



Everyday Classrooms: Feminist Pedagogies in #MeToo Era

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Abstract

In the #MeToo era, the discussion on sexual harassment/assault/violence has taken a new turn. While there has been a wave in which women have come forward to share their experiences there is a shift in attitudes, especially within institutional settings. The movement has generated fear and a mutated silence where most privileged individuals, cis-abled upper class men, are afraid of getting caught rather than understanding and engaging with sexual vulnerabilities that various sections of society experience. The accountability of people has been erased through imposition of institutional directives. The various steps being brought into institutional operations are to curb criticism rather than eliminate sexism and misogyny. In this environment, the paper examines and explores feminist pedagogy as a way to rethink and reorganise classrooms into equal, safe and empowering spaces. The paper analyses and presents various tenets and principles that can be used in classrooms, even the ones that are not focused on women and/or gender studies, where students and teachers share power and are made accountable towards one another and society.

Keywords: Feminism, Pedagogy, #MeToo, Empowerment, Morality, Violence

The #MeToo movement has motivated and enabled women to speak about their experience of sexual violence. #MeToo initially was started by Tarana Burke, a Black activist working against sexual harassment (Lang, 2019; Sanin 2019), before it was appropriated by Ashley Judd (an actor and political activist). #MeToo started as a hashtag movement on Twitter in October 2017 that received 2.3 million tweets across 85 countries (Lang, 2019). #MeToo as a phenomenon brought to the fore the intimacies at workplace, its politics and demanded the definition and recognition of consent and coercion to be made explicit (Lukose, 2018). #MeToo is a global powerful movement challenging the complicity and silence that besieges sexual violence and gives voice to survivors. While this has been an empowering and solidarity forging process, an ironic fallout of the movement is the fear of being called out as sexist, misogynist or becoming 'unpopular' due to your views. People now hesitate or fear to engage in conversations about these issues. Since the #MeToo movement, contemporary everyday classrooms, which are not about feminism or women studies, are met with a paradoxical silence when it comes to issues of gender, sexuality and violence by those who are privileged by patriarchy. The sedimentation of sexist and misogynist attitudes which are not getting contested and/or opposed are a new challenge for teachers, especially feminist teachers who incessantly work towards equality. These

attitudes more often than not reflect in behaviours, both in and outside of classrooms, that are toxic. This paper examines and re-assesses the ways in which conversations about gender and inequality need to be brought forward in everyday classrooms and environments by using feminist pedagogy as a medium.

Why I am looking at feminist pedagogy in relation to #MeToo is driven by own experience of conducting tutorials with students in a social science faculty, mostly Sociology and South Asian Studies departments. Thus, my exploration, understanding and analysis of feminist pedagogy is located in social science and humanities. My revelation of #MeToo and the imposed sexist silence that has pervaded classroom environments was during one of the tutorial sessions. An intimate class of 10 students (8 women and 2 men) and I were discussing religion and the disciplining of bodies it requires. The conversation landed on the notion of dressing up in a certain way for church and eventually moved to the pressure women experience in terms of attire they wear in their everyday lives. As female students were navigating their politics, one male student sighed loudly. I asked him what he thought of the issue. He told me he has nothing to say. I told him I would love to hear his thoughts. At that moment, he hesitatingly answered that women can wear what they like but they have to be cognisant of the fact that the spaces they occupy, men too exist in them, and women wearing shorts and tiny dresses distract men which is unfair to the latter. I was shocked and speechless, but I also saw this as an opportunity to dispel the notions around morality, gender, clothes, and femininity. Women students started to raise their voices. I could see the male student become extremely uncomfortable and very quiet. Some female students angrily questioned him back asking, “what if you’re told to not wear shorts?”, “how can you say that?” and “we have the right to wear whatever we want, why cannot men mind their own business rather than looking at us?”

The clash here was obvious, and required, as women felt attacked, their bodies were shamed, and their morality questioned. I took this moment to inform my students that a classroom is a safe space and we need to critically question each other’s opinions

and notions by understanding that everyone has a right to speak. I asked the male student to explain why he thinks women in shorts and tiny dresses distract men. He fumbled with his explanations which finally concluded that men’s bodies are not as sexualised as women’s. This led to a conversation on objectification and femininity. This culminated in the group and I in deconstructing the notion of normative masculinity and how it affects both men and women. I am not sure if this resulted in any change in the male student’s attitude or belief but the dialogue that was generated was crucial and this intrinsic link of morality and clothing needed to be challenged in a safe environment. After the class, I asked the male student what he thought of the discussion. He told me that he was fine, and he realises what he thought is a wrong way of seeing women but the discussion in class should also reflect reality. He viewed himself as the voice of reality whereas he viewed us women as emotional—a result of heteronormative order of society (Hartsock, 1998).

The sighing of this male student led to a conversation between him, the female students and me which, even if it did not change his mind, made him engage in a dialogue that provided him with various perspectives. Such conversations and discourses over a period of time may lead to thinking of gender in a more positive manner. While this is one incident out of numerous that are perceivable in classrooms, the key point here is to make sure these conversations and dialogues occur, whether the classroom is about gender, feminism and sexuality or not. While #MeToo has shifted the paradigm in terms of articulating sexual violence, the discussion in the everyday, in institutions, is being moralised without providing any space to converse about it or sharing one’s lived experiences. I call this institutional morality—an imposed morality which preserves those in power without actually taking into account lived and embodied experiences of those on the margins and/or providing any concrete check and balances.

Institutional Morality and #MeToo

Prior to #MeToo, most classrooms worked with post-feminist rhetoric; that gender equality is not a distant dream but a reality in developed neoliberal worlds. But #MeToo shattered this illusion with narratives of sexual harassment in developed countries where women had a different story of sexual exploitation and oppression to tell. While this movement has been empowering for a certain class, race, caste and religion of women, it has unfortunately infused a dangerous silence in classrooms, boardrooms, corridors and offices. Privileged members of the community, mostly cisabled, heterosexual, upper-class, privileged men, refuse to engage with the ubiquitous presence of sexual violence in their environments but bask in an imposed institutional morality to avoid accountability.

Institutional morality, as I conceive, is a phenomenon where the directives by an institute are deployed to keep the organisation and its powerful individuals safe from legal actions and public embarrassment, by invoking certain moral practices. Thus, institutional morality does not exhibit sensitivity and accountability of powerful individuals towards those who are vulnerable. It simply deploys certain actions and norms without investigating and understanding the lived and embodied experiences of those who are impacted by it in the first place. Institutional morality is a blanket that does not empower, but creates silences that can be toxic. This comes to impact those at the margins in several ways. For example, keeping the office door ajar while meeting female students. Does keeping office doors open make one accountable to the woman herself or is it just an act to avoid any questioning in the future? While it may make some women feel comfortable and secure, it can also take away the safety and confidence in sharing and confiding issues with a particular teacher or a professor when the door is open. The emotional intimacy that develops in university campuses between students and teachers slowly erodes in over professionalised environments.

This kind of imposition in-turn places the onus on the vulnerable or the victim once again. Dorothy Smith (1987), in elaborating on institutional sexism in the everyday argues that men create institutions and

within them formulate debates, ideologies, politics, belief systems, and truths. Thus the lived reality of those at the margins is never reflected and their needs are neglected. One continues to struggle and suffer in 'relations of ruling' (ibid). I must clarify at this point that I am not suggesting that institutions should not have measures and policies in place. They should, and they do, because it is crucial to work within a framework of rights and justice, but imposing morality does not really check the structural inequality and violence that lead to incidents and violence. These kinds of acts then become superficial gestures at best. The act of distracting and not focusing on structures of inequality is a core agenda of neoliberal universities and society.

Everyday classrooms are such spaces within larger institutions that mirror institutional morality. Classrooms are spaces that are patriarchal and hierarchal which display logic of domination (Orr, 1993). At the same time, these are also sites of invention, creation, intervention and freedom. Classrooms produce possibilities and bring forward the potential to challenge, resist and invert the dominant discourse. In this regard, feminist pedagogy becomes both a tool and a medium to understand and attain freedom and equality through education where discourses, lived experiences, opinions and beliefs are privileged as well as contested, and where social justice is foregrounded (McCusker, 2017). It is for this reason I urge to situate feminist pedagogy not only in feminist, gender and women studies classes but in everyday classrooms. Feminist pedagogy thus is needed and required in classrooms especially in the wake of #MeToo where silence or the fear of being called out, as seen with my own student, has been counterproductive.

Thus, the notion of creating a discourse, giving student equal opportunities to voice their opinions and ensuring they feel safe while doing so, form some of the basic tenets of feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy has been defined and articulated in several ways. The common tenets that run through them as well as some principles, strategies and techniques that need to be used in classrooms to push for equality, emancipation and social justice in contemporary society where sexism and misogyny are concretising are explored below.

Feminist Pedagogy

To be a teacher in a classroom not only requires knowledge but skills, empathy and patience. The last 5 years of teaching has proven to be the most fulfilling and yet challenging experience of my nascent academic life. This is because when you enter a classroom with feminist sensibilities, your motive is not only to discuss, debate and impart knowledge but to work towards equality and to create a safe space that brings forth voices and experiences which have been marginalised and/or silenced. This space transforms into that of engaged teaching/learning on the side of both students and the teacher where experiences are privileged (Cox, 2010). Classrooms in such scenarios are not only dialogical but require us to reassess opinions and belief systems (Holland and Blair, 2015). Additionally, the classroom and teaching are shaped by feminist discourse, especially that of intersectionality and shared power. This wholesome way of envisioning classrooms is what I call feminist pedagogy. In the following paper, I will unpack this understanding of feminist pedagogy as theorised and practiced by other feminists.

Feminist Pedagogies are more often than not placed in the context of feminist classrooms and even more importantly in women studies classes. I want to move beyond this notion and understanding where feminist pedagogies are equated with women studies and gender studies and explore them in everyday classrooms where gender is either a topic, subtopic or not a topic at all. I do so because bell hooks (1994), in drawing on Paulo Freire's work, explains that pedagogy is a 'commitment to education as the practice of freedom' (1994: 6). Holding this as the agenda and aim of feminist pedagogy, everyday classrooms then become crucial and relevant sites as the idea of freedom drags with itself notions of justice, equality and equity.

Carolyn M Shrewsbury (1997), in her insightful article on *What is Feminist Pedagogy?* explains that at its simplest level, feminist pedagogy is about gender justice and overcoming oppression of various kinds that exist in today's society. Furthering her definition, she notes that feminist pedagogy recognises 'gendered-

ness of social relations and consequently of all societal institutions and structures' (1997:167). Feminist pedagogies essentially resist dominant discourse (Holland and Blair, 1995) and androcentric ways of knowledge production (Crabtree, Sapp and Licona, 2009) by de-centering them and invoking marginality and vulnerability as the focus of attention. In this way, to use feminist pedagogy is to deconstruct and reinvent classrooms where discussions and teachings are constantly moving towards equality and freedom. Feminist pedagogies also create an intervention (Elwell and Buchanan, 2019) to the contemporary status quo by creating a safe space within classrooms for students. In this manner, the focus is on empowering student's voices and validating knowledge based on experiences (McCusker, 2017, Elwell and Buchanan, 2019). To think and practice feminist pedagogy is to know that it is not monolithic. It is varied and multiple, as is feminism. The shared tenet of feminist pedagogies is the goal of emancipation (Mei-Hui, 2014; Bretz, 2014) and liberation (Crabtree, Sapp and Licona, 2009) from the way teaching is done and practiced in neoliberal contexts (McCusker, 2017) as well as to contest and deconstruct structural inequalities collaboratively.

Foregrounding Lived Experiences

In order to do so, an important tenet of feminist pedagogy is to ensure and engage in critical thinking. Here the notion of critical thinking is not an abstract ideal but rooted in lived experiences of the students which requires reflexivity (hooks, 1994; McCusker, 2017; Rohrer 2018; Shrewsbury 1997). Everyone in the class, students and the teacher, should feel safe and comfortable in sharing their beliefs, opinions and lived experiences without worrying about negation and invalidation. Sharing of one's lived experience is difficult, and it is at times traumatic to live through the same episode, but it has the potential of creating empathy or/and sympathy, or widening one's knowledge or perspective, which disrupts the process of othering. To do this, the pedagogy requires the teacher to bring her lived experiences forth before students, before it is expected of the students (hooks, 1994, Elwell and

Buchanan, 2019). In this way the power dynamic is displaced as the teacher is making herself vulnerable.

As a teacher, I usually share my own experience with sexual violence, control and struggle with patriarchy. Sometimes, I highlight what it means to be a brown woman in various societies and cultures. I usually narrate an incident at John F Kennedy Airport, New York, where the immigration officer (a man) told me not to spend money on expensive holidays as nothing will be left for my dowry. A stereotypical and biased understanding of South Asian societies, women and men is surfaced here. The immigration officer simply by looking at me made his judgements about me, my family and the society I live in. I also use this incident to show the process of othering which is embedded in multiple identities that intersect for both the harasser and the harassed. This narrative is also a tale to remind one to move beyond stereotypes and to interact and engage with people from different cultures and societies.

Thus, the contextualisation of a certain phenomenon, in a diverse classroom, makes it more concrete for students to engage with and possesses the possibility of creating a discourse that takes into account lived experiences. This form of knowledge production can lead to change which is immediate or over a period of time, but it does ensure that students in class itself do not perpetuate the same violence, or injustice the person has already experienced but attempt to delve deeper into one's situated knowledge (Harding, 2004). This in turn creates sensitivity, and knowledge of power differentials become apparent and graspable. This phenomenon is theorised as 'it's in the room' (Rohrer, 2018).

'It's in the room'

Rohrer (2018) explains that students should be taught that issues of social justice that are being discussed are always present in the room itself that they belong to. She states that issues like gender, ableism, colonialism, racism, heterosexism and classism are issues that are 'almost always in the room in some form or the other' (2018: 577). This enables students to think structurally about power as well as intersectionality which

is hidden away in the overarching rhetoric of unity in diversity institutions. When people share their experiences and invoke their intersectionality, they come to experience and understand themselves as both vulnerable in certain contexts and powerful in others. In this manner, one realises that identities are always fluid and never frozen. Consequently, feminist pedagogies create sites that are enabling and empowering, as well as provide an analysis of the ways in which individuals attain power in some situations or forfeit it in others. This results in students and the teacher connecting better with one another by articulating and expressing themselves without fearing judgement or resistance. This way of engaging with one another promotes humanitarian values. Thus, to bring students to this juncture is not enough to create a space but it is necessary to push for critical thinking.

To promote and instill critical thinking, a key component of feminist pedagogy, requires that voices of everyone in a classroom is heard whether it resonates with that of the oppressor or with the marginalised. Elwell and Buchanan (2019: 3) explain:

[I]t can be challenging to affirm students' experiences when those experiences might contribute to sexism, racism, or homophobia...Managing the dynamics of student dialogue is precarious and requires a careful balance of allowing students to feel heard without perpetuating damaging discourses. There is a fine line between silencing students and taking a stand against prejudice; if teachers ignore racist or sexist comments, they are reinforcing status quo.

Thus, the tension, resistance, and conflict in classrooms are critical for discourse to build. This is because once the narrative, story, experience or opinion is articulated, there is scope and possibility of creating a dialogue where different perspectives and insights are shared. The primary aim of feminist pedagogy is to create a safe space for all (McCusker, 2017). It provides moments and opportunities to reflect on one's own thinking and notions. To do this, one has to accept, whether as a teacher or a student, that one is always changing and evolving. One has to accept criticisms as well as critique others sensitively and constructively. This can only be actualised when power in classrooms is shared.

Shared Power as Empowerment

I borrow from Shrewsbury's (1997) notion of shared power, as a tenet of feminist pedagogy. Power sharing in the class occurs between students and the teacher where both are active participants. Shrewsbury theorises power as capability. In this conception, power is to be increased in all actors rather than be checked and given to one individual. Shrewsbury (1997: 168) notes:

This conception of power recognises that people need power, both as a way to maintain a sense of self and as a way to accomplish ends. Power can be used to enhance both autonomy and mutuality... To be empowered is to recognise our abilities to create a more humane social order. To be empowered is to be able to engage in significant learning.

To think of power as something that rests with everyone in the class leads to empowerment where students are made equal stakeholders in their learning and in processes of knowledge production. This way of envisioning a class is to trust students' decision-making power in response to curriculum as well as social issues they are engaging with. They are required to engage in the development of curriculum by bringing their own knowledge and lived experiences to reflect upon. There is no better way to ensure critical thinking and engaged learning than by letting students take charge of the class they belong to. In order to do this, students are required to negotiate, navigate and evaluate the decisions they make on different issues. This process makes them accountable for their own statements and actions. While doing so, each student is required to be cognisant of differences and lived experiences of her/his fellow classmates. To use shared power as a tactic to empower students is to enable them to find their own voices and to be authentic and accountable towards oneself and one-another. This enhances their self-esteem and makes them feel part of the larger academic community.

In a classroom with shared power, the relationship between the teacher and students transcends to that of a dialogue and discussion rather than indifference or antagonism. Teachers feel as involved and accountable as the students. In this equation, there is an emo-

tional intimacy that students and teachers develop with one another. This aspect of student-teacher relationship challenges the neoliberal university where in the name of professionalism, student and teacher contact is required to be kept at a minimum. Emotional intimacy benefits both parties in terms of engaged learning as well as fulfilling pedagogic goals. At times, these relationships also transform teachers to quasi-therapists -a well-known phenomenon that occurs when students feel safe and comfortable to articulate their experience. Thus, teachers can then highlight shared power and its potential in emancipation from discriminatory phenomenon and processes.

The principle of shared power destabilises power hierarchies within the classroom, and in society, and enables in removing silences. This materialises when students and the teacher do not have to engage in censorship. In most conventional classes, students do not speak up as they fear being reprimanded for not agreeing with majority opinion or with the teacher's thought process. Similarly, teachers at times do not always share their beliefs, ideologies or opinions in fear of creating tension and aggression that will make future lessons more difficult. This kind of censorship constitutes a form of violence that students and teachers inflict on themselves (Elwell and Buchanan, 2019). Thus, with shared power, there is equality and voices, and diverse voices at that, that are heard.

Articulating Oppression

A tenet that I believe is very important for feminist pedagogy that has not been engaged with at depth is that of oppression. Many scholars and practitioners in the academic world have criticised feminist pedagogy to be homogenising as it does not address different kinds of oppression (Elwell and Buchanan, 2019). I argue that the question of oppression is relevant to the politics of feminist pedagogy.

An important process in a class driven by feminist pedagogy is to get students to articulate what they understand and mean by the term oppression. Do they only view it as something that impacts others, or do they see themselves being oppressed? How many oppressions are actually known to us? In this

conversation, the discussion on structural oppression and inequality surfaces. Students bring forth either their own personal experiences, and/or that of people close to them, and/or social oppression that they have learned about, seen, and/or heard. This provides greater insight into social issues and ensures that there is no one way of articulating and understanding oppression.

These tenets and principles of feminist pedagogy are needed in today's neoliberal classrooms where the #MeToo movement needs to be re-examined and discussed. But coming to a class with feminist sensibilities and changing the way of teaching and learning is not easily accepted by students. There is resistance in both overt and understated ways. It is important to use this resistance in productive ways to make feminist pedagogy sustainable in order to achieve its goals.

Utilising Resistance in Classrooms

When you enter a classroom, as a teacher, with students belonging to various faculties and disciplines you are never sure how to begin. I usually do so by introducing myself, my work and by calling myself a feminist. Mostly students do not react to this but there are times when I can see judgements on their faces, especially men thinking that I will not like them. I have been told this by a student of mine who stated, 'when you first told us you're a feminist I thought you will not like any men in the class and women will do better'. I was shocked but happy that the student had revised his opinion of me and of feminists.

In the same line of thinking, I have seen resistance from students in my classes either because I push them to talk or discuss oppression, especially gender injustice. The resistance is not so much as to what is present at the table but the way it challenges and destabilises their own privilege, entitlement and worldview with which they have lived all their lives. The normative reality starts to get overtly contested which understandably produces resistance. You Mei-Hui (2014) states:

We all realise that not every student who comes to the classroom is ready to deconstruct himself/herself. However, we all live in a gendered world. Students have taken status quo for granted. They have been accustomed to the gender hierarchy.

Similarly, Andre Bretz (2014: 18) notes that 'to a create a classroom that is genuinely liberatory, we must speak to those who do not recognise the system of gender relations to which they subscribe perpetuates a culture of violence and hatred'. The resistance in classrooms do not manifest in a unidimensional manner. The hostility is manifested in a variety of ways like, "from a sulky silence in class and/or poor attendance; to a superficial "going along with it", "saying what the Prof wants to hear, to overt anger exhibited in sexist comments and put-downs of women students and attempts, all too often successful in silencing them" (Bretz, 2014). I have also seen end of semester feedback for the teacher exhibiting hostility. This phenomenon is common to all classrooms but is most prevalent when the teacher is either a woman, a feminist, non-heterosexual individual, or is using feminist/critical pedagogy. But this hostility is something we need to work with on an everyday basis and challenge. This is more difficult within feminist pedagogy as one is trying to create a safe environment which is liberating.

My experience in classrooms with resistance is theorised by using Deborah Orr's (1993) work on resistance as a way to create intervention in the dominant discourse. She creates a very useful dichotomy between resistance and opposition. For her, opposition is the cul-de-sac of a student's learning trajectory. Opposition suggests the student has closed her/his mind to the issue at hand whereas resistance is a form where students continue to talk and debate. Therefore, resistance can be productive whereas opposition is counterproductive. Orr states that the resistance in classes guided by feminist pedagogy is mostly by men, not always, as they feel their masculinity is questioned.

Orr (1993) poses this issue of resistance by using it productively where masculinity needs to become a focus of discussion. Investigation into resistance exposes relationships and hierarchies between students

and the teachers, between men and women students and amongst men students. In doing so, one highlights the privileges of heteronormative masculinity, placed on cis-abled men, which provides an opportunity to deconstruct masculinity and visibilises the manner in which it harms and damages men's own interests. The example given previously, where my male student stated that women should not wear short clothes in public spaces because men get distracted, is evidence of privilege that he carries. He feels more entitled to spaces and women's bodies (to stare and comment on). As explained earlier, as the conversation continued, we arrived at the understanding that objectification of women's bodies is a result of masculinity where women's bodies are sexualised and men's bodies access and perpetuate such sexualisation. We also discussed why only certain parts of bodies are thought to be sexual while others are not.

Thus, the resistance provided by the student created a dialogue around masculinity and gendered notions of public spaces. The dialogue and patience to understand a perspective and take it to its logical conclusion is vital because as instructors we cannot silence students, with uncritical understanding of their own privilege. That would implicate them in their own domination (Orr, 1993). It is important to stress that gender roles, as formulated by patriarchal order, result in masculinity that is truly antipathic to men. Thus, as a teacher, one is continuously oscillating between providing equal opportunities to all students to speak while at the same time taking action against oppressive elements. In this context, it becomes essential to look at resistance as something that can be used in a productive manner, otherwise it can damage a teacher's mental health and impact her well-being.

Resistance in this way is very much part of feminist pedagogy. Praxis associated with feminist pedagogy never fears resistance but always attempts to use it productively for everyone's benefit. Feminist pedagogy is a process and not simply a set of tools that can be used once with guaranteed results. Teachers using feminist pedagogy practice perseverance with knowledge that the politics of 'it's in the room' (Rohrer, 2017) will change and lead to equality and emancipation through education. While this way of under-

standing and practicing feminist pedagogy is useful in changing the current classrooms environment, it is important to bring the discussion of violence as a turn with #MeToo moment.

#MeToo and Feminist Pedagogy

An important change to curriculum in social science modules can be to add the theme of violence more overtly. This is required because as Heather Lang (2019: 17) argues in the context of #MeToo that if 'rape culture is a pedagogy that teaches men to dominate and women to be dominated, it is critical to facilitate conversations that interrogate the masculinist cultures...'. Feminist pedagogy is a tool and a medium to do this.

Since #MeToo, one is not sure how to speak of violence that permeates the everyday worlds of individuals. A person sharing her story of violence not only marks her as a victim but can lead to further victimisation. This is because in a patriarchal order shame and blame always lies with the victim. On the other hand, if a male student is attempting to clarify on what consent is or if he has misunderstood consent, there is judgement. In one of my classes, a male student shared with me, personally, that he is never sure what consent actually means because sometimes asking for consent seems unnatural and can 'ruin the moment'. I genuinely wished he had raised this issue in class as it would have led to a thriving debate and conversation but in my personal capacity we engaged in a long discussion. I understood his inhibition, but I did not sympathise with him which is crucial in such contexts. One needs to not sympathise with persons and situations which run against the principle of equality and justice.

Thus, having a class dedicated to the issue of violence which encompasses all categories—physical, verbal, emotional, mental, and structural—would once again provide a platform to speak and call out injustices being perpetuated. This should not be a way to sympathise with the perpetrator or mark out individuals with a history of violence, but a space where one realises that violence is ubiquitous, but it is important to know when one is engaging in violence, especially

in the everyday and even in classrooms. For example, when one student censors or does not let the other student speak is an act of violence—silencing is an act of violence. I agree that it is not easy to speak of violence or remember it. More often than not it is lodged as trauma but with #MeToo we need to decolonise and demarginalise the way violence is articulated. A discussion like this can give, as Danielle M Stern (2018: 108) notes, ‘voice to bodily trauma’ (108), emotional and/or mental trauma.

Many universities run modules on violence but now is the time to speak of #MeToo as a movement that changed the idea of silence and complicity to that of equality and accountability. #MeToo and the discourse around it needs to be incorporated under the theme of violence. #MeToo as a movement made violence visible and this was articulated in various forms, sites and relationships by women from various backgrounds. Violence was made conspicuous with several thousand women validating each other’s experiences which gave this movement its momentum and longevity.

Thus, in a classroom the discourse on violence has to be embodied, participatory and stem from multiple standpoints, like the movement itself. An important discussion in relation to #MeToo and sexual violence is that of the ‘other’. Here the ‘other’ stands for the perpetrator of violence. Most students want to know why would one commit a sexual crime? What was the person thinking? Why did he do it knowing it will harm his reputation? Sometimes, going through the course on power relations, entitlements and privileges suffice. But at times, the shift in understanding violence that once again centers the perpetrator, his politics, actions and standpoint is troublesome as it takes away from the survivor who dared to speak up and challenged the power that oppresses her. A class guided by feminist pedagogy would support and strengthen the claims of the survivor/victim. Thus, these complexities need to be brought out. At times, hearing from the perpetrator can be a useful way to analyse sexual violence but not at the cost of negating and nullifying the experience and voice of the victim. A feminist pedagogy class will be able to discuss and debate these complexities even

if it is unable to reach a clear conclusion.

A feminist pedagogical class on violence where people speak of their embodied experience has the potential to validate their experiences which can contribute to the resolution of violence if not healing, as observed in #MeToo movement. One has to be very careful in running a module like this because pleasure as part of everyday life should be negated in examination and analysis of violence, especially everyday violence. Rather a module that takes off with #MeToo movement can make spaces, institutions and people more accountable without eroding emotional intimacies. It can produce solidarities within an intersectional framework and vulnerabilities can be acknowledged and addressed. It can bring uncomfortable but relevant issues to the table which can be struggled through by using principles and tenets of feminist pedagogy. More importantly, it will penetrate the wall that neoliberalism has created to hide structural inequalities and oppressions (Ahmed, 2017).

Running a module which incorporates the theme of violence requires not only sensitivity but patience and strong affirmation for students. We are not individuals free of baggage and can possibly act as custodians of patriarchy and other structures of inequality both consciously and subconsciously. It is therefore very important to use feminist pedagogy principles to understand our own locations, experiences and narratives. Robin Patric Clair, Pamela Chapman and Adrienne Kunkel (1996) explain that to share one’s narrative is to bring about both a mode of reasoning as well as a mode of representation of (self and the other) in one’s own terms. This enables in not producing sympathy for the predatory discourse but deconstructs it.

Conclusion

The discussion on feminist pedagogy above is useful and can be incorporated in most classrooms with a small number of students. In big lecture halls, it is difficult, but the agenda of feminist pedagogy can continue. The key principle of feminist pedagogy is to always work with the knowledge that every class is

different and rich in ecology and not a parcel of monoculture. This implies that techniques and strategies will be contingent on the needs and knowledge of the students which will create new ways of practicing and creating feminist pedagogy. The tenets and discussion mentioned above provide guidelines and highlight the ways in which everyday classrooms can be equal and privilege students' knowledge and experience without supporting and submitting to structural inequalities where sexism and misogyny haunt most spaces. Thus, feminist pedagogy is never a mode of indoctrination but uses feminism and feminist sensibilities to intervene in neoliberal educational spaces and attempts create a positive, equal and empowered individuals and community in spaces that are not about feminism or gender justice.

In neoliberal universities, teachers who offer alternative ways of thinking can be sanctioned but feminist pedagogy intrinsically challenges structures of power and thus needs to either work around the system or make students see the need and importance of it. Elwell and Buchanan (2019: 6) are prophetic when they state that 'even in politically fraught times, the school remains liminal space in which there remains potential for feminist intervention'. Hence, with the #MeToo movement, university classrooms have become spaces where feminist pedagogy can make a difference, especially in an environment where sexism and misogyny continue to press on in everyday lives but with mutated silences.

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