each other. Right-wing organizations in both countries are anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, and for endorsement of cultural values and the dominant religion. Right-wing respondents in India—more often than Georgian right-wingers—raise issues related to women but with dubious debate. Left-wing respondents in India declare themselves as comrades in the struggle for women's rights and strive for expanded, progressive leftist agenda; whereas Georgian respondents are still perplexed about identity politics.

Chapter Five: Encounter – "Making an Activist"

Introduction

This chapter explores the process of "making an activist" and elucidates it through the elements of the "transcending pyramid" that galvanize individuals to action. The "transcending pyramid" entails social networks, rationale, and action, which are manifested at two levels: through the organization's mobilization strategies and through the individual's political trajectories. In this chapter, I primarily focus on the role of an organization's mobilization strategies, which operate at all levels of the "transcending pyramid." I elucidate the ways prospective activists encounter with organizations and discover the field of activism.

Mobilization Strategies and Forms of Protest at JNU

The main gate of Jawaharlal Nehru University opens onto a labyrinth of red brick hostels and bougainvillea-lined roads. In the midst of the campus, the walls of the academic complex, as claimed by some activists, have become the "publishers of the poor." Various student organizations ranging from far-left to far-right depict their discontent through the art of wall painting and urge students to "study and struggle." The walls have become an avenue where creativity and politics meet. Activists wage an ideological war through hand-made artwork. The wall paintings of JNU speak about issues varying from women's "freedom without fear" to mundane price rise, from patriarchy to capitalism, from Naxalism to Gandhi, from caste oppression to international issues like "the occupation of Palestine," from "commercialization of education" to global imperialism. The wall paintings aim at political socialization and galvanizing students into action. One of them

reads, “When politics decides your future, decide what your politics should be!” Through this slogan, activists convey the message that politics actually is not an “abstraction,” but something very concrete that determines one’s future. Therefore, students are encouraged to protest, as it is their right: “Oppression is your privilege, protest is our right!” Another poster, spurring students on to engage in action, reads: “To exist is to resist.”

Some wall artworks aim to be the voice of the downtrodden and illustrate the wretched of the world, including women, oppressed castes, tribal members, workers, minorities, etc. In 2014, as a response to Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, the walls started speaking about “the rights and dignity of LGBT people.” Section 377 was introduced during the British rule in India and uncertainly criminalizes homosexual acts. In 2009, it was declared unconstitutional, and in December 2013 the Supreme Court of India decided that any change apropos to Section 377 should be left to Parliament. In this regard, the wall poster reads: “laws must uphold constitutional morality, not “popular” patriarchal morality.” Gender justice and women’s freedom are two of the prevalent themes of the left-wing wall paintings. JNU walls scream to “fight patriarchy from womb to the world” since women’s rights are violated from their conception as a result of sex-selective abortions or female infanticide; they depict women rising “up from a past that’s rooted in pain” and celebrate the “struggle for women’s liberation.” Another left-wing organization, SFI, urges students to “destroy the society that has enchained its women” and “unite for a gender-sensitive campus.” The wall paintings not only exhort students to act, but also aim to raise their awareness and inform them that “violence in relationships is not a personal affair.”

As the left-wing politics prevails over the right wing at JNU, this is reflected in the wall paintings. On the one hand, left-wing wall paintings invoke revolutionary poets and writers like Pablo Neruda, Bertold Brecht, Nabarun Bhattacharya (Figure 3), Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Pash, and they depict revolutionary figures such as Marx, Che Guevara, and Bhagat Singh. On the other hand, right-wing

wall paintings criticize communists, Naxalites, and Marxists, exhorting "no glory for Marxists" and spurring students on to action: "When communism is the enemy, it is a crime not to fight."

Figure 3: Wall painting at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The space for the wall paintings is shared-out every year, on an agreed date and time. During the summer vacation, students draw new wall paintings, which enshroud the walls of JNU's administrative and academic buildings before the beginning of the monsoon semester, which in turn is the time when new students join the university. Therefore, political socialization of students begins with the walls of JNU that speak of privatization, education, gender justice, communism, Marxism, imperialism, non-violence and violence.

Social networks, as an element of the "transcending pyramid," operate at various levels. While the political wall paintings at JNU are the modus operandi of diverse student organizations to indirectly socialize students with their politics, the admission process at the beginning of the monsoon semester hastens new students' direct encounter with activists. New students have to go through the rigmarole of completing forms, obtaining necessary signatures, and getting oriented to the sprawling campus. At this juncture, student activists from diverse organizations set up help desks, provide their phone numbers, and offer newcomers their help in the admission process. Generally, during the assistance, activists neither ask newcomers to join their organization nor attempt to sway them through political conditioning; it is an occasion to build networks and discover prospective activists. Due to the dearth of hostel rooms, many new students are not allotted to hostels immediately, so in the short run activists offer them shelter and in the long run sporadically organize protests demanding more hostels and dormitories.

Students learn about the upcoming demonstrations, processions with and without lighted torches (mashal juloos and juloos, respectively), sit-ins, hunger strikes, public meetings, and film screenings through a number of ways: the printed posters that are pasted up on the walls almost every day; leaflets; room-to-room and class-to-class campaigns (in case the issue requires mass participation and/or "high-cost" engagement); social media (recent trend); and encounters with activists at the places of public gatherings, such as Ganga dhaba, Sabarmati dhaba, and Godavari dhaba (names of the teashops).

Ganga dhaba is the oldest teashop at JNU, where evenings are especially busy and political socialization takes place as students gather in groups and conversations range from mundane matters to vehement debates on student, national, and international politics. It is not tea or snacks this teashop is famous for (Singh S. , 2013), but rather for being a "sociability center" until 3 am and for its unconventional structure, with stone seats and the open sky above. In his reminiscences

of Ganga dhaba, Sandeep Singh, a former JNU Students' Union president, narrates that it was here when he first witnessed the fierce discussion of student activists and when he was invited by AISA activists to the film screening of One Minute of Silence (*Ek Minute ka Maun*) (Singh, 2013). The film is about the life and martyrdom of the former president of the JNU Students' Union, Chandrashekhar Prasad, who left JNU and became engaged in "high-cost/risk" (McAdam, 1986) activism in his own village of Siwan (Bihar, India), where he was murdered in 1997 while addressing a public gathering. His short name, Chandu, often reverberates in the air of JNU during the sloganeering. The film One Minute of Silence is shown every year, in particular at the beginning of a new semester, in order to introduce the martyr to the new students and evoke his memory among old students. Thus, keeping the flame alive aims at exhorting students to intense action: "To remember Chandu is to do more than pay tribute. It is to say that the struggle continues, both in our campuses and beyond" (AISA, 2012). Socialization with activists at the admission process and at Ganga dhaba increases students' network of activist(s), which in turn increases the number of invitations they receive to attend the upcoming events as well as the possibility of turning "weak ties" into "strong ties" of friendship and camaraderie.

The film screenings, public meetings, demonstrations, and sit-ins are saturated with speeches and follow-up discussions. Students learn about the issues, listen to the argumentative debate between rival student activists, and gradually develop and/or reify their rationale, which helps them to elucidate systems of meaning and engage in action. Initially, they may join "low-risk/cost" activism, which consumes less time and energy, but they have already embarked on a journey into activism. As students engage with the issues related to their own welfare, such as allocation of hostels, enhancement of library facilities, and OBC reservations, they become more active politically and join other movements that are not directly related to student issues. Shivani as well as Sucheta, AISA activists, state that the students' issues are the tools to "politicize" students and

subsequently “transform their thinking process,” so they “discover” solidarity with other downtrodden groups and engage in “larger politics.”

Student activists of JNU, in particular the left-wing activists, primarily employ class-to-class, room-to-room, hostel-to-hostel, dhaba-to-dhaba, and street campaigns. A group of student activists participating in a class-to-class campaign knocks on the classroom doors and gets permission from the professor to speak on the issue at stake. Sometimes they are asked to wait until the end of the class, but usually they are allowed to interrupt and express themselves abridged. Activists try to make the right emphasis and hasten their speech, culminating in sloganeering and requesting that the students join their struggle (*ladai*) or movement (*andolan*). Students observe how activists from conflicting organizations and with differing argumentations supplant each other on the classroom “stage.” While fewer activists are engaged in room-to-room campaigns, which usually happen in the late night to catch the maximum number of students, more activists (approximately 10−20, depending on the issue) participate in the hostel-to-hostel campaigns and visit mess halls of each hostel during the dinner time (19:30−21:00). It is the point when most students leave or break from other engagements for dinner. At the dinner table, pamphlets that are commentaries on campus, national, and international issues await them. Sometimes students stumble upon pamphlets from rival organizations with diametrically opposed perspectives or with critical comments on each other’s activism lying side by side on the table. While students are engrossed in devouring their meal, groups of activists supersede each other, speaking abridged about the issue at stake. Hostel-to-hostel, dhaba-to-dhaba activists walk in procession, chant slogans, circulate pamphlets, and approach students. These forms of campaigning ensure political socialization of students to a protest issue as well as reify or develop their ideological predisposition and argumentation, which in turn shapes their decision to participate.

Protest sites are favorite haunts of activists and sympathizers, since frequenting the sites proliferates ardor and inquisitiveness, creates meaning, and generates friendships. As some students sip their hot tea, others go into raptures over sloganeering. Slogans are chosen depending on the occasion and protest issues; activists chant succinct slogans, which create an exhilarating and impelling ambience. As Shivani, an AISA activist, puts it: "Slogans will always have power. I have heard slogans which have given me goose bumps. I know something happens to me every time I hear 'Naxalbari lal salam' (Red Salute to Naxalbari). Especially after reading about it." Piyush, an AISA activist and former office-holder in the JNU Students Union, remembers that before joining AISA, he became fascinated by their slogans, and he started writing down and memorizing them. The Spanish slogan, "¡El Pueblo unido, jamás será vencido," is one of the most popular slogans among left-wing activists; they chant it in both Spanish and English languages: "The people united shall always be victorious; students united shall always be victorious." In response, right-wing activists reproduce the "leftist" slogans and shout: "*Parishad*[5] united shall always be victorious" or "the communists frustrated shall always be defeated." Sandeep Saurav, an AISA activist, considers sloganeering as a poetic and persuasive tool to communicate political messages. Shivani also notes that she cannot imagine "activism without being romantic." Some slogans urge students to rethink the history and annihilate hegemonic social systems: "Eradicate the dark history of Patriarchy, Brahmanism and Casteism" (*Brahmanvad ke, Jativad ke, Pitrisatta ke kala itihas ko jala do, mita do*); or "all centers of power must be destroyed, history should take a new turn" (*garhon mathon ko todenge, itihas ki dhara modenge*); some exhort women's freedom: "the liberation of women is the liberation of all; long live women's freedom" (*sab ki mukti, nari mukti, nari mukti zindabad*). Finally, slogans aim to invoke a sense of camaraderie and inspiration to strive toward a "common dream." For instance, "The desire for sacrifice is in our hearts (*Sarfaroshi ki tammanna ab hamaare dil mein hai*);" or "in protest and in resistance, as well as in revenge, oh comrades, raise the barricades" (*Prativad mein, pratirodh, mein, pratishodh mein comrade, khada karo, khada karo*,

[5] *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (ABVP)

khada karo barricade). This slogan is suffused with history, as it refers to the barricades built during the Paris Commune; it also gives Vibhuti, an AISA activist, a "sense of collectivity and the possibility of revolution, because one man alone or one woman alone will never raise a barricade–it is only the collective."

Slogans reflect the grievances that student activists address by their political agendas. In contrast to left-wing activists, my respondents from ABVP, a right-wing organization, predominantly cited slogans like "Vande Mataram," which is a national song of India and translates as "Mother, I salute to thee," and "victory for Mother India" (Bharat Mata ki Jai). The slogans of both left- and right-wing activists touch upon "woman" with distinct purports. Right-wing Activists draw on motherhood imagery, which is actually predominant in most nationalist movements (Basu, 1998); however, the conception of "motherhood" in Hindu nationalism derives from religion, and "Barat Mata" is the personification of India as mother goddess. These familiar framings of women are presumably more permissible than the discourse left-wing activists employ on gender, which exhorts women's liberation from all kinds of oppressive shackles, including hegemonic cultural norms shaping ideas of womanhood.

The path of the "transcending pyramid" that entails building social networks, socializing to the protest issues, acquiring a rationale, and engaging in action, is particularly relevant apropos of left-wing activists. The hard work to persuade and convince people, my respondents subscribe to the left-wing activists; they feel that since right-wing organizations already have a "given cadre" and a "given ideological mass-base," it is not that crucial for them to talk, introduce a new vision, and convince their audience. They engage in student activism with an already acquired rationale. According to Sandeep, an AISA activist, right-wing organizations like ABVP do not have to propagate unconventional ideas–they just have to preserve an already existing mass-base. In contrast, left-wing organizations have to promulgate "revolutionary ideas," which requires

"permanent persuading." As Vibhuti puts it, "literally for each issue you take up, you have to go to people once twice, trice, five times, six times, till you have people hear you." It is not enough for an activist to be eloquent, but it is indispensable to be an organizer, a participant in practical life, a "'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator" (Gramsci, 1971). "Persuading" implies that mobilization is not restricted to awareness raising, but aims at "consciousness transformation." Left-wing respondents construe activism as something that should transcend students' ordinary experiences and knowledge.

Since left-wing activists endeavor to lure students, who often come from a background where radical left politics are demonized and revolutionary ideas considered to be threatening to their Hindu-ness, they have to utilize various tactics and avenues to reach out students. Therefore, the communication, in particular the language, is the essential tool that renders mobilization viable or inefficient. Language is a contentious issue among left-wing activists, since dichotomies such as "simple" vs. "complicated or academic" and "Hindi" vs. "English" are persistent. On the one hand, some leftists employ "academic jargon," since they think that using "simple language" while addressing the masses only reifies the division of "academic vs. simple language" and serves the monopolization of the academic language by the privileged. On the other hand, Sandeep, a left-wing activist, thinks that this kind of approach is "self-righteous," which valorizes abstraction over lived experience. He notes that his language is largely determined by the audience he speaks to; "language is nothing if it does not communicate," and even if in the long run he intends to "destroy the divisions such as simple vs. academic," at first he has to convey the message in an understandable language, because "otherwise people will lose interest and the outcome will be minimal." It does not mean that there are people inherently incapable of understanding "academic" language, but it means that because of the historical reasons and social inequality, they have not yet acquired "academic jargon."

My left-wing respondents asserted the necessity of communication in order to convey their political message lucidly and generate interest, as only after that, during the process of engagement in activism, do people develop a rationale and acquire left-wing discourse. For instance, Singh, a former AISA activist, noted that when talking to the workers, if they are not familiar with left-wing language, he uses the word "fayda" (benefit) instead of "surplus value." At places like JNU, where many students are well-versed in politics, activists do not restrain themselves from using "academic jargon." The conversations and speeches of left-wing activists purport to be lucid and evocative. Another contentious issue apropos to language is the use of Hindi. A number of students label the domination of Hindi in speeches, pamphlets, and posters as "linguistic chauvinism." Hindi is one of the official languages, but for students belonging to the regions outside the Hindi-dominated belt, it is the third language. They object if political speeches are delivered exclusively only in Hindi. As a result, some left-wing leaders speak in a "hybrid" language, avoid talking in pure (*shuddh*) Hindi, and instead use a lot of English words. However, Hindi is still a prevalent medium at the public meetings, as many students come from rural North Indian regions, and English is arduous for them to understand at first. By oscillating between Hindi and English, activists aim to adjust to the needs of diverse communities.

The wide variety of mobilization strategies is largely espoused by the majority of student organizations at JNU. Activists interact with students in creative and experimental ways to encourage the culture of leftist radicalism. Occasionally, student activists adopt more theatrical forms of protest, such as street plays or performance of protest songs, which aim to attract the attention of a wider audience. Right-wing activists at JNU are engaged in relatively "low-cost" and less conspicuous activism. Mamta, former president of the ABVP JNU unit, avowed that although ABVP is the largest student organization in India, at JNU in the last four years very few have taken ABVP membership. While recruitment in ABVP JNU unit is largely defined by "formal membership," engagement in left-wing activism is ambiguous and convoluted, entailing several

elements and phases of the "transcending pyramid." In the case of the left wing, this boundary between formal members/insiders and non-members/outsiders is more ambiguous.

The propensity to strive for mobilization of new activists and for discovery of new leaders is partially prompted by regular Students' Union elections. The functioning of the JNU Students' Union is implausible without the participation of both activist and non-activist students. Although student organizations in JNU have a horizontal structure, the most contentious and critical decisions are made by the majority of students. The Students' Union consists of elected office-holders and a student council. If matters are not resolved at the Students' Union meetings, which are comprised of office-holders and councilors from different schools, or if the student community does not agree with the Students' Council's decision, the matter can be taken to the University General Body Meeting (UGBM). The UGBM decision obliges the Students' Union to follow it. All decisions except extraordinary matters are to be taken by a simple majority. The JNU Students' Union constitution ensures high level of participation of students, which in turn keeps students politicized and concerned about the issues and makes them important participants of the decision making and the movement. JNU Students' Union is bound to respond to every problem that the student community or any individual student is facing. All students who wish to speak at the UGBM should submit their names. The time limit of the speeches is decided on the basis of the number of speakers. The speakers, including the members of the Students' Union, put forward their arguments in favor or against the issue at stake. Debate usually lasts all night long and is followed by counting of votes, which is a unique occasion as it often happens by counting the heads of hundreds of students. Morning finds the activists loudly chanting slogans – some rejoicing their victory, and others, lamenting their defeat.

Most of the student organizations in JNU are explicitly or implicitly linked with the political parties (Pattnaik, 1981). Student leaders become important recruits for various national parties. The competition and struggle over students' votes traverses the university premises and becomes the site of struggle for domination among the National political parties. Notwithstanding, the political scenario in the campus is radically different from that of country. All over India mostly Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are in power, while in JNU their power has been undermined, because their student-wing organizations rarely get into power. Pattnaik and Altbach argue that the link between student politics and national political parties determines the intensity of students agitation and those universities' students, where this kind of link is almost absent, tend to be less agitated on the same issues. (Pattnaik, 1981; Altbach, 1989)

The political parties have a great role in student politics in India, however, they come into the picture obliquely. Students constitute an attractive power contingent. The interests of the political parties are the following: to build a student political movement against the ruling party; to recruit future party cadre; to gain electoral support and use manpower for campaigning (Patnaik, 1981). Often political parties appoint a "teacher" to the student wings to provide guidance to student activists and leaders. In addition, student activists attempt to attract the newcomers through "the large network of operation cells".

It is in the interests of the national political parties to foster student activism, because recruited students can be used as a pressure group against their political rivals. For this reasons, they popularize their student wings, discover and bring up new political leaders, and obtain a mass base and their votes. Thus, student politics can be used as an arena by political parties to "maximize their political resources and through it political influence and power" (Pattnaik, 1981). For instance, I observed the Legislative Assembly elections in 2009 in Jharkhand, where JNU student activists campaigned for their national party leaders. Similarly, student activists were largely mobilized in

2014 during the Lok Sabha elections. The student activists appear to be a vital resource for mobilization and campaigning.

Mobilization Strategies and Forms of Protest in Georgia

Laboratory 1918 sprang from the prevailing discontent with the quality and accessibility of education, with the students' self-governance, and with the system at large. Another driving force that engendered Laboratory 1918 was a more-or-less established social network. Many of the members were already acquainted with each other or had acquaintances in common. Third, those who joined Laboratory 1918 already had a predisposition toward the protest issue, although many of them still did not have a clearly defined ideological affiliation. In the beginning, Laboratory 1918 activists endeavored to attract more people and organized few public meetings with this purpose. My respondents avowed that it was an arduous task to engage students. However, some Laboratory 1918 members revealed that the platform was particular about the members and welcomed those who at least understood the "left-wing language." For instance, in September 2012, during the protests against prison abuse, Laboratory 1918 was in the vanguard of protests. It was a culmination of the Laboratory's popularity, as the issue gained momentum and resonance within wider society. Thousands of students came out on the streets, and it became difficult for Laboratory 1918 to control the situation.

After the September movement, Laboratory 1918 gained new members, but not all of them were left-leaning. Giorgi, a Laboratory 1918 activist, complained that there was a case when a newcomer "put forward an awkwardly neo-liberal issue . . . . it was difficult to find more or less left-wing individuals." In order to be a Laboratory 1918 activist, one had to be a formal member of Laboratory 1918. This imperativeness of membership drew lines between "insiders" and "outsiders," which in turn informed Laboratory 1918 as an exclusive platform. To join, one had to be aware of the left-wing discourse. Hence, the recruitment process was linear: social networks

and/or political socialization preceded development of rationale. These two elements were essential prerequisites to becoming Laboratory 1918 activists.

Laboratory 1918 sought to promulgate left-wing discourse, and it has proved relatively efficacious. When it comes to mobilization, its position was equivocal. On the one hand, activists labeled Laboratory 1918 as a movement; on the other hand, some of my respondents did not aspire to increase the group number and perceived the Laboratory as a disseminator of discourse on social issues. Moreover, my respondents reckoned that it has become "fashionable" to be a member of Laboratory 1918 and suspected some students' motives for joining it. There were members within the clearly defined boundaries who made decisions based on the consensus, and there were those who sporadically joined the protest organized by Laboratory 1918. It had a propensity to retreat into an "activist ghetto" (Barr & Drury, 2009), as in order to develop a social movement from fragmented protests, the division between "members" and "others" needed to be superseded.

The findings depict that mobilization has not been the prime concern of Laboratory 1918. Most respondents acknowledged that they needed sympathizers, but they did not have a defined plan of action to mobilize. One of the activists referred to mobilization as a PR campaign and lamented that they did not have enough resources like money and media support to do it. Some of the activists assumed that initially many people did not join their protests because they could not "advertise" it. What is missing in their mobilization campaign is a "human relations thing" such as face-to-face encounters with potential sympathizers in order to communicate their ideas and agenda.

The primary means for mobilization currently is the social media website Facebook. It has several limitations: first, it can be effective for issues that already resonate widely, but it fails for issues that are aberrant or addressed for the first time. Second, it is an exclusive tactic, as it leaves out all those who do not have Facebook or who do not have a "right" social network on Facebook to be informed

about or invited to the protest event. Communication and the question of language continue to be issues, since some Facebook posters employ a lot of barbarisms and "academic jargon" in their texts, which made it difficult for readers to comprehend. Some Facebook comments read: "It is difficult to understand the meaning of the text without a dictionary;" or "progressive 'intellectuals' already know about the issues you write and those who do not know, can't understand. So why do you write then?!"

In response, Toko, a Laboratory 1918 activist, argued that "it is necessary to introduce these terms as they have political implication." According to this approach, language is not merely a means of exchange or means of communication, but it is about struggle and discursive positions. However, the text is not understandable not only because of "leftist discourse" or terms, but because it uses a lot of foreign terms, which make the text look "academic" but render it less comprehensible. For instance, he uses terms like "inkorporirebuli," "valorizacia," and "dominanturi," which derive from the English words "incorporated," "valorization," and "dominant," respectively, instead of their Georgian equivalents.

Second, Toko argued that a division between "academic" and "simple" language is dangerous, as it only reproduces historical appropriation of "academic" language by elites and presupposes that "non-elites" cannot understand "academic" language. He aspires to break these boundaries by introducing "academic" language in everyday political communication. However, this is a self-righteous position based on an abstraction and immune to the evidence. If this division is historically constructed, it suggests that there are those who possess the language exclusively and those who, because of their disadvantaged backgrounds, do not understand it. It does not imply that one distrusts "disadvantaged" people's capabilities, but it is an acknowledgement that because of the deprivation they may not possess the adequate resources. In order to surpass this demarcating line in the long run, at first, there is a prerequisite to engage and interest them in leftist issues or

discourse, so they can acquire the "language" in the process of involvement. The propensity to adhere to a "dogmatic," "righteous" approach without considering the local circumstances and reality has precipitated obstacles to achieving the envisaged goal.

Similarly to Laboratory 1918, the right-wing organization National Front employs a limited range of mobilization strategies. It primarily attempts to mobilize through Internet websites. Sometimes mobilization is quite gendered and dominated by men. For instance, the Facebook "event" description of a weekly organizational meeting that entails physical and ideological training welcomes all those who want to "serve the national idea." I was curious to know whom the leader of National Front invited to this Facebook "event" scheduled on June 29, 2014 and scrolled through the "guest list." All the names were exclusively male.

Summary

This chapter explored the mobilization strategies that galvanize prospective activists into action. AISA, a left-wing organization at JNU, employs numerous tactics to facilitate the encounter of an activist with the organized politics. The avenues by which encounters may happen range from university walls to classrooms, from dhabas to hostel rooms. The encounter is a prerequisite for fostering the process of engagement through the "transcending pyramid." First, social networks are the element of the "transcending pyramid" that contribute to the process of engagement through political socialization and through formation of "strong" and "weak" ties with activists. Second, avenues of encounter are the sites where rationale, the second element of the "transcending pyramid," is being developed and reified through the interplay with social networks. Finally, encounter avenues refer to the sites of action, the third element of the "transcending pyramid," which in turn is an assemblage of encounters. A right-wing organization, ABVP, makes less effort in terms of social networks and rationale, and its scope for mobilization is limited to "low-cost" action. This reduces the susceptibility to encounters. Similarly to ABVP, in Georgia both Laboratory 1918 and the National Front did not thrive on attracting a large number of students into action, since their scope of mobilization was limited and their preferred means of protest was restricted to the marches on the streets and demonstrations. My respondents from right-wing organizations like ABVP and the National Front, Mamta and Eugeny, respectively, declared frequent protests to be extraneous. In Mamta's view, when the problem is really serious, only then should they interfere and organize protests, since "if for every little problem we go to protest, then there will be no value for our protest." All this minimizes chances of encounters, and hence, possibilities for the "transcending pyramid" to operate. In addition, face-to-face campaigns or direct modes of mobilization offer more control over the reception of ideas and meanings than do more

indirect modes such as Facebook, because of the possibility for "constant monitoring and adjustment" (Jasper, 2007).

Organizations like ABVP, the National Front, and Laboratory 1918, which have a clear demarcation between formal members and non-members, render themselves exclusive despite their claims of being open. Emphasis on formal membership during the mobilization lessens the possibility for a non-linear process of engagement to operate and excludes many non-member sympathizers, classifying them as "outsiders."

In the process of mobilization, gender is embedded explicitly in the case of the left-wing organization AISA in India and the right-wing organization National Front in Georgia, whereas it is an implicit tool of mobilization in the case of the right-wing organization ABVP at JNU. Gender inhibits the mobilization strategies of AISA through slogans and wall paintings that scream about women's liberation; the National Front's mobilization is gendered as it primarily approaches men; and ABVP uses gender to mobilize against Muslims or "others" that threaten Hindu women.

Chapter Six: Transcending vs. Preserving – "Becoming an Activist"

In this chapter, I explore the process of "becoming an activist" as it is viewed and interpreted by activists, whereas in the previous chapter, I investigated the process of "making an activist" by looking into the organization's mobilization strategies. This chapter depicts the ways activists' political trajectory is "transcending" or "preserving" and how it unfolds in practice. I draw on Wright Mills's (2000) concept of "sociological imagination," which enables the understanding of the larger process in terms of its meaning for the inner life. The biographical insights intend to illustrate individual trajectories of student activists through illuminating their own perceptions of themselves since "a life as led is inseparable from a life as told - or more bluntly, a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (Bruner, 1987). To bring this illumination to life, I focus on the lives of particularly committed and dynamic activists affiliated with the selected left- and right-wing student organizations in Delhi, India, and Tbilisi, Georgia.

The Case of Student Activists at JNU

The transcending journey of the left-wing respondents begins with an encounter with student politics at JNU. Due to the multiple avenues of encounters, new students find themselves embedded in the rhythm of vibrant politics. The socializing setting, on the one hand, facilitates establishment of broad activist networks; on the other hand, interplay of political socialization and activist networks raises students' awareness about the protest issue, fosters friendships, and engages them in action. For instance, Akbar, a left-wing male activist from a prosperous Muslim family, explains why he became involved in student activism. He obtained his B.A. degree from Aligarh Muslim University and was never attracted to student politics. However, when Akbar encountered the omnipresent political culture JNU, he discovered its uniqueness. It was difficult to avoid the chasing, ever-present shadow of politics in classrooms, hostel rooms, hostel messes, public meetings, seminars, and even at the students' favorite haunts, such as dhabas. Akbar's first memories of student activism at JNU revolve around the documentary film on Chandrashekhar's political journey. Chandrashekhar was an AISA activist and held the post of JNU Students' Union president for two terms. After leaving JNU, he returned back to his village, Siwan, to engage in politics, but was murdered while addressing a public meeting in 1997. Akbar cited the following quote from Chandrashekhar in order to explain what it meant for him to become involved in activism:

> Our coming generations will ask us for an answer. They will ask us, where were you when new social forces were being unleashed, where were you when people who live and die every moment, every day strived for their rights, where were you when there was an assertion of the marginal voices of the society. They will seek an answer from all of us…

During my field work at JNU, I stumbled across Chandrashekhar's words time and time again: many left-wing activists used this quote as shorthand for their conviction that students' engagement in politics is a "necessity" and "duty." The topoi of *duty* and *selflessness* were prevalent among respondents, who conceived their activism as reciprocal obligation to society. Akbar acknowledged that the lowest tuition fee at JNU is due to student activists' realization of their responsibility as they did not allow fee hikes to be enacted. Similarly, other left-wing respondents emphasized that while fighting for accessible education or other student issues, they do not strive for "selfish interests," but for the upcoming generations, who will avail themselves of these rights. Thus, political socialization at the public meetings and protests, along with broadening "activists' networks," led Akbar to acquire a rationale that, in turn, shaped his decision to become involved in activism.

JNU enables activists to "encounter multiple truths," to "realize contradictions," and to learn that "society is conflict driven." Ernest Mandel (1968) noted that students who come from a privileged background are not prepared by the life they have led to understand fully the reasons for social revolt. Thus, they first realize the necessity of politics within the framework of the university (Mandel, 1968). Activism is transcending as it opens new horizons, which enable activists to make sense of previously overlooked issues and "overwhelmingly complex phenomena" (Turner & Killian, 1972). For instance, Abhay, a left-wing activist from an upper-caste Brahmin family, comes from a village where he stumbled across people from the lower caste, but only after coming to JNU, where he became espoused to radical political **socialization**, did he develop **networks** and form friendships with students and activists from lower-caste backgrounds. These encounters led him to realize "how far and severe the exploitation is of lower caste people in his village." Engagement in activism at JNU provided Abhay with rationale and a new insight; in turn, these helped him to delineate a complex reality.

In contrast to left-wing respondents, right-wingers do not depict fascination with JNU politics since they are predominantly left-wing. As the caucus consisting of right-wing activists stated, they joined student activism in order to confront left-wing domination of the campus. For instance, Abhishek, an ABVP activist, is from rural Uttar Pradesh. He completed his master's at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and joined JNU for his M.Phil and Ph.D. Abhishek narrated one of his first encounters with JNU student politics:

> In 2009, soon after I joined JNU, an incident happened. Somebody put a beer bottle inside a water-cooler at Periar hostel to cool it. In a few days from the incident, hostel elections were approaching at Periar hostel…Ramadan was going on, and some Muslim students came and abused all Hindu people. They said we want to destroy their dharm…AISA, a big organization in this campus, came and started interpreting it as a Hindu-Muslim politics…If that beer was to 'offend Muslims,' it could have offended in the same way Hindus. This I did not like, and I thought that I should stand against this kind of sectarian politics, which is happening in this campus. This was the reason I became affiliated with ABVP and joined it. (Interview, 2013)

According to Abhishek, his discontent with the incident fostered his ideological affinity. He purported that had never been part of any student politics before coming to JNU. However, I learned that he misled me and actually was an ABVP activist at BHU, which implied that he had already been **socialized** and had already established a **rationale** when he joined JNU. While the main topos to elucidate the process of "becoming an activist" among the left is that of "transcending," among right-wing respondents, the prevalent topos explaining their engagement in activism is that of "preserving" and "protection."

As ideational transformation continued evolving, the disagreements between left-wing activists and their families became pronounced. Respondents recounted that their parents are worried that they may be seduced into following the wrong path. Parents are especially apprehensive about issues such as career, religion, and marriage. For instance, Akbar's parents, who are Muslims, are worried that he will disregard religion since left-wing activists are conceived as atheists. Generally, Akbar seeks to persuade his parents: "Whatever work I do through activism is an attempt to transform society. My parents also are part of society. If I am trying to persuade society, then I have to persuade my parents too. There is a conflict, but it is solvable." However, the topic of religion remains contentious, and Akbar began avoiding discussions on it. Similarly, Abhay, who is a male left-wing activist and an upper-caste Brahmin from Bihar, avowed his perplexity apropos of Hindu practices. Abhay traveled with his family to visit a temple in Nepal. At the request of his mother, he participated in the rituals and had a darshan (glimpse) of the deity. Abhay does not know how to address an ostensible inconsistency since his declared viewpoint does not always coincide with praxis: "Sometimes I also feel that here [in JNU] we give slogans that [are like] "Brahmanism down!down!" [and] preach that orthodox Hinduism should be condemned, but sometimes I am also following the same thing. So I don't know how to respond. It's all about traditions."

Hinduism, to some extent, continues to inform the lives of left-wing student activists: most of the left-wing activists, who were professed atheists in their public life, continue to observe important Hindu holidays and rites of passage. Participation in these "cultural" rituals is an affordable concession that aims at pleasing their parents.

However, left-wing activists remain largely uncompromising on matters of activism and their personal lives. For instance, most respondents noted that their parents desire a career in government services for their offspring. Male activists are expected to focus on their careers because they are obliged to look after their parents in old age. By embarking on a journey into activism, then,

students undermine their parents' "middle-class dreams." After completing their studies, some committed left-wing activists become full-time leftist politicians, which is an arduous path in India. Another sought-after career among activists is that of teaching, which is acceptable in contrast to jobs in government services or some non-governmental organizations.

In contrast to many leftists, who challenge their parents' authority and aspirations, right-wing activists seek to accommodate to their parents' wishes. For instance, an ABVP activist from Bihar, Santosh purposely withholds some information from his family and does not reveal that he devotes so much time to activism. In reality, he is not the kind of an activist who always hangs out in front of centers and schools to interact with students. He tries to keep the balance and avoid disappointing his parents. "I am not into that kind of activism because I have to think of staying true to the expectations of my parents." Santosh wants a career that can sustain his lifestyle and that will pay him enough to look after his family. Thus, Santosh's ambitions do not contradict the future that his parents envisage for him.

Another contentious issue is marriage: both left- and right-wing male and female activists confessed that parents time to time remind them to "settle down" with a partner belonging to the same religion and caste. However, while left-wing respondents, especially women activists, complain about it, right-wing respondents do not view it as pressure. I will separately delineate women's experiences with their families later in this chapter and focus on male activists here. Some left-wing male activists indulge in free relationships on campus, some even persuade their parents to accept partner of their choice, some still struggle or do not dare to oppose their parents in this matter, and others comply with their parents' decisions. Right-wing respondents did not complain about marriage "pressure" from parents as they do not consider it to be an issue. Moreover, right-wing activists at JNU often mark left-wing activists as "sexually frustrated communists" (ABVP, 2009). It is a

paradoxical label as according to right-wingers, left-wing activists "indulge" in pre-martial sexual relations on campus, yet they are "sexually frustrated."

While some left-wing male activists assert never to concede defeat, even in front of their respective family's authority, others strive to negotiate with their families. Those who seek to negotiate want both to keep the family's affection and to be true to their own left-wing progressive principles, but this seems to be an arduous task in a society saturated with caste and gender hierarchies. For instance, Abhay, a left-wing activist from an upper-caste Brahmin family, on the one hand, upholds radical politics. Along with Dalit activists and a few leftists under the *New Materialists* platform, Abhay organized a "beef- and pork-eating campaign" that aimed at demystifying the sacredness of "holy cow" and "unholy pig" and, hence, challenged food taboos predominating in most regions in India. Abhay also supports intermarriage between Dalits and Muslims, who happen to be his close friends. However, on the other hand, he conceals his involvement in these unconventional actions from his parents. Moreover, when it comes to marriage, the family's authority often continues to haunt him. For example, choosing a life partner poses a dilemma for Abhay: On one hand, if he marries someone from his caste and region, it would imply that he had not transcended himself, and he would be bothered by a guild feeling:

> If I cannot go beyond the sectarian outlook and if I don't make a friendship with someone who is coming from a different region and background, from a lower caste, lower class, or tribal area, what kind of radical am I?! (interview, 2013)

On the other hand, if he marries a Muslim, it would shatter his parents' illusions since his mother thinks that he is a last hope and expects him "to get a good wife, who will be culturally attuned to the orthodox Hindu culture." It is arduous for Abhay to oppose his parents as it affects their emotions and feelings:

> Sometimes, I can tell you that to make a statement in front of Manmohan Singh is easier than to make a statement in front of your mother. I can show a black flag easily to Bush, but not to my father. (Interview, 2013)

The purview of "transcending activism" is not restricted to consciousness, but also manifests itself in praxis. According to Althusser (2001), ideology manifests itself through actions that are "inserted into practices" (Althusser, 2001). Hence, the process of "becoming an activist" or "transcending" requires unlearning those practices that generate contradiction between consciousness and everyday praxis. Therefore, respondents purported that politics are a way of life since activism dilutes "disembodiment between the self and politics." As Sandeep, former AISA activist and former JNU Students' Union president from UP, noted, "Politics is me, and I am politics." This alludes to "oneness" of the self and politics, which, in turn, leads to "transcending" the limits of their old selves. In the case of left-wing activists who come from a background with a traditional upbringing, "unlearning" is a prerequisite for an impeccable transcending experience. It is a laborious venture because "becoming an activist" is an open-ended process and operates like "performativity," but not performance; "performance" implies finished, concrete event, whereas "performativity" reflects sustained temporal duration (Butler, 1999). Similarly, the process of "transcending" or "becoming an activist" is never absolute or complete; rather, it demands repetition.

In the case of right-wing respondents, the processes of "unlearning" and "alteration" are not pronounced; instead, they are expected to "preserve" and "reconstruct" well-established values and traditions. Since right-wing respondents' ideological affiliation is a continuance of pre-activist conceptions, they do not have to strive against them. Thus, the process of "becoming a right-wing activist" can be described as *preserving* instead of *transcending* since it does not endeavor to go beyond the ordinary experience. Rather, it aims at *preserving* and reifying "civilizational values" of Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu State). For instance, Santosh, a right-wing activist from Bihar, has not

observed much change in his individual values. Rather, his concern revolves around alignment of public and private conducts and perspectives:

> You have your individual values and then you enter into public life, and there are some demands from the public life. And you have to do one thing in the cost of other. For me, I believe in alignment of values. I have personal values, and then I am trying to be sensitive towards what is required for me in my conduct of my public life. And I think there should not be divergence between [the] two. Both my priorities are very much aligned.

Among left-wing activists, the process of *transcending* operates at the levels of consciousness and praxis, which, in turn, entails both personal and external realms. Personal transformations refer to appearance, behavior, and habits. For instance, Sandeep Singh, former AISA activist from Uttar Pradesh, noted that besides ideology and mindset, "appearance transcends too." He added that "transcendence" is not a mere artificial pretense, but rather it evolves intuitively in the process of political embedment.

On the one hand, personal transformation can be described as liberation. Through transcendence, liberation sustains. For instance, Sandeep Saurav, an AISA activist who comes from a single-mother family, narrated that activism at JNU has altered his priorities and that questions such as "what to wear" and "what career to pursue… in order to accomplish the middle-class dream" have become irrelevant. As a result, while in the past his confidence rested on external factors and even wearing torn shoes would have undermined his confidence, after engrossment in student activism, his confidence became determined solely by inward realms, such as vision and understanding. In turn, this generated an astounding sense of liberation.

On the other hand, personal transformation can be marked as "declassing." Becoming "de-classed" implies renunciation of material privileges and aspirations in order to revoke differences between

the "intellectual" and the masses (Dasgupta, 2003). The tradition of "declassing" has been endured in middle-class Bengali Marxist politics.

It may not elucidate personal transformations of many activists at JNU, who come from an already "disadvantaged backgrounds," but it may explain how "declassing" is employed by "elite" woman activists in a patriarchal society to self-censor themselves. For instance, Vanessa, a radical left-wing activist who often is described as "urban elite" by students at JNU, explained why she transformed her appearance at the panel on "sexual violence." For a long time, she had a very short hair, but when she engaged in political activism off-campus, her fashionable hairstyle became a topic of concern since people gazed at her short hair and fair hands. Vanessa did not want to look outlandish, but rather aspired to "declass" in order to be listened to instead of being looked at. Vanessa's example depicts how "declassing" is employed as a strategy in order to connect with the masses; however, for women, often the cost of being "declassed" is the restriction of their personal freedom by controlling what they wear, how they look, and how do they behave.

On the other hand, "declassing" can be an intuitive process gradually developed due to the "transcending experience." For instance, Abhay, a left-wing activist and an upper-caste Brahmin, lives on his scholarship. Once he told me that he purchased a new pair of shoes as there was a huge discount of about thousand Rupees. However, he hardly wore the pair:

> I got a scholarship, and I purchased it [the pair of shoes], but somehow I feel that I should not wear it because most of the people cannot afford to wear that thing. It does not mean that I will stop somebody from wearing it, but somehow I don't feel comfortable. I don't know how to explain it. (Interview, 2013)

For Abhay, the transcending process expands beyond the consciousness and external realm of activism and suffuses Abhay's personal realm where everyday negotiations occur.

Student activism is not only about sacrifices; it brings a range of privileges too. The vocal activists become *netas* (leaders); if they contest, win, and become the office bearers of the JNU Students' Union (JNUSU), their popularity proliferates since it is implausible to be the victor in JNUSU elections without a preceding intense campaign and broad social networks; if an activist becomes president of the JNU Students' Union, then the range of privileges increase on- and off-campus, which in turn bring that person into the limelight. *Netas* (leaders) are welcomed everywhere on the campus, including libraries and professors' houses. Activist prerogative operates in mundane, day-to-day realities of students' lives. Even at the canteens and dhabas on campus, they are recognized immediately and served the food (possibly the best) first, while common students wait for their turn. Thus, to be a *neta* (leader) has a long-lasting impact as leaders build powerful networks in the meantime.

For example, social networks may serve in two ways: firstly, if the student activist decides to pursue a career as a full-time politician, the student will already have a certain mass-base and large social network. Netas do not have to start agitation from scratch as they already have networks with developed familial relations all over the country, and these networks, in turn, help them to build new networks. On the other hand, powerful networks with influential people, prominent citizens, professors, journalists, high officials, human rights defenders, and so on come into service at various junctures. For instance, on May 1, 2014, I accompanied some AISA activists for the May day-demonstration in Noida. On the way, one of the activists encountered an incident with a CID (Criminal Investigation Department) officer, and subsequently, all of us were taken to the police station. The interrogation lasted for three hours, and I was sure that two of the activists would be sent to jail. During the three hours, one of the student leaders, who had been a JNU Students' Union president in the past, had been trying to call some influential people to interfere in the matter. Finally, the senior CID officer, who had been adamant, received a call from the senior state quarters and unexpectedly changed his behavior. After filling some formal papers and paying a fine,

activists were then freed and rescued from jail. This instance illustrates how the powerful social networks built during student activism are brought into play.

Female Activists in India

The process of "becoming an activist" among the female caucus of left-wing respondents has been a "transcending experience," which many of them mark as "liberating." Most respondents come from traditional Hindu families where women's behavior and sexuality are especially controlled. As leftist women become engrossed in activism through political socialization and activist networks, they develop the rationale of left-wing politics, particularly of gender injustice. The transcending experience largely implies transcending of female activists' gendered subjectivities. Left-wing female respondents frequently adduce their gendered experiences to illustrate the formation of a female activist, whereas right-wing female respondents did not allude to their experiences through the prism of gender while explaining the process of "becoming an activist."

Most female respondents affiliated with left-wing organizations initially had a very vague ideological affinity and came from an "apolitical" background, which implied disinterest with organized politics. Despite the negative perceptions attached to politics, after coming to JNU, these women eventually became some of the most vocal student activists on and off campus. JNU provided them with avenues where they encountered student politics and gradually became captivated. The process of "becoming an activist" entailed political **socialization**, **activist networks**, "low-cost" activism, and development of a **rationale.** These processes did not occur in succession, but often operated concurrently or interplayed between each other at different junctures. A few instances illustrate this well.

The first narrative elucidates the political trajectory of Shivani, a left-wing activist who is an upper-caste Brahmin from Haryana. She had no exposure to left-wing politics as they were marginal at her place of origin. In retrospect, Shivani realized that she arrived at JNU with what she calls "left-leaning sensibilities" as many of her views and concerns were left-wing. For instance, while studying clinical psychology, she worked in a hospital. She preferred working with lower socioeconomic strata. She started asking questions and searching for answers. When patients would come to her with certain problems, she often sensed that

> this problem is not simply occurring because of the individual's inability to cope… You have a worker, who is from Uttarakhand, working as a migrant laborer in Haryana. He works double shifts so [that] he can sustain his family, and he has been living away from his family for so long. He is unable to go back home even when somebody in his family is ill. He is having nightmares. Now, in psychology, the paradigm teaches that probably it's a thinking problem, it's an attitudinal problem, he needs to start thinking more positively, but in a lot of cases, I felt that it was not just about the individual. There was something that society was doing, and as long as I just kept telling the individual to change his style of thinking, it was not quite the fair thing to do. (Interview, 2013)

Shivani's self-reflection shows valorization of denial or rejection of the chosen path in order to find a way that would enable her to bring about a real change. The concrete experience of migrant laborers in the hospital, in retrospect, prompted her to reconsider her career and aspirations in life. Subsequently, she left her job and started teaching, which inspired her to study education, and she took admission in JNU to earn her M.Phil. and Ph.D. in education. At this juncture, Shivani's political socialization and building of activist networks began. For two years, she observed and attended public meetings. In 2009, the student organization AISA launched a movement on the right to education. According to AISA, the proposed Bill not only paved the way for massive privatization and commercialization of higher education, but also threatened reservations and social

inclusion in institutions of higher learning (AISA, pamphlet). Shivani was passionate about education, but she was also disillusioned with the Right to Education Bill. When AISA began loudly criticizing the bill, Shivani got involved in the movement. Subsequently, she joined AISA "because they were the only people talking seriously about the issue that concerned" her. Thus, interlocking of political socialization, tentative forays, rationale, and discontent led Shivani to engage in student activism.

The multiple avenues of encounter at JNU rendered most respondents galvanized by student politics. As JNU predominantly offers post-graduate courses (M.A., M.Phil, Ph.D.), many activists have graduated from other universities. However, most left-wing activists became involved in student politics only after coming to JNU. Activists explain it as being the result of a different kind of political culture at JNU, which may refer to efficacious mobilization strategies, along with the range of cultural practices, that are manifested in symbols and "rituals," such as annual Students' Union elections, regular processions with torch lights, and post-election, before-sunrise sloganeering echoing all over campus, that send signals about the nature of student politics and provide fertile ground for political "awakening." For instance, Vibhuti, an AISA activist, who graduated from Delhi University, stated the following:

> When you come from an environment like that in JNU, in a certain sense, it's bewildering, but also it's very, very interesting because for the first time you actually witness the people taking a stance - very actively, very consciously, in very clear and articulate ways. Then you are, of course, introduced to a spectrum of stands, and you have to make your choice between them. (Interview, 2013)

When Vibhuti joined JNU, she already had a left-liberal perspective and did not need to be won over by the left. However, she needed to be persuaded of the value of party politics. She began interacting with student activists and developed activist networks, which according to her, had a great impact on her political path. Similarly, Shweta, a left-wing activist and an upper-caste from

Bihar, like most of the respondents I have interviewed, knew very little about student politics before beginning her studies at JNU. Her previous encounters with politics at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Delhi University (DU) had left a negative impression since they are largely determined by "money and muscle" power. She recollected that the DU student organizations that obtained the most votes won not because of their ideology and agenda, but because they bribed students or used muscle power. She claimed that the organizations earned students' votes by taking the students to the New Year parties or cinemas or for food and fun. Shweta inveighs against student organizations that do not bother to present a student-welfare-oriented agenda or raise the issues of privatization of education, hostel problems, and so on. Shweta noted that none of the student organizations at JNU can earn students' trust with this kind of "bad politics," and it is hardly conducive to wining an election. If the contesting student organizations aspire to obtain votes, "they have to develop and present their agenda" and present a coherent and convincing political vision. Therefore, when Shweta came to JNU, she discovered her "real face of politics," which facilitated her political socialization, development of rationale for activism, such as articulation of problems pertaining to the higher education system nationwide and gender inequality; in turn, this enkindled her realization that rajniti (politics) is actually a necessity for her.

Contrary to the political trajectories of left-wing female activists, it was not JNU where right-wing respondents discovered ABVP. For instance, Mamta, who is an upper-caste Brahmin from UP, had been associated with ABVP since her school days. She joined ABVP because she had been inspired by cultural nationalism. When she enrolled at JNU, she continued working with ABVP at the university, and she was appointed president of the ABVP JNU unit in 2013. Thus, activism at JNU forms an important strand of continuity in Mamta's political career.

Conversely, another female activist, Gayatri, an upper caste, although not party to ABVP until she joined JNU, had been associated with it due to her family. She had been familiar with right-wing

political parties since childhood; her father was in the RSS, and her brothers also took part in right-wing politics. During the elections at JNU in 2006, her brother's friend from the ABVP (which purports similar ideological goals to RSS and BJP) asked her to run for a counselor post. She consented to his request and has been a committed activist ever since. In case of right-wing activists, previous social networks, particularly "strong ties" or family socialization, are pronounced, whereas in the case of left-wing activists, social networks, which have been developed on campus through political socialization, are more pertinent.

In the process of engagement in activism, activists acquire a sense of unity and camaraderie that foster confidence, which in conjunction, produced collective action and vice versa. Participation in the movement increases the perception of "collective effectiveness" and generates a sense of unity, in turn, sparking confidence as a result of a contribution to the common cause and succeeding perception of "individual effectiveness" (Passy & Giugni, 2001). For instance, for the first time, Shivani, a left-wing activist, did not feel helpless as a result of not being able to do something. She realized that "there is a platform where maybe you can't change things overnight, but at least something constructive is happening - where you are able to do something." Shivani's engagement in activism contributed to her confidence and encouraged her to act as she feels because, along with her comrades, she can change what others might think to be irreversible. Shivani was no longer a 'mute spectator of oppression' but had become a vocal speaker against it.

In order to retain this sense of unity and generate it among new students, activists employ various tactics, such as slogans and poems on the wall, paintings that evoke a sense of unity, and camaraderie through the discursive construction of "we-ness." For instance, one of the most prevalent slogans reverberating on campus during protests is that of "we shall fight, we shall win." It engenders a sense of unity and hope, which are pivotal emotions influencing involvement in

activism (Jasper, 2007; Passy & Giugni, 2001). Similarly, a political wall painting at JNU, citing Pablo Neruda, reads as follows:

> "You have taught me to see unity and yet diversity of mankind.
>
> You showed me how one person's pain could die in the victory of all…
>
> You have made me indestructible, [because with you,] I no longer end in myself."

Sucheta, a left-wing activist, referred to the abovementioned poem of Pablo Neruda to explicate the transformation she experienced due to her activism:

> I think that Pablo Neruda's poem, 'To My Party,' that is a very good articulation of a philosophical transformation of an activist. An activist starts to feel a sense of collectivity… Since childhood, parents teach you how to be apart: you have to be apart from your friends, from society, focus on your studies, and think about yourself. That is the major philosophical transformation that one goes through after joining activism. (Interview, 2013)

My respondents embrace intersubjective unity and the sense of camaraderie as they feel that they are "somewhere, where [they] belong." These also manifest in the feeling of "being understood," in "shared dreams," and in "common struggles." As Shivani put it,

> It's not that you are connecting here with certain people with certain leisure, entertainment. **You are with people with whom you share a dream**. We share a dream about which all of us are very passionate. It creates a bond where you share dreams and visions, and you all are working towards it. (Interview, 2013; emphasis mine).

Thus, engagement in activism escalates subtle webs that bind activists to each other. Engrossment in activism has been a "transcending experience" for left-wing female respondents since activists oscillate between learning new things and unlearning past practices. Personal and external realms,

where “transcending” takes place, are entangled with each other and inform the ongoing process of making and remaking the self as an activist. Respondents’ reflections reveal how they have crafted their political selves and how politics have affected their understanding of the self.

Firstly, in the process of engagement in student politics, female activists acquired a rationale and left-wing discourse. For instance, Shivani stated that in the past, she lacked a nuanced understanding of left-wing ideology and instead had, as she describes, “bourgeois morality” or “humanitarian concern.” I suppose Shivani’s veer from ‘bourgeois morality’ towards a left-wing ideology refers to the shift in her approach to solve problems of the downtrodden, particularly labor migrants, who happened to be her patients. During her clinical practice, she had taken the “attitudinal approach,” which places all responsibility on individuals and suggests they change their style of thinking to elicit a solution. Later, she labeled this approach as an experience of “bourgeois morality,” probably because it seems one sided and neglects the actual determinants of the problem, such as economic factors. It does not challenge the actual cause of the depression and overlooks the socioeconomic circumstances that led to it. In such a way, bourgeois morality serves the interest of the bourgeoisie and encourages inactivity. Shivani affirmed that student activism enabled her to deepen her theoretical understanding of oppression. Her critical view of “humanitarian concern” can refer to and be elucidated by “humanitarian,” ”anti-political” politics. It strives to help those suffering, but in reality, it confuses the actual cause of suffering and, hence, does not liberate the oppressed from the shackles of socio-economic hardship.

Another left-wing activist, Sucheta, originally from West-Bengal, elucidated how, in the process of “becoming an activist,” she developed a framework through which to understand and analyze different forms of oppression including gender. Sucheta, as well as all left-wing female respondents, focused the attention on her gendered experience and delineated development of feminist consciousness, particularly feminist rationale. She narrated that in the past she was

uncertain of why women were treated differently than men. After joining politics, "academically and politically," she "started understanding the reasons." First, she became conscious of the various forms of oppressions, and then she acquired a language to express and articulate inequality: "You are told since childhood that the poor are poor because it is their fate; they don't want study, they are useless, they don't have merit, etc., but then you start realizing that there are systemic reasons for that."

Thus, in the past, Sucheta was taught to blame the victim for being downtrodden since social prejudices, lingering in people's minds, have been depicting merit as inborn into particular groups, such as male, upper class, or upper-caste Hindus, which implied that those who are disadvantaged in society lack merit. Through activism, particularly through acquiring a rationale, Sucheta transformed victim-blame to system-blame. Moreover, the "transcending experience" had a very personal implication: she learned about forms of oppression, its manifestations, developed frameworks, and arguments explaining explicit and implicit manifestations of oppression, including patriarchal oppression. This, in turn, enabled her to transform from "self-blame to system-blame." Once Sucheta identified the "problem that has no name" (Friedan, 1963) and named it, she became bold enough to question gendered restriction, to express radical views, to make her own decisions, and to change things according to her wishes, in turn, giving her a sense of liberation. As Sucheta put it, "[You] no longer fool yourself that as a woman you are supposed to behave in a particular way." She purported not to be dependent on society's opinion and approval as she is liberated.

In other words, engagement in activism generated self-assurance or confidence, and this, in turn, enabled female left-wing respondents to have the courage of their convictions. "Individual effectiveness" in external realm fostered self-assurance and boldness in the personal realm too. For instance, Vibhuti, a left-wing female activist from an upper-caste family in Delhi, believed that politics has had a major impact on her perspective and behavior. She used to hush up her

convictions, but now she speaks out. As Vibhuti notes, student activism contributed to her self-confidence, taught her to express herself better, and led her "to recognize that one has to fight. Literally every day is a fight." Self-confidence and the subsequent sense of "courage" to fight and strive against all structures of oppression, including gender, engendered activists to become assertive with their family members apropos of their freedom. For instance, Shweta, a left-wing activist from Bihar, purported that she never aspired to marriage. She saw the sufferings of her older female relatives and felt that was not the future she wanted, yet she did not have the courage to say "I don't want to marry" or "this is wrong." The feminist consciousness that she attained through activism rendered Shweta audacious. As she elaborated, "Perhaps I have to fight, perhaps I may not be understood, perhaps I may be defeated in the debate, but I have this confidence, this courage to say, 'Look this is wrong.'" (Interview, 2013)

On the other hand, for right-wing female respondents, activism has been an empowering practice since it implies more intensive socializing and development networks, which led them to become more articulate and confident. As Gayatri, a right-wing activist from an upper-caste Hindu family, stated, "Now I'm more confident than before. And I meet so many people…but in the past when I was in college…I never used to talk; whatever people say, I would just listen." (Interview, 2013)

Female left-wing respondents mark activism as liberating or "transcending" since women are emancipated from societal pressures and judgments. However, the "transcending" process is never absolute or perfect; it is a perpetual repetition of endeavors. Both male and female left-wing activists use relatively free confines on campus, where they can drink alcohol, smoke, and express their sexuality as modus operandi to resist hegemonic notions of virtuousness. Both male and female left-wing activists are criticized by right-wing groups for their subversive practices; however, it is only women whose character sometimes is questioned behind their backs by righteous comrades. Thus, women still experience conundrums in their articulation of sexuality. On

the one hand, practice of progressive politics sets women free to express their sexuality and they think of themselves as subjects. On the other hand, considering the sexism of patriarchal society, which student activists are also part of, women may be viewed as mere bodies and objects. This obfuscated twofold conception of women's liberty hinders the process of "transcending."

Another impediment to left-wing women's liberation is the difficulty to cast off the shackles of family. Left-wing women have to resist restrictions of patriarchal family structure with implicit and explicit means. At first, most respondents employed the tactic of withholding information from their parents about the nature of their activism.

To note this, activists often used the word "avoiding." They avoid talking to their parents about their activism; they avoid revealing their views on caste, sexuality, and communalism. They avoid engaging in such topics in order not to provoke their parents' anger. They avoid in order not to have to confront their parents' views directly, and they avoid in order not to have to lie to their parents, which would make them feel guilty. However, avoidance does not always refer to conformism as most respondents endeavor to live their lives in line with their declared ideological framework and use avoidance in order to eschew their parents from despondency. For instance, Shweta, a left-wing activist from rural Bihar, stated that she is not afraid of societal disapproval, but she cannot expect the same from her parents as they are the ones who would face denunciation. As Shweta noted, "My mother often says, 'you don't care, because it's us who have to face the society.'" Thus, many interviewed female left-wing activists have to negotiate with parents in order to avoid direct confrontation and, simultaneously, avert their unwelcomed interference. For instance, Shivani, a left-wing activist and an upper-caste Brahmin from Haryana, at first thought she should be extremely honest with her parents, but then she realized that honesty had its limitations "because to be able to be honest with parents requires a certain amount of honesty and open-mindedness on their part." When she did not see that "open-mindedness" from her parents, she learned to be

pragmatic. Now she selectively reveals some of her activities to her parents and others are swept under the carpet.

In addition, the nature of negotiations with parents depends on which phase of life activists are in. Most respondents stated that economic independence from family is indispensable to their decision-making autonomy. As Sucheta, a left-wing activist stated,

> When you are economically dependent on your parents at the beginning of your activist career, you are closer to them. I did not tell them that I had joined politics, but subsequently, when I started getting scholarship[s] or had comrades who could help me economically or otherwise, they came to know… I said, 'This is the way I am. You think something else, but my vision is different.' (Interview, 2013)

Sucheta revealed her political activism to her parents only when she did not feel the threat of being deprived of financial support from parents as she became independent enough to stay true to her political path. Furthermore, Sucheta feels incongruous with her parents' expectations for her future as they want her to get a job, marry for the sake of stability, and keep her life revolving around family. Sucheta repudiates this notion of "stability," which according to her,

> means to be part of the system, where you have to bitch about your neighbor, saying '[t]hat person is so bad, that person is so selfish, that person's boy is earning so much, more than somebody else's boy, somebody else's daughter has got a more handsome husband than somebody else's daughter.' So your stability and middle-class livelihood also means engaging in this kind of thought-sharing. (Interview, 2013)

Sucheta's narrative alludes to the growing estrangement from her family, including relatives. She is reluctant to be part of the "traditional system" to which her parents, relatives, and neighbors belong. It also implies repudiation of domesticity, which refers to a particular organization of "market work

and family work" (Williams, 2001) supported by gendered division of labor. Through renunciation, her liberation begins, which enables her to embark on a "transcending journey," taking her beyond the ordinary experience of "stability" and "domesticity."

In contrast to left-wing activists, right-wing female respondents depicted their relationship with family members as utterly harmonious. The reason is that, firstly, both activists and their family members adhere to Hindutva ideology and share common worldviews. Secondly, activists' visions about their future are in sympathy with what their parents' aspire for them. For example, Mamta, a right-wing activist from an upper-caste Brahmin family from Uttar Pradesh, has been a right-wing activist since her school years, and her parents approve of it. Mamta purported that her parents have never had a problem with her as she abides by her family's demands. Mamta lives with her extended family of 20-25 members. She described with admiration how decisions are made collectively in the family and tells how she reveres this tradition:

> Any decision which I think that is right for me, my family also thinks is right. After taking a decision, or in the process of deciding, I talk to all my family members: my uncles, my aunts - both paternal and maternal - and my grandmother, brothers, sisters. Really, I get more strength from my family if I decide to do something. (Interview, 2013)

For Mamta, her family's validation of her actions is pivotal. Similarly, another right-wing activist, Gayatri, avowed that she earned her parents trust as they know that she will not "do anything wrong" that could impair their family's honor. Gayatri is amenable to her parents' decisions apropos of her marriage.

> After my PhD submission, they [my parents] will search for the guy, but if they cannot find the right guy (laughs happily), suitable guy, I can also choose - I have freedom - but I never do because my orientation was not that. I would never choose these things, so [my parents] will select, and they will show me… (Interview, 2013)

Gayatri is ready and willing to enter into an arranged marriage because she wants to engage in traditional righteous behavior whenever possible.

Resistance and Activism in the Lives of Georgian Activists

In Georgia, student activists' engagement in activism primarily has been a linear process: discontent and social networks concurrently led to organized activism and development of rationale. However, relative variations in the sequence of involvement among activists were determined by Laboratory 1918's heterogeneous character. For instance, social democrats first emphasized ideological predisposition, which was followed by **social networks**, foundation of Laboratory 1918, and activism. Levan, Laboratory 1918 activist and member of the Social-Democratic party's youth wing, recounted that at first, he became interested in left-wing ideology and began to look for likeminded people on internet websites such as forum.ge, which had a section on politics. Along with other social democrats, Levan engaged in online discussions and, subsequently, became a member of the newly founded social-democratic party. Thus, before establishing Laboratory 1918, many of its founding members were already affiliated or socialized with social democrats.

The organized protest was preceded with rationalization of their grievances, which identified individual problems as a mere manifestation of a larger system that must be attacked. For instance, Levan noted that they felt discontent with the education quality, joblessness, and economic situations, which had a very personal and mundane implication as they did not even have enough money to nurse a beer at their favorite hangouts. They realized that dissatisfaction with the quality of education and difficulty in finding jobs were not individual problems, but ramifications of new

economic and social order. Similarly, female respondents thought they should strive against the cause of the problems and emphasized the same range of issues as their male comrades.

Some respondents from Laboratory 1918 noted that initially their protest was merely the voicing of discontent about certain issues, and it was only later that they acquired a rationale to view these issues within a certain framework. In order to define this process, Alexandra, a female left-wing activist from Tbilisi, referred to Laboratory 1918 as an actual laboratory where research, experiments, and teaching took place, which triggered activists to develop their argumentations and frameworks. Many Laboratory 1918 members largely described engagement in activism as a result of individual predisposition or even inborn leaning. As Ani, a female left-wing activist, states, she has been posing questions long before the Laboratory's foundation, but there was not an adequate platform where she could express her grievances (Interview, 2013).

Ani's experience highlights how participation in political activism rendered students with an individual and collective sense of effectiveness, in turn, generating confidence. For instance, George, a left-wing activist, who has graduated from TSU, first identified grievances pertaining to the university and to the country at large. Interest in the protest issue was crucially related to George's engagement in activism, but it was not a sufficient condition. In order to conquer the feeling of "individual ineffectiveness," manifested in sitting at home, complaining, and lamenting over problems, he decided to take part in collective action. Prior to joining Laboratory, he was feeling "empty" and "helpless," which was soon transformed into the sense of "collective effectiveness" as he took part in collective action. Participation generated confidence, and he was no more a "discontented and complaining person." Engagement in activism was followed with discussions and readings, which elucidated reasons behind obfuscated and perplex protest issues, and gradually, he developed an illuminating framework or rationale.

Conversely, right-wing respondents became involved in activism in order to "protect Georgian identity and culture" from various threats, such as Muslims, migrants, Russian occupation, feminists, and LGBTs. Right-wing respondents' ideological expression is a continuance of their previous socialization. They view their engagement as a personal, innate inclination toward a "sacred duty" to protect the nation and preserve traditions. For instance, George, a right-wing activist from Tbilisi, purported to have been guided by patriotic feelings since his childhood, and nationalist ideology has been embedded in his life. The formation of National Front enabled him to express himself and find support of likeminded people, which then engendered in him a powerful sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Left-wing activists operated within the "permissible boundaries" and addressed issues that confronted those in power, but they did not strike against the patriarchal and heterosexual norms cherished in Georgian society as any confrontation would have had to stand up to society at large rather than to only those in power. As a result, parents of respondents approved the issues, which are righteous and resonate among a wider audience. For instance, George's parents were pleased when he participated in the movement against prisoner abuse in Tbilisi, and they also welcomed it when Laboratory raised issues concerning the university and education. However, they showed disapproval and disagreement when it comes to the issues of sexuality, such as LGBT rights. Similarly, Ani's parents were proud of her as she participated in protests against prisoner abuse and other social issues, such as demanding adequate and safe working conditions. However, participation in feminist demonstrations was outside "permissible boundaries." As Ana told, "She [mother] did not want me to be identified with the feminist movement because [she] feared that it may create problems, and people may think 'wrongly' about me." Thus, participation in the protests with demands asserting women's sexuality, freedom to abort, LGBT rights, and attacking the definition of women solely as mothers through slogans such as "women are not incubators" was conceived as subversive in the society.

Although disagreements between some Laboratory 1918 activists and their parents exist, they are not critical. Soso, a left-wing activist, states, "It is indispensable for a genuinely left-wing person to experience estrangement from your family members, in particular with [the] elder generation." Soso supposed that since family is an authoritative and patriarchal institution, intergenerational confrontation is even a requisite for a progressive leftist who wants to challenge power structures. Soso, contrary to other activists attempting to negotiate with or persuade their parents, avoids talking about politics with his parents as he thinks that their views are at odds with each other. Moreover, parents conceive activism as a hindrance to a successful career and express worries about their offspring's stability. Soso thinks that parents are concerned not only about his future, but also about their own stability. For instance, at a young age, children are financially dependent on their parents and are subject to paternalistic relations, whereas at old age, parents in Georgian society become financially dependent on their offspring. According to Soso, this only reproduces dependency and attachment, which then restricts one's freedom and autonomy. (Interview, 2013)

Contrary to left-wing respondents, right-wing activists live in intergenerational continuity with their parents. Firstly, parents support their patriotic endeavors and share a nationalist frame of reference with them. For instance, parents support Eduard, a right-wing activist from Guria, and are proud of his patriotism. His father was part of the nationalist movement in the past. Eduard thinks his parents do not have any reason to be against his engagement in activism. Indeed, they are delighted since Eduard fulfills their aspirations and does not aimlessly squander his time in the streets. Eduard's actions are congruous with his parents' wishes: "They [parents] brought me up as a Georgian and trust me. I will never do anything that will heart me or my family." (Interview, 2013)

Individually among respondents, engagement in activism generated a range of personal transformations: many respondents stated that their reading preferences have changed. Since joining

Laboratory 1918, they have begun to read scholarly literature rather than fiction. At their backstage meetings, they cited and suggested new authors to each other, thus pursuing self-education. However, one of the members – Soso – avowed that during the phase of intensive political activism, he read fewer books and drank more alcohol than before. Often organizational meetings were incomplete without drinks and bore a resemblance to socializing at parties.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored the process of "becoming an activist" as it is interpreted by activists. Left-wing respondents (AISA) in India view engagement in student activism as a "transcending experience," whereas right-wing respondents' (ABVP) journey can be described as "preserving" and "protecting." Similarly, Georgian right-wing (National Front) respondents' political trajectory is determined by motivations of preservation and protection, whereas Georgian left-wing activists' (Laboratory 1918) path can be described as an experiment. Both male and female activists of AISA, as well as of Laboratory 1918, acquired a rationale for activism in the process of becoming an activist. However, only female activists of AISA referred to their gendered experiences as having enabled them to develop feminist rationale. In contrast to left-wing respondents, right-wing respondents join activism with already-acquired rationale. On the one hand, AISA activists in India elaborated in length about intergenerational tension with their parents and the ways they negotiate with them. Among AISA activists, women mainly focused on the gender aspect of intergenerational tension, thus depicting their more feminist rationale. Laboratory 1918 activists also acknowledged intergenerational conflict, but it is less pertinent among them. On the other hand, right-wing activists, both in India and Georgia, live in intergenerational continuance and purported to never do anything that would put them at odds with their parents.

Chapter Seven: Gender Battleground – Student Organizations' Feminist Stance and Activism

In this chapter, I explore how left-wing student organizations position themselves in relation to patriarchal oppression and how it impacts their feminist stance and activism, particularly how feminist issues such as gender inequality and sexuality are addressed by left-wing organizations. In such a way, this chapter, as well as the overall thesis, looks at the organizations with the same elementary structure or left-wing ideological framework in order to identify the possibility of feminist activism within progressive left-wing politics. However, left-wing organizations do not operate in isolation, and in order to understand their stance and activism, sometimes it is also useful to look at the exemplary cases of right-wing activism that can enter into the frame. Therefore, in this chapter, I explore the constitutive elements of the feminist stance: declaration that implies the recognition of gender inequality and repudiation of women's oppression; rationale that refers to the ways in which organizations and activists articulate issues of gender inequality; and finally, action that entails individual and/or organizational-level acts that sustain or challenge sexism, gender inequality, and heteronormativity.

For Half the Sky and Half the Earth: Student Activism and gender

Georgian and Indian respondents' articulations of gender-related issues were largely determined by crisis events, such as the attack during the anti-homophobic demonstration on May 17 in Georgia and the Delhi gang rape in India, which occurred in Georgia and India, respectively, during my fieldwork. Many activists' responses to questions pertaining to gender inequality revolved around the images and debates that were precipitated by the abovementioned incidents.

The crisis event in India, the Delhi gang rape, took place on December, 16, 2012. A 23-year-old woman and her friend were brutally attacked by a group of men in a private bus in South Delhi. The woman was gang raped, beaten, thrown from the bus naked, and afterward, died from her injuries. The case sparked a massive outcry against rape, and protests spilled over the streets across India. As people flooded the streets and huge protest swept Delhi, both left- and right-wing organizations at JNU joined the massive movement against rape with distinct demands, which then generated the debate revealing implicit ideas and complex social realities that underlie, produce, and reproduce instances of rape in India. On the one hand, a large number of people in the movement against rape voiced slogans demanding the "death penalty for rape," and activists of right-wing organizations at JNU also joined the movement and insisted on the capital punishment of the culprits and "protection" of women. For instance, an ABVP activist named Abhishek stated that "protests are not enough; there is a necessity for such a law which would scare people" (Interview, 2013). Similarly, Gayatri, a female right-wing activist, noted that "one or two people [culprits] have to be hanged. Then newspapers will publish it, [and] then people will read and will have fear that if 'we do this, then we also will be hanged.'" (Interview, 2013)

On the other hand, left-wing groups and many women's organizations opposed the death penalty and chemical castration as these punishments do not address the primary issue - patriarchal oppression that precipitates enabling ambience for the rapist. The demands of chemical castration and the death sentence suggest that harsh punishment would deter perpetrators of sexual violence induced by sexual desire. Firstly, Kavita Krishnan, former JNU Students' Union joint secretary and current leader of CPI-ML, parent party of AISA, refuted that rapes are "all about the slaking of desire, devoid of misogyny" (Krishnan, Kafila, 2013); instead, she argued that rapes are about "male power which society confers" (Krishnan, 2013). Kavita Krishnan reckoned rape in the purview of patriarchal oppression: "Rape is a way of reminding women of their subordinate status, and warning them to 'stay within limits' by instilling fear in them" (Krishnan, Rape is about male power which society confers, 2013). Secondly, the reason for opposing the death penalty is that brutal punishment would increase social pressure on woman through emotional blackmailing to stop them from seeking justice, as Kavita stated: "Most of the rapes happen within the family therefore women are under tremendous pressure to suppress the incidents of crimes."

Left-wing student organizations of JNU and, in particular, the platform of "freedom without fear" backed mainly by AISA, not only participated, but mobilized large numbers of students and non-students for the movement; they surpassed the demands for the death penalty and patriarchal protectionism and, instead, introduced slogans that asked for women's freedom (azadi) from the patriarchal oppression that precipitates enabling ambience for the rapists. Left-wing student activists viewed the rape incident as inextricable from everyday oppression and as a culmination of patriarchal culture. Therefore, their demands were not restricted to the calls for safety and security for women as they problematized the concept of safety and security, which for authorities means following certain pre-defined conditions to be safe. As Shivani, an AISA activist wrote, "We did not come out on the streets to be told how to be safe, but to convey it loud and clear that we cannot spend our entire lives trying to be safe without actually getting to live it" (Nag, 2013). Instead,

placards demonstrated at the protest sites read: "Don't tell us, how to dress, tell men not to rape," or "if your gaze is evil why should I cover my face"[6] (*teri nazar buri to parda main karun*?!); moreover, slogans of freedom (*azadi*) from all manifestations of patriarchal oppression, including restrictions imposed upon women, were echoed in the air:

Women demand freedom, to walk on the streets, to go out at night, to wear anything they wish… freedom from fathers, brothers, and the khap. (mahilaein mange azadi, sadak pe chalne ki, raat mein nikalne ki, kuch bhi pahenne ki… bap se bhi, bhai se bhi, khap se bhi azadi).

Many left-wing student organizations of JNU, in particular, the newly established platform of "freedom without fear," organized a series of protests, parades, vigils, theatre performances, public meetings, and movie screenings aimed at challenging the patriarchal mindset. Kavita Krishnan, who was a former JNU Students' Union joint secretary and remains a "guru" for AISA, mainly in the matters of gender, argued that it is "gender justice that needs to be brought and kept in the center stage of the debate – not 'death penalty vs. no death penalty'" (Krishnan, 2013). For this reason, to begin with, left-wing student activists during the campaigning focused on overall changes that are necessary at the level of the law and power structures. For instance, left-wing activists demanded implementation of the Justice Verma Committee recommendations in their entirety. The Justice Verma Committee was established on December 23, 2012, to examine the possible amendments apropos to sexual violence in the criminal legislature. The end goal of the committee is to make the laws and the investigation mechanisms free from institutionalized gender bias, such as the obnoxious "two-finger test," which is common in the medical examination of a rape survivor to determine whether she is "habituated to sexual intercourse," which has to do more with the verification of the "character" of the survivor rather than consent; or the exemption for marital rape, which regards wives as no more than the property of their husbands (Justice Verma Committee , 2013). Correspondingly, Sucheta, an AISA activist and former JNU Students' Union president, scrutinized the use of language in existing laws, which define molestation as an

[6] Translation by Kavita Krishnan

"outraging of modesty." In Sucheta's view, when one says "outraging of modesty," it is definitely not a woman's autonomy of her own body, but it is somebody else's view, implying that a woman carries an "honor" in her body given by society, honor that has not been decided by the woman herself.

In the protests against rape, both left-wing men and women activists participated indistinguishably; however, women predominantly were in the forefront giving speeches, playing drums, and singing protest songs, whereas men mainly were restricted to the backstage activities, such as mobilization of protestors, mobilization of funds, organization of buses, and so on. These protests have become vehicles of ideas influencing participants themselves and raising their awareness. Anti-rape demonstrations were a form of political communication at two levels: externally, they are aimed at authorities, media, and public opinion, and internally, they convey a message to the protestors themselves. Thus, while listening to the speeches of feminists and while preparing themselves to deliver the speech and talk to the media and to the wider audience, left-wing activists acquired feminist political idiom and increased awareness. For instance, when I asked AISA activists about gender inequality, all of them were unequivocally against any manifestation of patriarchal oppression, but male and female activists' articulation of gender inequality differed. In order to enunciate gender inequality, men invoked examples discussed during the "freedom without fear" campaign, although they sometimes lacked further articulation of the issue. A few examples help illustrate this. As Agnitro, a male, AISA activist, stated,

> Any kind of inequality within gender, class, or caste is because some people are privileged and some people are not privileged. So that should not be. Like, if a man can go to the streets at midnight without any fear, anybody should [be able to]. (Interview, 2013)

To the question about gender inequality, Agnitro brought forward intersections of gender, caste, and class. However, men are marked as "men," but women are subsumed under the category of "anybody." Further, Agnitro identified forms of gender inequality, which were largely discussed

during the anti-rape movement meetings, addressing the tragic incident in the purview of larger patriarchal oppression. For instance, these forms focused on the restriction of the women's movement: sexual harassment, sexual molestation, and power hierarchies:

> Although JNU is progressive and there is a body, GSCASH [Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment], but there are several layers of gender inequality. Firstly, safety and security, of course, it is comparatively [a] much safer campus, but we [still] heard the cases of sexual harassment, molestation happening in the campus. So we have to introspect, how much safe[r] and [more] secure is our campus… and there are several power hierarchies which exist. For instance, [the] power hierarchy between supervisor and female student. How we democratize the power structure, that's also a challenge for the movement. (Interview, 2013)

Agnitro, who is a radical left-wing activist, ascribed gender inequality to the "right-wing, communal, and patriarchal society." His articulation of the examples for elucidating the statement finds an echo in the discussions and speeches delivered in the purview of the anti-rape movement, such as the restriction of women's agency when a society sets unwritten rules about what women should wear, how they should behave, and how they should talk; and the issue of marital rape:

> Society is very right wing, communal, and patriarchal. Even in the campus, if a woman wears shorts, some people think (though they don't pass comments here) in a particular way because society taught them to think in a certain way that women should behave like this, women should wear like this, talk like this. So that is patriarchy I think…How martial rape is not an issue. Marriage does not mean that men own women's body. She has a right to say no. (Interview, 2013).

Another AISA male activist named Akbar answered the question about gender inequality with an example of domestic violence:

> Recently, behind the library, a men slapped a woman. Student activists interfered and suggested her to file a case against him; however, [the] woman replied that 'no, he is my boyfriend.' Now this girl thinks that her boyfriend has the right to slap her and go away with it. Then I thought that it is a very problematic understanding… (Interview, 2013)

On the one hand, Akbar was quick to identify and condemn the case of domestic violence, but on the other hand, he realizes that "gender inequality exists in the society and [that] it is not only the mindset of men, but women also operate with a patriarchal understanding. We have to think how to change it." Thus, he holds both men and women accountable for gender inequality, but fails to mention who benefits from this inequality. Probably, both men and women can reinforce, to a different extent, existing inequality, but it is only men who are privileged and who gain the *patriarchal dividend* (Connell, 2005) out of this discrepancy.

Left-wing female respondents were immensely articulate and aware of the issues of gender inequality. They elucidated patriarchal oppression through scrutiny of gender relations in the family and gave examples of their personal gendered experiences. The issue of marriage and liberty from the shackles of patriarchal control is the most contentious among left-wing women. For instance, Sucheta, a left-wing activist, noted that "gender inequality is there at every inch of your life." Another left-wing woman named Shivani spoke out:

> For a girl in India, 24-25 has to be a marriage age. So you must have very solid grounds [for] continuing your education till 30. I'm 30, and it's a big issue at home that I'm not married and [that] I'm studying for so long. They say, 'You search for a man who will be okay with you studying, but delaying marriage for education is not an option.' It's really hard to fight that. With men, people wait at least till they get a job; with women, that does not happen. You will be constantly reminded of your biological clock. At home from my relatives, I've heard things, which I laugh it off, but one time you can be very insensitive

> when people tell you that 'your market value is going down…' This is the kind of marketology your family will tell you. (Interview, 2013)

Shivani noted that, in the case of marriage, men have more freedom to eschew their parents' pressure and not harm their careers because parents "would wait at least until he gets a job," but they cannot allow the same to their daughters. Thus, women have to negotiate with their families in order to obtain freedom to make their own decisions and choices. In addition, left-wing female activists raised the issue of women's sexuality. As Shweta complained, "Women cannot express their sexuality, even in front of her husband." (Interview, 2013).

In order to place left-wing activism within the proper context, I will illustrate exemplary cases of right-wing activism. The right-wing respondents, both men and women, acknowledged that there should not be any gender-bias, but on the questions about the implications of gender inequality, their articulation of its dimensions and essence was very limited and predominantly revolved around the role of the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH). GSCASH is a gender sensitization body that ensures gender justice on the campus and receives complaints in cases of the sexual harassment and other forms of gender discrimination. Due to the left-wing organizations' efforts, along with the entrance form, new students are provided with the GSCASH pamphlet. Thus, students on campus are commonly aware of GSCASH. For instance, instead of elucidating the implications of gender inequality on- and off-campus, a right-wing activist named Umesh averted to criticism of GSCASH: "There are some organizations like GSCASH, but I think this is not appropriate. It's only a face, [so] we should not read only the face value." Similarly, the response of another right-wing activist, amale named Sumit, also revolved around GSCASH: "There is a GSCASH committee,[so] if the boys and girls tease each other, then the GSCASH committee solves it. There is a safety for girls because they are wandering and walking throughout the night. They feel very safe." (Interview, 2013)

According to Sumit, sexual harassment is not at all gendered, and both boys and girls equally can be culprits and "tease each other." Right-wing respondents' articulation of gender inequality vs. equality was limited to the certain instances of relative safety for women at JNU and failed to enunciate the essence or manifestations of gender inequality and subsume them under the label of "some things." For instance, a female right-wing activist named Gayatri stated the following:

> In JNU, there is no discrimination…there is no caste discrimination, no gender discrimination… Nothing is here, [and] everybody is equal. Being a girl, I am most safe inside campus rather than outside campus. This is equality, you see. I can walk alone at night on campus, [and] nobody will touch me or stare at me... I am safe here, but I have fear outside the campus because in the whole [of] India or Delhi, they do some things.

In contrast to right-wing respondents who described JNU as "heaven" for women, left-wing respondents refute JNU to be marked as an "island." For instance, Sucheta, a left-wing activist, noted that "the campus is the better place for women than [the] outside world, but that does not mean that everything is okay in the campus." Another, left-wing activist Vibhuti stated the following:

> JNU is a relatively more liberal space for women; the niche of the problems is very different compared to other places, so for example, even within JNU, you have to deal with certain kind[s] of obscene songs have been [played] at hostel nights, so you do have to negotiate instances of certain kinds of sexual harassment." (Interview, 2013)

In the case of sexual harassment, students can file a case with the Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH), which has evolved as a body for imparting gender sensitization and preventing sexual harassment on the basis of the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court of India and in agreement with the requirements of an institution of higher

education. The rules and procedures of GSCASH at JNU take into consideration and follow the Supreme Court decision in Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan, which requires universities to develop gender sensitization committees against sexual harassment. Although many universities have adopted sexual harassment policies to avoid legal liability, typically these regulations exist only on paper without any serious effort to implement them. JNU can be considered an exception in this matter. JNU has voluntarily implemented the GSCASH recommendations as a practical internal mechanism to handle problems of sexual harassment at the university. However, right-wing respondents purported that GSCASH has been used "as a weapon to fire" by left-wing organizations. For instance, Gayatri, a right-wing female activist, told the following:

> When clashes happen… In ABVP, there are girls, but they do not come out. They stay behind the scene while other organizations call their girls in front, and when girls come out and ABVP boys are there, though they are not doing anything, but they [girls] would file a case saying that 'they touched us, they eve-teased us.' This is a misuse of GSCASH. (Interview, 2013)

In this account, Gayatri revealed that though there are girls in ABVP (a right-wing organization), when there is a "confrontation" between rival organizations, they usually do not come out. Instead, they stay "behind the scene." She complained with a judgmental tone that girls from left-wing organizations stay at the forefront and search for the reason to accuse ABVP men in touching, eve-teasing, and subsequently file a complaint. Thus, the female activist is viewed differently from the male activist as men are considered the natural actors in the public place and even more natural perpetrators of violence, whereas women are assigned to the private realm. Thus, if women act violently or simply/merely just act in the forefront in the public realm, they are rejecting their role in society. Therefore, this rejection of her place in her normative peaceful sphere makes the female activist "abnormal" for Gayatri, who assigns female activists to the role of observers "behind the scene" when protest ambience becomes violent.

On the other hand, a left-wing activist named Sandeep elucidated that women join the organization on equal terms: "They form leadership, and at times of crisis, they take front positions as they do not fear if they have to fight." Firstly, women feel equal in terms of fighting, and this explains their presence in the forefront. Secondly, the reason for this is that during the confrontations with the police, it is an organization's gendered strategy to let women activists to be in front in order to save the situation. The assumption is that police would refrain themselves from employing violence toward women, as "it may become an issue, whereas in case of men it does not become such an issue" (Interview, 2013).

"Love Jihad:" Gender as Strategic Political Maneuvering

Often gender-related issues become a battleground for left- and right-wing student organizations at JNU to pursue their ideological goals. Further, sometimes GSCASH unintendedly becomes an ambiguous instrument for political and ideological retaliations. Right-wing organizations only become vocal about sexual harassment cases when it is against their adversary. For instance, in July 2014, two left-wing leaders who have been part of the movement "freedom without fear" were accused of alleged sexual harassment. Both of the accused activists published a notice expressing their shock, promising to cooperate fully with the GSCASH and later resigned. A complainant was in the same left-wing organization and in an open relationship, at first with one of the accused and afterward with another accused. Later, she left the organization to join a rival student organization and brought a case against them. However, considering the patriarchal mindset of the society, to reveal that the same woman filed a case against two activists is highly contentious since the public would question the "character" of the girl, which is against GSCASH rules as it may prevent other women from filing a case due to the fear of denunciation. On the one hand, if the accusation proves

to be true, it once again depicts the laboriousness of unlearning for left-wing activists. As one of them puts it, "In the public space, we claim we are equal, but in the private space, we often fail to unlearn cultural limitations: wrong portrayal of women activists." (Interview, 2013)

On the other hand, suddenly ABVP, a right-wing organization, has become a vehement defender of women's rights as the woman who filed a case is a Hindu and the two accused are left-wing Muslims (who themselves claim to be atheists). ABVP gave the issue an ideological and communal edge and started incriminating all communists and Muslims in violence against women. ABVP pamphlet (2014) reads, "These communists abuse Durga Mata and Bharat Mata and insult the idea of womanhood, how can we expect that they will respect women!"

ABVP talks about sexual harassment in the scope of disrespect of "womenhood" by communists. On the other hand, left-wing female activists revolt against the "imposition of 'ideal womanhood'" as it only reifies existing gendered roles and generates normalization of hierarchies. As Sucheta puts it, "Do not impose your imagination of 'ideal womanhood' on us anymore because that serves only your purpose very cleverly." The right-wing stance on gender is that "it is not only about women" and that it is about "accepting the differences and rejecting discriminations." The emphasis on 'accepting the differences" can be misinterpreted and used for anti-feminist purposes as it may suggest acceptance of existing hierarchical gendered roles as differences in the name of womanhood. In contrast, a left-wing female activist named Shivani suggested scrutinizing gendered hierarchies in and outside the home and gave an example of her own home:

> Recently, something struck me. My father has retired, and he feels good, but my mother's life remains the same She still has to get up in the morning, make breakfast. You know, he has the sense of 'I worked for so many years, now I need rest.' It's not that she was sitting like that for all these years. And at no point of time can she say I want retirement. There never seems to be a fair division of work at our home. (Interview, 2013)

In addition, ABVP blames left-wing groups for "promoting their brand of emancipation through booze and drugs" and describes left-wing groups as threatening since they may "coerce" peers "into perverse behavior and relationships." Under this premise, the crux of the problem for ABVP is ideological affiliation of the accused activists and the association with "unchaste" behavior. On the other hand, Sandeep, a left-wing activist, marked the case as "the cultural cost of [the] 'freedom without fear' campaign." According to Sandeep, the "freedom without fear" movement brought the discourse of women's emancipation along with free love, which at first galvanized left-wing activists, but cut them off from the conservative reality. In another pamphlet, the right-winged ABVP organization alludes to the Muslim identity of the accused and, hence, to the possible case of "love jihad": "Romance for Islamic Caliphate induces Love Jihad and feeds into the machinations of Sectarian Politics thereby rendering women right every bit dispensable at JNU" (Pamphlet, 2014).

One of the characteristics of right-wing organizations, particularly of ABVP, is an instantaneous awakening of gender "sensitivity" when the issue concerns "others," such as Muslims and communists, who are constructed as "dangerous others" who threaten Hindu women's dignity. Thus, "other" is gendered and made as a target for ideological battle. The "love jihad" campaign, which re-emerges from time to time, is one of the tactics to demonize the "other." ABVP first used this racket of "love jihad" at JNU in 2009, stating that thousands of Hindu girls are being lured by Muslim boys in order to convert them into Islam. Right-wing organizations, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad, and ABVP, have launched a campaign declaring "love jihad" as part of "Islamist conspiracy" to win over young women and deceitfully convert them (Gupta, 2009). In response, AISA, a left-wing organization, published a pamphlet stating that ABVP actually aims to "spread communal hatred," curb women's freedom, and obsessively control women's sexual choice in the name of protection from the threat:

> It is high time women not just in JNU but all over the country tell ABVP: 'we will love and marry according to our choice. We defy your diktats – just as we defy the khaap panchayats who tell us we are whores for marrying according to our choices. (AISA, pamphlet, 2009)

Firstly, employment of "love jihad" is not a new tool; rather, it is a new avatar of Brahminic patriarchy that has looked at women of upper castes as "gateways" into the caste system, which implies obsessive surveillance and control of women's sexual choice in order to preserve purity of caste (AISA, pamphlet, 2009). Women's bodies are seen as carriers of "purity or pollution" and employed as symbolic assertions of patriarchal ideology. In support of this, left-wing female activists demanded "freedom from being the vessels of purity, virginal innocence, piety, and morality." Therefore, the anti-rape movement was portrayed as not simply a movement for women's freedom, but the movement addressing structural questions concerning patriarchy, class, and caste oppressions.

Secondly, as Gupta (2009) noted, the "love jihad" campaign draws immense resemblance to the similar "abduction" and conversion campaigns launched by Arya Samaj, a Hindu revivalist organization, in the 1920s in north India. Thirdly, Kavita Krishnan identified similarity between "love jihad" and Hitler's tactic that was used to generate hatred against Jews and quoted the following: "The black-haired Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, satanically glaring at and spying on the unsuspicious girl whom he plans to seduce, adulterating her blood and removing her from the bosom of her own people (Mein Kampf, 1939)." Similarly, Georgian the right-wing organization called National Front started counting the number of marriages between Georgian women and black men in order to denounce such marriages; however, due to National Front's irregular and limited activism, the denouncements have not reached the same heights of the "love jihad" campaign (Facebook post, 2014).

In India, "love jihad" constructs women as vessels of purity and upholders of Hindu values, and this, in turn, implies that women's sexuality and choice is strictly guarded:

> Every woman should think twice before becoming the breeding element of a Muslim family…she should first know what mighty heritage she is carrying, the glorious history of tolerance and diversity she got from her ancestors, what treasure she would throw to the wind if she were to drop her native tradition. (ABVP, Pamphelt, 2009)

ABVP **declares** itself to be pro-woman and **acts** against women's sexual harassment only if the accused is the "other." However, the purpose and **rationale** for these acts serve more than just a feminist focus. As far as ABVP's articulation of its views, sexual harassment is merely as an assault on womanhood or an attack on Hindu-ness, upholders of which are assumed to be women.

"Marriage of Marxism and Feminism"

Left-wing activists recognize patriarchal domination over women in the country, but they are far from an essentialist perspective. They do not address gender justice or woman's questions in isolation without including the dimensions of caste and class. Agnitro, an AISA activist, noted the following:

> There is a misconception about communist parties that they are not serious about 'not class' issues, for example, gender, caste, etc., but whatever our understanding of gender issues is that, no issue is alone [a] gender issue, and gender issue is an [issue that is] everyone's issue. For example, when we are talking about women's rights, women's freedom, we talk how it is overlapped with other social dynamics, like class, caste. (Interview, 2013)

AISA, a left-wing organization, promotes the intersectionality approach and refers to multiple axes of oppressions. AISA developed a framework to include instead of excluding. On the one hand,

AISA members fight against the trinity of Brahmanism-Patriarchy-Capitalism, thus, against caste-gender-class oppression; however, AISA is reluctant to mention the term "feminism" in its pamphlets, posters, or public speeches. AISA's activism entails feminist activism as it strives against women's oppression, women's control, sexual violence, patriarchal protectionism, women's bodily autonomy, or moral policing of women, but would not name it as feminism as the organization thinks Marxism entails feminism and that to do "feminist work" is to do progressive left-wing politics. As Sandeep, a left-wing activist, explained, "We never say feminist because being a Marxist is a bigger liberating project than feminism. Marxism has ample space for different issues, and it includes feminism." The left-wing respondents do consider themselves (or "try to be") feminists, but it is not the way they usually describe their politics as they think feminism would "bracket things" while they aspire to "wage war on all fronts." Vibhuti, a left-wing activist, explained it this way: "Capitalism, patriarchy, [and] caste oppressions are not working separately, but they are working together," and "when they are working in that kind of nexus with each other, one should not occupy one position over another." (Interview, 2013)

Thus, for left-wing respondents to mark their politics as "feminist" implies positioning themselves within the scope of one axis of the oppression – patriarchy. Instead, they consider the words "progressive left-wing," "Marxist," or "communist" as all-embracing, and they employ these words to locate themselves at the intersection of multiple axes of oppressions. As Vibuti, a female left-wing activist, stated, "to say I am a communist means in itself that I am simultaneously waging war on all fronts." Similarly, Agnitro, a male left-wing activist, affirmed that a "Marxist is someone who fights for any kind of deprived section of society, be that gender, caste, or class." (Interview, 2013)

Despite the ambiguity apropos of labeling themselves, AISA's strategies and rationale can be described as feminist. The organization regularly takes a stand against violations of women's rights

and various manifestations of patriarchal oppression, which, in turn, aims to connect the specific instance of discrimination with the larger question of oppression. As Vibhuti put it,

> The only way to tackle it [patriarchal mindset] strategically is to pick up one issue at a time, so sometimes you will talk about rape, sometimes you will be talking about whether women's hostels should have curfews or not… At every moment you have to make the stand. Whether it is a question of dowry, whether it is a question of women being sexually harassed, whether it is a question of mobility and freedom to speak to get married or not get married, to have a job, to go out late at night, etc. Each time it is a specific instance that has to be taken up. (Interview, 2013)

Contrary to AISA activists, who address concrete instances of gender discrimination, exploitation, and violence in order to connect them with the wider concept of patriarchal oppression, some members of Laboratory 1918 are critical of such tactics. As Laboratory 1918 activist Alexandra pointed out, "In Georgia, I am critical of feminist activism as I think they are reactionist[s] and oppose concrete facts instead of doing fundamental work." (Interview, 2013)

Many activists of Laboratory 1918 acknowledge gender inequality and view it as an epiphenomenon of capitalism and, thus, subsume feminist struggle into the anti-capitalist struggle (Hartman,). As Alexandra noted, "influence of economic factors is the primary reason" of gender inequality, which suggests that to attack causes other than on an economic basis appears super-structural and, hence, superficial: "Gender equality exist[s], and it is a product of patriarchal culture, which in turn is a part of capitalist system…Feminism is not self-sufficient because [it] is not able to relate to the cause from which inequality derives" (Interview, 2013).

Archil, an Laboratory 1918 activist, marked questions of gender inequality as "extraneous," noting that they only exist because they serve the interests of small organizations who aspire for "more grants:"

> I agree that we live in a patriarchal world, but I think that it should be regulated by the legislature, so it would not trigger extraneous questions. And small organizations would not employ these topics to get more grants… However, this patriarchal ambience pressurizes not only women, but men too. (Interview, 2013)

Laboratory 1918 was a heterogeneous group and activists' articulation of identity politics, particularly of gender and sexuality, varied. For few of them, issues of gender and women's rights were not "secondary." According to Soso, a Laboratory 1918 activist, "Today protests on the issues of women's rights and gender are equally relevant, and we can never say which dimension is more important" (interview, 2013).

In order to place Laboratory 1918 activism within the context, I will illustrate an exemplary case of right-wing respondents who, with some reservations, declared that gender equality is necessary; however, their articulation and conception of gender equality and inequality reveals a lack of gender sensitivity and knowledge. George, a National Front activist, on the one hand, thought that the world should "make far better use of women's capabilities," which is a utilitarian argument to support gender equality. Further, he added that gender inequality was never a problem in Georgia, and it only appeared in [the] 1990s because of economic hardships that triggered change in gender roles at home, which, in turn, generated domestic violence:

> This problem in Georgia actually never existed. It is a problem that appeared during last 20 years… but it is because we had social problems. That's why women's discriminates took place… but this problem is largely created by NGOs. No, there are some lapses, but still. (Interview, 2013)

To questions about gender inequality, most respondents I interviewed after May 17, 2013, responded indirectly within the purview of identity politics with particular focus on LGBT activism. May 17 is an International Day Against Homophobia. On this day, an anti-homophobic rally, which was violently attacked by thousands of counter-protesters, was held in Tbilisi in 2013. Prior to the rally, some activists of Laboratory 1918 had planned to publish a statement of solidarity with the LGBT community. However, it became a contentious issue among the members of Laboratory 1918 as they could not reach consensus. It is not that those who opposed the statement were not in solidarity with LGBT community, but that they problematized the issue of "identity politics." According to Toko, Laboratory 1918 activist:

> The last contentious issue that triggered division was regarding the statement to be published on May 17. It was a statement, on the one hand, with an introduction about homosexuality; further, it criticized the church and then criticized the organization Identoba. Not community, we were in solidarity with the community. This statement was blocked. The main reason I think was the political marketing. (Interview, 2013)

Respondents offered varying arguments to elucidate reasons for discontent apropos of the May 17 rally. Firstly, the issue of sexuality was beyond the "permissible boundaries" of Laboratory 1918's activities as it threatened the "virtue" of the nation. Some of the Laboratory 1918 activists were members of the political party and support of gay rally would have damaged their image among homophobic masses. As Toko, a Laboratory 1918 activist, stated, it was largely determined by "political marketing" of the pragmatist members, who considered the issue highly unpopular.

Secondly, identity politics, due to their non-material institutional bases, were assumed as "mental" and, therefore, secondary or derived. Some of the activists depicted issues of gender, LGBT rights, and religious minorities as secondary, which only distracts attention from the "material" and,

therefore, "primary and determining" issues, such as unemployment, homelessness, and education. As Alexandra, a Laboratory 1918 activist, stated,

> Some of us thought that it is not a primary issue. It is a part of liberal discourse that oppression of sexual minorities and the church are the problems. Thus, they want to avoid issues of homelessness, unemployment, and education from the agenda. (Interview, 2013)

Some of the Laboratory 1918 activists consider identity-based issues as "narrow politics" as they only benefit a certain community. As Archil from Laboratory 1918 noted, "They [LGBT; women; religious minorities] come out on the streets because of their identity, but not because some other problems, which really exist." In such a way, his statement indicates that LGBT is not a "really existing" problem. Moreover, Archil purported that big corporations finance these kinds of minorities to create problems for the governments and destabilize the situation: "Identities entail a big threat in itself. I think that society should ground itself in more fundamental social problems and social identities rather than [in] some kind of religious, sexual, or any other kind of identities." Similarly, right-wing respondents from National Front argued that NGOs fighting for gender discrimination are financed by the "foreign force" and did not serve the national interests.

Thus, on the one hand, some Laboratory 1918 activists purported to be progressivists who should strive against material or non-material injustice, but on the other hand, some issues, such as material-based problems, were considered as "fundamental" and, therefore, "real," whereas identity-based issues were viewed as "derived," super-structural, and therefore, "unreal." Laboratory 1918 activists' argumentations largely derive from neo-Marxist and postmodernist paradigms. According to the postmodernist paradigm, activism guided by the status categories only reifies those categories; therefore, instead of deconstructing those differences, which are the basis of inequality, it reconstructs them (Bernstein, 2005). As Archil, a Laboratory 1918 activist, noted,

> We debated on identity, and many agreed that it is an evil. It creates in itself a foundation for violence. I agree with this thought. Their attitude towards the self annoys me as if they were trying to isolate themselves…I agree that violence is horrifying, and I am in solidarity with them, but I do not support when you come on the streets because of your identity and not for some other problems, which really exist. (Interview, 2013)

Thirdly, many Laboratory 1918 activists argued that identity politics actually divide the masses as they wage fragmented struggles instead of uniting for the "larger" struggle against the current economic order. For instance, Levan, Laboratory 1918 activist and member of Social-Democratic party, explained that some activists fiercely opposed the radical statement in support of the LGBT community on May 17, 2013, since they considered the homophobic counter-demonstrators as their allies in the "larger" struggle, whereas "identity politics" only would have damaged this possible alliance:

> The reason was that these people [counter-protestors] actually are our allies in the larger struggle, than this narrow issue… They are low- and middle-class people like us who, due to socialization, have acquired intolerance… however, we have common economic hardships, [and] that is why we did not want to break the bridge between these people [counter-demonstrators] and us. These kind of identity politics only divides the left-wing groups. (Interview, 2013)

At the same time, Laboratory 1918 activists acknowledges that as leftists, they should have demonstrated their solidarity with any oppressed section of society, including LGBT and women. As Levan, a Laboratory 1918 activist, stated, "We had to introduce this discourse; as leftists, we should have supported these minorities." However, Laboratory 1918 members faced a dilemma since they could not develop a framework, which, on the one hand, would have enabled them to stay true to the righteous left-wing politics, that considers identity politics as superstructure and,

therefore, “secondary,” and concurrently, to practice progressive left-wing politics, that equally addresses identity-based issues. This dilemma reveals ideology as schematic and dogmatic, which is consistent and logical, but immune to the everyday life. This kind of functioning of ideology interpolates human beings as subjects (Althusser, 2001), who become subjects from their performances (Butler, 1999).

Thus, both ideology and gender are constituted through the discourse and entail elements of performativity. On the one hand, ideology operates through the ideas and beliefs that have to be consistently “performed” in order to be congenial to it. When Laboratory 1918 activists repudiated identity politics and marked it as “secondary” and “divisive,’ I read these renunciations of identity politics as performances of ideology through which, in turn, performative enactment of gender and heteronormativity occurs. For instance, in order to “perform” leftist ideology, some Laboratory 1918 activists did not support the statement of solidarity with the LGBT community on May 17, 2013, and did not participate in the rally since explicit solidarity statements or participation in the demonstration would have challenged Marxist and neo-Marxist (in some cases postmodernist) paradigms. Thus, they would have failed to “perform” the adhered ideological framework. On the other hand, through performativity of ideology, these activists actually performed gender and heteronormativity in the following way: performativity of gender and heteronormativity is sustained through reiteration of norms and practices. The necessity of repetition, in turn, implies that repetition may fail to replicate. Radical statement of support or participation in the anti-homophobic rally would have disrupted the replication since activists’ gender and sexuality would have been questioned. As one of the activists told me in personal conversation: “If I would have gone there May 17 rally, then for the whole of my life I would have had to prove that I’m not gay.”

Summary

Both left-wing organizations in India and Georgia think that identity-based issues such as gender and sexuality generate fragmented struggles instead of "larger" struggles against neo-liberal economic order. However, the selected left-wing organizations in India developed a framework to strive against multiple axes of oppression and, thus, on the one hand, eschew the "divorce" from identity-based movements and, on the other hand, provide a fertile ground for "fragmented" sections of society to join the confluence of struggles against interlocking oppressions. The selected left-wing organization in Georgia firmly adhered to the image of true leftists, which means that for the idea to be correct, it should be supported by a relevant reference to the authoritative left intellectual, which implied distance from identity politics since it was considered as less important, divisive, or /and reifying the categories, which should be dismantled. The left-wing organization in Georgia failed to offer any alternative how to dismantle the hierarchical categories or unite the struggles as its tactic merely suggested unity at the cost of ignorance of identity-based issues or struggles against the "primary" source of oppression, which suggests that axis of oppression is only one – material – and everything else is superstructure.

Both left-wing organizations in India and Georgia emphasized the "narrow" scope of feminist activism; however, their solutions and tactics differed. Feminist idioms and activism was almost absent from Laboratory 1918 activism as it was considered as a "secondary," "reactionist" and fragmented battle. Instead, the organization aimed at a "larger" struggle against current economic order, which is viewed as a "primary" cause of all oppressions. Similarly, AISA activists also recognized that without the "larger" struggle against the capitalist system, it is impossible to achieve absolute liberation; they also viewed feminist activism as a "fragmentary" struggle;

however, simultaneously, AISA acknowledged the necessity to wage "fragmentary" struggles against various avatars of oppression, including patriarchy.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This Ph.D. thesis, *Deciphering Dissent and Resistance: Student Activism and Gender in Georgia and India*, had a threefold aim: to explore the dynamics of student activism and how students embark on a journey into activism; to illuminate the ways gendered structure is embedded in student activism; and to decipher where student organizations and their members position themselves within a particular oppression or ideology or within systems of multiple oppressions simultaneously, as well as the ways in which it affects their feminist stance and activism.

First and foremost, in order to understand the process of engagement into activism, I examined the elements of the "transcending pyramid," such as **social networks**, **rationale**, and **action**, which are viewed as theoretical toolkit that can explain students' involvement in activism at two levels: through the organization's mobilization strategies and through the individual's political trajectories. Therefore, firstly, I elucidated the mobilization strategies that galvanize prospective activists into action or the process of "making an activist." This thesis revealed that AISA, a left-wing organization at JNU, India, deploys myriad tactics that facilitate the *encounter* of an activist with organized politics. The *encounter* is a prerequisite for fostering the process of engagement through the "transcending pyramid" or social networks that contribute to the process of engagement through political socialization and through the formation of "strong" and "weak" ties with activists. Further, avenues of *encounter* become the sites where the **rationale** is developed and reified through interplay with **social networks**, and finally, social networks and rationale enable discontent to turn into **action**, which in turn creates avenues for *encounter*.

On the other hand, Laboratory 1918, a left-wing organization in Georgia, as well as complementary cases of right-wing organizations, made less effort in terms of social networks and development of

rationale. Their purview of mobilization was limited to "low-cost" action, which in turn minimized chances of encounters and, hence, possibilities for the "transcending pyramid" to operate. At this juncture, the thesis revealed that gender inhibits the process of mobilization explicitly in the case of left-wing organization AISA and right-wing organizations in both Georgia and India. For instance, gender is embedded in AISA's strategies through slogans and wall paintings about women's liberation; the National Front's mobilization is gendered as it primarily addresses men; and ABVP uses gender to mobilize against Muslims or "others" that threaten Hindu women.

Secondly, in order to explain the process of engagement in activism, I explored the individuals' political trajectories or the path of "becoming an activist" as it was interpreted by them. Left-wing respondents (AISA) in India viewed engagement in student activism as a "transcending experience," whereas the path of right-wing respondents (ABVP) can be described as "preserving" and "protecting." Similarly, Georgian right-wing (National Front) respondents' political trajectories are determined by motivations of preservation and protection, whereas Georgian left-wing activists' (Laboratory 1918) paths can be described as an experiment. Respondents from both left-wing activist organizations acquired a **rationale** for activism in the process of "becoming an activist"; however, only AISA activists referred to their gendered experiences as having enabled them to develop a feminist **rationale** or the second element of the feminist stance. Activists from both left-wing organizations acknowledged intergenerational conflict; however, it is more pertinent among AISA activists, especially women, who expatiated on gendered aspects of intergenerational tension. Complementary cases of right-wing activists, both in India and Georgia, claimed to live in an intergenerational continuance and purported never to do anything that would put them at odds with their parents.

Further, I explored the feminist stance of left-wing organizations and activists and how that stance is influenced by their ideological framework apropos of singular vs. multiple oppressions. Both left-

wing organizations viewed feminist activism as "narrow" identity politics; however, their solutions and tactics for addressing gender oppression differed. Laboratory 1918 considered gender-related and overall identity-based issues to be a "secondary," "reactionist," and fragmented battle. Instead, the organization aimed at the "larger" struggle against the current economic order, which is viewed as a "primary" cause of all oppressions. Similarly, AISA activists endeavored to address the "larger" struggle against the capitalist system in order to achieve absolute liberation and viewed feminist activism as a "fragmentary" struggle; however, simultaneously, AISA acknowledged the necessity to wage "fragmentary" struggles against various avatars of oppression, including gender. Thus, AISA's activism moves beyond both the singular Marxist analysis and isolated radical feminist theory, which either considers the social relations of production or the social relations of reproduction (Eisenstein, 1979). On the one hand, Marx saw women's problems as derived from their status as instruments of reproduction, and he saw the solution in "abolition of the present system of production" (Marx & Engels, 2002). On the other hand, radical feminist theorist Firestone (1970), in her book *The Dialectic of Sex*, suggested that women, as a sex, are a class (Firestone, 1970). She supersedes the capitalist system of oppression with patriarchy and thus views sexuality as the key oppression of modern times. AISA, the left-wing organization, recognizes interlocking oppressions and the significance of "fragmented" struggles as long as they are connected with the "larger" liberation of the "whole world." The difference between AISA and Laboratory 1918 is that the first entails feminist activism and the second subsumes it. In my view, the differences between the selected left-wing organizations apropos to gender oppression are predominantly defined by their interrelationship with ideology. For instance, as I illustrated in Chapter Seven, how Laboratory 1918 activists employed ideology as an instrument to sustain performativity of gender and heteronormativity (Butler, 1999).

In my view, the variances between the left-wing organizations with regard to gender can be elucidated by the oscillating character of ideology. On the one hand, ideology can construct the

"subjects." On the other hand, student activists can reconstruct the ideology and make ideas and beliefs resonant with local context. However, those who view ideology as schema or script to be adhered and are cut off from the current reality become mere "subjects" of ideology and are therefore restricted to the performance of ideas congenial to that ideology. In contrast, those who connect ideology with their cognitive system and negotiate between ideas, beliefs, and reality are able to eschew shackling dogmatism, which has the potential to render activists immobilized in cases of "fragmented" struggles, while they ache for "larger" battles. For feminist praxis to take place, it is indispensable to maintain equilibrium between being shaped by ideology and re-shaping the ideology.

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ANNEX 1:

List of Interviews

In India

1. Ritika, female, left-wing (22.04.13)
2. Shweta, female, left-wing (23.04.2013)
3. Ruchira, female, left-wing (24.04.2013)
4. Vibhuti, female, left-wing (25.04.2013)
5. Kusum, female, left-wing (26.04.2013)
6. Shivani, female, left-wing (27.04.2013)
7. Sonam, female, left-wing (01.05.2013)
8. Sukrita, female, left-wing (04.05.2013)
9. Sucheta, female, left-wing (10.05.2013)
10. Prashant (invented name), male, left-wing (April, 2013)
11. Abhay, male, left-wing (17.04.2013)
12. Akbar, male, left-wing (21.04.2013)
13. Agnitro, male, left-wing (21.04.2013)
14. Sandeep Junior, male, left-wing (25.04.2013)
15. Piyush, male, left-wing (27.04.2013)
16. Tathagata, male, left-wing (28.04.2013)
17. Anup, male, left-wing (08.05.2013)
18. Sandeep, male, left-wing (10.05.2013)

19. Anmol, male, left-wing (May, 2013)

20. Abhishek, male, right-wing (01.05.2013)

21. Ajith, male, right-wing (04.05.2013)

22. Santosh, male, right-wing (07.05.2013)

23. Umesh, male, right-wing (07.05.2013)

24. Sumit, male, right-wing (08.05.2013)

25. Namrita (invented name), female, right-wing (03.05.2013)

26. Gayatree, female, right-wing (04.05.2013)

27. Mamta, female, right-wing (08.05.2013)

In Georgia

28. Ani, female, left-wing (

29. Katerina, female, left-wing

30. Nino (invented name), female, left-wing

31. Alexandra, female, left-wing

32. Archil, male, left-wing (24.06.2013)

33. George G., male, left-wing (24.06.2013)

34. George C., male, left-wing (December, 2012)

35. Toko, male, left-wing (26.06.2013)

36. Levan, male,left-wing (05.07.2013)

37. Mate, male, left-wing (December, 2012)

38. Soso, male, left-wing (25.06.2013)

39. Nona (invented name), female, right-wing (11.07.2013)

40. Eduard, male, right-wing (04.07.2013)

41. George B., male, right-wing (06.07.2013)

42. Evgeny, male, right-wing (04.07.2013)

ANNEX 2:

Consent Form

Information and Purpose:

The interview, in which you are asked to participate, is a part of my PhD research on student activism. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways student activism functions across the political spectrum and how gender identity relates to the practices and ideologies underpinning student politics.

Your participation:

Your participation will consist of an interview that will last approximately one hour. You do not have to answer to all questions. You may skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time you can withdrew from the interview.

Confidentiality

The interview will be recorded. Recorded interview will be transcribed and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the recordings. Your name will not be associated with any part of the writing if you wish so.

By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understood the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation at any time.

Signature_____ Date _____

ANNEX 3:
Interview Schedule

Research Aim and questions

The main focus of this research is to explore the nature and characteristics of student politics. It aims to examine student activists' and organizations' stance with regard to feminist issues. Research questions try to investigate the following:

- What are the main grievances addressed by student activists?
- What are the goals of student activism?
- What role does gender play in student organization's agenda?
- Why do students join student politics? Are there gender differences in their motivation?
- How do they understand, perceive gender equality and inequality? How does their understanding differ from each other?
- What are their preferred strategies and models for social action in order to reduce gender inequalities? (e.g. is gender inequality connected to class struggle, or is it more conceptualized as an individual affair?)
- How important is activism in shaping student's life? (e.g. how does activism affect academic performance? What effect does it have in the management of time and in more general life-style choices?)
- how do student activists negotiate dominant patriarchal values in their daily lives with one another; What are the students' concrete individual strategies that challenge or sustain the conservative norms of gender roles?

Interview Schedule

1. Can you introduce yourself?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from and where do you live?
4. Can you tell me about your education and occupation?

Section 1

What are the main topics and goals of student organizations:

1. What does the student movement represent for Georgia/India today?
2. Can you tell me about your organizational affiliation?
3. What core ideology does exist in your organization? And what is it based on? How are socialist ideas/nationalist ideas/ relevant to this movement?
4. What are the issues your 'organization' addresses? How would you define the main priorities of the student activism, your organization? On what type of social problems do you work? Why do you think they are important?
5. How many members does your organization/initiative group and what do they do? Are they paid or volunteers?
6. Can you describe the activities of your organization?
7. Do you think your work addresses the cause of the problem? and how ?

8. What social cause or issue are you most passionate about?
9. Can you describe some of your methods of struggle?

(How do you reach masses? How do you campaign? How do you educate the public about the issue? What tactics are the students using to try to achieve the goal/win the fight? How do you manage to mobilize large number of students? Do you try to attract students to join your organization? What do you do for students' engagement into activism?) What campaigns would you see as models?

10. How has the government/university administration responded to the strikes and protests? Example.
11. Do you collaborate with other organizations? Who are most often in solidarity with your demands (left-right-feminist)? How other sectors within Indian/ Georgian society share these grievances you mention. For instance, workers, miners, unions, women etc , have they associated themselves with the students demands? And if so, why? How?
12. What have you seen as the biggest challenge in students' politics?
13. What has been, for you, most rewarding about being student activist?
14. What kind of society you do you want to live in?
15. What is your favorite slogan? What meaning do you attach to sloganeering?

Section 2

16. What did trigger you to join student activism? How did you first become interested in student politics/activism/these issues? Why did you join activism? Were you recruited? and by whom? What inspired you to continue working for social change? How long have you been involved in the activism?
17. How much time do you spend being busy in activism or related work?
18. What do you like best about being an activist/this work? Least?
19. In what ways activism affects your lifestyle? How does it affect your personal choices and preferences?
20. What's your average day like just now?
21. Do you still find time to read/study in the midst of the vibrant activism?

What are you reading at this moment?

22. How do you manage activism and studies together?
23. What will motivate you or discourage you from joining a protest demonstration? What is necessary in order to join the protest? What are the factors, which may stop you from joining the protest?

Local context issues:

24. What is your stand regarding LYNGDOH and what is your critique of it?
25. What do you think about the anti-rape movement? Why do you call it a movement? Why other parties from JNU did not join the movement in large numbers?
26. Why mostly women are speaking and leading protests on women's issues?
27. What are your demands to the administration now? (MCM) What kind of responses you got from the administration?

28. How do you describe elections in JNU?

PART II

29. I would like to know whether your family is supporting you in your endeavors? How do your family members get along with your ideology? If there is any tension? Whether your parents are politically involved or share your ideas? How do you oppose/confront them? What kind of parental opposition to your activism do you face?
30. What kinds of issues are acceptable for them and which are the most problematic ones?
31. Which are the areas of your life your parents want to interfere most? What are your parents' expectations for you?
32. How your political engagement or lifestyle is looked at in your family?
33. Have you ever felt some kind of contradiction between what you believe and what you do/have to do? How do you deal with the matters when you have to make choice between your traditions and your ideology? Do they come into contradiction some times?
34. How does your activism forge/make, shape a new relationship? Friendship?
35. When it comes to student activism, it is observed that they dress up in a particular way, how do you see your choice of dressing in this or that way? Is it politically determined? What meaning do you attach to clothing? Does your attire have any meaning?
36. What will you do at the end of the student life? Will you continue with activism?

Section 3: What role does gender play in their agenda? How do they understand, perceive gender equality and inequality? How does their understanding differ from each other? What are their preferred strategies and models for social action in order to reduce gender inequalities?

37. What are the gender-related issues you are concerned with? Do you have any plans regarding gender politics?
38. What do you think about gender equality/inequality? What does gender equality/inequality mean for you?
39. Do you think there is any gender inequality in Georgian Society/Indian society? How can you explain gender inequality in the Georgian Society/Indian society?
40. What kind of forms of gender inequality students may face?
41. What should be done to eliminate problem of gender inequality? What are your organization's strategies regarding this issue?
42. Who should take action to eliminate gender inequality?
43. How do you see political space? Is it pro-gender egalitarian?
44. What do you do (on everyday basis) to challenge gender inequality?
45. Do you identify yourself as feminist? Why? Why not?
46. What does it mean for you to be a feminist?
47. Do you think change in gender relations is possible?