

# **POLITICS OF SHAME AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS**

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## **Master of Philosophy**

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DECLARATION

I, Jigyasa Sogarwal, hereby declare the dissertation entitled **Politics of Shame and Protest Movements** submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or other university.

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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Introduction	1
Shame instances in Political life	1
Contemporary assumptions on shame in political theory	4
Need of Shame in the study Politics	7
Protest movements as the lens	9

Chapter I

The Political in Shame	12
Emotion Theory	12
Shame Concept	21
Shame as Political	30

Chapter II

Who can be shamed?	35
Shame of Self	37

Shame of ...Self that resides in the Body	<b>40</b>
Abominations of the Body	<b>44</b>
Power of Shame and role of Self Respect	<b>52</b>
Chapter III	
Protest Movements and Subversion of Shame	<b>57</b>
Protest Movements and Politics	<b>58</b>
Manipur 2004	<b>63</b>
Jantar Mantar 2017	<b>67</b>
Nakedness and Shame	<b>73</b>
Subversion of shame	<b>79</b>
Conclusion	<b>83</b>
Power of shame	<b>83</b>
Shame faces Challenges	<b>84</b>
Elevation by Reduction	<b>86</b>
Notes	<b>91</b>
List of References	<b>95</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

## I

### *Shame instances in political life*

A woman stripped her clothes off and walked up to the nearest Police station in Rajkot, Gujarat. She carried with her some bangles and a Red rose. Eye witnesses speak of how it was quite a spectacle. She later presented the rose and the bangles to the police officer in charge. According to her, he failed to register her complaints of domestic violence against her in laws and husband who were torturing her for dowry. She at last had to resort to walking half naked from her house to the station; *'us admi ko sarre aam chudiyani pehnani chahiye'* (that man should be made to wear bangles publically).<sup>i</sup> Bangles are remarkably Indian in culture. Aesthetically, women wear bangles for ornamentation; politically, they wear it as a mark of *'suhag'*<sup>ii</sup> to determine that the said creature (woman) is under the protection of her male guardian (father/husband/son). Bangles are markers of her being docile, fragile and in need of protection. We know this because men on the contrary are considered protectors and they are not supposed to be wearing bangles. A man wearing bangles is an act of emasculation, of a man being stripped of his title of the ultimate protector; it is a loss of status. What is so essential to a woman is a loss of face for all men. In presenting her bangles to the police, our women here reduced our police officer's and her husband's masculine self to her 'supposed fragile' self. She walked naked in the neighbourhood and effectively shamed everyone, from her abusive family, the complacent police and the patriarchal society. Yet in another incident, an actress named Sri Reddy from Telugu stripped naked protesting against the alleged sexual harassment in the film industry. There were quick remarks over the social media reducing her to a sour loser, and the mentally misfit. The counter narrative suggests that the sanitised world of merit is being polluted by the

undeserving and unworthy. But it opened up spaces elsewhere in the media, and amongst people in the film trade itself about harassment, misogyny, and casteism prevalent in the arts and cinema industry. In another incident, Dalit family of four, both men and women were beaten up by the police when they made a case against theft. In the process the police tore their clothes off. In turn the men then stripped their clothes further to protest against the actions of police. The parallels from the play *Draupadi*<sup>iii</sup> are hard not to be drawn, “*what is the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man*”<sup>iv</sup> While there are several individual acts of protest of the kind, there are also protests by groups of people.

Earlier this year, farmers from Tamil Nadu gathered in protest using what came to be called shocking methods. With their heads half shaven and bodies bare they carried with them the bones and skulls of allegedly those farmers, who had committed suicide because of the ordeal of a farmer’s life. In threatening to drink their own urine, farmers presented an image that is grotesque by any standards. People shifted uncomfortably and made faces with absolute revulsion, as if they will throw up any second. Urban elite were grossed out to even hear or look at the images of these farmers who had stationed themselves at Jantar Mantar. And speaking of which, Jantar Mantar in New Delhi has become the ‘unwanted twin’ of our capital city. It is given away to those who do not matter but are there. While the nearby Connaught place market is full with hustle and bustle of the urban daily life. The upwardly mobile India takes selfies (an accepted form of self love in a society ridden with hate, violence and depravity) on their mobile phones and the marginalised and aggrieved gather around at Jantar Mantar with their bodies demanding the most basic (livelihood, shelter, wages )of what we would call a human life.

In early 2015, not very far from Jantar Mantar, sanitary pads on JNU hostel doors announced the names of the room inmates. A red ink on the white sanitary pad sent messages of gender equality and rape culture on them. It was the ‘*Pads against sexism campaign*’. Around the same time a security guard at the Delhi university campus college informed me how deeply shameful he was one morning when he



saw that pad on the tree. He was visibly embarrassed. He assured me that in keeping with his moral duty towards the campus he had removed and thrown the pad early in the morning before anyone else could see. One would be inclined to consider the role shame plays as one goes about meeting the challenges of the world. In 2011, in Toronto the women marched out in what they called the '*slut walk*' against the rape culture after a Toronto Police officer suggested that "women should avoid dressing like sluts" as a precaution against sexual assault. Subsequent rallies have occurred globally where women dressed themselves up in what was called '*slutty*'. Its Indian variant was called the '*Besharmi Morcha*' (Shameless demonstration)

2016 saw JNU being publicly shamed as an anti-national university. Each one of us are in turn asked to be ashamed of using tax-payers' money to propagate crimes against the nation. JNU became in fact the neo-untouchable, attracting revulsion from every possible part of the society. PhD students are ridiculed ever since for 'being students', that not having to do a job in market sense of the term at the age of twenty nine (representatively) is a failing, women students are put to shame in local narratives and social media as being promiscuous and a menace to family life for they are believed to be breaking norms of caste and class, purity and pollution. Anti-national becomes the category reworked into shaming and stigmatizing people or groups of people that may want to criticize the state or its policies. JNU became the embodiment of that stigma. And yet our shame is still the shame of the privileged, the educated. Compare this with the shame that sex workers experience. She claims to be working as a domestic help and dresses up to walk up to her place of work. Ever on the caution for anyone to find out that she is in fact a prostitute. The walk from the civilised neighbourhood of shame to the place of shamelessness, the journey is filled with fear, anxiety and an associated lack of dignity.

In Gujarat last year, Dalit men were openly flogged like animals and video recorded for refusing to remove cow carcasses. The idea was to punish them and make a public statement out of it. This has been the long standing method of coercing and shaming marginalised communities whenever there is an act of

resistance. This however was followed by a call of Gujarat Dalits to the upper caste cow worshipping, in reality cow feasting and cow trading (India is the biggest exporter beef in the world)<sup>vi</sup> “ *Your mother, you burry her*”<sup>vii</sup>. Cow carcasses were dropped in public buildings. *Mother-cow turned into the dead-a menace*. Caste Hindus publically lynched Dalits and Muslims for slaughtering their mother but needed ‘lower’ castes to remove the carcasses of dead cow. From the western state of Gujarat to the eastern part of India, in 2004, twelve women (revered locally as the ‘*Ima*’, or mothers) from Manipur went naked, stripping their clothes off in front of kangla fort in Imphal where Assam rifles were stationed. They shook the nation as the image of middle aged naked women with the banner “Indian army rape us’ hit the national dailies. They were protesting the alleged rape and murder of Manorma and several others under state’s AFSPA regime.

The cases presented above are some of the many such examples of how shame and humiliation are part of our political landscape even more so now than it has ever been. The list is quite exhaustive and mere descriptions of the modes and motivations of these actions do not help improve our understanding of politics. And yet there has not been an adequate and equal attention given to emotions such as shame in politics.

## II

### *Contemporary assumptions on shame in political theory*

Let us consider therefore the present theoretical assumptions about shame in political theory. The ambiguities of definitions and boundaries around shame get replicated in the contemporary literature that focuses on shame in politics. We have two broad spectrums, one which cautions against shame and argues against giving it space in politics. And the other who condemns shame and do so because they see it as something that threatens certain necessary conditions for democratic

participation and deliberation. Shame can threaten the mutual respect necessary for democratic deliberation by diminishing a person in the eyes of his audience or even in his own eyes, thus causing the person to withdraw from the political discussion, and it can do this in a way that may be much more effective than a show of force. John Rawls (1971) describes it as “the feeling that someone has when he experiences an injury to his self-respect or suffers a blow to his self-esteem.”<sup>viii</sup> As self-respect is for Rawls a “*primary good*” and necessary condition for active participation in moral and political life,<sup>ix</sup> shame is dangerous precisely because it can instil apathy and cynicism in the person, either by making everything seem worthless or by weakening the will to strive for things one values.<sup>x</sup> Similarly, Martha Nussbaum (2004) argues that shame (or more precisely a primitive form of shame)<sup>xi</sup> ought to be banned from our legal systems because it contains dangerous aspirations to omnipotence that endanger rather than foster the “institutional and developmental conditions [necessary] for the sustenance of a liberal respect for human equality.”<sup>xii</sup> Finally, Jill Locke (2007) argues that feminists and democrats should be sceptical of shame because the “negative global self-assessment” it involves and the weariness it induces actually forecloses rather than opens up the kinds of counter publics and alternative spaces “where freedom can dwell,” especially for “shame-ridden and shame-prone” subjects.<sup>xiii</sup> In a somewhat similar vein (though from a different angle), queer theorist Michael Warner (1999) has argued that a politics of shame is pernicious to democratic deliberation because it isolates certain groups from the public by asserting a norm of what is acceptable and then silencing or concealing any “deviant” voices. In Warner’s work, the “politics of shame” denotes the practice of diverting or avoiding the feeling of sexual shame by pinning it on someone else. Shame is the central mechanism by which the false morality of the majority restricts the sexual autonomy of certain individuals by making their experiences and pleasures seem disgusting and therefore unworthy of acknowledgment. Equally problematic for Warner is the fact that instead of striving to circulate accurate knowledge about, and challenge the predominant view of their practices, these “perverts” strive to become “normal” by presenting themselves in accordance with the image of the “normal” citizen.<sup>xiv</sup>

On the other side of this spectrum, theorists of civility, such as Jean Elshtain (1995) have argued that shame can provide the necessary conditions for democratic deliberation by excluding and thereby protecting the private lives of citizens from the gaze of the public. For Elshtain, individuals who parade their sexuality or intimate lives in the public breach the “boundary of shame” because they transpose the bodily functions, feelings, and interpersonal relationships that are meant for a private audience into the public sphere. Instead, for her, the public sphere should only be concerned with the activities of “arguing for a position, winning approval, or inviting dissent as a citizen.”<sup>xv</sup> Similarly, Christopher Lasch (1995) has argued that America is actually suffering from a culture of narcissism and shamelessness in which the mass media regularly parade the “most outlandish perversions, the most degraded appetites,” and moralists and psychoanalysts are in the business of getting people to accept and celebrate rather than judge and try to overcome these perversions.<sup>xvi</sup> As he puts it, “We do children a terrible disservice . . . by showering them with undeserved approval . . . Self-respect cannot be conferred; it has to be earned. Current therapeutic and pedagogical practice, all ‘empathy’ and ‘understanding,’ hopes to manufacture self-respect without risk.”<sup>xvii</sup> Without the sting of shame, individuals never learn the individual initiative that is forged by overcoming obstacles and failures, nor do they develop respect for impersonal standards of competence that underpin any true form of education.<sup>xviii</sup> Alternately, communitarian theorists of civility such as Amitai Etzioni (2001) argue that shame is necessary not so much to protect the individual from dangerous intrusions by the state or to educate him into self-reliance, but rather to express and reinforce the shared moral values that countries such as America are in danger of losing.<sup>xix</sup> Etzioni and others have even gone so far as to favour the reintroduction of shaming penalties, e.g., forcing child abusers or drunk drivers to wear signs or bumper stickers publicizing their crimes.<sup>xx</sup> According to Etzioni such penalties are actually democratic because they express society’s collective disapproval of certain acts, and they can be far more just than imprisonment because incarceration, unlike public penalties, often subjects prisoners to harsh conditions, offers few possibilities for parole, and fosters recidivism far more than rehabilitation.<sup>xxi</sup>

Shaming penalties, on the other hand, express society's disapproval of the behaviour while simultaneously giving the individual the possibility of showing his remorse and of reconciling with and reintegrating back into society.<sup>xxii</sup> Although this kind of defence of shame may seem to lend itself to a conservative political agenda, William Miller (1997) and Dan Kahan (1996) have recently argued that emotions like shame and disgust can play a progressive role by marking out those moral matters for which there can be no compromise in a liberal democratic society, e.g., crimes such as "rape, child abuse, torture, genocide, predatory murder and maiming."<sup>xxiii</sup> By expressing our collective abhorrence of these crimes and forms of cruelty, shame and disgust become virtues that track these vices and are necessary for the proper functioning of a liberal democratic society.<sup>xxiv</sup> Alternatively, John Braithwaite (2000), who is an opponent of the kinds of shaming penalties favoured by both Etzioni and Kahan, has argued that shame can play a positive role in the criminal justice system through "re-integrative shaming conferences."<sup>xxv</sup> Such conferences involve bringing together two "communities of care": the victims of the crime and their families or supporters, and the offenders together with their families and supporters. Because violent offenders have often erected a shield to protect them from feeling sympathy for or shame toward their victims, the victims' statements will instead affect the mothers or friends of the offender, and their reactions will in turn cause the offender to feel ashamed of his actions because of his respect and care for this latter group.<sup>xxvi</sup> As Braithwaite puts it, "It is the shame of letting down those we love and trust that has the greatest power over us," and it is this kind of shame that is more likely to get criminal offenders to take the hard road of behavioural modification.<sup>xxvii</sup> Finally, Braithwaite's work on shame has recently been utilized in the theories and practices of restorative justice, and of truth and reconciliation commissions after war, mass atrocities, and genocide.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### **III**

#### *Need of shame in the study of politics*

To begin with there are questions that the challenges of our times have thrown up. Emotions such as shame, disgust, guilt, anger, humiliation have been part of both social and public life but there are no concrete categories to understand these emotions in their own right. There is a tremendous potential that emotions have now been playing in politics hold. Take for example, the *demonetisation*<sup>xxix</sup>, despite causing great inconvenience to people, economy and industry, our government was able to sell it well. People died in the process, lost their businesses and their income, yet a nation did not rise in uproar. One of the explanations that were offered was that people *'felt'* that it was good for the country. Narratives of the soldiers braving death on borders was put forth to suggest that our tragedy was much less in comparison. Prime minister's ninety year old mother was put in camera frame withdrawing money from an ATM in a long line. People had an emotional *reaction*, it was suggested. A public policy disaster had tremendous purchasing power and the reasoning was emotional. The phenomenon of social media trolling<sup>xxx</sup> is deeply related to the domain of shame. Calling political opponents names, body shaming them, alluding to their caste and class on social media is repackaging of old tradition of shaming through newer techniques. Just that the scale of shaming has increased. The act of stripping, beating and parading a victim naked is not new. What is new is the instant publicity it gets. The pervasiveness of shame is now ever more compounded. Discussion on shame as a phenomenon has been confined to psychology and anthropology. Problem of shame in contrast to problem of conscience has not been dealt with or has not got enough attention in modern moral philosophy.<sup>xxxi</sup> Shame needs to be claimed as a deeply political phenomenon, more so because it has now been at the door of politics for a while and we can no longer answer some basic political questions without alluding to it. The manifestations of shame are perverse and omnipresent and we can no longer go without taking them into consideration.

First chapter concerns itself mostly with definitional issues and conceptual apertures. It is divided into three parts. The first part has tried to understand the

concept of emotions. The definitions are not exhaustive, yet they are used to speak of most extensive human responses. Shame is an emotion and the discipline of sciences houses shame. Shame however is not an innocent emotional occurrence. It is constitutive of power. Any translation of shame into politics would need to consider a conceptual understanding of shame emotionally for it to move further. And therefore a concept of shame from within in that of emotions has been developed. There are other emotions such as guilt and embarrassment which are closely related to that of shame. Guilt finds adequate space in politics, in forms of normative principles of International law and responsibility and also in juridico-political matters. Hence it becomes necessary to differentiate shame from other emotions known to be in the same family that of embarrassment and guilt. The third and last part tries to answer the central question of the chapter 'what is political in shame' and make a case for and against a reading of shame in politics. Shame has been a subject of study of disciplines other than political science in a way that raises problems of conceptual import. Emotions as they are treated in pure sciences such as psychology cannot, and perhaps should not be transplanted into a discipline of political science as it is. The political explanation of shame therefore may not only be distinct in character but also in content from say, the psychological explanation of it. The task of this work is political in both intent and manner.

The second chapter focuses on drawing the constituencies of shame. Who can be shamed and what is its cause? When is shame possible? In answering these questions, the chapter engages with two themes- of self and the body that houses the self. What makes the self and how has the body in which self takes seat has been treated through history. The chapter also answers '*Who shames*' while answering '*who can be shamed.*' It is suggested that the shamed and those who shame are part of the same social milieu. They speak the same language, precisely why they are able to hold each other to shaming. This is precisely why shame is available to the tormented to invert. This is why the language of shame can be claimed and made own. This is best understood by looking at protest movements aiming to shame.

## IV

### *Protest movements as the lens*

As suggested, this work is an attempt to understand shame politically. There is in fact more than one road that leads to shame in politics and yet this work has chosen to approach the political in shame via protest movements especially the naked body movements.

Shame is deeply political emotion and it is latent. It is not immediately available for noting down. It presents itself in nodes and in glimpses here and there. There are no exclusive grand structures that hold shame. There is not one repository or one register. Shame is part of a politics of suspicion, fear and surveillance. The shaming of minorities as criminal and their women as caged, shame of being raped, shame of a grotesque acid attacked face, shame of the state watching, tapping and monitoring movements. Shame is part of politics of dirt, dress and death. Shame comes in form of being an untouchable and by that logic a dirty polluted body. Shame comes from being a menstruating body, an infertile body (woman who bears no son), and a prostitute's body. Shame comes from wearing more clothes (women who wear veils are chided as uneducated, primitive and conservative) and wearing fewer clothes, or certain types of clothes. (Khap decrees against mobile phones and *Jeans*). Shame comes from death of '*mother cow*'. Shame has one companion *hiding*. Where are the numerous cleaners, municipal workers who clean the roads, toilets, railway lines before the city awakes? They work in the darkness and disappear within the same darkness. Shame is attached to identities, to caste names (the habit of many government officials and people in general to enquire after your full name to immediately locate you on the social hierarchy), to religious names singled out for mass lynching or denial of rental properties in urban metropolis. (A Muslim name is enough to scan out potential tenants). Shame is attached to 'cheap neighbourhood' addresses to determine your class. Shame reaches you through



school textbooks, primary socialisation and institutions. Any one or all of these could be an entry point to understanding political in shame. This work, however takes up protest movements for particular reasons. One, it is not possible in the scope of one research to touch upon vast subjects such as these. Two, protest movements mostly centre on a common identity of being a victim to a supposed wrong done. Strength of an identity comes from its emotional side<sup>xxxii</sup>. Individuals in a protest hold to a theory, and some normative ideas but they hold it through shame as an anchor. Three, naked protest movements hold an element of moral shock which is not available elsewhere. This initial moral shock is the first sense of moral outrage which leads to participation in political action.<sup>xxxiii</sup> This process of shame in form of moral shock translated into moral outrage playing out in political action is of interest to a student of politics because power changes in hands here, it evolves as a living entity. Fourth, protests have logic of emancipation to them; they are attempts to change the world hitherto considered unjust and unfair. Protests movements help understand the possibilities of subversion of shame for furthering the boundaries of democratic politics. Chapter three specifically takes up two cases of naked protest movements. One is that of Tamil Nadu farmers' protest demanding remedies for ailing agricultural scenario and other of the naked protest of 2004 by the Manipuri women against AFSPA (Armed forces special powers act) and rape. This chapter looks at the concept of protest movements as constituted in shame and traces the history and politics of nakedness. It lays out the possibility of emancipation in and through protest movements.

## Chapter I

### *The Political in Shame*

The primary concern of this research work is to ask the following question, what is political in shame? However a more basic question needs answering before that. The question is what is shame? If one were to answer it in plain common sense terms then it can be said that shame is a felt experience about something. I have felt it. People have felt it momentarily and also over a longer duration of time. And it indeed is deeply felt. It invokes unpleasant feelings. It is a deeply disturbing experience. But the same common sense understanding also suggests that anger is also deeply troubling, so is hatred. But can we conclusively say that shame is not

anger or that shame is also not hatred? If shame shares the property of unpleasantness with its fellow emotions in this category, what is it that distinguishes shame from other emotions? What makes shame constitutive of power? Each emotion apart from having been felt have distinctive characteristics of their own. While defining shame politically is the central project of this work, it must be noted that the route to such understanding inevitably has to pass through an understanding of emotions because shame is in fact an emotion. Before getting into characteristics of shame more directly, one therefore needs to look at emotions and emotion theory.

## I

### *Emotion theory*

Emotions have long been discussed and given some serious attention in disciplines of psychology as well as anthropology. But that was not without its own problems. There is a methodological inconvenience in defining emotions and putting them in distinct categories. This makes emotions a fissile (or fertile, depending upon how one sees this) material to work with. And this leads most often to abandoning of emotions either entirely or manipulation of emotional ideas along different other dimensions indirectly eluding to emotions but never using them in direct sense.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Of course one can not entirely do away with emotions as a subject of study or a method via which to explain and understand human beings. This is simply due do centrality of the emotional in almost all phases of human life. In fact enlightenment brought with itself ideas and a subsequent way of dividing the soul (human soul) into three parts. These were namely: the cognitive (to do with thinking, accessing, understanding), the conative (the willing part) and the affective faculties (to do with the feelings part).<sup>xxxv</sup> Interestingly anything that did not fit in the thinking or willing parts about human soul, were to be comfortably slotted for the affective faculties. Desires, impulses, intuition, moods, instincts, the gut, sensations, feelings, emotions

therefore were marked out for the affective part. From this bag of often overlapping and therefore complex entities psychologist took whatever they could for a convenient use to further their insights into the thinking cognitive part. But this third part of the affective faculty, the bag of the condemned remained forever inferior. This graded schema of different parts of human soul was used by anthropologists as well to define certain communities as primitive, and ruled by primitive animal like passions of the body as opposed to the modern developed human societies informed by reason and thinking. The nature- culture divide<sup>xxxvi</sup> is based on this distinction between those moved by bodily needs (women, slaves, aboriginals, Dalits, tribal) who are considered to be outside of 'civilisation' for they are yet to win over their bodily wants. The suggestion is their heart rules over them, making them untrustworthy candidate for equal treatment. As opposed to those who have now moved to culture who control their passions. Those who have transcended all material needs and they have control over their passions, for it is their brain that is in charge. It is not difficult to point out how this way of doing things develop a deeply political classification of people. It is almost as if the human whole can be divided into two, the desirable cerebral and non desirable, pathological. This of course sounds very similar to Plato's classes and therefore this mind-body distinction remains central thread in almost all discussions on emotions. This tendency invariably aided in looking at some people collective as primitive, hysterical and irrational and therefore lesser beings and became the reasoning for discrimination. Discussion on emotions and their place in democratic theory has mainly come in the following forms. First, there is an articulation of the difference between reason and the emotions as two distinct entities. When such distinctions are effectively made, there is a case made for benefits of reason such as impartiality, neutrality and objectivity as against the corresponding dangers of emotions. Nussbaum in her work suggests that these arguments were propounded by Roman and Stoic philosophers. According to this school of thought, emotions remained outside the control of human beings for they are external goods. Medieval philosophers linked it to Christianity and therefore to suppression of sexuality.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The second form divides the category of emotions into 'interests'

and 'passions'. In doing so it gives a laudatory position to interests and a cautionary place to passions defined as irrational, dangerous, and warlike. This tendency developed in the wake of violent and religious wars, classical liberals proscribed passions and emotions from politics as they created spaces for instability and war.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Adam Smith and John Locke used greed and avarice against passions of pride to later develop a language of self interest. These 'former passions' as 'interests' are accorded the status of rationality by arguing that they, unlike the "hot blooded" passions, were calm, calculable, and communicable to others.<sup>xxxix</sup> Linked with this was a tendency to see people still moved by passions, rather than reason or interests, a "ignorant," "primitive," and part of the "lower orders."<sup>xl</sup> Third form simply overlooks emotions in their models. The political reasoning and agenda setting are understood to exclude any consideration on emotions. However, there is a limited utility that this form sees in using emotions for motivating political action which has already been decided upon principles of reason and rationality. Fourth category tends to compartmentalise and encourage positive emotions such as love, compassion, guilt in public life, while carefully making a case for excluding what it calls the negative emotions. Fifth and more overlapping form simply assumes emotions to be the sphere of the private; emotions reside in the household and the domestic. There should be no difficulty in understanding therefore that women are considered to be dramatic, irrational, and hysterical since domestic houses both emotions and women. By the very same logic, it is assumed that emotions do not and therefore also should not reside in public. This methodological bent sealed the restrictions of women, primitive and the slaves into the public domain. This served the logic of power. The reasonable men had power over the supposedly 'hysterical and unreasonable women'.

If there is a conceptual difficulty in defining emotions as the literature on emotions suggests, where should we look if we have taken up the task of defining and understanding emotions, and as in our case emotion such as shame. Let us begin by the everydayness of emotions and feelings.<sup>xli</sup> There seems to be considerable ease with which people tend to label their emotional states without actually having to have a definite meaning of what they mean when they say they are in love, or they

are sad, or they are overjoyed. It seems we all seem to know exactly how the other feels. Even when there is no uniformity of experience in what we describe as emotions, there seems to be no difficulty in communication and understanding those emotions.

The obvious question is how does this come about? I suggest that emotions have what we can call a basic minimum common along which they operate. I am taking my cue from the basic minimum common that all species have with the other. All living beings have an instinct for preservation of life, need for food, clothing and shelter as the basic common that they share with other living being. This does not mean that humans and non human animals are alike. They are not, but they definitely share some common characteristics. Similarly the content of emotions as experienced by humans and non human animals may vary but there exists a common minimum that they share. This tendency of emotions to be a common minimum is partly based on the sheer anatomy of a vital body and partly on the environment that both human and non human animals contribute to shape. The body will fear if it is under attack, it will be aroused for sexual intercourse and it will feel sad on loss of a mate. These are minimums, and the explanation is biological. “All the organic bodies contain within them negative properties like sweat, excreta, urine, mucus and gases.”<sup>xliii</sup> In the material sense, they are the source of foul smell and unpleasant feeling. Therefore the body as the source of impurities would elude to what Guru (2009) calls a kind of ‘*ontological equality*’ - that everybody is dirty, brings out in every person a moral insight which can generate a sense of moral relativism, in effect creates the possibility to re strain, and perhaps, totally eliminate morally offensive capacity. Politically, the minimums can be extended further based this insight to the moral worth intrinsically enjoyed by a human being by virtue of being human. This moral worth is ensured by mutual recognition based on the value assigned to human life collectively. This is the *minimal recognition*<sup>xliiii</sup> that human beings enjoy and give to each other. All human beings despite being different or same are considered to be repositories of basics that are common to all. Each life is therefore equally important in the face of law, state, vote and institutions. By this logic of the basic common minimum we can

therefore safely conclude that emotions are experiences; experiences that are felt as the common minimum.

Both emotions and feelings are felt experiences that are experiences of the internal kind. (Pain, hunger and longing are also felt experiences but they are not emotions so to say, we would rather call them simple feelings) The main characteristic which justifies the inclusion of feelings and emotions in the category of experiences of inner status is the fact that they occur when an '*intraorganismic*' state is subjectively experienced.<sup>xliv</sup> Simply put the emotions can be experienced by the self all by itself, via body which houses the self. There are two parts to our emotion occurrences. One is the experience of emotion that the self housed in a body goes through all by itself, either in presence or absence of the other. The causality is mostly external, but the going through the emotion is quite contained within one body that is in an embodied self. Second part of our emotional experience is the part where we need to communicate these emotions; this is the outward dimension of emotions that requires extending the experience of self to other(s). Part one, of experiencing emotions within the self can be understood by alluding to the basic common minimum suggestion. It helps us have a common experience of emotion. But this may not involve any outward signalling or declaration of how one feels. As humans we are almost always bound in this swirl of push and pull. While there is a need to feel one with the rest, that is to be accepted as part of the larger universe. And yet there is also a deep seated desire to stand out from others, to be different. It is a certain commonality that makes us feel accepted. Imagine for example the pure ecstasy that one experiences when one finds their own countrymen in a foreign land. The in-group solidarity therefore is based on the desire to be inducted as one (also because numbers have power-both brute and democratic; the logic of majority) and the spirit of competition within the in-group stems from the need to distinct out. In both these cases the need to communicate emotions becomes imperative. It is language that ties the knot for us in cases where emotions may require communication. And such communication may involve description of emotions in terms of several different languages. Functional (adaptive) language-applies to both humans and animals. The behavioural language on the other hand is

quite general, again applied both human and animals. However, the subjective language is particular to only human beings for they have what we call a grasp of a certain language experience. Subjective language therefore is suspect to complexity. It comes to acquire its own biases and becomes variable. Along with subjectivity comes layers that need uncovering. Certain learned behaviours may reflect complete contrast between verbalised behaviour and expressive ones. For example, when people say they are not angry because being angry is considered to be a bad emotional state to be in but their behaviour is filled with expressions of anger associated with passive aggression. This makes the category of human emotions susceptible to multiple observable complexities.

So far it has been argued that emotions are experiences that are based on principle of 'basic common minimum' (largely owing to biological reasons among others) and they are also communicable via language (which is subjective and brings its own biases). This language could be verbal or symbolic. Spitting, sneering, frowning are associated with unpleasantness as opposed to smiling, hugging and saluting. There are other symbolic gestures such as bending, prostrating, being asked to remove shoes outside while entering a dwelling which elicit strong emotive responses.

So if we know thus far that emotions are experiences, how are they caused? What causes us to be sad, joyful, ashamed, or guilty? One and the most accepted cause of emotions is physiological. Emotions are a patterned bodily reaction caused by stimulation of brain in responses to external stimulus. Either to protect, destroy, reproduce, deprive, incorporate, reject, explore, or orient. Hence, it is argued that emotions have implications for evolution in both human as well as animal beings. The other cause or component of emotion is the cultural. Emotions are more deeply embedded in a human's culture than anything else. Culture is a montage of disparate habits. Habits are cultivated by rituals. Rituals are repetitive, regular and absolute. Each ritual and habit is in turn incensed with one or more than one emotions. For example, the practise of cooking extra servings of food to be given out to a dog, cow or for charity have continued in many north Indian household.



Such practices are based on the need for care and compassion vis-a-vis other living beings. Quite oppositely, cultures that practise untouchability thrive on hatred and revulsion as the emotional repository for carrying out such exclusion. Culture and emotions have interacted and influenced each other in different ways to form an emotionally fertile social. One such way by which culture shapes emotions is by perception of emotional stimuli. For example, some in some cultures, fish as a food is not only a delicacy but there is positive aromatic smell attached to it. Then there are cultures that find the smell of fish or other such foods rather repugnant. Similarly there are stimuli that in some cultures induce fear and anger in others. Suicide for example invites shame and a tag of cowardice in some cultures while in others it may be considered an appropriate response for guilt reparation. Second way in which cultures shape emotions is more direct. Instead of changing perceptions, cultures mould the response by laying out permissible and non permissible outwards expression of emotions. Men for example in almost all cultures and more in some than others are not allowed to cry in private or public. Even when the stimulus is of great sadness, such as the death of a loved one, they are not allowed to cry. And consequently they don't. They are not fighting tears, they just don't form tears. As opposed to women who in same cultures are expected to wail, and make loud noises so as to present their grief. The third way in which cultures shape emotions is by allocating values to and building systems of judgement. Let me take the more generic example of the question of interest in Islam. Interest on credit is considered '*haram*'<sup>xlv</sup>. This is in opposition to capitalist societies which are centred on the idea of capital. Such capital phobic and capital philic attitudes invoke contrasting emotions in different cultures. There is another way in which cultures shape emotions. These can be characterised as institutional emotions that is those emotions which are generated by virtue of the institutional structure. Consider for example the training induced institutional aggression in warfare, armies, or for example the training induced affection in day care and child care institutions. There are emotions that are necessitated by structures such as crematoriums, wedding rituals, at the reception of hotels and restaurants, while being a tele-communication executive. Imagine for example a credit card seller on

the phone. *“Hello Sir, we are offering you an exclusive credit card”*. If not more there must be at least 20 such people everyday who would hang up on the tele-caller and respond in a rather terse way. Some may even use curse words. And yet every time the caller calls you back, their voice is ever so radiant and full of hope. How much is this tone an expression of her “true” emotion really?

This work is not suggesting that cultures influence emotions in their entirety or in ways which are exclusive of other biological causes. In fact most times they are a complex work of both. Yet the most important cause of emotions is the cognitive one. Emotions are distinct from other categories of experience because they involve appraisals. They are elicited by external conditions which are of concern to us or by things which we have brought about or suffered. (We would not, for reasons such as this, call hunger and thirst emotions.) They differ from each other because of differences in what is appraised. Fear, for instance, differs from anger, largely because seeing something as threatening differs from seeing it as thwarting, and these different appraisals have different consequences both physiologically and in the behaviour which may be their outcome. In other words, emotions are basically forms of cognition. It is because of this central feature which they possess that I think there is any amount of scope for educating the emotions. Education is an evolutionary process; it is not one single act but a series of them. This idea of being able to educate emotions through learning, unlearning as processes of thinking and rethinking are linked definitely to the cognitive aspect of the self but also to relation of time with emotions. Let me therefore open up the dimension of temporality in emotions. While emotion has only one temporal dimension: the present<sup>xlvi</sup>, there is in fact an enlarged space that extends both into the past as well as the future. The experience of any emotion, say shame for example will happen in the present, in today, right now, right here. But there may be strong bearing on it from the experience of distant past or one that is anticipated in distant future. In that sense, the emotion is temporally wider than one would imagine it to be. Why is temporality an important factor for us here? They are important because past emotions shadows present attachments; they take up residences within them. Therefore we find that narrative dimension is absolutely essential to bring the

complicated temporal history of human beings to fore.<sup>xlvii</sup> Literature extends our life and our experience, "making us reflect and feel about what might otherwise be too distant for feeling"<sup>xlviii</sup>. It cannot be denied that we are limited in our experiences and yet we have the capacity for understanding distant emotions if we are presented with them. One of the things that literary art does is that it presents one with moments where "habit is cut through by the unexpected"<sup>xlix</sup>, testing our aspirations to live a good life through events outside of our control. This process of reading often becomes one of moral learning, a way of training ourselves to recognize the importance moral insights. No prefabricated principle can help us here, but we can only learn experientially, step by step, guided by the novel. And this is more or less the explanation for why art, literature and poetry tend to be windows to a more complex yet a more complete human. Narrative dimension becomes crucial for perception formation because they provide a platform for deep engagement with subjects and experiences hitherto unfelt or untouched while also maintaining certain neutrality, a distance. This distance from the subject of narration helps take the object out and into the background and while pushing the moral questions in front. Narrative dimension is also deeply political. Much of human effort is that of the war between memory and forgetting. Narrative dimension plays a crucial role in for the marginalised to reclaim history. In this sense, art goes a long way. The official, archival history is never available to the subaltern but poetry, dramatics, novels, biographies, and literature is.

Let us take a stock of what has been suggested of emotions so far. Emotions primarily are experiences that are internally felt and externally caused. The external causes in the case of shame are caused by power. They may or may not need to be publically communicated. In cases where they are to be so communicated, such outward expression of emotions has a language of its own. This language is made intelligible to others by virtue of being part of the same social milieu and human beings experience emotions as part of the basic common minimum. Emotional experiences, it is suggested are caused by three often interlinked and overlapping factors, which also form the contents of any particular emotion. These are physiological, cultural and cognitive. Since emotions are

appraisals and value judgement, they have a potential of being educated. That partly explains the temporality of emotional experience.

## II

### Shame-emotion

Now if we know as much about emotions, what does this help us in understanding about shame as an emotion? Let us take shame through the various characteristics that we have assigned to emotions. Emotions are felt experiences; Shame is also a felt experience. Let us consider a scenario to understand the felt experience of shame. Having grown up in a household of limited means, the only pair of shoes a person had was part of their school uniform. Little did she or her rural parents know that having catapulted into a world of modern urban living, one was supposed to have more than one pair of shoes for more than one occasion? Having been invited to a birthday party of a school classmate, she wore her black school shoes. It was later when her classmates, children her age asked her questions like “*are these your uniform shoes?*” and then they mocked her “*don’t you have an extra pair?*” and finally they dismissed her, “*She must be poor*”. As a child who was being laughed at, she wanted to hide and stay hidden forever. She did not know back then that this was her first learning of shame, that she was in fact experiencing shame. She knows now that it was her first lesson in ‘class’ that there is something called poor and something called rich and perhaps, she was not as rich as others. She experienced shame therefore, and she experienced it internally, urge was in her to be hidden, to not be present in a place where she was being looked at as inferior or object of people’s ridicule. This shame in her was externally generated. It was outside her control really. In fact she had no idea that having worn her black shoes to a birthday party, shoes she had polished black could come up so severely upon her. She was shaken and disturbed. These emotions needed communication. Her shame needed

articulation and of course there was a language, as a child she cried. She threw her pretty black shoes away in anger and demanded her parents get her 'appropriate' party shoes. They as part of the same social milieu in which she was just entering perhaps understood her present predicament and offered her an alternate set of emotions, by way of cognition. They brought to the fore another possibility, that of having no shoes at all. "*You were not barefoot, were you?*" "*If you were barefoot that would be a cause of shame so there is nothing to be ashamed of*". She was introduced to the idea of austerity and having to use only as much as is needed. They tried to displace her shame by suggesting things that she should be proud of. That the real shame is in being late to school, getting less marks, not listening to parents, and also making fun of others. Shame as an emotion, therefore can be better educated. It can be moulded and transformed by changing the underlying thinking. Did the children at school stop mocking her as the poor girl? No, they did not. But she did not want to hide anymore, she wanted to fight and she did. At first the ashamed she wanted to hide, and later the same she wanted to fight. And this transition from hiding to resisting is the political narrative of this work.

### *Shame-concept*

It must be admitted that the above example is rather simplistic narration of shame as experienced by the six year old. But this and several other such incidents could be attributed to the everydayness of human experience. To my mind it seems that since shame operates at the local, by which one means in the immediate sphere (like all other emotions), this is the best way to deal with it. Therefore, it could be firmly suggested that all enquiries into the nature of self must begin from the self, yet it is not enough to just theorise what one experiences. We need therefore a conceptualisation of shame.

Following section attempts to lay out the conceptual bit of shame, one step at a time. First, any conceptualisation of shame happens around and on '*an object*'. This

object (could be internal to one or external of it, bodied or embodied.) is what self is ashamed of. Shame is of and about something. Unlike anger or guilt it is not action oriented, it is object oriented. It needs an object as a medium to propagate and derive its force.

Second, shame requires the audience for its very conceptualisation. There is no shame, if there is no audience. The idea of audience in shame itself is quite complex and needs some delayering. Let me present it like this, we have already suggested that the situation that causes shame is related to an object. The object as such is part of social milieu and some values are attached to it. Now, shame will be made possible only if there is deviation from the expected norm. Now who will point out at the deviation? How do we know that a deviation has in fact taken place? We need an external entity which is outside of our self to be witness to such deviation. Simply put, if you deviate from the expected norm, and if there are people to witness, this causes you to be ashamed. There is a standard that you were supposed to meet, you believe in the standard and having failed to meet it, you have brought upon shame on yourself. But this is not as simple as it seems. What happens in cases where there is no audience and yet a person experiences a deep sense of shame? For example, you have been practising to learn how to play guitar for a while now, yet when you play it even now, playing of the instrument is not as good as you had imagined should it be. You feel a deep sense of shame for not having been able to learn an instrument well despite having given the needed time to it. There is no audience in this case, and yet the feeling of shame is pretty strong. Some would argue that perhaps, this is a case of shame being induced by imagining an audience. Imagine our agent thinking, 'What if I have to play guitar in a family gathering and I am exposed to not know how to play guitar well'. In this case, the agent herself becomes the audience, even if it is only in her imagination. So we can safely assume that there is an audience, either real or imagined. When the audience is imagined, it is the self that becomes the observer. Shame therefore is feeling of exposure; that you are essentially the object of gaze of the other. The most crucial point about the audience is this that it occupies not the participant but the observer position. If the agent himself is acting like the observer, then she most definitely

needs to be detached. In all cases, being seen at all is sufficient condition for being ashamed. It will be on the nature of gaze (critical, lustful, disgusted, and appreciative) that the shame so invoked would depend upon. If a couple are making love and are seen by a third party, this gaze will definitely invoke shame, but this shame will be qualitatively different from naked pictures of a woman made public.

Third aspect of shame is related to the relationship between the audiences, or self as the critical observer. There is a thread of consciousness that connects the two. I have elaborated this aspect of consciousness and primary authority in great detail in the second chapter. For now, it is sufficient to say that if value systems do not form part of the same consciousness, no shame will happen to occur. To put it another way, the observer and the entity must both allocate same values- negative as well as positive to the object in question. It is only then can the experience of shame be possible. Allow me to explain this by taking a contrary case, say for example; there are cultures in which cleanliness is valued as a higher virtue. A person who does not accord similar high priorities to cleaning will not be ashamed by the gaze of a person who is judging their dwelling as untidy. At maximum the agent would brush aside such a criticism as being displaced or coming from a different sensibility. Therefore, in feeling shame, one not only sees oneself from the eye of the other, one also accepts the judgements of the other as being valid and true. There is however, another interesting peculiarity about shame. As a process, in shame there is a negative judgement of self. This judgement is partly caused by the observer's point of view. But in shame, there is also something called the final judgement of self. This judgment as has been suggested already is the judgment of the entirety of self and is independent of the audience. In shame the negative judgement attached to the one or many objects become the shame of all of the person. It no longer remains a small (or big) part of a larger self, rather it is the self. This point will be made clearer by the differences on guilt and shame later in the chapter.

There is another slight difficulty that is of the language, the outward communication and internal experience may vary. Take for example, a student who shows up late for a class activity. It is quite possible for her to say, "I am ashamed

of my behaviour”, but in reality what they are expressing is regret and not shame. Being late for a class activity is most definitely not a virtue; in fact having to make people wait is a terrible thing. One must therefore regret it. But it is quite possible that there were reasons more compelling that held the person, such as perhaps they were taking their ill mother to doctor, or attending to a road accident. In such cases a person will definitely feel regret, but not shame. And despite not feeling shame, may express their emotions of regret by using the words, “I am ashamed.”

Fourth aspect is related to third and yet it needs to be laid out as separately from it. Shame requires a profound sense of self –consciousness. This entails some awareness of the person’s position in the world. Please note that the term ‘agent’ is being used in pursuant of this fact of knowledge of the concept of self worth. This idea of self, and the dialogue between *me* and *myself*, the ability to able to see myself from another eye is inbuilt in the structure of shame as an emotion.<sup>1</sup>

There are three additional characteristics of shame, which aid us in answering the central question of this chapter of what makes shame political. I will briefly present them here and take them up in greater detail in next part of the chapter. First is that shame ultimately becomes an emotion that speaks of totality. To put it differently, shame is a negative assessment of all of self as absolute and not in relation to another. Second shame as being closely associated with self respect, that is to say that a person who seems to encounter no situation as shame inducing can be safely assumed to have no self respect and third, which derives from second is that shame is a moral emotion.

### *Shame, Embarrassment and Guilt*

One must now turn to the other question that was confronted right at the beginning of the chapter and the answer to which we have delayed until now. How is shame different from other political emotions? Emotions can be differentiated from within each other, or be called to have come from same family or a different family as they vary in three distinct ways. One is the intensity. Intensity is sheer force with which



an emotion is experienced. By one explanation, it is the measure of physiological and mental changes it is capable of causing. For example within the same family, we make distinctions between fear and panic, or irritation or rage along the intensity axis. The second way in which emotions are distinguishable is in the degree of similarity with one another. It can be noted from a distant observation itself that shame and guilt are more similar to each other than the emotion of happiness and anger. The third characteristic is that of polarity. Polarity means that for every emotion on one side of the spectrum, there is a distinct and opposite one in place on the other. Sadness is opposite of happiness. Hatred is opposite of love. This polarity it is argued is itself a matter of degree.<sup>li</sup> So we can imagine for our self a range of emotions along an axis that measure them across their degree. Such a classification is necessary for making legible the category of different emotions, so that the charge on emotions being a complicated subject is adequately addressed.

Let me begin with embarrassment as the first emotion that I suppose has very close bearings on shame. In fact from among the intensity, similarity and polarity index, these two can be put more closely to each other in comparison to other emotions. It has been argued so far that emotions have content, and they are structured around some basic parameters. Shame and embarrassment seem to have the same structure; maybe the degree of intensity of emotion may vary. Like shame, embarrassment necessitates a certain level of self consciousness; it is also a feeling of being exposed to an audience, or public. Being embarrassed also means adversarial judgment of self and yet we know that these two feelings of being ashamed and that of being embarrassed are not same. Perhaps it is agreeable that shame is far more nerve numbing and shattering. Embarrassment in comparison feels like a much lesser baggage to deal with. But there also exist structural differences First, shame is linked to an individual's self morality (questions such as what rules and regulations does one layout for oneself, what are normative principles that guide a person) in a way that embarrassment is not. Second, embarrassment manifests itself in a social context, it is always much easier to point at embarrassment as being the emotion in place as opposed to shame which is not limited by a social context, and therefore much more subtle to pin at. This is precisely the reason why

embarrassment can be claimed to be a social emotion as opposed to shame which is categorised as a moral emotion. Third and a fairly crucial distinction between the two is related to the responses both emotions generate. When facing shame, the agent experiences a feeling of having been revealed (paraded) to the world. That something about me( myself) is now laid out in broad eye. In embarrassment however, the experience is entirely different. The agent regards it as demand for some response<sup>liii</sup>, a demand that one feels as being incapable of responding to. Note that, not all response demanding situations will cause embarrassment. There can be many emotional responses in such cases, and embarrassment can be one of them, provided however that the agent imagines or knows that there is a gaze, an eye of another watching them. Please note, that in being embarrassed, there is no assessment of the self. It is assessment of a response on a particular demand so made. Related to the third distinction is the fourth which is that embarrassment effects are caused with a person taking a particular position and then being concerned about their position vis-a-vis others. Shame is quite absolute and is lesser localised emotion in comparison to embarrassment. By a localised emotion one means, the immediacy of the emotion (both spatially and temporally).

A caveat must be added here, it is perfectly possible that both these emotions given their apparent similarities may cause to exist and be experienced in one particular situation. For there may not be much difference between embarrassments as caused fundamentally by how one appears to the world, and shame as related to how one is. And yet, as discussed above, they are not the same emotions.

Less similar than embarrassment but more likely to be confused with shame is the emotion of Guilt .Hence it will be wise to contra pose shame and guilt as emotions. Guilt, unlike shame is a legal concept.<sup>liiii</sup> The law so broken may have varying authorities. It could be the authority of the divine, that is the laws made by god (religious) or that made by humans.(laws of governance and that of states, or the laws that a person gives to herself as pursuant of their own life.). No matter the authority, the breaking of law is the precondition for guilt. Law in this sense is defined quite extensively, a social contract, an agreement, a handshake, or a

promise. They can all be considered to evoke guilt if the agreeing party withdraws or violates the said rules by not performing the said duties or not fulfilling the obligations. Guilt therefore is preceded by set conditions that more than two parties agreed to in advance. By this very logic, guilt differs from shame simply because guilt presupposes action or non-action (in situations where a law is violated by non action) which ever may be the appropriate case. There can be no guilt without actions. There can however be shame without actually having acted.

One could argue and rightly so, that there could be a case where a particular action or non-action merits guilt, that is that an X person is guilty, but they may not feel that guilt. Let me put it differently with the help of an example. A man who kills his sister for she eloped with her lover from a different religion is guilty of murder, but experiences no such guilt. The man in question does not accept the authority of law which holds the right to choice in matters of love as legal. Instead this man otherwise guilty of murder feels exactly the opposite emotion of pride. He is proud of his actions that come from his thinking of himself as the saviour of the honour of his house. The consciousness of the man of our example is following a different authority than from the legal authority of our constitution. There is another way in which one could look at the guilt feeling, and that is to test it against the feeling of having caused someone or something harm. Rawls suggests that thinking of causing someone harm is in fact a question of right,<sup>liv</sup> and in doing so he is proposing that while harm is necessarily done for feeling guilt, no such thing is required in case of experiencing shame.

So far we have argued that, guilt feeling is different from shame, in first, that the sufficient condition for guilt to occur is an action/non action. Shame on the other hand can exist without any action. Second that, having caused some harm through an action makes the possibility for feeling guilt. A person alternatively can experience shame without harming another. Put it differently feelings of guilt concern themselves with what one has done to others, while feelings of shame have to do with one feels about one's own standing in the world.

If guilt is a legal concept, and it occurs when there is a violation of law. Then it is logical to presume the possibility of punishment attached to it. The idea of punishment is based on three assumptions. One is the need of meeting justice, second is that of reformation of the guilty and third of reparation of the wrong done. It is safe to assume therefore that the feeling of guilt comes along with a possibility of correction. What causes guilt hence is a wrong done that can be made right. Punishment so advanced is for what one has done and not for what one is. Shame on the other hand comes to be defined more for what one is. Guilt sounds more like an aberration in normal course of action that can be remedied. Shame becomes the shame of self, of all of it. The question of repayment and punishment are central to guilt in a way they are not to shame and therefore it can be argued that guilt has a lot to do with responsibility in a way that shame does not. The other interrelated aspect of which makes shame and guilt different is this. That the action so enacted in case of guilt is by the self and only the self. One cannot possibly be guilty of the deeds committed by their children even when as a parent one may feel responsible. But they can certainly be ashamed of it. Mere relationship with an object of deviance is enough for feeling shame, but guilt needs the self to be responsible in having caused harm by an action so committed.

The concept of guilt has found adequate place both in the jurido-political landscape. The holocaust is evoked with a certain sense of guilt that is beset upon Nazi Germany. Guilt finds adequate space in the judicial systems of democracies. Both embarrassment and shame however are not political in the way guilt is. Embarrassment is not, because it is a much milder emotional experience. And shame because it is much deeper, therefore different to contemplate. Also because shame is more negative than it is a positive emotional concept. So am I making a claim for shame in politics here?

### III

#### *Shame as political*

Before being as bold as making a case for shame in politics, allow me to consider the dangers of bringing concepts like shame into the framework of politics. One, shame by virtue of being an emotion is externally caused, by agents outside the control of self. Bringing shame in lays bare the vulnerability of self. It acknowledges the externality attached with human condition; the apparent neediness of the self. Imagine a liberal rational individual. This individual is free, equal, and the suitor of her best interest. This is an almost infallible sort of entity that has chosen for herself, her government, her law, her life and almost her destiny. This imagination of the individual as the supreme, special entity faces a severe blow in face of emotional vulnerability. It is another matter that not all individuals are as equal, as free or the makers of their own destiny as liberals would have us believe. Having said this, if we dispense away with emotions entirely in our hope to also lose our vulnerability, would this not amount to losing agency as seen in the liberal sense? The second problem with shame as any other emotion is more generic. Since shame is more personal, related to the self, it develops more in connections with extremely close and intimate attachments. Should it not be desirable therefore to work in categories which are more detached, less personal forms of reasoning?

These problems are well placed and often the points of great debate in this tradition. However I wish to submit the following, that there is no contradiction between emotions and reasoning. Emotions are just highly complex and messy parts of human reasoning itself. It makes no sense to preserve the idea of agency without actually adequately addressing all parts of human existence. It is fairly argued that “without emotional development, a part of our reasoning capacity as political creatures will be missing.”<sup>lv</sup> Besides there are parts of human life that reason alone

cannot, or has failed to explain. Take for example loyalties to political parties, or leaders. Despite having their economic interests hurt during demonetisation held in the November 2016, majority of the population in the country hailed the decision of the government as appreciable. I am making a case for shame in political theory also simply because I find shame sketched all across our political landscape. Shoes are thrown at political leaders in parliaments, men are paraded on donkeys, flogging and stripping people naked is the reality of our roads. Women are called sluts for wearing clothes of their choice and Women have stripped naked against an act of army, and farmers have gone naked for their compensation.

Elsewhere in this chapter, it was affirmed that the journey from having to hide and wanting to resist is the political narrative of this thesis and I want to return to that now. I must now turn the attention of the reader therefore in answering the most prudent question - why is shame political? How are emotions, and in this case the emotion of shame relevant to politics? Why do we need them at all for political considerations?

Shame is political in three distinct ways. One, shame is political in its very conceptualisation. Let us reiterate here what we have discussed of shame as a concept. Shame is structured around (or about) an object (which becomes the object of shame). This object of shame lies either inside or outside of the agent experiencing shame, and such shaming requires an audience (or self as observer). Shame cannot be experienced, or one cannot be made to feel shame if one does not have an adequate feeling of self worth. In shame an agent may feel that they have done something morally wrong (failed to live up to a certain expectation) or they may experience as feeling of losing self respect. Either way, both the situations (sometimes occurring together) make shame an essentially moral phenomenon. The complex dynamics of internal authority of the consciousness and the external authority of the public (social) is centred on the values and judgements. What is socially acceptable and what is socially condemnable. It speaks of the norms that a people collective give themselves and consequently use those norms to measure their achievements and shortcomings. Shame is political because shame is moral.

Developing an adequate normative view of the world, in which to answer what is a good life, and how best to live has been the task of political theory. Shame is political, because shame is normative. The political in shame therefore, is the relationship between experience of shame and various conceptions of human good.

Two, shame produces consequences that are political. Shame is a reducing agent. It reduces (self worth) the agent in their own eye, and hence in the eyes of the world. When shame is attached not only to one person but groups of people, the magnitude of reduction increases much more. This has implications one for human dignity and two for democratic practices as a whole. Engage with this for instance, in Kant the conception of dignity as that which cannot be assigned a price, and must be valued as an end in itself: “a human being regarded as a person, that is, as the subject of morally practical reason, is exalted above all price and as an end in himself he possesses a dignity by which he exacts respect for himself from all other beings in the world”<sup>lvi</sup>. Experiencing shame is antithetical to the idea of dignity. Shame convinces a person that they are not worthy as others are. This thwarts an equal and fuller participation of ‘*the ashamed*’ in the political community. By being ashamed of myself, I cease to see myself as worthy of respect. This has sabotaging influences on democratic systems and processes, where a group of people can be made to be ashamed about anything from their bodies and birth to their culture and habits. This leads to a situation where people convinced of their own unworthiness are made to yield the political terrain to those who see them in this light. This exclusion is peculiar, because the exclusion is political. It is political in the sense that it tilts power in favour of some as against others. In exclusion one is not excluded from the political as such, but is excluded from dignity. They are made to stay in the community as examples to be set out for everyone else to see. Shaming as an act becomes a ritual that concretises the condemned status of some.

The third is that shame operates as a modality of power. Shame just like Foucauldian power cannot be categorised as a bad or a good thing. This would be gross oversimplification of the concept. Shame does not immediately have only negative implication. For instance, habits of hygiene and sanitary formations in

early infants are inculcated using techniques of reward and punishment. When a toddler appears naked in front of others, they are disciplined and their behaviour is corrected by shaming them. This shaming may not lead to any inhibitions in public participation. In fact an important lesson in public clothing can enhance the capacity of an infant to participate better in activities with their peers. It can be argued therefore that shame has much greater role in exercise of power both on self and on the other. This can be understood as follows, in any conception of human good, it can be said with fair degree of certainty that human beings would want to avoid shame. Every such conception of human society therefore would be aimed at minimizing as much as may be the possibilities of encountering shame. Shame avoidance becomes therefore an act of self disciplining and navigating one's life choices in sync with dominant (often socially desirable) discourses.

It is violence of a certain depth that at the same time has the implicit cooperation of the aggrieved. People are able to participate in their own marginalisation because shame avoidance does not feel entirely negative. In avoiding shame, one lets the power of the forces grip it much further. Take for example, the industry selling smell. Body odour or smell related to body fluids including sweat, menstrual blood or semen is as natural as the bodily functions. But some smell can actually be quite discomfoting. Fragrances therefore are used to make sociability of extreme body odours possible. When a person with a repugnant smell enters a library full of people, they invite attention. Their bodily smell becomes the object of shame. They now become the person who smells bad. Having accepted that their smelling bad is a negative judgement of their self, they feel ashamed. And try to use a deodorant to avoid inviting shame. This rather harmless example, takes absolutely disgustful turn if a group of people decide to reduce this person in the world. What if despite using good smell (deodorants and perfume market flourishes on the side), the perception that they smell bad refuse to die down. What if the group in total decide to sit them out on account of being smelly? What if because they smell bad, therefore they must be dirty becomes the argument. What if a bad odour, leading to dirt body now lets people suggest that this in fact is a person with foul mind. Now



compound this problem to its maximum integers when entire communities and people are shamed.

The important point that I want to make here is this, by itself shame is not something that can be called desirable or undesirable, a virtue or a vice. Shame as it will play out will depend upon the underlying moral ethical principles upon which the people, the politics and communities would base themselves. The very fact is that no matter who what or how, every living being by virtue of their being in this world are capable of experiencing shame. What causes shame in one can cause shame in another. In that sense it becomes a language that both or more parties not only understand but also use to communicate with the other. It is however the underlying normative principles that determine the consequences of such shame.

Let me conclude what I have said about how is shame political. Shame is political in three ways, in its very conceptualisation. The concept of shame is inherently linked to questions of self respect and self worth, which in turn are moral concerns. This makes shame a key subject for normative political science. Second, shame is political for it produces consequences for nature of power. It reduces some, and leads to elevation of others. I discuss this aspect in greater detail in the next chapter where I raise the question 'Who can be shamed'. It suffices to say here that reduction of self is the inevitable consequence of shame. And third is that shame in its operation and everydayness becomes a modality of power.

## Chapter II

### *Who can be shamed?*

The definitive feature of human history has been the persistent movement towards ‘civilization’; although opinions have differed as to what amounts to ‘civilization’. Whatever its varied perceptions, it cannot be denied that an essential feature of civilization has been the creation of ‘societies’. Societies indulged in a multitude of cultural, religious, social, political and economic activities. These activities amount collectively to a twofold struggle to survive and survive meaningfully<sup>lvii</sup>. While indulging in these activities, societies have attached meanings and values to themselves as well as individual units within them. One is tempted to ask as to how these values come to be allocated and who has the power of such allocation. Who and what gives meanings to the mundane (to include the ritualistic basics of life) and the extraordinary of life? To survive would basically imply preservation of self (from nature and from barbaric nature of men (human)), and to survive meaningfully would involve culture, aesthetics, rational dimensions (discontinuity from nature like self, especially because human beings are reflective beings). Since human beings are reflective beings, any such allocation of worth needs recognition outside

of them, therefore there is a need of society. By their very nature, humans are dependent for their survival on others in their species; more so because humans do not subtract their moral worth from animals. Recognition as a wider cultural need becomes possible only in a human society.<sup>lviii</sup> Since there is effective allocation of recognition in human society, it makes possible for conditions to emerge in which human beings tend to desire being superior or different from other human (Hence every industry selling the 'carve your own path'). This precipitates human in the direction of elevation<sup>lix</sup>. But what would you elevate over and how? Biological facts such as racial characteristics and sex differentiation are drawn upon selectively for purposes of elevation. On the one hand women, due to their biological role as reproducers (and certain categories of men, due to their association with manual labour) are seen as being within the realm of the 'nature'. On the other hand, more complex processes of social production, based on the division of mental and physical labour come to be associated with 'culture'. This is the nature- culture divide<sup>lx</sup> which provides the rationale behind social stratification and hierarchy. If one goes up, one essentially tumbles the other. It the social cost which one part of society pays for the recognition of other. Women, tribal, blacks, sexual queer and 'untouchables' are consigned to be 'nature' on the basis of their reproductive role, connection with primitive agriculture, natural production and primitive kin system with their emphasis on 'blood-relationship'. They are considered backward because of their inability to move from nature to culture. Consequently, some came to be valued more than others. Some lives therefore matter more while others not so much. The trope of backwardness, used in the sense of 'natural' inferiority runs through the state's perception of these sections of society and governs the policies enacted on their behalf.<sup>lxi</sup>

At the heart of Liberal democracies lies the idea of a right bearing rational individual. This individual is equal to every other individual who forms part of a democracy (at least in theory, if not in practise). As a right bearing citizen, each person is an embodiment of basic human dignity and fullness of life. However the content of these democracies and the processes of it as such, have thrown up questions of inequality, marginalisation and injustice. There are people and groups

who are actively shamed, stigmatised and targeted. This active shaming reduces both physically and ideologically the spaces for equal participation of some members of this otherwise equal political society. One of the most stigmatised life conditions in almost all societies is poverty. Therefore shame associated with class status becomes one. Shame associated with body, manifests itself in the form of stigma attached to certain colours (racial shaming), shame associated with body fluids (menstrual blood) or the stigma based on smell (hence flourishing market selling smell). Shame is also attached to ideas of masculinity, femininity, disability, and sexuality. In India, untouchability and caste hierarchies render some bodies as objects of disgust and inward shame. Experiencing shame therefore obstructs the equal and meaningful participation of certain set of individuals and they are reduced to sub-human existence.

The question about who can be shamed, condemned to the life of hiding will be answered in this chapter. Before looking however at the sites of *shame induced politics*, we need to look at two places. One is at the consciousness, where the dialogue between me and my-self takes place. Let us call it the place of thinking by *self*. Second is the body, where the *self* lives, resides, where it touches, sees, smells.

## I

### *Shame of self*

“Shame....is shame of self; it is the recognition of the fact that I am indeed that object that the other is looking at and judging”.<sup>lxii</sup> Shame is a potent emotion. The word potent is used to mean that it has all the capacity to rupture any social engagement, from the time it threatens or actually makes open in the public eye such ruptures. In most literatures on the subject, there is a characterisation of shame as this permeable boundary, a psycho-social layer that is always unstable, between ‘self’ (individual) and the ‘other’ (collective). One can use the word the ‘person’

and the 'mirror. While shame may help regulate the content and manner of interactions between the person and the collective, it also threatens to lay in public what is most deeply sensitive; it may therefore force us to turn inwards, resentful, and in this sense it becomes entirely political. For shame, culture is a-priori. Unlike fear shame cannot be imagined a priori.<sup>lxiii</sup> In fact shame and culture are coeval. Shame regulates, forces us to behave/confirm with one cultural surrounding. It is already integrated into cognition. Therefore it becomes the politics of cognition. Integration of shame and consciousness is a continuous process. Step I is the division of affect into good and bad (expression of shame however is identical in both process). One plausible explanation of this could be that for a very long time trespassing fellow mates or falling behind were both considered shameful (Greek notion of hubris). The shame affect, being the only in born moral feeling in human beings plays an enormous role in socialisation. This explains the subtle nature of power induced by shame emotion.

Since the emergence of practical reason as an independent authority of human conduct and consciousness, the power of shame has become ambiguous (more and more so). Heller argues that shame being an inborn affect will never die down or be overcome. Shame affect is not the only affect; there are others too such as disgust, eroticism, fear, sadness, bodily pain, rage. These are not only socialised but also become the means of socialisation. They also become the instruments and weapons of culture used against each other. Heller argues that all these affects, whether they are used against each other or not, are all used related to affect of shame. They (affects) are only effectual when they are accompanied with shame. Shame and conscience are both feelings. Being involved in something is a feeling.<sup>lxiv</sup> Involvement is not a lone by-standing act. This actually means that both of them can be looked at as being involved in the judgements made by authorities of human conduct. A judgement made by moral authorities qualifies the extent and nature of such an involvement. Any authority of human conduct is a normative authority precisely because it is dealing with moral feelings. Shame and conscience are different in so far as the nature of authorities is concerned. In shame the authority is 'Social Custom' that is the eye of others to include social rituals, habits,

codes. For conscience authority is 'practical reason'. This manifests itself as external voice. The intensity of guilt in either case is not dependent on authority but may vary in different cases. If we are indeed working on two levels of authorities namely external and internal, Heller raises the question that does occurrence of shame signifies the internalisation of external authority. If there is not internalisation of external authority then there is no need of feeling what we call the guilt of the self. This would mean saying two different authorities work at same level. Then shame would only be reactive. That the community does not accept/ recognise the validity norms set by external authority. This however is not the case. Therefore shame as a feeling signifies internalisation of external authority. The character of infringement of norm determines the intensity of shame. Additionally the intensity not only depends upon norms but individuals relations to these norms. In case of pluralistic norms, this happens pluralistically. They can be interpreted in ways where people could react differently. One could argue however that it is not lack of internalisation but the nature of sanction upon which the intensity of shame would depend.

Another formulation suggests that shame calls for external sanction whereas guilt an internal one. The problem with such formulation is that in some shameful situations there is no punitive action. Going through shame is sufficient or equivalent to or enough as punishment. In such a case where the torment of self is enough punishment, the argument of shame being connected with external sanction does not stand ground. Heller suggests therefore that in case of shame it is not the sanction but authority which is external. This leads her to argue for primogeniture of shame over conscience.

It is the very feeling which regulates a person's actions and general behaviour in conformity with norms and rituals of his/ her community. Coming to terms with norms/values external to us is similar to becoming human. In heterogeneous norms of conduct, confirming would also mean selecting. In societies with homogenous norms which Heller believes is 99% of the societies, shame effect is the primary source of socialization. Shame effect expresses deviation or deflection. Feeling

shame effect in itself is a confirmation or recognition of the validity of the system in place. In case of deviation from norm, feeling shame alone is not enough or sufficient to make it alright. Shame expresses a debt, either to the community or to God. Durkheim calls it a debt which is to be repaid.

External authority works on itself in the following conditions. One, when the norms are homogenous. Two, when the community is small. Three when social change is not noticeable for co existing generations. Internal regulation supplements but not replaces external authority. Internal authority is not naturally inborn present. It develops when a social system cannot maintain its ethical integration without it. This is called structural homology; structure of internal authority is always homologous with structure of external authority that is because they are authorities of same social structure. Now there may be chances that internal authority may become independent of external one so much so that it destroys the ethical integration in the social system. Whether or not that happens is the hallmark of the external norms. Deliberation as a process of some practical reasoning is associated with norms. Norms are used to conduct practices/actions in any foreseen situation (particular) ones such certainty requires 'Phronosis'- practical reason. Good action will always be more and more dependent on good reasoning.

## **II**

### *Shame of... self that resides in the body*

Shame is that of the self, what feels ashamed is the self, body houses the self. The self resides in a physical entity called the body which often becomes the object of shame. It is not however, the only object of shame. A person can be shamed for their mind alone. For example, there can be a stigma attached to thinking of a particular mind. "*He has a filthy mind*", is associated with shame of non-bodily.

This shame is a judgment of self based on sanction of external authority (upon which the ethical norms of the politics depend). The internal authority concurs with the external and accepts its shame.

Since body houses the self, it becomes so to say a central coordinate in shame induced power production. Body becomes the site of power, since it is in most of the cases (discussed as we proceed) the object of shame. There is a certain history to the treatment of questions of bodies and consciousness and how liberal philosophy looks the way it does today. Body becomes the more concrete object upon which the marginalisation is played upon so much so that even in its absence the idea of it, the imagination of it, the smell and sense of it becomes central to forms of exclusion.

Body is socially constructed. As such it has no intrinsic meaning. The social body, which bears witness to meanings and changes in meaning, varies widely from culture and time. Human bodies are an interesting point of what one could call particularities and commonalities.<sup>lxv</sup> By particularities one would mean that there are no two bodies which are similar, they are distinct in the way they look, feel, eat, walk and pray. There is no such thing therefore as bodies in general yet there is a basic common that distinguishes them from other animal bodies or inanimate objects. There are some commonalities that each individual has even when it lives differently. This becomes the point, the permeable boundary where the stigmatized are included yet marginalised on accounts of their bodies. They are physically set apart and their bodies called upon to bear witness. Their being apart, therefore an ontological condition becomes the very ground of their existence.<sup>lxvi</sup>

The Greeks glorified the body. The naked human form enjoyed great artistic work in the form paintings, stones and clay structures. Culture was body centred but there seemed to be no philosophical consensus on the body. There seemed two opposing schools. One of Hedonism, the Cyrenaic school that came to suggest that bodily pleasures are far more better than the mental pleasures and Epicureans, for whom pleasure became the first kindred good, where the body is good but mind is better sort of formulation emerged. Second, that of Orphism by which body was regarded



as the tomb of the soul. This Orphism influenced Socrates, Plato, hence Neo-Platonism and Christianity. Plato saw soul as helpless, chained through the body compelled to view reality through prison bars. The pursuit of philosophy in a sense was purification of body. The body negative dualism in Plato was rejected by Aristotle who as a naturalist got enormously interested in the body. For Aristotle soul is the principle of life, a particular form of a living body. This actually meant that for him, one could not be without the other. Soul and body constituted one, where soul was superior but a complete whole with body.

Perception of Roman bodies further underwent changes. Seneca changed the platonic formulation to suggest that body is not a prison. But a cloak; external to you, additional to you yet it is not you, yet you can do without it. Epictetus took the dualism to levels of sophistication, where body was associated with animal like existence and soul to divine like existence. Body makes us behave like animals; forces us to behave like animal. It is the mind where reason resides and it is the mind that must subordinate the body. It is in renaissance that the body is rediscovered as the beautiful. Secularisation of body in Renaissance makes theology unavailable. There emerges a scientific way of looking at the body. This finds resonance with Descartes and Hobbes. There is a machine like explanation of the body, denying the body certain mystery by knowledge of organs and their working. Modern philosophical thinking is aimed at being transcendental, disembodied and cosmopolitan, an essentially Kantian way of looking at philosophy. It is in Descartes that we find the philosophical basis of such philosophy. He lays down the modern subject in terms of certain schizophrenia where there is a split between the cerebral you and the physical you.

Shame however works on both the cerebral you and the physical you. The question for this chapter remains who and what are this *you*? Who are shamed, how it happens and how shame translates into discrimination, exclusion, reduction and marginalisation which is to understand the power that the torment of shame holds on a group and how it shapes histories, and hierarchies and yet *Who shames* is as important as *Who is being shamed*. for the politics of deviance, of not being

enough, of being less than what is expected, of being abnormal, women, primitive, black, ugly, polluted corresponds with that of someone being normal, men, modern, white, beautiful and sacred. Politics of shame is about the power that the one who shames has over the one who is being shamed. The possibility of role reversals is discussed in detail in the next chapter which discusses how subversion of shame even if temporarily but does allow for switching of places. But for now let us look at process of shame.

We have what can be called the symbols and signs which are used to expose the unusual moral status of the signifier. By unusual moral status one could also mean anything that represents disgrace. Society establishes means of categorising individual social identity which consists of both personal attributes such as (honesty) and structural ones (occupation). This categorisation is part of process of establishing hierarchy. These identifications (markers of categories) turn into normative expectations and further into righteously presented demands. These demands so made can be termed as virtual social identity. These are expectations made in effect so subtly that we do not realise unless they are not fulfilled. In contrast actual social identity would be categories and attributes which we actually seem to possess. The process of discrediting of a person, when they are tainted, discounted with respect to the category they should be a part of is the process of shame induced power. This power works on the assumption of a serious discrepancy between the virtual and actual social identity. It uses the language of a relationship; it is a dialogue of one with respect to the other that is between an attribute and the stereotype.

These shame induced reductions are generally based on the following. One is the abominations of the body. Two are the blemishes of individual character and three, the group shame of caste, race, religion, tribe etc. Shamed individual (group) assumes their differentness in two ways. One is as the discredited and two as discreditable, which mostly is based on the possession of an undesired differentness. Normal or the desirable those who have the expected attributes by definition, assume that one with shame is not quite human. Based on this

assumption follows a discrimination which involves constructing a shame theory. This involves building an ideology to explain inferiority of a particular group to rationalise animosity. This basically propels assigning unreasonable attributes; example of a widowed woman being a witch woman (which in reality is an attempt to discredit a widow's claim to her deceased husband's property). This assigning of unreasonable attributes and consequent discrimination becomes possible because of shame. Shame becomes a central possibility arriving from the individual perception of one of her attributes as being defiling thing to possess and one he can readily see himself not possessing. The central feature of an ashamed individual situation in life is 'acceptance' and it is here that the power of shame is most fertile. This can be further understood by examples of those who seem to bear the shame yet not be repentant or exhilarated by it. Goffman calls them the gypsies, shameless scoundrel. This will be made clear with the discussion on 'nakedness as natural' in next chapter. For now let us turn to shame inducing situations.

### **III**

#### *Abominations of the body*

Let us begin with the abominations of the body<sup>lxvii</sup>. The ideas of purity and pollution could be very important entry points to this. In any language, there are some physical constructs that are made translatable from material (physical) world to social world. These are concepts that seem to exist in two parallel realities. It will not be difficult to argue that the use of certain concepts is made deliberate to reduce a group or people to the absolute physical. As argued elsewhere in the chapter that the nature like (animal like, instinctual) is considered inferior and undesirable. This translation of physical into social is done to reduce (render worthy of being untouched, to ask for a physical distance from) and therefore consequently to condemn to servitude. Take for example, the most common word *dirt*. Dirt is the

actual physical unclean material. But dirt is also referred to that of the mind and at other times of as some part of society. How often do we listen to slums in urban metropolis as being referred to the dirt of the city? Dirt in almost all these senses is essentially disorder.<sup>lxviii</sup> But there is no such thing as absolute dirt, but what it definitely is that it offends the idea of order. In chasing the dirt away, avoiding, cleaning, barricading it, one is governed by avoiding shame, thereby confirming to the ideas of accepted attributes. Pollution and purity in this sense are the most physical manifestations of shame. The locus of shame is the body, and the power works through barricading of the physical self. The rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience for everyone and this is done through working of symbolic patterns which are carried with the intention of public display. The ideal order of society is therefore guarded. This guarding takes place through shaming. The instrument of barricading is shaming. They can be called shame-beliefs, which are used by one person to coerce the other and which he himself is cautious to keep distance from because he wants to avoid shame. Physical marking and barricading of spaces like red light areas, Muslim ghettos, and '*Dalit bastis*' from the city is shame avoidance. On the reverse side of the spectrum, the exclusive gymkhana clubs and golf societies are physical barricading for shame induction. While the prior is pushing of a group of people into one corner denying them exit thereby shaming them; the latter is building a zone in the centre of the city and denying them entry and hence shaming them. In both cases the shame is of one people to bear. And it works on two mutually reinforcing logics. One is that the shame is of the polluted (dirty) to bear. Second that the bearer of shame threatens to contaminate others who will have to bear the same shame just by virtue of being connected to the ashamed. Shame in this sense becomes the symbol through which people are forced into good citizenship. There is something pre given upon which the new sticks. There is a common language of shame which each understand. This is made possible by prior ordering of ideas, in the patterning of the culture, a performed compatibility between the abominations and the general principles upon which their universe was created. Shaming is attempted at creating and maintaining a particular culture, a particular set of assumptions why which experiences are

controlled. Shame is actually a ritual, one that creates experience and alters it. It standardises situations, and thus helps to evaluate them. Shame makes a link between the present and the future. Shame provides a frame. This frame limits experience, shapes it, moulds and enlarges it, thereby controls it. Abominations of the body are those categories that do not fit into the shame frame. They are indefinable, in transition, category defiling, not complete, not whole, not proper, and not normal. Douglas uses the category of 'social inarticulateness' which seems to be appropriate here. Anything that cannot entirely be articulated with the help of categories is uncontrollable and worthy of being ashamed. Therefore by shaming, the entity is fixed into either or category.

Sexual queer are the examples in point. Birth of non heterosexual child is a matter of shame, just like the birth of female. (By one thinking even female bodies are the lesser deformed version of the male bodies)<sup>lxi</sup>. It is seen as a failing; failure of the mother to stand up to the task of birthing a heterosexual male. The queers spend most of their time in hiding their identities from the world. In Revathi's story from her autobiography she relates her ordeal, having once fallen in love with a man she could not bear to even tell him that she is not a woman biologically. In other instances where she lives away from her Guru's<sup>lxx</sup> patronage, she narrates how she is desperate not to disclose any information of her being a Hijra. The gripping fear of being exposed is shame. The fear of being rejected, and the real experience of actually being rejected is shame. A queer body is shamed vis- a- vis a heterosexual body. Within the heterosexuals, there is a hierarchy between male and female, so a female body is shamed vis-a-vis a male body. This phenomenon is not sui generis. This emerges from what is called the idea of 'Moral Panic'<sup>lxxi</sup> where the deviant groups become picked for aggressive treatment at the hands of police and other authorities because they are believed to pose grave and

immediate danger to the society- but this danger is in large measure constructed as are the danger- bearing characteristics of the targeted group .This acceptance and the consequent rejection (acceptance of one is superimposed on the rejection of other) of one over the other produces power.

Menstruating bodies are considered unclean, dirty and therefore required to be physically separated from the clean and sacred (places of cooking, worship and common sitting.) In one formulation menstrual blood has the status of dead, the life that never lived. “The blood if it had not flowed, it would have become a person, so it has the impossible status of being a dead person who never lived.”<sup>lxxii</sup> The idea of wholesomeness becomes relevant here. Menstruating women are not whole; they are dealing with a blood that is a manifestation of something incomplete, a dead person who never lived. The ideas of pollution and purity are used to physically exclude menstruating women. Exclusion can be of any kinds. There is a possibility of a person being physically present yet being excluded, but exclusion based on ideas of pollution and purity mostly cause physical separate-ness. Being deemed unworthy of physical presence in a surrounding is caused to affect shame and thus cause hiding. The other interesting thing is the fact that something which affects half the population is simply absent in the public consciousness. Menstruation is certainly one feature inescapably attached to the female body. But the way it acts as a disability have to do with social and cultural, not natural constraints. Sample this for instance, “*What would happen, if suddenly, magically, men could menstruate and women could not? The answer is clear-menstruation would become an enviable, boast-worthy, masculine event: Men would brag about how long and how much. Boys would mark the onset of menses, that longed-for proof of manhood, with religious ritual and stag parties...sanitary supplies would be federally funded...Military men, right- wing politicians, and religious fundamentalists would cite menstruation as proof that only men could serve in the army (you have to give blood to take blood), occupy political office(‘can women be aggressive without the steadfast cycle governed by the planet Mars?), be priest and ministers(‘ how could a woman know what it is to give her blood for our sins) or rabbis(without the monthly loss of impunities, women remain unclean).*”<sup>lxxiii</sup>

Female body’s tendency to bleed is used to restrict their movement outside homes. This happens also because of lack of clean and plentiful public toilets and inexpensive and easily accessible sanitary napkins (clearly a state’s responsibility). Secondly, menstruation as a process is effectively used to character assassinate

women as temperamental and dramatic. These are some principles upon which the logic of treating women unequally at workplace and in wage system rests. The secretive and hush-hush attitude towards menstruation is primarily to control female bodies. But this is not carried out by male members of the family and society directly. The task of perpetuating shame is left to the 'ladies', mostly mothers. The mother is required to teach her daughter the task of concealment without conveying a sense of shame, surely the impossibility. This is just the classic way where shaming happens by the imagination of the other. Women as a group uphold self-shame. This could be partly explained by this. The women who failed to train her daughter to survive in patriarchy, for instance who neglected to teach her the etiquette of menstruation would only expose her to ridicule or worse of the man. Therefore they become party to their own shame by trying to avoid further shame. Shame perpetuates shame.

On the matter of female bodies the other shame inducing phenomenon is that of rape. In India it was through the issue of rape that the feminist debate entered the public domain. Interestingly when the issue of rape surfaces as a political issue, it is only in the public context of the question of a nation, community, or group 'honour', the violated women being merely a factor in an antagonistic encounter between groups of men. Rape becomes a special category of crime. Engage with this for example, murder, bribery, theft are crimes of heinous nature. All of them involve serious injury to parts of body and even loss of life. But it is only rape that invokes shame on the victim. Rape then becomes the crime capable of effecting loss of honour not just of the victim but also entirety of community. This peculiarity could partly be explained because rape is traditionally seen as a defilement of family honour, and a common reaction is to hide or ignore it. It is regarded as somehow 'asked for' by the rape victim and thus becomes her shame to bear. Offence taking in this sense becomes an industry. It does not require investment; it does not require even reason. But it gives a tremendous pay-off. Groups (based on identities) lay claim to a woman's body on the basis of their ability to take offence. The honour then is restored by putting in place the men of other communities by defiling their women's body. The object of shame remains

the women, always and anyways. This shaming the other also works in intra-family/community relations where women are considered as the embodiment of shame. Practices such as walking slowly, speaking softly, sitting gently are all examples in point. The idea of 'lajja'<sup>lxxiv</sup> as a woman's ornament becomes the characteristic feature of a 'female self'. Much of parenting is therefore disciplining female minds and bodies to be the epitome of shame. The issue of rape is used by parties and movements as a key element in their anti-state discourse. Take for example the recent Maratha assertion that drew itself around the rape of the Maratha women by Dalit men. The Maratha group rallying across Pune demanded reservation as fair share in development. But the problem here is, just like elsewhere that rape was conceived not as a gender issue, but as that of element of Maratha pride and honour the fair compensation of which is reservation in prestigious jobs and institutions rather gender just societies.

If the some movements use rape as key element in raising demands from the state, the state machinery also uses rape as an instrument of coercion. There are excesses of the worst possible kind where armed and unarmed forces of the state have raped women from groups and communities to 'put them in place'. The allegations from states of Jammu and Kashmir, north east and several rural districts of tribal areas have of rape and assault are lying pending with the law courts or their files dusting in the government appointed commissions. Military, Paramilitary forces, Police within the state world over and not just in India are alleged to have caused conflict related rape. Rape has so much power because being raped is a matter of shame. Mere physical extermination of the enemy is not enough. It is the battle of memory, of the power of narration. '*We raped their women*' is a memory that is reused and resignified as and when the need arises. These memories become collective manifestations of shaming and reducing people. In the Kunan poshpora districts of Jammu and Kashmir where the Indian armed personnel allegedly raped a number of women in early 1990s, the children from the entire village are stigmatised. They are called names in schools; they are referred to as dirty children.<sup>lxxv</sup> The construction of female body as chaste, covered and complete is disturbed by rape. Rape renders the body 'non-chaste', 'defiled' and 'polluted'. And powerful use this shame, the



shame of losing honour and chastity to reduce women and their families. And yet there are categories that transcend and often connect the abhorrence's of the body with the shame associated with group identities of caste, race, religion and tribe.

#### **IV**

##### *Accidents of birth; burdens of identity*

This section concentrates on the shame of the ascriptive identities, those that are attached to the accidents of birth. The identities of caste, race and religion unfortunately are shadows that follow the individual everywhere. A person can be one rooted in their culture or be someone who has distanced themselves from their pre-given statuses yet the scale of perception is such that these can seldom be escaped. More than perception, there are structural difficulties; ordering of values is done around identities. And this unequal distribution of resources and values lead to internalising shame. This looks like an acceptance by a tribal man that he indeed is the primitive animal like creature that needs a lesson in civilisation. Shame helps by becoming the facilitating ground for this lesson to be both learnt by the marginalised and to be taught by the powerful. Nussbaum suggests that primitive shame is associated with narcissist societies' anxiety. This produces a herd mentality in which the 'normal', the conformist find themselves bonding together over and against stigmatised groups. This cannot better be seen than in the mob floggings and lynching that have become the part of Indian social reality. In a small place named Una in Gujrat in 2016, Dalit youth were flogged mercilessly, tied to a vehicle and paraded half naked through the streets. Such flogging has become so rampant that many incidents come up from throughout the country. Two years on the prime accused remains free on bail, having been identified on camera he was let free. Besides it was reported as recently as April 2018 that the victims were beaten up again by their perpetrators. In following the same road, the cow vigilante boasted to his co passenger that they are in fact the Dalits he had bashed last time.

It is an exchange so localised and mundane yet this exchange has created a web of power that ensures the servility of one group over other. Consider this for example, not only is one individual beaten up, they are also shamed by being paraded on naked, the law enforcement at first lets such an incident happen, and once the incident has happened lets the culprit lose, only so he comes back to rub the wounds and declare it to the world, that '*you were in fact beaten and here I am to rejoice in my act*'. This open and blatant criminality bolsters the regime of shame, and from shame that of fear.

Less criminal but more in the face is symbolic shame. The act of spitting when another person comes in site is an act of shaming the other without saying a word. Calling human beings names is another technique of shaming. The most common among these techniques is to invoke an animal. Pigs are the universally used animal for this task. One American advertisement opens with an image of a gigantic pig, obese pig, covering whole of North America. It grunts, burps, licks its lips, and looks insatiably greedy. The racial slurs against blacks and those against immigrants include '*you filthy little pig*'. In Hindi the word '*suar*' (Pig) has been in use for a while now. Even the British colonialist used it too luxuriously to humiliate subordinate Indians. It is used in popular cultures too, pick any standard Indian cinema and one would find the word '*suar*' very comfortably situated. Pig in this sense is a cultural symbol of disgust, used to shame people. But who would be called a pig? Pig is mostly related to filth, squalor and disease; it is in the characteristic feature of the animal. In contrast an animal like lion is considered more like the symbol of power. (Hence, the government's 'Make India campaign' has lion as the symbol, and not the pig). The ancient temples and monarchs had lions and tigers as their motifs. A pig is the motif of the undesirable, associated with the unwanted. It is different from calling a human, a donkey. A donkey is not disgusting; a '*Gadha*' (Hindi word for donkey) is plain stupid. It does not attract repulsion, it attracts ridicule. Similarly peace symbols inadvertently have pigeons flying over as messengers of goodwill and peace. Some people are therefore called lion like, and others sheep like and still others, the condemned of the world and subjects of this work are pig-like. The pig like are our shamed ones. These are

cultural ways of attaching meanings to human beings and their relations. This is basically a process via which takes place the change from identification to objectification and vice-versa. This animal like objectification of human to characterise identities is part of developing shame-belief. This happens when the distinction between the material and the person is purposefully blurred. The untouchable body is rendered filthy for its imagined association with filth. The superimposing of one over the other where the human-animal or human-filth are made to have no distinction. Most societies teach the avoidance of certain groups of people as physically disgusting, bearers of a contamination that the healthy element of society must keep at bay. Some people, however, are more marked out for shame than others. Societies select certain groups and individuals for shaming, marking them off as “abnormal” and demanding that they blush at what and who they are. People who look different from others—people with visible diseases or so-called deformities, the mentally and physically handicapped— wear their shame on their faces, so to speak: social behaviour tells them every day that they ought to blush to show themselves in the company of the “normal.” When there is no visible brand, societies have been quick to inflict one, whether by tattooing and branding or by other visible signs of social ostracism and disapproval.

#### **IV**

##### *Power of shame and role self respect*

Shame involves disrespecting and demeaning others and bringing them down in the own eyes, damaging their own self respect, thereby causing hurt and pain.

Prostrating in front of political leaders or being asked to remove shoes outside dwelling places may be the cases in point. When auto riders refused to carry students from JNU and called them names, there is certain humiliation attached to that. The students may have felt no failing or shame in being associated with JNU however. There is one issue which is that humbling someone is not shaming them. Humbling would amount to deflating someone's ego. Training one into humility is not humiliation; rather it embodies a certain assumption of mutual respect. There is also something called the problem unintended shame and humiliation<sup>lxxvi</sup> thrown up by cases of growing globalisation, social media and larger audiences. What happens when the dog loving British have to deal with Dog eating North Koreans? Or when the traditional men reach naked beaches as part of tour? Every act of shame therefore is not humiliating or causing serious harm or injury. But if one raises this at the meeting point of cases such as cow praying versus the cow eating, there emerge serious issues. The mob lynch attitude and the fact that the cow becomes more important than human raises questions for very value of life.

Shame is an assault on the self respect. It is crucial that only those who are part of the system can be put to shame by it. You have to be on the list, to be able to stand at some place in that list. To be excluded, one needs to be included first. That is why those who are shamed too have some power over their tormentors even when the equation may be asymmetric. V.Geetha's suggestion that the Savarna's have constant fear of pollution by Dalit touch is an example. This could be termed as the crippling fear of losing control in the Savarnas. Nandy has explained this as the Passive acceptance of humiliation as a Machiavellian tactic to control the powerful and limit their options. While unequal societies are opportune spaces for institutionalised shame, not all unequal societies would shame. There is something called a regime of shame. Bourgeoisie society despite being unequal does not fall under the category of 'Regime of humiliation'.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The desire for both recognition and elevation logically assumes corresponding reduction, rejection, cancellation and annihilation of certain human beings. Reduction requires physical/object to be brought down to the level of an animal or the physical animate object. Rejection needs no such thing, even the idea of such and such human being is enough, for

example even references to an untouchable is enough for people to make faces and feel repulsive. Rejection is intended to give repulsive meaning to human body. Invisibilization of human beings by denying them public space is another way of exclusion and shaming. The countless number of slum dwellers, Riksha-pullers, beggars, homeless who sleep under high rising city bridges, metro over bridges is examples of those rendered invisible by the architecture of the city. In the light of the city they disappear, only in the night do they appear. This is invisibilization of people by ghettoisation. Humiliation is distinct from annihilation. During partition abducted women were married and absorbed in large numbers in the enemy household. Losing women and abducting other's women happen in common framework of humiliation and counter humiliation. As opposed to Gujarat riots, where rape as followed by burning of bodies. Idea was to annihilate preventing Muslim women to produce more numbers.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Interestingly humiliation becomes substitute for genocide. Though outcaste, Dalits remain in the caste system and perform polluting (hence humiliating tasks). If they were to be dead (left), others will have to work, thus inviting humiliation (loss of status). Nandy discusses the case of Karachi Dalits who were retained in Pakistan during partition with state security provided to them. Cancellation cancels out the human being from a memory. *If this girl survives, she will be a living dead. The rape victims, even when they survive live like dead for their lives.*<sup>lxxix</sup>

In other societies, where equalities are differently grounded, say within the sphere of ascriptive-identities there unalterable or quasi ascriptive (alterable with great effort- this makes inequalities frozen, congealed into fixed status of hierarchy.<sup>lxxx</sup> Shame is built into the very structure since such societies are underpinned by belief in hierarchical gradation of humanity. Societies based on slavery, racial segregation, hierarchical status, untouchability, caste system are examples of institutional shame. Shame in such a society is very part of the domination, assault on self respect as well as attempts to prevent it from developing it. Since shame is deep pervasive or structurally built, even episodic or periodic remedies are enough to shame. The floggings and donkey parades, prostrating, naked parades are parts of the punishment rituals used in regimes of shame.

How is institutionalised shame established and continues to exist? It continues one, by legitimising ideology, convincing both dominated and dominating groups of the justness of the humiliating order. Ideology is most effective when it becomes the common sense and everyday understanding. This is done through educational cultural and other institutions – cultivating appropriate patterns of thought and behaviour. Two, when degradation is accompanied by shame. Those living in degrading socio-economic and cultural conditions do not have the means to improve their self respect. Hence are considered legitimate objects of humiliation. Three, it happens through informal and diffused system of coercion by individuals of the dominant group. Boundaries of dominant and subordinate are diligently guarded through chastisement, ostracizes, insult, sanctions and segregation. Finally it is done by physical force of state. Intimidation arousing fear is used. While the State remains in background. Dramatic, selective, flashy episodes of transgressions are picked and dealt with. Under Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, many parts of India, especially North East and Kashmir have witnessed rapes (of activists and wives of activists). Women continue to play a major role in various language-region and nationality based movements. In light of state's overriding preoccupation with the unity and integrity of the nation, these various movements at best are dubbed as anti-national movements. This becomes the logic of state's repressive machinery (police and army) to revoke the fundamental democratic rights of the citizens. The role of women in these movements links the anti state with an anti patriarchal thrust of political activity. Rapes, tortures and murders are alleged in the context of army's operations against fugitives, subversives and agitators. In modern state where discrimination is kept out of the formal legal structure what is more problematic than shame associated with social location/ascriptive identities is the sense of betrayal faced by cheating from state (non acceptance of FIR'S), systematic constraints,(state protecting the perpetrators and police providing protection covers to the rioters as opposed to victims in case of communal violence.).

How does one deal with the question of self respect here? What happens to human agency? Like humiliation, shame collaborates by feeling shamed; they cannot be

humiliated however hard you try.<sup>lxxxii</sup> One needs consensual validation of shame (obliging the tormentor). Shame is a form of human relations that can never be a one way exchange. In instances of contradictory interpretation of same event by the different parties or people, it is very difficult almost impossible to concretely affirm shame. Two things about human beings that make them distinct from all other living beings are reason and morality.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Human beings rise above natural world and give themselves laws, 'self given' laws. Therefore the capacity for freedom or self determination is unique to human beings. This becomes basis for dignity, infinite value or worth. This dignity is derived from something intrinsic/inherent in them, and not from any other external source. By this logic human beings have (share) a common equal worth. Moral worth is the action consistent with and according to intrinsic equal worth to all. Human beings deserve respect because the powers of reason and morality deserve respect. Person gives himself a law. All of respect for a person is the respect is actually respect for law that he/she gives. Self respect therefore is duty of man to her, both as a nominal being and an end in them. Kant extends this to equal moral worth accorded to others. Parekh argues that Kant is so anxious to even avoid even slightest traces of humiliation. Human beings have value so long as they are bearers of rational and moral powers. Now, Bhikhu Parekh argues that if self respect is an individual and intellectual achievement. Where is the role of social? What about the conditions of living. If human beings forfeited there reason and moral behaviour, this makes respect of oneself and others contingent on good behaviour. This weakens Kant's case for inalienable human worth. Parekh thus suggests that one must go beyond Kant. Human beings are two dimensional. One is that they are human being, an individual. This is an ontologically privileged status, respect based on species, a generic dimension. The other is the distinctive unique Person. This is not only individual specific but also something that the person has chosen to be of value within which a certain type of value. Self respect thus has two dimensions.

Shame is a very delicate balance between acceptance and rejection. The moral authorities that allocate value and the ones that internalise it are actually the part of the common structure and value system. The shame(ed) and the sham(ers) are part

of the same complex. So much so that if the roles were so replaced, both parties will be able to slip into each other's places. Role of the normal and the role of stigmatized are parts of the same complex. If one could play one these roles could surely play the other.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Nandy's example of the Muslim lament "*hamein achuton se pitwaya*" (got us beaten by the untouchables) can also be looked it in this light. Instead of developing solidarity on account of being victims to the violence by the same perpetrator (Caste Hindus), Muslims chose to feel offended. The reason why people irrespective of feeling stigmatised along one axis fail to understand and in fact assume the role of tormentor in along other axis. To put it another way, shaming me would need me to accept that I have fallen in my eyes that I have failed to meet some standard, that I have lost face/respect. (Take for example the infant human beings would be completely okay with nakedness as opposed to adult humans.) If one has to break free of shame does one attempt at a complete overhaul of the system of sensibilities that the stigmatised share with their tormentors? If yes, what are the conditions for the same? Is such an overhaul even possible? The political problem with this however something else, how do you respond to language "A" in language "B". Protest movements that use shaming techniques and the ones which use the language of shame to appeal to the higher standards of morality and human dignity provide one of the answers. The following chapter discusses at the length the subversion of shame through political protests.



## Chapter III

### *Protest movements and the Subversion of shame*

Shame in political life is ever pervasive and ever potent. In avoiding shame the tormented (those who are shamed) work to make sure to hide their shame, or avoid being associated with what causes shame. The more they try to avoid shame, the more power it exerts on them. Yet it faces challenges. Power produces resistance of its own kind. Shame faces challenges in its everyday form. Blackening of faces of leaders, burning effigy, political cartoons and memes, throwing shoes and gifting bangles are common techniques in shaming the powerful. More severe and shocking forms are taken up by protestors who strip naked and let go off their clothes to shame those in power. In subverting shame occurrences, the hitherto tormented are capable of inverting the logic of shaming by breaking open the myth of shame. Shame as externally caused is premised on power relations that work to reduce some individuals over others. In inverting the logic the tormented are able to shame the tormentor instead. There is however a structural difficulty in this. In cases where subversion of shame is directed at entities such as state, governments and institutions, how does one locate who is being shamed? Unlike a human being, states have no brains, no bodies, and then who are we shaming? Can one say that States have a mind?

This question needs to be answered before one proceeds further. States are not anatomical bodies; they have no brain or body. Yet they can be felt. State has its essence. We can experience the state on occasions and in places. Sometimes the state is present in its absence. A national flag in central park of our city is state; the army bunker on border is state. What state has is a logic if its own; it has its own

morality. The state is occupied in most places by living entities with mind. State can therefore be held accountable. State is vital in the sense that it grows by the day, it changes and it evolves. Anything that has to live up to a standard and fails to do so can be put to shame. State strictly speaking is not a human, but state is also not wood.

It seems that in order to understand subversion of shame and the impact of it on democratic practices, protest movements that use the language of shame are a good place to start. This chapter therefore, picks up two acts of protest in which the protestors shed their clothes off in order to shame the state. One is fairly recent; the naked protest of Tamil Nadu farmers in early 2017 and the other is nearly fifteen years old, the protest of ‘Mothers of Manipur’ from the year 2004. While reading shame (rather subversion of shame) in these two cases, this chapter attempts to do the following. One, generally discuss the concept of protest and the role of protest in politics. Two, and particularly so present larger problems and background around which the two protests taken up for a case study have occurred. Three, understand the significance of ‘nakedness’ and as a tool of protest, and also develop the history of nakedness and its relationship to shame. And four, discuss the relationship of subversion of shame with possibilities of freedom.

## I

### *Protest movements and Politics*

Why must protest and social movements be important for politics? First and the foremost reason is that social movements are widely prevalent in our societies. They are part of our everyday reality. They have remained a site of power in our times and those before us. They can be understood as transitory phases between seemingly two different times, a bandwidth that connects (or disconnects) two or more different histories. Therefore social movements are as much about societies

as they are about politics. Changes in societies have known to be driven by several factors; protest movements being one of them. We live our lives in particular ways after having developed some shared knowledge and values. Similarly power is allocated effectively by virtue of possession of some key resources (and values). Social movements problematise the ever permeating power relations. They change our habits of thoughts, action, and interpretation. They throw serious questions about legitimacy, authority and nature of political structures in the society. Moreover, it will not be wrong to assume that we have evolved by protesting. We have developed better systems, more efficient technologies, even political systems because someone somewhere thought we could do better. Perhaps protest is central to social change and social change is central to social development. But what is political to protest (and important for our analysis) is that it is the weapon of the weak and perhaps the only weapon the weak has. In this sense, it is linked directly to question of justice. (This is not to suggest that all protests are by the weak, Marathas in Maharashtra and Jats in Haryana are by no means weak, and yet their movements will fit the definition of a social movement. What is being suggested here is this that while all those who protest may or may not be weak, but all weak have the capacity and the moral authority to protest). In that sense, protest is political and deeply so. Protest is not a manifestation of mere inconvenience or displeasure. Not all displeasures are political, or could be called protest. Some are strictly displeasures of the body and may not emanate from any particular external power at play. This is where one would argue that the concept of protest has been made possible within a particular setting. Protest is a dated concept. Not all human displeasures, complains and no's are protest. A protest may involve hurt of interests and those of sentiments, yet there is more to it. One wonders if one could have protested in the name of king, his highness. Monarchy meant allegiance to king and his heirs. It also meant obeying God himself for most monarchs derived their legitimacy from religious theory of divine origins. One could not protest to Gods, to kings, even to family. Paternalistic societies do not entertain the concept of protest. The parent like king is always caring therefore better aware of the interests and needs of their pupil. The idea of protest becomes possible only in a democratic

society. Here, it is important to suggest that while shame predates democracy (and not politics), protest is entirely democratic. The idea and processes of protest are made possible only in a liberal democratic system. This is so because the idea of a right bearing individual, laden with his/her collective identity is made possible only in a liberal imagination (Monarchies, theocracies, feudalistic orders, slave societies entertain no such ideas of individual human agencies, therefore differentiate amongst human beings as superiors or inferiors).

After having suggested that protests are possible only in democracies, we need now to consider different conceptual definitions of protest? The problem most theorists of protests grapple with almost unilaterally is how to define a (protest) social movement.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Since this work has taken up the task of understanding the role of Shame in social movements, it becomes imperative to discuss the phenomenon of social movements prior to reading shame in them. Precise definition of a social movement is not possible for a social movement is a dynamic<sup>lxxxv</sup> phenomenon. It is not an act or a series of act. It is not a moment. It is not a year, a month or a day. Movements are in movement and that their characteristics would subsequently change.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Any attempt at generally defining a movement ends up including anything and everything under the spectrum, and too narrowly defining it leads to excluding so many important acts and ideas. The problem therefore remains. Is a movement defined by the task it achieves, are we saying that a movement is going to be called a movement if only it achieves the targets it sets out at the beginning? Then what about those collective actions which did not get the desired results but moved thousands of people? Is any and every collective a social movement? If not, then what are the qualifiers? Is it a phenomenon that cannot be defined? Can it be felt? The very act of defining a phenomenon is limiting it in some way, like drawing for it a boundary to ensure its exclusivity. Despite numerous difficulties, social movements can be gauged; they are identifiable, documented and perfectly definable socio political phenomenon. This section attempts to bring in some ways in which social movements are understood. *“Social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life. They have their*

*inception in a condition of unrest, and derive their motive power one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new system of living. The career of social movement depicts the emergence of a new order of life*<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

This definition is alluding to some basic issues, first that a social movement is a collective enterprise. Simply put, it requires social agents in action with each other. It is not difficult to argue therefore that for Blumer (1969), an act of protest would not be a social movement if it does not involve a human collective. Second according to Blumer's definition a social movement must come about against existing orders of things, with the intention of changing it and therefore the third, should also have alternative imaginations of new form of order that they wish to bring about. There are some problems with this definition. One, if we are to look at those movements that had no career, ones they happened and did not make any change, or moved no things then we realise Blumer's definition has no space for them. Second, it is also problematic for what about those movements that do not emerge from present dissatisfactions, but instead are trying to further the status quo, aiming at strengthening it.

Let us consider Charles Tilly (1979) who provides a historical survey of social movements from 1750 onwards. In an unequal system, there are groups and collectives that have at their disposal sufficient resources, prestige, connections and have acquired enough rights to directly bargain, negotiate with the government. They need no protest. Social movement is not their politics. Therefore, "*Social movement is a distinctive form of contentious politics. Contentious because the claims so made are in contravention and detrimental to someone else's self interest. Social movements therefore are politics of claim making*"<sup>lxxxviii</sup>. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) in their cognitive theory of social movements have suggested that, "*social movements are best conceived as temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities and even ideals.*"<sup>lxxxix</sup> According to this definition, one could perceive a few more characteristics of social

movements, one that they create public spaces, loosely translatable to an idea of a public sphere. The public spaces become areas of activities that individuals participate in and in the process create new kind of social identities for themselves, for others in the group and also for larger societies that they are part of. Two, that social movements are temporary. While how long and what is temporary needs serious questioning, it is nevertheless an addition to Blumer's definition. The next definition to consider is one that contrasts the temporariness of social movements with calling in the concept of durability in social movements. "*Contentious politics occurs when ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities and opponents. When backed by dense social networks and galvanised by culturally resonant, action orienting symbols, contentious politics leads to sustained interaction with opponents. The result is the social movement*"<sup>xc</sup>.

Here again, like Blumer the sustained interaction with opponents suggests distinguishing between social movements and singular acts of protests. It is true that resistance today is against particular individuals, men and women and real people who are seen to be the harbingers of inequality and in this sense the elites, authorities and opponents in Tarrow's (1998) definition are immediately identifiable. But there are movements that are fighting abstract enemies, institutions, structures such as patriarchy. Moreover one is tempted to ask, do all movements seek change, what about the ones that are sheer display of anger or helplessness? Does wanting to change things, and win over the opponents all what social movements do? Melucci answers this for us, "movements do much more than just protesting", exploring the new social movements suggest that movements engage in different experiments in living and alternative forms of practise.

Cox and Nilson (2014) look at "*social movements as a process in which special social group develops a collective project of skilled activities centred on rationality..a particular way of making sense of and relating to the social world that tries to change or maintain a dominant structure of entrenched needs and capacities in part or whole*"<sup>xci</sup>.

Here the idea that social movements can be both against and in favour of the status

quo, that there is something called a movement from above (they take neo liberalism as a movement for example) and those from below depending on which side of the status quo they lie on. This view sees resistance as fertile. Movements can be understood as institutions that people build, that will enable them to meet needs that are currently not being met.

The above discussion suggests and rightly so that there are different ways in which protest movements can be understood. Yet it can be assumed that “where there is power, there is resistance”<sup>xcii</sup>. Similarly, if there is shame, there is power and movements that try to shame the perpetrator are essentially movements that are about power. Here it is being suggested that just by laying claim to shame, protestors can be elevated. This idea is developed further in later part of the chapter. The idea of courage becomes central; from helpless and ashamed to courageous and fierce. And thus shame is inverted on its head. The claim is now made that shame is not of the tormented to bear but is that of the tormentor’s (for having caused conditions for such a shame to occur in the first instance). This can be better understood by looking at the two protest movements we have marked right at the beginning of the chapter. The following section discusses in some detail the background conditions and causes of these protests.

## II

MANIPUR, 2004

*“Indian Army Rape Us, Take Our Flesh”<sup>xciii</sup>*

Back then in the year 2004, Indian electoral results had given congress a chance to make government in the largest democracy of the world and the opposition party

member Sushma Swaraj was threatening to go bald<sup>xciv</sup> and many in BJP were volunteering to sleep on floor for the rest of their life if Sonia Gandhi was made the Prime Minister. Indian economy had grown at 7.9% as compared to the previous year. Indian Ocean was hit by the largest earthquake in forty years, originating in Sumatra and causing widespread damage to many places including southern India. Economic recession of 2007-8 was four years away. It is in this year, the year 2004 that the iconic protest by mothers of Manipur took place. It was by no means an ordinary incident. Twelve women, courageous, strong and angry reached the historic Kangla Fort<sup>xcv</sup> where the 17<sup>th</sup> Assam rifles were stationed. They disrobed themselves by removing their *Phanek*<sup>xcvi</sup> and challenged openly the army men ‘*come and rape us*’. The incidents preceding the naked day, were saddening not just for these twelve women but also many other Manipuri people. As they disrobed, eye witnesses claim that it appeared as if some power had possessed them. They were fierce in asking the army men to take their flesh. The guards at the fort had no idea how to respond to it. They were too stunned; in fact they could not dare to look up. They were also perhaps scared. When one of the in charges came out, he folded both his hands in submission. That was all he could do or say. The ferocity of the act was such that a few of the protestors collapsed right there. They went unconscious, owing perhaps also to their age. The elderly Manipuri women were protesting naked because the Assam rifles had killed a thirty two year old Thangjam Manorama.

### *What had happened to Thangjam Manorama?*

It was under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, henceforth AFSPA that an arrest memo was issued for Thangjam Manorama. At approximately 12:30 a.m. on July 11th several 17th Battalion of Assam Rifles personnel allegedly broke down the door of the 32-year-old woman’s home, dragged her out of bed, and physically assaulted her two younger brothers and her elderly mother when they tried to intervene. Several personnel then dragged Manorama to a veranda where she was allegedly blindfolded, tied, tortured and brutally assaulted for hours. Some



personnel came back into the house from the veranda and took a towel and water container, allegedly using them to gag Manorama and pour water on her face while assaulting her. Later other Assam Rifle personnel came inside and took a kitchen knife. It is also alleged by the family that before taking Manorama with them, the security personnel gave the arrest memo to the family and forced them to sign a “No Claim Certificate.” The document certified that no property was damaged and that the personnel had not “misbehaved with women folk.” (The family alleges that the 17th Assam Rifles personnel looted them of 5,000 rupees and some jewellery.) It should also be noted that the time written on the certificate was 3:30 a.m. – allegedly three full hours after the Assam Rifles arrived at Manorama’s home. The arrest memo stated that Manorama was arrested on the suspicion that she had links with the underground People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The security personnel told Manorama’s family that she was being taken to Kangla, the fort where the Assam Rifles were stationed. But Manorama never made it to the Kangla fort. Her partially clothed body was found dumped on the side of a road later that day. The villagers who found Manorama’s body said that there were scratch marks from fingers all over her body, a deep gashing knife wound on her right thigh, signs of bruises on her breasts, deep cut marks on her inner thighs, and genitals, and several bullet wounds.

The autopsy of Manorama’s body was conducted at the Regional Institute of Medial Sciences Hospital (RIMS) after the police picked up her body. The autopsy was performed before family members were able to identify the body and the results of the report were not released to the public. The bereaved family members had refused to take back Manorama’s body, stating that as a murder, an inquiry should be conducted. A judicial enquiry was henceforth conducted to look into her murder. The report of this commission was submitted to state government in December 2004 itself but was never made public. Having remained under rugs for more than ten years, it was submitted to honourable Supreme Court of India in the year 2014. The report says that “most of the injuries would reveal that she was shot

when helpless". It said "some injuries suggest sexual assault too"<sup>xcvii</sup>. The Commission had examined 37 witnesses.

Manorama's killing triggered widespread protest across Manipur state. It made people extremely uncomfortable. Allegations of unlawful killings are part of the usual story in the small state of Manipur (as it is in all other parts of country where AFSPA is in place.) Many residents of Manipur allege that under the AFSPA of 1958, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and looting by security personnel is commonplace. AFSPA was born to colonial India. British brought to life this act in order to curb the activities of nationalists and freedom fighters during the Quit India movement. Indian partition and the subsequent consolidation of India as one territorial entity were fraught with its own tensions. Manipur joined the Indian Union in 1972. In independent India, fighting with Naga rebels and the open refusal in Nagaland to cooperate with government officials and boycott of schools and colleges led to a situation of public disorder. This regional conflict turned into a situation of insurgency and the Indian government enacted AFSPA in the year 1958. AFSPA also has a twin in state of Jammu and Kashmir that came in force in 1990. AFSPA in Punjab however was short lived and remained vital in the years of insurgency. Later it was repealed entirely from Punjab, since militancy in state of Punjab was believed to have been curbed almost entirely. AFSPA is an extraordinary mechanism under which the armed forces are given some powers that have huge significance for a polity that claims to be a democracy. Under Section 4 of the AFSPA, all security forces are given unrestricted and unaccounted power to carry out their operations, once an area is declared disturbed. Even a non-commissioned officer is granted the right to shoot to kill based on mere suspicion that it is necessary to do so in order to "maintain the public order". It gives the armed forces wide powers to shoot, arrest and search, all in the name of "aiding civil power." The army can shoot to kill, the army can enter and search without a warrant, and the army can destroy property and arrest anyone it chooses, without a warrant. Under Section 5, once the military has arrested someone, they must hand that person over to the nearest police station with the "least possible delay." There

is no definition in the act of what constitutes the least possible delay. Under section 6 no legal proceeding can be brought against any member of the armed forces acting under AFSPA, without the permission of the Central Government. This gives army personnel almost near immunity from prosecution in any civil law court of the country. Such permission is almost never given. Of the 38 requests to sanction a prosecution under AFSPA that the Ministry of defence received between 1991 and 2015, permission was denied in 30 cases and the decision is pending in eight, defence Minister Manohar Parrikar informed Parliament recently.<sup>xviii</sup>

The logic of AFSPA is this that an area declared as a ‘disturbed area’ requires army to bring ‘normalcy’. This normalcy requires some extraordinary force which cannot be brought about without using violence, because if that were the case, there would be no need of army at all. In heat of the operation and while carrying out their duties, a soldier cannot be expected to second guess their target. It is argued that there is no time for such guesses in warfare. Army is averse to the repeal of AFSPA, even when its provisions are clearly dangerous for democracies because they fear that any dilution in the act would be detrimental to the morale of army which indeed will be detrimental to national security. It has been argued time and again and rightly so that “How can rapes fall under the category of acts done in the line of duty, requiring legal protection of the state?” While we can go in great detail on merits and demerits of AFSPA, it is not the scope of this work here to do that. It is mostly to understand that it is under this regime of violence (against it) that the naked body protests were carried out. We now turn to the next case.

### III

JANTAR MANTAR, NEW DELHI, 2017

*“PM did not meet us because he thinks we are the sin of the nation, fourth grade citizens who should only be met at election time. We had no choice really, but to strip naked.”<sup>xcix</sup>*

Farmer protesting in large (small) numbers is not an uncommon site in India. Popular news once in a while does give farmers suicides some air time highlighting the need for reforms in agrarian sector in the country. A farmer is important for election purposes; farming as an activity is crucial for on it lays the cumbersome burden of feeding the nation of 1.3 billion. But farmer suicides have literally and even at the cost of being absolutely insensitive have reached a stage where they have become political common sense, say for example, discrimination against Dalits is an accepted ( and I would argue expected) social fact, it does not invite shock or surprise. It disturbs no one. This common sense acceptance of farmer's distress is one of the many sad stories in the country. But before one proceeds to examine this, it is prudent to put to mind some of the suggestions on what ill the farming sector and where lie the fault lines?

Suicide is a plural<sup>c</sup> phenomenon and is a political<sup>ci</sup> act which can be explained in the following way. (Suicide has been taken an entry point into the agrarian crisis only because it is the most overt symptom of the problem). There has been decline in agricultural productivity since early 1990s. Along with which the value of farm products has not increased. Real agricultural growth since 1960 has averaged about 2.8 percent. While from green revolution to the year 2004, the average rate at which agriculture grew in India was 3%.<sup>cii</sup> The low productivity in farming and allied activities, by one estimate the ratio of worker productivity in agriculture to worker productivity in non- agriculture is about one fifth is coupled with a large dependence of the population on agriculture. According to the international labour organisation report, agriculture sector in India employs 47.3% of its population.<sup>ciii</sup> It is also because much of India is rural and rural non-farm activities are minimal. Marginal land holdings and the selective focus on rice and wheat since the green revolution has hindered any possibility of a developed and diversified agricultural development in the country. The peculiarity of agriculture in the country has been that it is always looked at as the stage in transition that ultimately the idea is to pull people out of agriculture to secondary and tertiary sector which tend to contribute more to the Gross domestic product of the country while employing less than the

primary sector. From the beginning of planning process in India, infrastructural development in agriculture sector has been scant and it has only decreased further over the years. Since institutional credit remains at best inadequate, the farmers are forced to turn to the informal sectors for credit which is never cheap and not without constraints. The debt burden is accompanied with uncertainty and volatility of the market. In India, much of agriculture still is dependent on the whims of monsoon and in absence of water and irrigation the crop survival and at worst sowing remains contingent of the stroke of nature. The distress can be gauged by a simple fact that the suicide mortality rate for male farmers in India has increased from 12.3 in 1996 to 19.2 in 2004.<sup>civ</sup>

If one were to look at farmer suicides within the larger political landscape, then the significance of the act by which not merely the desperate situation of individual lives are signalled but with every life taken, or to say given, there seems to be a renewed sense of agency and idea of life.<sup>cv</sup> Along with the features discussed elsewhere by others which are mostly economic, there are also some socio-psychological aspects of what pushes individuals in this direction. What is a life and what would it mean to take it away. Is it sheer desperation, a moment of weakness? Are there primary socialisations from which farmers find difficult to come out? What in the rural psyche causes this?

Vasavi discusses the socio cultural reasons that have caused the present agrarian distress. The hitherto backward classes, especially the ones that did not benefit and hence cannot be called the green revolution players in the rural economy and those who ranked low in the caste hierarchy now form the marginal cultivators. Traditionally non cultivating caste groups (lower castes and tribes for simplicity sake) are trying to gain a foothold in the agriculture sector. In some way they try to catch up as new players in a sphere that was until very recently not available to them. This ofcourse is linked to aspirations of equality in the market. In the process some issues emerge as they proceed, key sources of non institutional creditors have been agri-business agencies which at times are providing both inputs

and loans. Along with them are the new money lenders who are mostly urban friends and relatives drawing on urban salaries. This causes double burden on the farmers. One the interest rates are exorbitantly high (as high as 24-25%) and second that the credit so availed is value laden; it comes through social and personal networks. Even at the risk of transgressing a little from the central discussion here, it becomes important to suggest that money in such settings where transition to modern sensibilities is yet not complete or that when the system is of a hybrid form that is it is semi traditional, semi feudal, and semi modern market oriented. In such scenarios, money is not neutral. Money becomes a social category which has its own burdens and meanings. So much so that in case of failure to pay the debt, the farmer has to face ridicule and public humiliation. The worst fear remains the threat of dispossession of assets, home and land amongst which are most important. It is no doubt that in rural societies, assets such as land and property are indicators of honour and pride. They determine the social standing of a family and often the loss of land is loss of face.

Vasavi suggests that agriculture in India depended on local knowledge, shared practices and skills were learnt and developed through collectivised farming practices. There was a locally available know how and culture specific knowledge systems that lost their significance after green revolution. The hybrid seeds, new regime of pesticides and fertilizers and the market oriented production essentially meant that the nature of knowledge locally available was increasingly discarded over one available in the market. In the effort to beat each other at the new game, the societies which were until very recently growing things together started out a competitive endeavour which led to agricultural deskilling and dissonance.

Commercialisation of agriculture meant integration of agriculturalist in the market economy which had led to reordering the cultural basis of Indian agriculture.<sup>cvi</sup> The rural social cultural milieu could more or less be sewn around agriculture and related activities. The caste based social bases of production have largely been retained while those based on client –patron relationship has largely been done

away with. As interdependence based on customary structures has declined, dependence on external structures and agencies has increased. While the disintegration of the customary forms of support has also liberated the working , low ranks caste groups and enabled them to escape from caste prescribed subservience and debt servicing , the provisioning mechanisms of the moral economy have not been adequately replaced by state mechanisms of provisioning have highlighted, most government programmes that seek to provision the poor with food grains , housing or employment are also subject to rent seeking behaviour which in the form of commissions, bribes and misallocation mean that the benefits barely reach the most deserving.

The continued prejudice of the upper castes against the former untouchables creates a situation of isolation of the low ranking new agriculturalist. Petty competition and caste mentality breeds hostility and reluctance to share knowledge. This along with little or no knowledge of new market necessities led to problems in the agricultural landscape.

Further individualisation of agriculture can be attributed to other social changes, such as division of joint families into nuclear households. Individualisation of household automatically leads to individualisation of responsibilities. Farmers take loans for agricultural and farm activities, in event of crop failure, they face desperation and frustration. Not having to deal with such intense market pressures they end failing to pay back the loans, this invites scorn ridicule and even public humiliation. These anxieties play out in the form of visits from loan recovery personnel in the village, the threat of losing once land or property or cattle creates conditions of shame, the taunts and sneers and they become public examples. Individualisation of agriculture does not correspond with private individualised social sphere, to mean that there is no corresponding individualisation of life conduct and pluralisation of life forms. There is therefore dual burden of economic pressure and negotiating everyday with the old social traditions and the ones which are emerging everyday anew.

Poverty for long, maybe as long as the modern world has existed is considered a reason for shame. Conditions of poverty therefore are conditions of shame. Poverty is almost repulsive. It is no shock therefore to understand why conditions of poverty would invite shame in people. This happens because in the process of elevation as discussed in the first chapter, human beings attempt to free themselves, disassociate themselves, first from other living animals, and second from those in their own species. Capital and material possessions become one such condition in the market society where possession of property translates into possession of a higher position in the hierarchy of things. Apart from the failure to do well in new market economy and loss of face in the village, amongst family, friends etc, debt for a farmer produces the shameful effect for another reason. This is more intrinsically related to the idea of debt as such. Caste hierarchy in Indian context has long been justified as the due from the previous birth. That the work being done now will translate into good rewards in next birth. Being indebted therefore has connotations which have bearing on the social status of the ones involved.

We move now specifically to the case of Tamil Nadu farmers. In early 2017, protestors from the state of Tamil Nadu called a protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar where they sat for more than 41 days with a list of demands, Rs-40,000 crores drought relief package, farm loan waiver and setting up of the Cauvery Management Board by the Centre. Soon the protest gained headlines and one could hear people talk about the bizarre ways in which the protestors ate dead animals and stripped naked. They appear in different pictures having shaved their heads and moustaches which would appear absolutely normal on any other summer day but not when it is only half the head or half the moustache that they shaved. They kept mice and snakes in their mouths, conducted mock funerals, flogged themselves and even carried skulls which they claimed were of farmers who had committed suicide due to debt pressure, and indicated that they would drink their urine symbolically to suggest parched fields. P Aayakaanu is a lawyer who has turned leader of the



farmer protestors persists in his viewpoint when pointed out at by Rajdeep Sardesai in the India today conclave that stripping naked was the only and last resort. That the fact that they were denied audience at all places including Reserve bank of India where they first went also Prime minister, they had no other choice but to strip naked.

So what were the protestors demanding and why would they strip naked. At present there seems to be a profound agrarian distress in Tamil Nadu state which is caused by several factors. One of which is and a major one is the condition of drought prevailing due to weak monsoons and shortage of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu. The summer crop, locally called '*kuruvai*' was lost owing to lack of water due to the Cauvery water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and the winter crop called '*samba*' failed owing to particularly weak north east monsoons. The year 2016 witnessed a 60% shortfall in rains which made it the worst year in terms of rainfall after year 1876. It is important to note that 2012-13 also witnessed weak monsoons, but crops could be grown owing to water supply from Mettur dam in Salem district. Last year however the dam showed low levels consistently. Karnataka government refused to budge and released no water to Tamil Nadu despite SC judgement asking for release of Cauvery water to the parched state. Drought like situation is also amplified with groundwater levels hitting very low. Farmers claim that regeneration of ground water has failed for two consecutive years of low rainfall and deficit water supply from Cauvery has culminated into dry spells. In many parts farmers tried growing crops as many as three times. It is important to note that the area in question is not one of the stressed agricultural sites in the country usually. The state owing to its climate and soil fertility is able to otherwise, in good monsoon period produce up to three crops in a year. But this time around the hope of water and agriculture produce was shattered. This caused further loss on costs of failed crops thrice over. Other problem that went a great deal in causing the present conundrum includes the policy of demonetisation that hit the Indian economy in November 2016. Agriculture and allied activities are cash dependent so much so that the farmers buy seeds, fertilizers and oil from cash. The

agricultural labour is paid in cash and so is the transport. Preference for liquidity in agricultural life was met with the government sucking out 86% of liquidity from the system (1000 and 500 rupee denominations so banned were worth 86% of currency at the time).<sup>cvi</sup> This delayed payments of the farm labour which in worst drought hit areas is mostly drawn from scheduled castes. In January 2016, news reports on Tamil Nadu farmers claimed that close to about 106 farmers committed suicide owing to the distress in farm sector. This prompted the National Human right commission to issue a suo motu notice to Tamil Nadu government to take action on the matter.<sup>cvi</sup> One of the farmer protestors suggests to a news reporter that “because we are large farmers, we get no help from the government” which could partially be true. Having outlined the background, causes and problems of both the protests, it must be noted that these two are two seemingly very different issues. They speak of marginalities of very different kind. And yet they have been taken up for analysis here. The common thread that binds the two is the ‘naked protest’, i.e the act of stripping naked. The following section explores the history of nakedness and role of shame.

#### **IV**

##### *Nakedness and Shame*

The Manipuri women had gathered in their small room and sat across from each other recalling the gruesomeness of Manorama’s death. And yet none of the existing modes of protest from procession to boycott seem to working for them. The protests had become part of the normal culture of Manipur, along with violence of course. This is a peculiar problem of other types of protest. It dissolves the discontent. This happens because of this feature of liberal democracies and that is that it has established itself as ‘the’ system. When there are tussles for power and material such as between workers and employers, or say racial or linguistic minorities and others, or over land, resource and water. These struggles are mostly

about something within the system, not about the organising principles of the system itself, or changing the system entirely. They do not aspire for a systemic overhaul. What happens therefore is routineisation of both violence and protest side by side. Therefore the mothers as they are referred decided to do something extraordinary, something that will shock, and something that will hit people. Why and how does nakedness shock people, why does it cause bewilderment? Nakedness acts like the basic common minimum suggested in the first chapter of this work. Human beings share with other human beings the basic morphology of the bodies. Clothing therefore is a social act. In clothing, one is not only hiding their own bodies, but also hiding

the idea of the body of others. To put it differently, when one lays bare their body for public, it brings shame on the audience because they share the same morphology with the naked person. In being naked, they have

exposed the idea of bodies of all others. Nakedness is also deeply private. The crossing over from private to public creates problems of acceptance for the audience. In the previous chapter it was discussed how emotions are relegated to the private sphere and in doing so, they become necessary nodes to discrimination against women. The idea of nakedness is pretty normal and even desirable in the private. At yet at the same time the society constructs only the female naked body as profane, indecent, shameful and sexual, never to be displayed in the public.<sup>cix</sup> Nakedness in that sense could be directly linked to shame. So much so that a naked body of a woman may bring shame not only upon her, but her family as well. It is interesting that the degree of public acceptance of nakedness of female body is far less than that of male bodies. It is far from real that there is absolutely no shame whatsoever in public display of male bodies. If nakedness is indeed shameful, it can be argued that by being naked in public, and appealing (in case of Tamil Nadu farmers) and challenging (in case of mothers of Manipur), the protestors were in fact trying to shame their tormentors. And yet we cannot skip the discussion on nakedness, shame and protest without looking at the history of nakedness

### *History of nakedness: publically nude bodies*

Owing to the weather and climatic conditions over the Indian subcontinent, it seems unlikely that India would have a population that would require a lot of clothing. Nevertheless, the earliest representations of women in forms of paintings and sculptures depict them with minimal clothing. In sculptures from the Maurya and Sunga periods (about 300 BC) men and women wore rectangular pieces of fabric, on the lower part of the body and one on the upper part. In fact the sculptures found from different times show a trend towards declining drapery. Images from the Gupta period about the 7th or 8th Century show stitched upper garments along with a breast band, as well as a lower garment. In southern India, even in colonial times, some women did not cover the upper part of their body. In Bengal, in the Victorian era, some women did not wear blouses under their saris they went bare-breasted. This did not suit Victorian society, which had its own ideas of propriety, and blouses increasingly became the norm. The terms "blouse" and "petticoat" both English made the leap into Indian vocabulary in the Victorian era. Shirts also came to be worn under the sari as part of high fashion and these rather British innovations are considered traditional garments.<sup>cx</sup> Before the advent of British colonialism therefore, a number of clothes and styles seem to have been prevalent across the subcontinent. The naked or the partially naked body came to be associated with the primitive only during the colonial times. Clothing naturally became part of the civilising mission that tried to clothe the '*savage naked primitive*'.

India has also had an ancient tradition of Gymnosophy<sup>cxii</sup> and religious nakedness. Jain monks and Naga Babas are particular examples in point. They are the religious ascetics who renounced clothing. In the Jain tradition, there is renunciation of wealth and material and therefore also of clothes. The Jains of Digamabara sect have continued to reject clothing to this date. The sky clad as they are called reject clothes not only to renounce material wealth but also owing to the belief that this will avoid killing any organism through washing clothes. By this logic the Digamabara monks believe that a woman cannot gain enlightenment because she

cannot totally fulfil the vows of *Apagriha* (doctrine of non attachments to possessions) and *ahimsa* (doctrine of harmlessness), since she is obliged to wear clothes. While at present the number of naked sky clad Jain monks in India is close to about 200 people, there are supposedly more than one thousand naked Hindu Sadhus called the Naga Babas. While the Jain monks seem to distance themselves from all forms of worldly attachments, Naga babas were once mercenary warriors who fought naked.<sup>cxiii</sup> At one time having been employed by the Kings in India for defending their territories, they later lost out to British. The naked mercenaries decided to become naked saints.

One can also find nakedness being enmeshed with mythical and otherworldly powers. In some parts of northern India and Nepal it is believed that parched fields are brought to relief by the grace of lord Vishnu. A traditional way to attract rain was to have a group of naked women to plough their fields at night while they usually prayed. Fifty Nepali women in the year 2006 ploughed naked in their drought ridden fields in the hope to induce some rains. “This was our last resort, owing to which it did rain a little bit. “

Two points of significance that emerge from the naked sage tradition of India are this. One that there is definitely a gender bias that seems to be existing; it is mostly men who form the naked Sadhu brigade. Second, nakedness in their case is coterminous with renunciation and asceticism. Reading One and two together it can be argued that nakedness of the male body is capable of being non-sexualised but that of female body in public perception is not.

### *Political Nakedness*

It is clear therefore, that act of being naked, shedding clothes partially or entirely can be religious. But it also can be political and it is the political which is of significance to this work. While the story of nakedness in religion is dominated by men, the reverse of it is true for nakedness in politics. It is predominantly women who occupy the stage. How nakedness will become political will depend on the act

of stripping. When one is being stripped naked by other, for force and coercion, it is terrifying, reducing and humiliating. This nakedness is deeply political. On the other hand, when we strip naked, all by our self, it is active nakedness (as opposed to passive nakedness in case of being stripped naked by others). In active nakedness, there can be several motives, erotic, thrilling, exhibitionist, market oriented. We are not getting into those because

they are not relevant to this work. But active nakedness that is political transcends the regular stripping and becomes a potent and provocative means of protesting against abuse. In the world of clothed, the civilised

world of hidden genitals, stripping naked is an absolute one hundred percent guarantee of attracting attention. This is precisely why naked protest has the capacity to shock the tormentor. A naked body becomes a site of spectacle, rebellion and of subversion.<sup>cxiii</sup> The power of nakedness lies in the simple fact that the powerful, need the clothes and guards and cover to protect themselves as against any protestor that can hold the system to halt just by threatening to go naked. The contact with naked is deemed to invite shame; therefore the dominant try and avoid the naked and the shame. We have discussed already how power is exerted by shame avoidance. The weak have the capacity to subvert shame and invert the power relations just by virtue of being naked. Take for example, the *Hijras*<sup>cxiv</sup>; they are condemned to humiliation of worst possible kinds. Yet they hold immense power by virtue of myths attached to them. In family functions and auspicious occasions such as the birth of son, *Hijras* dance and perform rituals that are considered auspicious. The hosting family is supposed to give them food, clothes and money as gift. Such partial acceptance and veneration comes from the supernatural explanation of profane and sacred. 'Pay the Hijras well, make them happy, lest the curse will fall upon you.' Hijra's *curse* becomes their power. In most parts of northern India, Hijras lift their skirts to reveal to public their private parts. Public is not only afraid but extremely cautious to give them alms as fast as possible to avoid shame at the earliest. Subversion of power through spectacle such

as Hijras or women enlisting their naked bodies in resistance signals a form of “*Politics*” that is beyond formal politics.<sup>cxv</sup> Such a politics inevitably undermines the foundations of the hegemony of repressive regimes.

In Manipur when women used their naked bodies to protest, it was a matter of last resort. After having failed in all other ways did they decide that the need for a naked protest was paramount. This can be spoken of generally of all naked protest movements. The farmers from Tamil Nadu had dragged their feet to almost all government officials concerned. They took their matter to the state government and RBI. It is only when the Prime minister refused to meet them, they decided to strip naked on Delhi’s Rajpath, and described the act as one coming from being left with ‘no other choice’. But the very act of stripping by married or women who are mothers is so much more potent than any other. In Manipur, many women were not only elderly but also mothers and grandmothers. The message was very simple yet heart wrenching. In standing naked a mother has shamed all her sons (mother of one as mother of nation). This leads to localisation of emotions. This can be better understood by asking yourself ‘what would happen when you see naked 50 year old women with her hair let lose, holding a placard shouting fiercely and provocatively and asking the Indian army to rape her?’ One is bound to think of their own mother, their own aunt. This ends up de-sexualising the naked body in the protest. It suggests that the sons of the nation are no longer able to protect the dignity of their own mothers. The shame associated with such an act is immense. The sheer power of naked protest also lies in the fact that the onlooker does not have available means to respond. Shame at seeing naked bodies compels the audience to look away or hide. They try to get away from the site, especially since they are the target of that shame. In Manipur case, the district administration just could not respond to the act for long, for they were shocked, they had not seen such a thing before. There was no manual of civil services that trained them in dealing with women stripping naked. The act of shaming the tormentor also gets its ferocity from the accompanying act of derogatory, fierce and anguished speech. In shouting profanities and asking the army men to ‘take their flesh’, the protestors were able to

shame them much further. The disturbance caused by a protesting naked body is increased therefore, because the body no longer remains a fragile passive recipient of wrath, it instead grows much taller and larger than its surroundings. Quite contrarily, the protesting naked male body is not looked at the same way as the women. For instance, in the case of farmers, many called the protest motivated and funded by opposition parties. The men were rubbished as mere miscreants. As opposed to which the women bodies become objects of sexualised gaze. Much of this can be explained by the prevalent patriarchal system in our societies. There are also other ways in which these two naked protests are different. First, in the way they approach authority or power. Farmers protest was premised on the fact of gaining attention for care. *'Dear Prime minister, your apathy has caused us to be naked. In refusing to meet us, you have reduced us as human beings.'* This was an appeal to the higher standards of morality, for the state to recognise that in not acting, it is reducing its own people. The protest at Imphal was different. It was never a call for care. It was holding the mirror to the army and saying, *'this is all you can do, you are rapists and murders, so might as well do it to us now.'* This protest was no appeal; it was showing the inherent criminality of Indian army. It was also a challenge, a taunt. It is this confluence of protest and politics that creates possibility of subversion of shame in both these movements. In the next section some points have been made to explain better what has so far been called the subversion of shame and its role in democracies (on freedom)

#### **IV**

##### *Subversion of Shame*

Right to speech and expression is a fundamental right enshrined in the constitution. It is the bedrock of democracy and any serious discussion on rights of human being



cannot (and must not) negate its importance. Body as argued in previous chapters is central to self because it houses the self. And if we accept the proposal that body in fact can become a place of self expression than there will be no difficulty in understanding that protests that use bodies, (naked body protest being one of them) are acts of self

expression (anger, pain, hurt, helplessness being one of the many emotions that they may be going through). Let us use the “speaking body” metaphor, we know that communication is not just speech, but also facial expression, gestures, etc. It is prudent to argue therefore that in protesting naked and shaming the state the protestors are doing something very fundamental to freedom, both theirs as well that of others. It is the direct exercise of their fundamental right to expression. Note that when the tormentor uses power to shame the weak, in experiencing shame the marginalised are denied this speech. When Manorama is picked from her house, she is gagged. Her mouth is allegedly covered and her family locked in. Victims of conflict violence and rape refuse to speak up of their horrible experience in order to avoid the shame. Shame avoidance curtails the fundamental right to speech, expression and movement. In shouting insanities at Kangla fort in July 2004, the protestors burst open the voices of many gagged women.

Second, anything legal is considered to be most objective (as opposed to non legal such as religious, spiritual etc). But that is not true. There are at least two ways in which one can think of situations where law is not as neutral or objective as one would imagine it to be. One, when law gives itself the extraordinary place. For example, AFSPA and other such extraordinary laws<sup>cxvi</sup> give themselves a state of exception logic to work upon. The law itself lays out the scheme of shaming and therefore any pretence of respect what so ever is dropped. Frisking (naked and otherwise) in suspicion of carrying a lethal weapon, or the requirement to produce Identity cards as and when demanded, checking of houses and personal belongings are examples in point.<sup>cxvii</sup> In colonial times, the British built the practise of shaming Indians by outlining it in the law itself. The policy of segregation of the native and

the European was shaming. This shaming was mentioned in the very law. The other way is when law by itself is not extraordinary but mentions categories that are not objective and allow for active shaming. Take for example, provisions in law related to ‘public morality’ and ‘decency’. These are broad concepts used in statute books (without any particular definitions) to determine what is legally permissible (or not). This assumes that it is already quite clear and known as to what public morality and decency is (it is not difficult to guess that we will inevitably be dealing with a casteist morality and our patriarchal decency). It is therefore important to keep in mind that the well known secular legal institutions are actively shaming the people they are made to protect. Since shame within legal institutions is almost always available to the state and its agents, it is entirely difficult (almost impossible) to cause inversion of shame in them. And that is why when a body is deployed as an instrument of resistance outside the institutionalized system of protest, it is quite effective. It can force power to move out of the sphere of institutions to that of protest.

The third observation about protest and shame has to do with the cultural narratives and discourses that define us. Power operates through these discourses. In subverting shame that is in inverting the gaze one is also altering the discourse simultaneously. Naked protests render shame to be working through rather than on people.<sup>cxviii</sup> This means that the discourses on what is shameful and what is not is also undergoing change. This happens because shame (in protests) becomes relational,<sup>cxix</sup> and thus the protestors are able to transgress and resist the discourses that are trying to shame them. In the process they are also able to push the boundaries of discourses and therefore that of democracies.

Fourth, is that the protest movements are woven around political Irony. This mostly works at three levels. One, it works at the level of figure of verbal Irony, which simply means that the act is alluding to something entirely opposite of what is being said. In asking the policeman to wear bangles for not having protected her, the woman from Rajkot is doing precisely this. Similarly in asking the Indian army

to take their flesh, the Manipuri women protestors are in fact in midst of a situation of verbal irony. The second is the dramatic irony, in the protest as it plays out; there is an element of dramatics and a theatrical treatment of the subject. In reality it is quite the opposite which is being demanded. Irony produces shame and even guilt in the onlooker, the tormentor. Naked bodies for most parts become objects of lust, objectification and even voyeuristic gaze. It is because of irony that the tormentor ceases to objectify and begins to feel ashamed. At first the act appears funny and later a sense of bewilderment takes over *what are they even doing?* But as soon as the posters, slogans and verbal irony come to the fore, it produces shame in the tormentor.

The fifth observation comes from protests that shame being strangely situated. They are strangely situated because the primary aim of protest is to shame the perpetrator; this shaming in turn is actually a response to the shame inflicted on the protestors by the perpetrator in the first place. In such a protest, two things happen, mostly one after the other. One, that any possibility of elevation (of protestors) is premised first on their own reduction. Second, the reduction of the protestor leads to reduction of the tormentor, and hence the elevation of the protestor is made possible. Perhaps this point will need further elaboration. When the protestors go naked, they reduce themselves further. Further because some reduction has already taken place, that reduction (injustice) is what they are protesting against. Take for example the case of farmers from Tamil Nadu. They suggested that as farmers “all we have is our loincloth; that is all we wear anyway”. The pitiable situation of agriculture and state’s denial to intervene they claimed has already rendered them poor. Yet they removed even that one piece of cloth that covered their respect further. Note that, the shaming of the other (state, dominant, tormentor etc) is only possible by further reduction of self (of protestors). This reduction in case of farmer’s is carried out by sub-human acts of biting into dead snakes and mice and finally into stripping naked. As discussed elsewhere that reduction is possible with inclusion. One has to be included to be treated as an outcaste or lower in the hierarchy. The very act of reduction in total breaks open that possibility. By

reducing themselves further, the protestors are able to exclude themselves entirely (they are not ashamed of their nakedness anymore) and hence they are elevated through the act.

## CONCLUSION

### I

#### *Politics of shame*

Shame is political (repository of power), localised (experienced in the immediate), Learnt (it is acquired through observation and habit formation) and shame is social (it exists through externalities, not as something that is limited to individuals). Shame is not an innocent and neutral emotion, it is pervasive and negative. It is political in the sense that it uses the same language as power and is used rather effectively to create fixed hierarchies. It barricades people and it objectifies identities. Shame is a political process with political consequences. As a process it has various modules, one is the construction of strongly held shame beliefs, ideas and rituals that establish the regime of shame. Second are the periodically enacted shame-acts. Much of politics in one sense is the retelling of history, of claiming to be part of it. The idea is to redo history and to re- enact it, by being the winner or the victor this time. This retelling of history is nothing but a project of dealing with shame. After all the history of victors is a history of pride. The losing side is the repository of shame. Retelling of history through narration, stories, biographies, movies, theatre is therefore an attempt to deal with the supposed shame. Shame acquires more power through this historical narration. It also derives power from biological explanations. Shame uses the differences in the body such as that of women, homosexuals, physically disabled, blacks to divide bodies and thereby

people into the animal, non cultured and those that are human-like and thereby part of civilisation. Shame rides in religious scriptures and occupational hierarchies to demean, untouchables and prostitutes as polluted beings. Shame transforms itself into new forms in the modern systems to coerce the poor, unhealthy and the hitherto ashamed from the traditional. Shame is a negative instrumentality used by the dominant, those who wish to elevate themselves at the cost of others. Traditional societies validate shaming, and consequent elevation of some human beings at the cost of others. In modern societies however, shame takes newer forms. Even when shame is denied any valid entry in liberal political institutions, it seems to have made inroads both openly as well tacitly. Shame therefore keeps people and groups in political communities at the cost of their self respect. Denial of self respect is the marker of shame. Politics of shame is not that of exclusion. Exclusion is elimination, denial of participation. Shame is participation with an inferior status. Shame reduces individuals and groups to the level of exemplifiers in the hands of the dominant to set the agenda for politics, public policy, institutions and civil societies.

## II

### *Shame faces challenges*

Shame in politics however does not go unchallenged. Shame has majorly three responses. One of shame avoidance, the individual or group aligns itself with the expected norms and tries to avoid shame by fulfilling all expectations. In this sense there is complete surrender to the established shame norms and the power associated with it. The second is a slightly complicated response of partial acceptance. The victims of shame accept their reductions partially. Charles Taylor calls it 'a reduced mode of being where one accepts reduction in order to retain some forms of power that is by feigning ignorance'. How does this happen? Reduced fixed bodies start flowing over a course of time. This propels the

tormentor to destroy any possibility of natural insight and thereby a moral insight. This is so done because a moral insight of their present condition of shame may lead to fluidity of reduced fix self. A reduced self is fixed by the attributes used to shame it. Shaming fixes it into hiding from the world. The self is reduced from the negative judgement of it as polluting, undesirable, dirty and abnormal. Hiding from an adversarial judgment of the world, this self fixes itself into darkness. A moral insight may give the self the confidence to claim its shame and locate its cause outside of itself. This may mean that a moral insight has the capacity for claiming of individual agency. The tormenting sphere of power well understands that if such moral insight is not destroyed, it may leave spaces for subversion or assertion against domination. Two ways in which such moral insight is destroyed is either by coercion or by ideology. Ideology uses symbolic as well as fake forms of elevation. For example the tactical elevation of women to levels of Durga, and Kali to deal with the trauma at personal level. This is basically to accept acquiesces. Calling the untouchables '*Harijans*' can also be looked at in same light. The second category of partial acceptance of reduced status is to retain some power buys into this ideology of fake partial elevation. In reality it is nothing but a safety valve that holds the big bubble of shame from bursting.

The third response to shame is what this thesis has taken up in great detail is that of subversion of shame. In this response shame is claimed by the tormented as their weapon and that of the tormentor's burden to bear. One problem is that in countering the claims of something, one ends up internalising the concepts and categories of the same thing it wishes to counter. Thus, in a tacit way shame breeds more shame. It becomes the language between the tormented and tormentor, only problem being that the tormented never had a choice in picking this shame language, it was picked out for them and now they have no other option but to speak in it. But what is important is that while developing an insight into shame that in having a dialogue about ones shameful condition with oneself, one is at an epistemological act, but in claiming it, by

communication of it to the public and in trying to deny it logic or distancing oneself from shame inducing consciousness is a political act.<sup>cxx</sup> Political protest that strip naked, that call out the tormentor for their atrocities are acts of shame subversion. Subversion of shame is made possible because politics of shame is a vector<sup>cxxi</sup> quantity. It has both the intensity and the direction. In inverting shame, the intensity of the emotion, the reducing capacity of it remains intact, in fact it gets pronounced but the direction of it is now inverted towards the tormentor. This is made possible because shame is a translational; it is the language of the internal and external conscience. Both the shame causing and shame inducing categories are part of the same milieu. Cultural meanings and symbolic gestures are commonly held and thereby make the shame transaction possible.

### III

#### *Elevation by Reduction*

Rejection is a negating the importance of or validity of a group of individuals. It is denial of respect or of recognition as an equal and vital part of political system. To help understand with an example, let us take the example of UP state assembly elections of 2017, the BJP claiming that they do not even need to ask for Muslim vote is precisely an act of rejection. In a country where elections are great exercise in asking for people's support, such claims of having a minority irrelevant is relegating the Muslims in UP to an irrelevant status. But this is not reduction. Reduction is a far severe form of rejection. But it stops short of reducing an entity entirely. As discussed above this is because total reduction is dangerous for politics. In the Hindi language there is common saying '*nang bada parmashwar se*' (the one who is naked is bigger than God). The '*nanga/naked*' is used metaphorically for anyone who no longer pays any attention to social custom or recognition; one oblivious to their shame. Such a person they say is more powerful than even God. This person generates fear. This is precisely why naked body protestors generate

panic and fear. They appear to have reached that status, of no longer caring about the social custom of clothing. It is no wonder that most naked people are assigned two extreme positions, either of the sacred (saints, sages and godly) or of the profane (witches, mad, polluted). Therefore, the exercise of power always stops short of total reduction, because total reduction is capable of transcending this boundary. Once the boundary is transcended, the escape from power of shame is made possible. Total reduction is therefore capable of becoming entirely powerful. This process is the process of elevation by reduction. In subversion of shame the partially reduced reduce themselves much more until they transcend this boundary. The political and social no more have the technology to control them. As entirely reduced, the fear of shame escapes them. Shame avoidance and partial shame acceptance are no longer the cases, there is no face left to save. In their total reduction, they

now call upon their tormentors to shame. The moral insight gained by the victims of shame is used by them to hold the dominated responsible. This reduces the tormentor at the following levels. One is at the level of moral shock. The tormentor is shamed, his acts made public and his responsibility fixed. Two is the pinning of blame. Naked protest movements call out the names of those they hold responsible quite clearly. This is powerful because the acts of God or those of destiny cannot quite really be blamed upon anyone. When people are shamed in the traditional societies, they are done on the sanction of God. If one looks at blemishes of the body, caste, race etc, all of them are pre-given. The past birth karma theory justifies the caste system. In adequately pointing out the blame on the tormentor, the protestors free themselves of the vicious web of dependence of other-worldly entities.

Readers of this work may well be in a place where they could wonder if this work is making a case for shame to be in politics as a desirable form. Let this be made clear, that shame in politics is a process so complex that it works very subtly and therefore making a distinction between desirable and undesirable shame is a futile exercise. How then do we classify what shame is perverse and what is not? If shame cannot immediately be classified as desirable or undesirable in itself,



perhaps what can be suggested rather firmly is that shame is antithetical to the idea of a decent society when shame as negative judgement of other is made to discriminate, marginalise, ghettoise, eliminate or torment an individual or a group, or an identity. If shaming as an act leads to temporary or permanent paralysing of people's capacity for growth, freedom and a good life, than shame is the ideological equivalent of worst forms of violence. Even as an emotion of coherence (homogeneity of structures in society) or discipline (education of etiquettes) or of repentance (in case of crimes, war crimes, genocide, rapes) shame is used in political life rather coercively but if the use of shame leads to just situations, perhaps it is not as dangerous as the situations where shame is used to humiliate the already poor, weak and different. That shame can be fruitful in any form is a misconception. Shame in every form is non pleasurable. This work is making a case for shame in politics, for two reasons. One and perhaps a pragmatic reason is the very fact that shame already is political and it already is ingrained in our socio-political system. Therefore it cannot no longer be brushed aside as some momentary emotional hiccup. It really is not a choice whether it should or should not be treated as politics because it already is. Two, Shame is a negative emotion; it is adversarial judgement of an individual or a group. It is used for reducing individuals and it lays the ground upon which larger discriminations stand. Therefore any attempt at political theorisation cannot afford to ignore the power of shame in aligning, prioritizing and subjugating agendas of importance in political systems. In protest movements where shame is being subverted, the deep anxieties of both the tormented and tormentor are at play. Shaming the tormentors is never a choice, it is not a freedom to chose the method of protest. It is quite the opposite really. It is the absence of choice that pushes groups and individuals into using shame.

This work is suggesting that the only way out of shame is through it. One has to pass through shame to neutralise it politics. In passing through shame, one will need to own it, and perhaps also disown it simultaneously. In naked protest movements which this work has taken up for study, protestors are confidently able to shame their tormentors and reverse the logic of power. In the moments of naked

spectacle, they own their space, their bodies, and the power attached to the public viewing of the exchange. When the policemen paraded naked family or when in Una flogging was done and men tied to a car were moved around the neighbourhood, the idea was to make a public announcement. That is to make available some bodies for the world to see as being animal like, derived of dignity of a human being. In claiming shame, the protestors use the same public announcement. This act one could argue does not give us a way out of shame, instead it just increases shame more, perhaps it inverts the logic of power of shame, but in no way does it reduces shame in politics. It is true that subversion of shame does not give a way out of shame immediately. But there is a larger role that incidents of shame subversion play for politics. One, they break the shame barricade. Shame is located (or made to reside) in specific constituencies. The boundaries of shame are clearly drawn and religiously maintained. Subversive movements break the barricades to extend the spectrum of shame to the other side. This reduces the power shame has over the marginalised. Second, subversive shame movements break the power of shame loop. Shame is made most effective by a twin process of one shame-belief and two of shame-act. This process works on mutual reinforcement. Shame-acts selectively and periodically pick individuals from a group and enact shaming in public. This shame act is then used daily to reinforce the shame beliefs. The power of imagination and the fear of supposed possibility of being caught in shame act propel people to avoid shame and thereby the loop of power of shame completes itself. Shame-beliefs further embolden the shame-acts, and in turn get reinforced by the shame- beliefs. Protests such as the naked protest movements and others such which claim the shame as their own weapon break this circuit. Third, they denuclearise the intensity of shame, the spectacle and theatrics have the capacity to hold any spectator captive. And yet in recent times there has emerged a grid pattern which presents itself in every desperate group taking up naked protests. The intensity is now being deflated because of repeated occurrences. And this leads to point fourth of shame normalisation, more number of movements will increasing make naked protests a normalised phenomenon which perhaps will no longer hold the shock value, it may

no longer disturb people. Like the other forms of protest which ones held the moral imagination of people but no longer do. This is a possibility that one will have to consider eventually.

But the larger problem for politics of decent society is this. What impact does normalization of shame have on the politics of equality and dignity? Does it open spaces for democratic practices? This work is inclined to consider the possibility of shame movements to not only invert the power of shame but also open up further spaces of deliberations, both moral and political. This opening up of spaces will hold the tormentor responsible if not in big grand way but the very least in recognising the apparent vulnerability of the dominators, that they are also in fact susceptible to the perverse, negative, reducing shame. If the main aim of dominator is to elevate oneself over others, shame will only play to opposite role. Perhaps shame avoidance will ensure that the tormentors will cease to reduce others, if not out of sense of equality than perhaps out of fear of being reduced.

But is it desirable to build a politics of shame based on politics of fear? Is it desirable to have a society whose organising principle is shame? The answer is in the negative. Shame process elevates no one. It redeems no one. Protest of subversion of shame reduces the already reduced further, and thereby reduces the tormentor. The route to elevation of the hitherto shamed is through reduction of all first. Is this the best possibility in a democratic polity? Perhaps not, yet there are perhaps no better ways to deal with Politics of shame until we develop political spaces devoid of shame entirely. What we need is a shame free politics. The responsibility of which lies on the state, its institutions, the civil society and perhaps protest movements help open up these spaces for democratic possibilities.

## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> News video Retrieved from <http://deshgujarat.com/2007/07/06/her-half-nude-walk-on-roadsnot-madshe%E2%80%99s-provokedvideo/>

<sup>ii</sup> Hindi word used to refer to the marital status of a woman. In northern Indian cultures, bangles have colour codes. The Green and red colour bangles are restricted to married women. This makes them easily identifiable, as married, unmarried or widowed. No such marking is done for men, but women are required to carry the status of marriage as mark on themselves.

<sup>iii</sup> Play written by Mahasweta Devi in 1988

<sup>iv</sup> (Mahasweta Devi 1988:196)

<sup>v</sup> Dictionary defines slut to be a woman who has many sexual partners, or the one who is usually untidy and lazy. Slutty is a derogatory word used to refer to a woman who has control over her sexuality and therefore becomes the biggest nightmare of a patriarchal society.

<sup>vi</sup> Raghvan 2016, News report Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-on-top-in-exportinbeef/article7519487.ece>

<sup>vii</sup> Slogan given by the Una protestors whereby they refused to carry animal carcasses any longer which was hitherto considered as their job.

<sup>viii</sup> (Rawls 1971:442)

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<sup>ix</sup> (ibid 62)

<sup>x</sup> (ibid 440)

<sup>xi</sup> (Nussbaum 2004:15). See Nussbaum for rich discussion on how infants develop shame associated emotions and behaviour

<sup>xii</sup> Nussbaum (2004), 16. Cf. Massaro (1997 and 1999), who utilizes a number of different psychological and sociological theories of shame to show why shame should not be introduced into the contemporary legal system in the form of shaming penalties.

<sup>xiii</sup> (Locke 2007:153–55, 159) She borrows the term “where freedom can dwell” from Hannah Arendt

<sup>xiv</sup> (Warner 1999)

<sup>xv</sup> (Elshtain 1995)

<sup>xvi</sup> (Lasch 1995:198)

<sup>xvii</sup> (Ibid 206).

<sup>xviii</sup> (Ibid 206).

<sup>xix</sup> Etzioni (2001)

<sup>xx</sup> Ibid chapter 2, 37–47; and (Kahan 1996).

<sup>xxi</sup> (Ibid 42, 46)

<sup>xxii</sup> (Ibid 44).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Miller (1997), 36. See also Kahan (1996) and (1999).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Miller (1997), 202; and Kahan (1999), 64.

<sup>xxv</sup> (Braithwaite 2000)

<sup>xxvi</sup> (Braithwaite 2000:120)

<sup>xxvii</sup> (ibid)

<sup>xxviii</sup> Drumbl (2002) and Lu (2008).

<sup>xxix</sup> Demonetisation is the word used to refer to the policy announcement of the November 8<sup>th</sup> 2016 whereby the government of India announced that Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes will cease to be legal tenders from the said in the economy. These notes were to be exchanged at banks and new currency was to be withdrawn. In the initial months, the policy restricted the amount which could be exchanged and withdrawn. More than 70% of the currency (in form of 500 and 1000 rupees note was therefore held invalid over course of one night.

<sup>xxx</sup> A social media troll is a person who creates conflict on the internet with the sole intention of disturbing people and eliciting emotions responses. A troll is inclined to divert discussion from topics at hand to irrelevant and hate spewing places. A troll is a cyber bully and source of internet chaos.

<sup>xxxi</sup> (Heller 1980)

<sup>xxxii</sup> (Goodwin 2001)

<sup>xxxiii</sup> (Jasper 2011)

<sup>xxxiv</sup> (Lazarus,1970:209)

<sup>xxxv</sup> ( Hillman,1970:121)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> (Hartman,1976:145)

<sup>xxxvii</sup> (Koziak 2000:8); (Jacobs 2008:72); and (Berlant 2008: 81)

<sup>xxxviii</sup> (Hall 2002) and (Hirschman 1977)

<sup>xxxix</sup> (Hirschman 1977)

<sup>xl</sup> (Walzer 2002:619-22)

<sup>xli</sup> I am using the term feeling and emotion almost interchangeably here. But they are not same. There are a number of differences as proposed in discipline of psychology. To mention a few, feelings are considered more temporary as opposed to emotions which have longevity attached

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to them. Emotions are concerned with appraisals while feelings are more or less immediate response to bodily stimulus. Some also associate feelings with internal processes of body, hunger and sex and emotion to have externality. While these are worthy consideration, they are not immediately relevant to my work. (Arnold,1970)

<sup>xlii</sup> (Guru,2009)

<sup>xliii</sup> (Guru 2009)

<sup>xliv</sup> (Arieti 1970:135)

<sup>xlv</sup> ‘*Haraam*’ is an Arabic term used for anything that is forbidden according to Islamic law.

<sup>xlvi</sup> (Arieti 1970:140)

<sup>xlvii</sup> (Nussbaum 2001)

<sup>xlviii</sup> (Nussbaum 1990:40)

<sup>xlix</sup> (ibid :43)

<sup>l</sup> (Taylor 2002:67)

<sup>li</sup> (Plutchik 1970)

<sup>lii</sup> (Taylor 2002:69)

<sup>liii</sup> (Taylor 2002:85)

<sup>liv</sup> The principle of right refers to the principle of justice: ‘When we go against our sense of justice we explain our feelings of guilt by reference to feelings of justice’. (Rawls 1971)

<sup>lv</sup> (Nussbaum 2001)

<sup>lvi</sup> (Kant 1786)

<sup>lvii</sup> (Guru 2009)

<sup>lviii</sup> (Ibid)

<sup>lix</sup> Term used by Gopal Guru , to suggest the process whereby human beings seek differentiation, first from nature and second from her fellow human beings. Human life becomes meaningful from double elevation.

<sup>lx</sup> This is Ortner’s formulation that ‘female is to male what nature is to culture’ in

(Hartman,1976:145)

<sup>lxi</sup> (Mahanta 1994:91)

<sup>lxii</sup> (Sartre 1943:261)

<sup>lxiii</sup> (Heller 1985)

<sup>lxiv</sup> (Ibid 3)

<sup>lxv</sup> (Synnott 1992:81)

<sup>lxvi</sup> (Geetha 2009:97)

<sup>lxvii</sup> Borrowing from Goffman 1963

<sup>lxviii</sup> (Douglas 1966)

<sup>lxix</sup> Bible suggests that Eve is made out of Adam’s rib.

<sup>lxx</sup> Hijra community in India works as a strong knit system of Guru’s and their families. A guru takes in a *Chela*, who either pays the Guru a maintenance price or works for them. The guru instead takes the *Chela* in with an initial buy in. This is done through an induction ritual. See Revathi’s account in the A hijra’s story to better understand this.

<sup>lxxi</sup> (Cohen:1972)

<sup>lxxii</sup> (Douglas:1996)

<sup>lxxiii</sup> (Steinem 1978). Retrieved from <http://www.mum.org/ifmencou.htm>

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Urdu word for shame

<sup>lxxv</sup> Documentary on Kunan Poshpora Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5L3MFsOYTX0>

<sup>lxxvi</sup> (Nandy 2009)

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<sup>lxxvii</sup> (Parekh 2009:26)

<sup>lxxviii</sup> (Nandy 2009:51)

<sup>lxxix</sup> Sushma Swaraj, parliament session on December 2012 rape. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfL0EbMw684>

<sup>lxxx</sup> (Parekh 2009)

<sup>lxxxii</sup> (Nandy 2009)

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Kantian formulation of a human being.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> (Goffman 1963)

<sup>lxxxv</sup> The term protest and social movement have been used interchangeably, but the two are not same. What they do have in common is element of opposition. A social movement is much broader concept and may even include movements that further a situation of power. But protest is always an opposition.

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The term dynamic is used to mean that its goals, participants, reach, methods and geography alters as we move in space and time. The central character of it perhaps is its homogeneity.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> (Blumer 1969)

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> (Ibid:99)

<sup>lxxxix</sup> (Tilly 2004:1)

<sup>xc</sup> (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:4)

<sup>xc</sup> (Tarrow 1998:2)

<sup>xc</sup> (Cox, Nilson 2014:175)

<sup>xc</sup> (Foucault 1978:1)

<sup>xc</sup> Slogan painted in bold letters on the banner of the protestors.

<sup>xc</sup> From news report. Retrieved from <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-sushma-swaraj-the-politician-who-once-threatened-to-shave-her-head-1325066>

<sup>xc</sup> The Kangla fort was the seat of power for Manipur kings until it was lost to the British in 1892. The fort had been with the Indian army since Independence and has been a bone of contention. In the aftermath of 2004 protest, the 17<sup>th</sup> Assam Rifles were shifted out of the fort.

<sup>xc</sup> Traditional Manipuri dress worn by women .

<sup>xc</sup> From <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manorama-death-brutal-torture-probe-panel/article6596278.ece> [last accessed December 9, 2017]

<sup>xc</sup> From a news report can be accessed here <https://www.stratpost.com/mod-no-prosecutions-under-afspa/>

<sup>xc</sup> P Ayyakannu is the leader of the Tamil Nadu farmer protests. This is a response given by him during an interview at India today enclave. Can be accessed here <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-conclave-south-2018/video/farmers-in-distress-congress-mp-renuka-chowdhury-activist-ayyakannu-slam-modi-sarkar-1149826-2018-01-19> [last accessed 25 May 2018]

<sup>c</sup> Plural because it is multifaceted and has no specific causalities that could immediately be pointed at. There is no clear picture. There is no one way of explaining the act, or the process of suicide. The explanations vary from a neurobiological to socio cultural. Economic face undoubtedly is the primary one. Yet there is no single finality to it.

<sup>ci</sup> Several of the suicide notes left by farmers are not addressed to families, panchayats, creditors or bankers, but to Chief Ministers of states and Prime ministers of the country.

<sup>cii</sup> Economic survey of India, Ministry of finance 2018

<sup>ciii</sup> India labour market report 2017 by International Labour Organisation

<sup>civ</sup> National crimes bureau department statistics in (Mishra2014)

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<sup>cv</sup> (Vasavi 2009)

<sup>cvi</sup> (ibid)

<sup>cvi</sup> RBI data, available at <https://www.firstpost.com/india/chart-rs-500-rs-1000-notes-form-86-of-total-value-of-currency-in-circulation-3096964.html> [last accessed May 5, 2018]

<sup>cvi</sup> Press release from 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018, available at <http://nhrc.nic.in/disparchive.asp?fno=3445> [last accessed June 26, 2018]

<sup>cix</sup> (Tamale 2016)

<sup>cx</sup> (Tarlo 1996)

<sup>cx</sup> Gymnosophy comes from the greek word gymnos: naked and sophia: wisdom. Gymnosophy is a philosophy and lifestyle based on the belief that nudity is a normal condition that should be embraced by all human beings. (Jirasek & Hlavinka, 2010)

<sup>cxii</sup> (Carr-Gomm, 2010:65)

<sup>cxiii</sup> (Tamale 2016)

<sup>cxiv</sup> Hijra is the term specific to south Asia used to refer to a person whose birth sex is male but who identifies as female or as neither male nor female; a eunuch.

<sup>cxv</sup> (Lewis, 2009)

<sup>cxvi</sup> Acts passed by legislature to handle situations of extraordinariness where the normal course of justice is suspended. The logic is that the extraordinariness of circumstances necessitates extraordinariness of laws. Terrorism, armed insurgency etc are the situations that have acts like POTA, Prevention of terrorism Act 2002

<sup>cxvii</sup> The seemingly harmless acts of checking premises on pretext of security are in fact acts of profound violation of privacy. Laying bare the intimate and personal to the public eye can in fact be seen as the everyday face of shame.

<sup>cxviii</sup> This is directly understood as the formulation of power in Foucault. (Foucault 1977; Rabinow 1991)

<sup>cxix</sup> Relational means that there is an intimate link between the shame as experienced by the tormented and tormentor. The two are not same; they share the same communicative link. Hence ashamed bodies can be 'resignified to shame the external cause of shame'.

<sup>cxx</sup> Borrowing From Guru's discussion on humiliation (Guru 2009)

<sup>cxxi</sup> Vector is a mathematical term borrowed from pure sciences. Vector and scalar are used in measurement of magnitude of motion of objects.



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