

**Borderless Democracy  
and Diffusion of Alternate Sexualities**

**SYNOPSIS**

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# Borderless Democracy and Diffusion of Alternate Sexualities: A Synopsis

## Introduction

Our democratic polities are moving towards a matured state, in the sense that there is a widening of our understanding of the democratic ideals. But still our society is ridden with instances of inequalities and injustice. These inequalities and injustice flow through different realms of the society and affect different groups in a different manner. The varying concerns of different ethnic identities do not overshadow each other but stand in contradistinction to pose greater challenges to the state. The matured status of the state becomes evident when it takes the responsibility of protecting and preserving the distinct identity and spatiality of different ethnic groups. This role is derived out of the democratic consciousness of the state which in-turn emerges out of the process of democratic unfolding.

The challenges of identity politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century raise questions beyond the scope of redistributive justice. The concerns of identity politics now question the very normative framework of the society. The concern of the alternate sexualities is one such area. My study aims to address the concerns of the alternate sexualities who, I have argued, suffer from a systemic outcaste and an academic neglect. The position of the alternate sexualities, within our discourse, is 'out of bounds' and marked by a coerced invisibility. This invisibility does not allow the concerns of the alternate sexualities to be raised within the legitimate domain of the social discourse. The injustice done to the alternate

sexualities happens at an existential level and endangers the very identity of such groups. The nature of the injustice done to the alternate sexualities, and their spatiality within our discourse makes their case unique, and thus worthy of introspection.

However, an enquiry into the concerns of the alternate sexualities makes it necessary to introspect the nature of the contemporary discourse itself. The existing discourse is based upon a heteronormative assumption, which discards as pathological anything that does not abide by its logic. The heteronormative framework also follows a logic of the binary, which understands everything in terms of duality- good/bad, male/female, black/white and so on. Such framework of understanding ignores the range of possibility and plurality of human culture. This puts the whole discourse on alternate sexualities under a dark area which suffers a systemic neglect.

The case of the alternate sexualities is also important to understand because it holds the key to an open society. While identities like caste and class are based on recognizable parameters where the identity becomes the interest, the discrimination of the alternate sexualities is complex as it is premised upon individual interest. Since it is difficult to portray an individualistic interest as the basis for an identity, the concerns of individuality of the alternate sexualities are rendered invisible. The invisibility of the alternate sexualities abrogates the democratic rights of these groups in such a manner that their political and social existence is allowed only on terms of adherence to the heteronormative norms. This is what makes the case of the alternate

sexualities unique. The concerns of the alternate sexualities entail issues of individual rights and autonomy and the extent to which the society could put restriction on them.

It is also important to mention that my emphasis on the concerns of alternate sexualities does, in no sense, seek to undermine the relevance of the concerns of other ethnic identities. Nor have I attempted to undermine the significance of the other issues of justice. Instead, it has been my belief that these varying concerns of justice stand in contradistinction to each other, and does not follow a zero-sum game. An enquiry into the underexplored areas, such as those concerning the alternate sexualities, only works to broaden the overall scope of the democratic paradigm under which these deliberations take place. The goal of my study is to understand and address the concerns of the alternate sexualities in such a way that leads to a conception of a 'borderless' democracy, wherein the identity of an individual does not become a hindrance in the deliberative process. In doing so, I also hope that the conclusions I draw through this study would contribute in addressing the concerns of injustice of other identity issues as well.

## Questions and Concerns

The framework of understanding and the trajectory that I have pursued in my research touches upon four broad areas and concerns:

Firstly, through a revisit to the concepts like democracy, equality and liberty, I have attempted to understand the reasons that account for the neglect of the alternate sexualities from our discourse. This attempt, I

have referred to as a ‘foundational critique’ of the discourse. Through this act, I have attempted to highlight the latent heteronormative assumption of our discourse, which acts as a prism to our opinion and understanding. This activity becomes an indispensable tool to understand the nature of democracy and the ideals that define it.

Secondly, I have attempted to carve out a sphere of individuality which appears to be the abode of personal space. I have understood this ‘personal sphere’ in contradistinction to the public and private aspects of life. Given the engagement of our conventional discourse with the public-private dichotomy, I have attempted to explore and excavate the area of individuality through a ‘trichotomous understanding of the public-private-personal sphere’. This framework becomes instrumental in my understanding of the space of individuality as it opens up the society to the claims of individuality.

Thirdly, while trying to understand the nature of the activism of the alternate sexualities, I have referred to Fraser’s framework of ‘recognition-redistribution’. This is an important reference in my framework of study as it accords a better analysis and contrast to the politics of identity and redistribution in the contemporary times. Fraser’s model also helps to contemplate the different trajectories possible for different courses of activism. Such exercise helps to track the model of political action that is suitable for a non-redistributive political movement. A wrong trajectory taken by the queer movement could prove to be detrimental to the interest of the alternate sexualities.

Thus, it is important to assess the possibilities that a particular trajectory of social action might entail.

Lastly, my framework of understand is suggestive of a 'structuralist' position as I have argued that the role of the state is instrumental in addressing the concerns of the alternate sexualities. Some aspects of this idea have been taken from Habermas' idea of a technocratic state, to suggest that the state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has developed an independent conscience based on its democratic pillars, which guide it towards democratic ends. As a result, the state structures begin to show a democratic and just attitude towards the alternate sexualities. This democratic consciousness proves to be helpful to the alternate sexualities. I also argue in my study about the unfolding of the democracy towards a borderless form which, I believe, is based on pillars of deliberation and reciprocity. Such conception of democracy would show more faith in the ideals rather than the means to achieve them. Thus, democracy would remain as a 'floating place' wherein the priorities and goals would be set through mutual deliberation and self-defined purposes.

## Methodology

My research is based on an analytical reading of the texts dealing with philosophical concepts like democracy, liberty and equality. Some prominent thinkers whose ideas I have referred to in my arguments include- Butler, Fraser, Lefort, Habermas, Tocqueville and Mill. The

analytical reading of the texts has allowed me to explore the areas that might have been left unattended by several thinkers.

In order to support my arguments and understanding of the metaphysical concepts, I have used, as a primary source of reference, several reports published by the government and non-government organizations on areas dealing with alternate sexualities. These reports have been published by reliable sources and prove to be the primary source of data and statistical record in my dissertation.

I have also derived the primary data relating to the attitude of the public institutions towards the alternate sexualities through several correspondences done under the Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI). The official reply received from the various public institutions have been used to support the findings and observations.

Since an important part of my dissertation deals with the activism in the field of civil society, I have also undertaken a direct participation in one of the projects of the Lakshya Trust, wherein I participated in the Instagram campaign and volunteered for two months. In the past, I had also volunteered with the Naz Foundation (India) Trust, and got the first-hand experience of the activism by the LGBTQI+ groups. These experiences have really helped me understand the activism of the queer groups and share the feelings and perspectives of the community.

Overall, my methodology has remained a harmonious mix of theoretical as well as practical aspects. The analytical reading of the texts and secondary data has been well supported through the primary information

received through the optimum utilization of the RTI Act as well as through the first-hand experience of the queer activism.

## Literature Review

Review of literature comprises an important aspect of my study and helps to form a logically coherent support to my frame of understanding. I do not claim to have ventured upon an area untouched so far. Rather, the theme I have tried to explore in my study has been thoroughly contemplated upon. However, my study is an attempt to understand the possible gaps and deficits which remain important for our discourse as well as the society.

The section on literature review has focused on 5 texts from different authors. Each text has been pursued for specific reason and suitability to my study. These texts constitute major contributions in their respective fields and holds some degree of authority over what comprises our contemporary understanding.

The first, and probably the most prominent, text I have pursued is by Judith Butler. While Butler has written several texts on the theme of gender studies, 'Gender Trouble- Feminism and the Subversion of Identity' remains the most celebrated one. Even Butler agrees, in the Preface of the Book, that her work has important contribution to the growth of a queer consciousness among the social discourses. Butler's work not only breaks the logic of bipolarity in our social discourses but also problematizes the conventional understanding of gender and heteronormativity.



Second, and equally significant, literature I have referred in my study is Nancy Fraser's 'Justice Interruptus- Critical Reflections on the PostSocialist Conditions' which represents a classic work on contemporary social movements. The analytical discussion on the dilemmas related to a social movement helped me understand the complexities of recognitive and redistributive justice. While Butler's work deals with the individual and social normative aspects; Fraser's primary concern is the macro level dynamics of society. Her proposition of plural public spheres, in the form of 'subaltern counterpublics' offers a promising vantage point for an emerging social movement.

Third, democracy is the broader and underlying theme of my study. Thus, Tocqueville's 'Democracy in America' becomes an indispensable part of my framework. The reason for studying Tocqueville becomes even more important due to the detailed discussion on the 'conditions of equality' and the foundational aspects of democracy.

The fourth and fifth texts for literature review are Carole Pateman's 'The Sexual Contract' and Wendy Brown's 'The Manhood and Politics: A feminist reading in Political Theory'. The reason for selecting these texts for literature review relates to my attempt to offer a foundational critique of the conventional discourses. The trajectory of the texts by Pateman and Brown follows the logic of the foundational critique, though from a feminist angle. In this sense, these texts offer a guidance to my attempt in examining the nature of the discourse.

When seen in a broader light, the texts taken up for literature review touches upon the broad themes of my study and justifies my attempt to explore the nature of injustice done to the alternate sexualities.

## Concerns and Structure of the study

My broader frame of discussion has touched upon three major themes- democracy/equality, liberty and alternate sexualities. The scheme of chapterization that I have tried to follow attempts to built a logical flow of arguments through these primary themes. Thus, the schema of chapterization begins with an introductory opening of the study and links the insights on democracy/equality, liberty and the concerns of alternate sexualities in such a manner which creates a logically coherent structure of arguments.

In Section 1.1, I commence with a short introduction of my study and introduce the spatiality of the alternate sexualities amidst our discourses. This builds the case for reading the concerns of the alternate sexualities. The discussion on the need to study these concerns is immediately followed by an analytical reading of the nature of the existing social science discourse, in Section 1.2. Here, I have tried to understand and uncover the latent heteronormativity of the prevailing discourses, which does not allow the concerns of the alternate sexualities to be addressed appropriately.

In Section 1.3, I have introduced the idea of ‘coerced invisibility’ to suggest the unique spatiality of the alternate sexualities with regard to our discourse. This section also discusses how the state might be an

important actor in addressing the concerns of the alternate sexualities. Section 1.4 discusses the literature review for the prominent texts used for forming the arguments of my study. The closure of the first chapter is done with Section 1.5, which summarizes the concerns of the study and the scheme of chapterization followed.

The Second Chapter of the study focusses upon the idea of democracy and equality. In Chapter 2.1 “Uncovering the relevance of Democracy” I have tried to understand the evolution of the idea of democracy through different ages. Such an excavation of the idea of democracy allows us to trace the evolution of the idea, and informs the values that are considered as cardinal to it. I have also tried to study the different ideas and understandings of the idea of democracy, in order to find out the possible reasons and factors that might have led to the outcaste of the alternate sexualities. The purpose of the chapter could be summed up as an attempt to understand the principles upon which the democratic struggles are said to be based; and uncover the reasons, within the existing political discourses, that might have led to the exclusion of the alternate sexualities. This uncovering of the reasons for exclusion of alternate sexualities would also form the *foundational critique* of the political discourses.

Section 2.2 “Equality, Democracy and the idea of People” expands upon the idea of equality as the founding pillar of democracy. This section also discusses the idea of the ‘people’ as the constitutive component of a democracy, and defines the category of the ‘people’ as a dynamic element which undergoes change and transformation. Thus, the idea of

equality is proposed to be read as a dynamic ideal which cannot be understood as a static element. The arguments of Section 2.2 are materialized in Section 2.3 “Equality as Renegotiation” wherein the idea of equality is discussed as a form of renegotiation between contending sets of interests and groups. This section proposes the idea that equality need not be understood as a state of ‘sameness’; rather, equality is a condition of renegotiation between equally capable actors/groups to mold their conditions. Chapter 2 closes with an understanding of the idea of democracy and equality as free-floating ideas that cannot be bound in norms of fixity.

Chapter 3 focusses upon the idea of Liberty, and tries to explore the extent of individual liberty in contrast to the claims of the society. Section 3.1 “Exploring the Idea of Liberty” explores some of the interpretations and understandings of the idea of liberty, and tries to develop an understanding of the concept. The primary aim to discuss liberty is to build a foundation of understanding to discuss the debates about the self/other regarding actions of the individual and how far the society could put restrictions on such liberty.

Section 3.2 “The imperative of the Public Private Divide” is the logical unfolding of the discussion on liberty and explores the domains of the conventional public-private dichotomy. This section exposes the misunderstandings and confusions attached to the nature of the private sphere, and tries to uncover the cause of stereotype of the alternate sexualities. The task left incomplete in section 3.2 is taken up in Section 3.3 “Trichotomizing the Divide” wherein I have tried to read the

conventional public private dichotomy as a trichotomy of ‘public-private-personal’ sphere. Such revised understanding is capable of securing a sphere of dignity and individuality to the alternate sexualities.

Chapter 4 takes up the third theme of my study, that is, the case of alternate sexualities. Section 4.1 “Inclusive politics and realm of law” is a descriptive part that deals with the outlining of the legal provisions in India concerning the alternate sexualities. This section also outlines some observations of International and national reports that have had significant influence on the fate of alternate sexualities in India. This section is particularly important for the study because it summarizes the changes in the lego-political framework of the state in India.

Section 4.2 “Social consciousness and change: A case study of Lakshya Trust” is based on my experience and study of the Lakshya Trust. This section explores the various channels through which the civil society organizations, like the Lakshya Trust, are spreading the awareness about the concerns of the alternate sexualities. It also summarizes the various initiatives taken by Lakshya Trust and the impact of these initiatives.

Section 4.3 “Assessing the impact of political-social possibilities” is an assessment of the changes in the lego-political framework of India as well as the efforts of the civil society organizations. This section tries to understand the impact of different strategies adopted in the political and social sphere, and suggests the future trajectory of the movement of alternate sexualities.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion part of the study wherein I try to sum up my observations and make inferences on the basis of them. In Section 5.1, I try to offer an overview of the study by revisiting the ideas discussed throughout the dissertation. The purpose of this revisit is to summarize the arguments and observations before coming up to the final conclusions. In Section 5.2, I attempt to offer the final conclusion of my study and offer inferences based on the arguments made throughout the dissertation. Here, I also try to offer a probable redress to the concerns of the alternate sexualities. I also try to offer a proviso that would lead towards a borderless democracy as understood in my framework of understanding. And which would address the concerns of the alternate sexualities in a visible just manner.

### Some Concluding remarks

There are four major arguments that I have tried to establish throughout my study. The inferences, or conclusions, are drawn on the basis of these arguments. I have tried to bring together the three themes of my study on one path, and paint the picture of my understanding of the issues concerning the alternate sexualities. Needless to mention that, the problem at hand does not have a definite solution, and thus any argument is, but one of the several possible solutions. These arguments would help to correct the inequalities, especially in a society like India, where such instances flow through every structure and try to link it with borderless democracy. The main point that needs our attention is the end of the subjugation and suppression of individuals, in the name of tradition and

pride. The idea of a borderless democracy is not to extend the borders of the state, but to dissipate the ones that create unequal statuses between individuals.

The first argument, or conclusion, that I have drawn from the discussion is regarding the nature of the conventional social science discourse, which shows heteronormative inclination, to the extent that it leads to a systemic outcaste of the alternate sexualities. This systemic outcaste appears in the form of 'coerced invisibility' and works to subjugate the alternate lifestyles while also reinforcing the presumptions of heteronormativity. Thus, a revisit to the foundational ideas of our discourse is required in order to revalidate our understanding and establish the relevance of such concepts.

The second argument, or conclusion, relates to the analytical understanding of aspects of life as- 'public-private-personal' spheres. This trichotomization of the aspects of life is necessary in order to establish an autonomous sphere of individuality, which is otherwise suffocated and negated by the social norms. The conventional understanding of the public-private dichotomy is limited in the sense that it deals with only the socio-political aspects of individual life, and leaves the aspects of individuality unattended. Such unattended domain of individuality becomes an easy prey to the aggrandizing domain of social norms.

The third argument, or conclusion, talks about the strategy pursued by the alternate sexualities for addressing their concerns. Given the unique

spatiality of the alternate sexualities, a conventional strategy of claiming redistributive justice might be unsuitable for the alternate sexualities. Since the basic premise of the concerns of alternate sexualities lies in the recognitive aspects of justice, it is more plausible to remain focused on such aspects. The distinct spatiality of the alternate sexualities also makes their struggle unique and riddled.

Fourthly, the state plays an important role in addressing the concerns of the alternate sexualities. With the fairly mature experience of democracy, there has emerged a degree of consciousness on the part of the state itself, which flows through its structures and beliefs. This autonomous consciousness happens to support the democratic concerns of different groups. Thus, while the majority of social groups might be against the alternate sexualities, it becomes difficult for the state structures to deny the valid democratic claims of the alternate sexualities. Thus, either willingly or unwillingly, the 'out of bound' spatiality of the alternate sexualities is changed and they are accommodated into the democratic fold of the polity. This political accommodation helps the movement of the alternate sexualities to advance further in other spheres of democracy.

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## **Chapterization**

Chapter	Section	Title
1		Out of Bounds and the Question of Coerced Invisibility
	1.1	Introducing to the study
	1.2	Understanding the Bases of Conventional Social Discourse
	1.3	Coerced Invisibility: In Search for a place of alternate sexualities
	1.4	Select Review of the Literature
	1.5	Concerns and Chapterization of the Study
2		Understanding Democracy and Equality
	2.1	Uncovering the Relevance of Democracy
	2.2	Equality, Democracy and the Idea of People
	2.3	Democratic Equality as Renegotiation
3		Exploring Liberty and the Public-Private Domain
	3.1	Exploring the idea of Liberty
	3.2	Imperative of the Public and the Private
	3.3	Trichotomizing the Divide
4		Alternate Sexualities and the Imperative of Social and Political Possibilities
	4.1	Inclusive Politics and the Realm of Law
	4.2	Social Consciousness and Change: A Case study of Lakshya Trust
	4.3	Assessing the impact of Political-Social Possibilities
5		In Conclusion: Borderless Democracy for the Inclusion of Alternate Sexualities
	5.1	Overview of the study
	5.2	The Politics of Inclusion of Alternate Sexualities
		Bibliography

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