

Feminist Precarity and Everyday Survival: Women's Lives Under Slow Violence in Indian Feminist Narratives

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Abstract

In this paper, Indian feminist literature would be understood using the concept of precarity/slow violence, where the subjugation of Indian women is understood not so much due to catastrophic situations that erupt but because of processes that occur on an everyday level, becoming one with normalcy. Indian women's literature, while depicting situations that unfold due to "violence, nativity, fatalism, and ripeness," includes aspects where "violence can derive from situations described using other social categories, for example, exhaustion, social control, ethical dilemmas, etc." Indian women's literature, while depicting situations that erupt due to "violence, nativity, fatalism, and ripeness," also includes situations where "violence can derive from situations described using other social categories, for example, exhaustion, social control, ethical dilemmas, etc." Following various social sciences' understanding regarding "ferocity, nativity, fatalism, ripeness, visibility, normality, etc.," and using various strands from feminist realists, feminist narrative ethics, etc., while understanding precarity/slow violence's role in shaping Indian women's understanding/expression, it has also been observed that under "fatalism, ripeness, normality, etc.," Indian women's literature also includes situations where "violence can derive from situations described using other social categories, for example, exhaustion, social control, ethical dilemmas, etc." Hence, theorizing survival as a feminist discourse, the article builds upon the existing ideas of feminist literary studies in the context of events of trauma and empowerment, focusing on the ethical-political value of lived experiences of survival in the context of slow violence, the ultimate truth of the paper being that feminist resistance in literature is not one of triumphant events but of surviving, existing, and being, even within a context of structural precariousness.

Keywords: Precarity, Slow violence, Feminist realism, Everyday harm, Domestic labour, Endurance, Indian feminist narratives.

1. Introduction

Violence in women's lives is often imagined through the spectacular: assault, death, public scandal, or dramatic rupture. It would be misleading to suggest, however, that such forms of violence are universally exceptionless, for Indian feminist narratives repeatedly insist that women's oppression is also produced through the ordinary. Harm accumulates through daily routines and domestic expectations, and silencing is repeated. It appears as exhaustion, emotional deprivation, coerced care, and the slow depletion of selfhood. Such violence is not always visible; thus, it is frequently denied cultural recognition.

It contends that Indian feminist narratives build a feminist discourse by portraying women's lives under slow violence, normalised harm that does not register as "crisis" but shapes existence through attrition. Often, the domestic sphere is transformed into the main site of slow violence, where women execute unwaged labour, absorb family conflicts, and maintain social respectability while getting erased emotionally. Such patriarchal power does not work only through force but through repetition: women are expected to endure without complaint, to care without reciprocity, and to remain grateful for survival.

Clearly, precariousness takes centre stage at this juncture. The lives of women can no longer be understood as merely precarious from an economic perspective, but they also begin to intersect with aspects relating to ethics as well as

emotions. Their security can only exist on a conditional basis; therefore, it is dependent on their ability to demonstrate obedience, on being respectable, and on effacing themselves. In fact, middle-class women may experience.

In focusing on slow violence and precarity, this study extends the feminist literary exploration in the context of Indian feminist literary studies. This is because feminist resistance in the texts is understood 'not as radical action of rebellion but as an active resistance to collapse, to forgetting, to disappearance.' In the case of feminist literature in India, 'every day is the archive of the political and how ordinary is the living site of violence.'

2. Review of Literature

Patriarchal control in the ways of household management, marriage, and women as labour have been extensively researched in feminist theories. Feminist studies in Indian literature have also emphasised how the subjugation of women happens in the household and community scenarios. The studies also reveal the women's writings on how the suffering of women happens in ordinary ways instead of the extraordinary ways.

Trauma studies and feminist realism have also contributed to an understanding that violence is not always single or visible. Feminist realism, in particular, challenges heroic stories of freedom in favour of unsolved stories of survival in confinement. There is also an emphasis in feminist narrative ethics on the ethical complexity of survival, as it critiques any ethical evaluation of surviving women in oppressive arrangements. A new concept of 'slow violence' creates an interesting shift in terms of a theoretical paradigm: 'slow violence' involves an aspect of damage described as gradual, incremental, and also invisible, as it does not manifest the 'spectacle' normally associated with other kinds of violence. While the concept has been used to consider issues of environmental injustice and inequality, it can also inform a 'feminist' understanding of the 'violence' within the domestic sphere, which might manifest through deprivation for the women involved, without the marker of violence being explicitly apparent.

Nevertheless, at times, literary criticism remains entrenched in perceiving observable crises. Domestic exhaustion or emotional deprivation may be interpreted as psychological instead of political. Women's experiences of suffering may be understood more through mood than through structural crimes. Likewise, a critique that centres on empowerment may overlook non-empowering survival. The current paper bridges such theoretical and geographical divisions by theorising precarity, on one hand, and slow violence, on the other, in relation to feminist discourse in India. The paper theorises that everyday harms are politically significant because they enable the maintenance of patriarchy by normalisation. "Every day harms of micro violence, in feminist narratives, render the unseen visible, pushing the borders of feminist discourse beyond trauma's melodramatic edge, asserting that survival is a legitimate kind of feminist resistance." The writing of women in India expands feminist discourse to such an extent that it argues that survival is a legitimate kind of feminist resistance.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper applies theories of slow violence, feminist realism, and feminist narrative ethics to analysing how precarity shapes the lives of women in Indian feminist narratives. The concept of slow violence centres on the actuality of harm that manifests gradually, which may accrue and remain socially invisible because it does not meet conventional definitions of violence. In this way, it enables a feminist reading of domestic oppression as structural injury: exhaustion, depletion, and attrition become forms of violence even when they appear ordinary.

Feminist realism invites a framework for reading that is attuned to narratives which refuse the provocations of liberation and closure. It centres the understanding that women's resistance within patriarchy often unfolds without triumph and may result in compromise, loss, and continued constraint. Feminist realism thus legitimates endurance as feminist experience rather than reading it as failure.

Feminist narrative ethics stresses ethical complexity and constrained agency. Such a theory is not a judgement on women's survival strategies based on moral ideals of bravery, departure, or empowerment but instead looks at the structural conditions that operate in framing women's choices. The framework helps explain why women may remain within oppressive spaces: leaving may be socially, economically, or emotionally impossible.

The idea of precarity links these approaches together. By precarity, we mean a set of instabilities and a vulnerability that characterises life as uncertain: "precarity as a precarious life." For women, this is a precarious life built on conditional stability, on following the rules and looking after each other and ourselves."

Collectively, these theories enable this paper to think through Indian feminist narratives in terms of archives of slow violence. They literally lay bare for us how normalisation happens; how women exist within this context of depletion; and how, ultimately, resistance to this takes place. Hence, feminist discourse does not only come out of revolutionary acts but also comes out of engaging within this space to stay ethically clean.

4. Slow Violence in Domestic Life: The Ordinary as Structural Harm

Even the space of the home is constructed as a safe space within culture, but feminist narratives in the Indian context regularly reveal the home as the central space of slow violence. Violence in the home is regularly naturalised: women have the responsibility to "work" at the home, to keep the peace, to eliminate conflict. In the form of normalisation, violence becomes invisible. In feeling so familiar, slow violence is not seen as violence at all but as "obligation."

Slow violence is also experienced through the display of a lack of emotional concern, deep criticisms, humiliation, and denial of autonomy. It is also experienced through the daily display of unpaid work, such as preparing meals, cleaning, and providing voluntary labour without recognition. Women are made to weaken both physically and emotionally so that they are no longer able to exhibit emotional power.

In domestically located slow violence, the perpetrator is often hard to identify. The patriarchal entity oppresses women based on expectations rather than out of personal cruelties. Women may receive no direct brutality but live submerged lives marked by stealthy extraction. The ideology of 'good wife' often assumes its role as extraction.

In Indian feminist narratives, the space of domestic life appears as circular, in that women are never at complete ease. Even in cases of sufficient material security, there are always emotions of insecurity. The space of home appears as one where one has to attend to others, but never to one's own needs.

In representing domestic harm as slow violence, feminist discourses stretch violence yet to include other categories. The discourses illustrate that to oppress women is to do no violence to them at all but to live ordinary lives. The political significance of violence lies only in its awareness of ordinary violence. In representing ordinary violence as harm, Indian women writers' writings lay stress on how masculinity relies on women's ordinary exhaustion and demonstrate the home to be a site of politics where violence is reproduced habitually.

5. Precarity as Condition: Conditional Security and Women's Vulnerability

The women's world in a patriarchal society can be perceived as one in which security is subject to certain terms and conditions, whereby women may appear to enjoy security in terms of having a home, being married, and receiving financial support, but only on terms of subservience, caregiving, and quietism. The term "precarity" can therefore be seen to embody a form of emotion.

"In Indian feminist discourses, women's security is often predicated on respectability. The woman who expresses too loudly, desires too openly, or is reluctant at duty is less likely to be legitimate. Stability has less to do with being right, and far more to do with being performed. Precarity has everything to do with moral economy."

Precarity is also created because of economic dependency. Some women are stuck in the oppressive space because of an inability to escape due to economic constraints. However, there are also other types of dependency. For instance, women with education are also subject to emotional dependency. Moreover, there is also the dependency associated with patriarchal structures. Precarity is created by the patriarchal structure by limiting alternatives.

Precarity forms subjectivity. Women learn to anticipate punishment and conduct risk management. They monitor their words, emotions, and bodies. In this way, anxiety becomes a constant, which over time depletes agency. This is how such vulnerability becomes structural violence since it 'turns life into continuous negotiation'.

Indian feminist narratives often depict precarity, not as dramatic crisis, but as daily condition: women existing in unstable equilibrium, sustaining families while being denied security of selfhood. In such contexts, resistance may be less an act of rebellion than of survival. Feminist discourse therefore erupts when such conditioning is revealed to be inhuman. Precarity is not nature; it is manufactured.

By theorizing precarity, feminist literary discourse uncovers how women's subjugation is nurtured in and through vulnerability masquerading as stability. Not by brute force alone, but through the contingency of women's safety does patriarchy retain control. Feminist narratives uncover this condition and assert that an accountable security need not be predicated on the erasure of women.

6. Micro-Violence and Emotional Labour: The Extraction of Women's Inner Life

One thinks of micro-violence as small, iterative acts that wear away dignity: speech that is dismissive, subtle humiliations, gaslighting, and incessant emotional invalidation. Acts that could seem minor on an individual basis create profound injury cumulatively. Micro-violence tends to be foregrounded in Indian feminist narratives because it constitutes the everyday mechanics of patriarchy.

Micro-violence is closely related to emotional labor: soothing conflict, soothing others, managing family reputation, keeping emotions stable. The work of such labor very seldom receives recognition; it is naturalized in the feminine character. Feminism resists this naturalisation by rendering explicit the way emotional labour becomes extraction—women give out and never get in return.

Such extraction does exhaust. Women become depleted, and cannot sustain selfhood. Yet, patriarchy demands they continue. Women are required to do emotional labour for domestic life to function; they become invisible yet indispensable. It is this contradiction that heightens slow violence: women are valued for what they provide, not for who they are.

Micro-violence also regulates the manner of speaking out. If women express dissatisfaction, this is regarded as irrational or ungrateful behavior, thereby discouraging discontented women from speaking out, leading to a form of internalized oppression through silence.

The daily mining or Drauding of women at the hands of their oppressors is mirrored and reflected by Indian feminist narratives. The daily routine and repetitive tasks mirror the concept of structural violence.

The focus on micro-violence, micro-femininity, and the work of emotional labour produces a different concept of violence: one that is no longer purely physical, but rather extends to ethical desubstantiation, including the draining of emotions. The discourse of feminism comes into play precisely in moments where literature makes a forceful intervention that demands consideration of the importance of micro-injuries: that means acknowledging micro-violence, of course, but also being compelled politically to think of patriarchy not in events, but in systems maintained by the unseen work of women's emotions.

7. Survival as Resistance: Endurance, Boundary-Making, and Refusal

Under the banner of slow violence, resistance does not always mean rebellion. Women are confronted with the fact that they may not be able to resist or revolt against patriarchy or the man without a great deal of cost. Under conditions like this, resisting or merely surviving becomes resistance. Feminist realism looks at survival as a form of resistance. Surviving should thus have consequences for feminism.

Endurance encompasses boundary-making. Women can say no to certain demands, opt out emotionally, or protect their inner space. These small acts of refusing or saying no create disturbances in patriarchy's complete process of extraction. Boundary-making, therefore, transforms into feminist activity because it starts, in its own right, with an acknowledgment of woman's limitations, limitations that patriarchy seeks to erase.

"Refusal" also becomes relevant, for women may refuse compulsory care, may refuse forgiveness, may refuse silence. "Refusal" or "refusing" the coercive machinery, even if it does not bring freedom for women, reveals the coercive nature

of the system. For the institution of patriarchy thrives upon women. Indian feminist narratives are replete with representations of survival strategies that are morally ambiguous: compromise, secrecy, partial resistance. Feminist narrative ethics insists that such strategies be contextualised under constraint. Women choose survival because they must. Resistance becomes uneven.

Slow violence produces fatigue, and fatigue shapes resistance. The women may not have energy for dramatic rebellion. Thus, feminist discourse has to take up exhaustion as a political condition. When women survive despite exhaustion, that survival is resistance against the system that expects them to disappear.

Thus, survival here becomes feminist politics. It challenges empowerment narratives that want to see a visible victory. And it insists that women's endurance under slow violence is ethically significant. The Indian feminist writing spreads discourse by portraying resistive tropes: daily persistence, setting limits, and refusal. These narratives assert that feminist agency can sit inside constraint, not as triumph but as a sustained struggle to remain human in a structure so worked up for the erasure of women's selfhood.

8. Narrative Form and Slow Violence: Repetition, Silence, and Anti-Closure

Indian feminist narrative texts also employ the concept of slow violence in their forms. This is partly done through repetition since "repetition is also the core of daily life." Daily-life acts are repeated, even chores like silencing, and emotional work. It is cyclic in nature.

Silence is seen to be taking shape, too, within a woman's inability to speak her hurt, her hurt being one that is seen within a system of normalisation. The use of silence is seen as one where it is difficult to put a name to what is seen to be so ordinary. There is no emptiness within a feminist text's "Anti-closure" is a second method with a connection to formal techniques. In various narratives of feminist experience, closure is not provided since "slow violence" often lacks a neat conclusion. Women may not be rescued, and patriarchy won't disappear. There is no closure on this account because "closure" is not possible; to provide closure on this issue would be a Fragmentation may also occur, symbolising weariness. With slow violence, women's identity takes on a fragmented form. The narrative of fragmentation evinces this kind of disintegration.

These formal strategies produce a political reading experience. Readers must contend with repetition and unease, not resolution. Feminist discourse crystallises when form resists making harm palatable. It is opposition to the cultural desire for catharsis. By depicting slow violence in their form, feminist texts therefore refrain from neglecting anything as they widen the scope of violence in terms of definition. They demand its importance because, for slow violence to exist, it must remain invisible. By highlighting its repetition in literature, it becomes a way of exposing patriarchy's mechanisms.

Therefore, feminist literature forsakes narrative comfort for ethical truth: the fact of ongoing oppression, of cumulative injury, of incomplete resistance. Narrative is a feminist method. It enables literature to represent women's lives under slow violence, and to do so without elevating them to inspirational text. Instead, it retains the precariousness of vision.

9. Feminist Agency Without Triumph: Living Through Attrition

Women's agency under slow violence is seldom triumphant. Many feminist narratives refuse the empowerment arc because everyday harm does not resolve into a single act of rebellion. Women may continue to live in oppressive spaces. Yet, feminist discourse insists that agency remains through endurance, refusal, and self-preservation. Agency here is partial and costly. Women resist internally while complying outwardly, through manners or rituals that preserve dignity in silence or through refusing complete emotional availability. Such agency wins against the conceptualisation of feminism as necessarily looking like liberation. Slow violence generates attrition: women run out of energy, hope, and capacity. And yet many persist. Such persistence becomes feminist realism. It does not rule out the impossibility of flight for women without allowing the destruction of everything valuable. Survival thereby becomes a moral attitude. Feminist narrative ethics underscores that we must not label women's endurance as failure. Rather, endurance is the recognition of constraint. Women are not choosing oppression; they are navigating risk. Feminist agency under slow violence is therefore strategic: maintaining selfhood within depletion.

In Indian feminist narratives, women's lives are often framed as an unfinished struggle. There is no denouement since structural injustice persists. Agency comes across as an endless negotiation rather than a victorious finale. Hence, feminist agency without triumph opens up the Indian feminist discourse beyond victorious frameworks. It insists that to live through attrition is to be political. When women survive slow violence, they resist erasure. Their lives bear testimony against the normalisation of harm. Feminist discourse here is not a victory story; it is a survival archive. It shows how patriarchy works through everyday depletion and how women resist-not always by leaving but by continuing, refusing collapse, and sustaining a sense of self within a world designed to exhaust them.

10. Conclusion

In this project, it has been asserted that Indian feminist narratives create feminist discourse using representations of precarity and slow violence, which are persistent, usual, and additive, as opposed to singular and spectacular representations of injurious events. These narratives address domestic exploitation, emotional work, micro-violence, and conditional security, revealing how patriarchy maintains itself through the depletion of femaleness. Slow violence has political significance through its intractability as a culturally invisible phenomenon, one that is dismissed as duty, tradition, or ordinary life. The present paper, drawing on theories of slow violence, feminist realism, and narrative ethics, has shown how the subordination of women is often the result of a process of attrition. Precarity configures women's subject formation in terms of insecurity and limited agency, with security dependent upon compliance and respectability. Resistance to this through the form of women's writing consists in the recovery of the everyday as a form of violence.

As has been further elucidated in the present paper, resistance in such narratives is sometimes evidenced by survival rather than success. Endurance, drawing borders, and resistance can function as feminist agency in constraint, a complex though significant concept since it is not dissolved by its context. The use of narrative can contribute to the discourse of feminist agency by its own resistance to resolution in its use of repetition, silence, and anti-conclusion. In the final analysis, Indian feminist narratives add to feminist literary discourse because they underscore the everyday as a space of politics. They attest to the slow nature of violence and the quiet nature of resistance. Feminist attainments are not those of grand acts of liberation in any of the texts; it is the hard work of living, not being erased, and finding self in the face of precarity. Slow violence is draining to women, yet feminist literature is the space where this draining is not naturalised as invisible.

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