

The Intimate City:
Violence, gender, and ordinary life in Delhi slums

Ayona Datta

a.datta@leeds.ac.uk

Abstract: In this paper I argue for an expansion of the horizons of urban geography through a notion of the intimate city. I focus on the slum as a space where the violence of an exclusionary city is woven into its intimate material and social conditions, but where this violence is also domesticated and rendered as part of the everyday. I illustrate through three stories of intimate lives of slum women that everyday life in the slum requires the production of (a) an urban subject who shows agency not by resisting but by living with intimate violence; (b) an urban subjectivity involved in acquiring knowledge of one's bodily terrain in order to limit this violence; and (c) an urban citizenship that argues for a "right to intimacy" as a way to claim a right to the city. This paper calls for a recasting of the public/private divide in urban geography in order to understand how violence circulates through and contravenes the boundaries of public/private, city/slum, tradition/modernity.

Rape on the urban agenda

In the past couple of years, several violent incidents of rape in India have brought the issue of a gendered "right to the city" sharply under the urban agenda. One which made international headlines was the brutal rape and murder of a young female student in a Delhi bus in December 2012. In its aftermath, as men and women came out on the streets of Delhi demanding effective policing, an accountable government, and safer cities, the media began a close scrutiny of how the actions of the accused were shaped in their immediate environment in the Delhi slums. They described slums as "Delhi's underbelly"

and as “fertile breeding grounds for criminals,” which provided a den to Delhi rapists (Bagga 2012). Following this, prominent Indian sociologist, Ashis Nandy, echoing a Simmelian dystopia, claimed that this incident was a form of “anomic rape” connected to the urbanization and modernization of India where “kinship dies and community ties weaken and become superficial” (Tehelka Bureau 2013). The rape was therefore a product of stranger misogyny and an erosion of the ‘publics’ from the city.

Further reported incidents of rape across the country since then have only served to polarize the divisions between slums and the city, constructing slums as urban “malaise” and the seedbed of gender misogyny. This was seen in the most recent rape and murder of two minor Dalit girls in the village of Badaun near Delhi who were on their way to defecate in the open fields, but were abducted, raped, and then hung to die from a tree. This incident ironically unleashed a deluge of proposals from scholars, architects and urban planners alike to underline the gendered nature of risks that women in poverty undertake everyday in order to fulfill essential bodily functions. They rightly suggested that basic sanitation is much more than just an infrastructure issue; it is also a social issue, an issue of public fear and safety for women in marginalized communities who try to lead ordinary urban lives (McFarlane 2014). Following this, Sulabh International (a sanitation-themed NGO) announced that they were going to provide toilets to all homes in Badaun (PTI 2014).

The connections between sexual violence and material “lack” (of shelter, water and sanitation) associated with slum-like living conditions misguidedly suggest that rape can actually be eliminated via the provision of basic amenities or by the creation of “slum free” cities. It glosses over the misogynist networks of social power that led to these incidents – intersections of class and caste in the geographic contexts of the Delhi rape case and

Badaun hangings and the pervasive misogyny in the laws, policies and institutions of the state. This determinism has served to manipulate the geographies of sexual violence in the city to obscure the wider forces of social and spatial exclusion directed towards slums and other marginal spaces to suggest that rape occurs only in the public realm. It also presents slums as the site of misogyny and therefore distances the causes and consequences of rape away from wider debates on gender, class, caste and other social inequalities within the city and beyond.

In this paper, I start from the premise that material interventions to prevent sexual violence, though important, do not in themselves question the inherent gender ideologies that normalize or obscure rape within the private domain. They do not address the entrenched structures of gendered power and ideologies within state, law and society. I suggest, however, that it is important to examine how and why this materialist logic is simultaneously mobilized among those living in slums. This is a potentially contentious argument which on the one hand feeds into wider anxieties around slums in the city and, on the other hand, absolves gender and sexualized violence in slums as a function of design. I argue that it is important to understand how a material lack of the components that make a middle-class home are seen as the precursors to gender violence and how fulfilling this “lack” is a political utterance among those on the margins of urban citizenship. I argue, therefore, for a deeper understanding of how intimate violence is internalized as material lack of a normative home by those living with everyday violence and I therefore seek an expansion of the horizons of urban geography to the intimate spaces of the home.

There is another controversial argument here. On the one hand, an understanding of intimate violence in the home as connected to sexual violence in the city can be seen as

echoing calls by colonial and postcolonial urban planners for slum removal. On the other hand, denying the recognition that the intimate is connected to the urban means refusing to recognize the decisions that marginalized urban citizens have to make around the control (or lack thereof) over one's bodies, spaces, homes, and other material aspects of their private lives in order to engage as equal citizens in the public realm. Seeing intimacy as a potential bridge between the material and the social, the city and the slum, between violence and desire, between public and private, between morality and its policing, I argue that for those living in slums, exposing the marginality of their material contexts where intimate relationships are sustained (at the risk of perpetuating wider symbolic violence directed at them) may be the only way to give voice to the violence present in their everyday lives. In doing so, intimate relationships across home and outside, public and private, become central to the regulation and shaping of citizenship and belonging of marginalized urban citizens. Arguing for a more nuanced understanding of the role of intimate power relationships in shaping urban violence, I therefore illustrate how claims for a right to intimate spaces amongst those living in slums should be seen as a claim for a right to the city.

I see the intimate as an aspect of urban life that has largely been kept outside of urban geography – the non-economic transactions of emotions, affect and feeling. I recognise violence not just as death, pain, grief or trauma that disrupts everyday life nor simply as a “violence of law” (Benjamin 1978) created and enforced by the state but crucially also as a condition that is internalised among its subjects in order to allow everyday life to exist at all in the slum. I conceptualize the intimate city, then, as a site of exchange between a violence of urban exclusion and a violence of everyday life. To use a conceptual

frame of the intimate city means scrutinizing the exchanges between proximity and emotion, the oscillation of violence between ordinary and extraordinary, spectacular and mundane, public and private. This raises the significance of the city (or what we understand as urban) as a critical site of moral, symbolic, structural and intimate violence that is linked through its very fabric of social relationships of power, order and control to the intimate sphere of home, family and community. On expanding the horizon of urban violence thus, I examine what it means to be urban citizens living through intimate violence within marginal spaces of the city.

Urban violence as extraordinary?

In the global south, there is a tendency to articulate urban violence as an aspect of (under)development or conflict (Moser and McIlwaine 2005). As Winton (2003, 166) argues, urban violence is “related to the complex social, economic, political and institutional processes that help to make violence a prevalent means of resolving conflict and gaining power.” The complicity of the state in instigating political conflict results in informal justice, vigilante terrorism and full-fledged urban warfare. In India, in particular, the signature of urban violence has been communal riots (Chatterji and Mehta 2007, Blom Hansen 2001). There are a few moments and events that have been captured repeatedly: the violence between Hindus and Muslims during India’s partition in 1947; the killing of thousands of Sikhs after India’s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her Sikh bodyguard; communal riots after the Babri masjid demolition; and, more recently, the Gujarat riots. These events have generated widespread scholarly interest in the experiences of trauma, torture, and rape among the survivors and how communities attempt to rebuild themselves within these sites of violence despite their experiences of these incidents.

In reflecting upon the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, Edgar Pieterse (2009, 289) asked why routinized violence in Africa that has killed far greater numbers of people over the years has been met with such a “deafening silence.” The same question could be asked of intimate violence in the city. The reluctance among urban geographers in confronting sexual violence as intimately linked with wider structural violence has relegated sexual violence within private spaces and therefore separate from “urban violence.” While the material contexts of intimate relationships across public and private spheres are linked to the professional faces of urban geography – architecture, planning, policy making and urban development -- their representation as rational and objective science (Jaschke 2008) has led to the constructed divisions between public and private, intimate and distant, and especially between public rape and domestic violence.

As Hume (2009) notes, the “separation of ‘public’ security and ‘private’ lives has serious implications on critical urban studies.” While violence over women’s bodies in the public realm often produces public outrage, urban geography has been largely silent on its links with intimate violence within the home. Intimate violence is regular and everyday, yet public outcries over rape have served to perpetuate and reinforce this separation between public and private. This is perhaps most evident in the making of the new Rape Law in India in 2013, which expanded the definition of rape to criminalize “forced penetration” for the first time but excluded this in the case of marital/intimate partnerships. At the same time, the government launched several programs to make safer cities through special rape helplines, combat training for women, women-only buses and railway compartments, and so on.

It is only recently that scholarship on urban violence has recognised its links to sexual violence as part of a “culture of violence” (Stimpson 1992). This recognition also comes from anthropological and feminist scholarship (Duncan 1996, Hume 2009, Kapadia 2002, Pieris 2012), which argues that gendered violence is a manifestation of structural violence in so far as it is a “cultural representation of authority and power” (Winton 2003). We see this particularly in the work of Emma Tarlo (2003) who illustrates how Delhi’s slum dwellers sought to negotiate the city beautification and sterilization schemes of the Indian Emergency Period (1977-79) by deciding who within the family would undergo these surgical procedures and therefore give the opportunity to others in the family to bear children. We see this in the work of Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993) who noted the construction of “disposable children” among slum women in Brazil in order to cope with the violence of high infant mortality. We also see this in the work of Donna Goldstein (2003) who illustrates how slum women in Rio cope with the violence of everyday life through a bodily aesthetics of laughter and black humor. These examples, though isolated, indicate that embodied, gendered and intimate violence is closely connected to the wider processes of structural and symbolic violence in the slum.

Structural violence, intimate violence and material politics

The story of Delhi’s slum production, demolition and resettlement charts the continuities from colonial to post-colonial governmentalities through discourses of modernity and development (Datta 2012, Ghertner 2008, Tarlo 2003, Dupont 2008). Focusing on Delhi’s colonial governmentalities, Legg (2007) reminds us that social and spatial exclusion in slums was part of the biopolitics of colonial governance through which British and native populations were kept at a distance from each other. The logic of this

separation was maintained through a discourse of morality, sanitation and order taken up by the Indian social and political elite after independence in 1947 (Gooptu 2001). Successive Delhi masterplans over the decades have criminalized slums, leading to mass scale evictions through similar logics that have been legitimized through planning and urban development masterplans (Baviskar 2003, Bhan 2009, Dupont 2008, Ghertner 2008).

How is this wider sense of urban exclusion enhanced by the material conditions of everyday life in slums? How do the material conditions of everyday life heighten the experience of intimate violence within the slum? The public debates on slums and material interventions to prevent rape highlight how slums are part of the wider geographies of structural, social and cultural violence in the city. I have written elsewhere (Datta 2012) how this violence is also embedded in law-making, maintaining and enforcing through which slums become part of the illegal city. This wider structural violence produces a sense of exclusion not just from the planned city but also from legitimate urban citizenship. The state constructs slums as a “zone of exception” (Agamben 2005), using a rule of law that then legitimizes the use of brute force in slum demolitions, as well as the denial of basic urban facilities to its residents. This material ‘lack’ of permanent home, water, sanitation, electricity and so on in the slum extends this ‘zone of exception’ from state inflicted structural violence to the social, cultural and representational violence in their everyday lives. They embellish within the private realm, the perceptions of precarity of living in an exclusionary city.

Public and private life cannot of course be conceived as distinct social and spatial arenas; rather, they are continually produced through the intersections between home and outside, self and other, law and society. In India, the modernist separation of public and

private has its roots in the divisions between *ghar* and *bahir* (home and outside world) that emerged during India's nationalist struggle (Chatterjee, 1989). Chatterjee suggests that during this time, the home was taken as the gendered domain of the inner spiritual self, which was pure and authentic, while the outside world was seen as a masculine realm of fear and danger for women. In this context, Chakrabarty observes that for women "freedom" meant a "freedom from ego, the ability to serve and obey voluntarily" (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 335). Chakrabarty argues that while the discourse on modern domesticity had inserted western notions of 'private' and 'public' into middle-class lives in the 19th century, these were also reworked through a redefined version of the 'old' patriarchy of the Indian extended family and by investing the Indian woman with a 'sacred authority' over home and domesticity.

In India, this is particularly relevant in the case of civil law where women's gender identity within the home is supplanted with religious identity in so far as marriage, inheritance, divorce, child custody and so on are regulated by Hindu civil code or Islamic Sharia Law (Galanter 1988). In interpreting personal law, on the other hand, the judiciary has subsequently ruled that fundamental rights (such as right to life or right to equality) have no place within the private sphere (Williams, 2006). Yet, it also reflects particular notions of 'family values' and 'tradition' (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004) and normalizes the gender identity of women as daughters, mothers and wives. In this construction, women's bodies and spaces are regulated by sovereign rule, in so far as new legal categories of 'single' or 'married woman', 'widow', 'rape victim' and so on come within the regulatory power of the state. In the context of slums, in particular, special programs aimed at women's

empowerment, literacy, health and so on construct women as the 'burden of the state' (Rajan 2003) and the patriarchal family as their sole protectors.

In regulating gendered identity through religious and economic status, the state in turn has empowered 'community' as the space where intimate relationships are legitimized, valorized or criminalized. Mody (2008) notes, therefore, how religious, caste or ethnic communities then become politicized entities that regulate the lives of their members by defining the limits and boundaries of intimacy and morality. While different forms of intimacy seek out legitimacy through the moral spaces of the community, those living in slums also seek to govern intimacy by valorizing the moral authority of the family or community, which is often transgressed within its material contexts. In exercising control over the terms and conditions of intimate life in the slum, the state provides specific cultural, political and social meanings to intimate violence in the material contexts of slums.

Slum as the Intimate City

In feminist geography, an emerging debate on the geopolitics of intimacy in the work of a number of feminist geographers (Pratt and Rosner 2013, Pain 2014) argues for an examination of intimacy across several scales and spaces. Recent work has proposed unlikely combinations of words – intimate global (Pratt and Rosner 2013) and intimate terror (Pain 2014) -- in order to reveal how the personal is closely bound to "presumably impersonal spheres of economy and global insecurity" (Pratt and Rosner 2013, 31). While these emerging debates do not address the links between intimate violence and the city per se, I agree with Pratt and Rosner that "intimacy is equally caught up in relations of power, violence and inequality" (2013, 3) in the urban realm. I understand intimacy not just as part of politics but also as part of state sovereignty and the rule of law through which intimate

relationships are legitimized and upheld. By expanding the horizons of the 'urban' to include the intimate relationships of power within the home, I am interested in a notion of the 'intimate city' as a critical lens of analysis in urban geography.

Slums can be conceptualized through the lens of an intimate city in a number of ways. Slums in their very nature embody a material politics of proximity and distance. The material conditions in slums determine how and under what conditions slum dwellers must live their everyday lives, in one-room dwellings, in the absence of regular water or sanitation or electricity – basic services of everyday life that are taken for granted in middle-class neighborhoods. Slum life is laid bare of all its 'private' elements, open to the public gaze, to the scrutiny of municipal officials and, in its porosity, to the gaze of 'others' within the community. By living in restricted physical environments, norms of family privacy and intimacy are laid bare. In accessing basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation in the public realm or through extra-legal means, embodied and intimate encounters in slums are laid bare, exposed and violated. Intimacy in this context is both a negotiation of personal space and a space for sustaining intimate relationships. The slum home can be seen as physically constraining by regulating the frequency of intimate marital relationships, as morally challenging in posing intimate proximities between kin, and as structurally violent in its 'houseless domesticity' (Appadurai 2003). The slum home, while providing a 'refuge' from the exclusionary city, is also in greatest danger of intrusion and violence – from the state, from the community and from the family. The slum is the site of intimate violence from within and without.

The slum where I situate my argument is a squatter settlement in South Delhi that epitomizes this material politics. Left behind by Delhi's urban renewal strategies of the past

few decades, it has a rough population of about 5,000 residents living at close quarters without access to toilets, and with infrequent water and electricity. This slum is denoted as a Camp, which is evidenced in the ways that Delhi maps show an empty space where 5,000 people live. These blank spaces, which proliferated in Delhi's cartography until the 2000's, have mostly been removed with the exceptions of this Camp, which remains out of sight behind several resettlement colonies of the 1970s and 1980s. This Camp, too, has been slated for removal for over a decade now but, for this reason, residents have been denied any of the material 'infrastructure' that defines middle-class life in the city.

Residents in this Camp are continuously pushed to the margins of what is understood as the 'norms' of privacy and intimacy in family, kinship and community relationships, which Agamben (2005) describes as a 'threshold of indistinction'. This indistinction is between bare life and political existence, legal and illegal status, legitimate and illegitimate citizenship, since it exists in a zone where access to basic norms of privacy, safety, security and law are withdrawn. Living in slums therefore means coping with the continuous violence of the state and an exclusionary urban realm, a violence that both sustains and violates norms of intimacy and privacy in the home and community, a violence that is "visible, but somehow obscured from view" (Das 2004).



For these reasons, the intimate is an active site of struggle for those living in slums. Since violence in all its forms strikes at the heart of intimate relations of power, struggles for intimacy and privacy are central to the articulation of urban citizenship. The struggle to maintain intimacy in the various spaces of the home, neighborhood, slum, and the wider city can be framed as the struggle to maintain a right to intimacy in an exclusionary city. In

this context violence is constructed not as an interruption of intimacy but rather as a route through which intimate relationships are upheld, sustained, and rendered ordinary. Like Das, I see gendered agency not as direct resistance but, rather as “the attempt to lead an ordinary life within a framework of violence” (Das 2004). In other words, the right to intimacy becomes the critical arena for struggle for the right to the city.



‘Vocabularies of violence’

The intimate city is examined here through what Hume (2009) calls “vocabularies of violence.” For Hume, this means “foregrounding subaltern vocabularies that have historically been ignored in debates on violence” by “locating these vocabularies in a critical analysis of the relations of domination.” In the slum, this means developing in-depth accounts of violence in everyday life in order to understand how and under what conditions those living with violence make links between intimate violence in their private realms and the wider violence of exclusion from the city. Using the vocabularies of violence as they emerge from the everyday lives and spaces of three women, I intend to bring into view the

entanglements of intimacy, power, and morality that have so far been invisible in wider debates on urban violence.

This reframing of intimacy in the city through vocabularies of violence seeks to challenge the public/private divides that continue to plague urban geography. For urban citizenship to emerge as a space of transformation and critical consciousness, “the very nature of intimacy in relation to private and public realms has to be reconceived” (Reynolds 2010, 35). As Pratt and Rosner (2013) note, the intimate as the sphere of untidy and messy emotions and unruly bodies can challenge those institutions that are bent on disciplining it and, in doing so, “replace the rubric of identity” with a deeper analysis of power from both within and without. This is particularly relevant in Delhi where the constant move to transpose sexual violence onto a pathology of slums is challenged from within the slum. This challenge, however, is not always through active resistance or social action but rather through speech and utterance of sexual violence, from within the space of slums, by living with violence, and by recasting the private space of intimate violence as a claim for a right to the city.

In the following pages, I look at three different stories that are connected through vocabularies of intimate violence. These present forms of utterances are mundane and ordinary in the lives of those living with violence. Yet these utterances are important as a “moral rhetoric” – the “hesitant” terrain of political claims in the impossibility of recourse to law (Chatterjee 2004) for drawing attention to the everydayness of violence. The intention of verbalization of violence is not to achieve material realities but rather to highlight a condition of material violence that is politically charged. Indeed, vocabularies of violence in this case lie at the intersection of the literal meaning of the words uttered and the social

world of the participant uttering those words. They are ordinary and give voice to everyday experiences of living with violence. In other words, these vocabularies of violence expose the slum as a place where violence is domesticated and rendered as part of the everyday, through what Veena Das (2007, 7) calls a “descent into the ordinary.”

Sujata and Ameena’s story: ‘unsayable’ intimacy

Ameena and her woman friend Sujata (and her two children) lived on rent in the first floor of a small one-room dwelling in a South Delhi slum. Built with bricks and covered with a corrugated metal sheet for a roof, and with a small open grilled window, it was incredibly hot on an August morning. All along the walls were loose shelves holding up bottles, utensils, food items, clothes, and all sorts of other goods essential to domesticity. There were posters of the Mecca and a calendar on the wall. On the floor was kept a wobbly stool on which there were a few textbooks, a sign that the children were going to school. The rest of the space was filled with a small strung bed and an armchair. The telltale sign of a “Beauty Parlour” shop notice was tucked away in one corner of the room. In itself the room evoked no significant emotions apart from its sheer lack of space and was therefore like any other house I had been visiting in the settlement.

Ameena and I sat next to each other and in doing so we took up all the space in the room. Ameena’s neighbor and landlord from downstairs came and sat on the threshold along with my research assistant. A number of people including Sujata and her children came in and out of the room. Ameena did not seem to be too worried about this while she recounted her story to me.

Ameena was a young Muslim girl living in the slum with her parents and three sisters. Since she was young, she had been sexual abused by her father each time he was

under the influence of alcohol. Her father used to beg for “forgiveness” from her after each incident and she used to let it go. Then her parents began to have domestic arguments and they sent her off to an aunt’s house where she was abused by her uncle and “fell ill.” She then returned to her parental home where her father continued to abuse her. When she sought her mother out for help, she said that Ameena must “tolerate” these incidents. In the meantime, Ameena trained as a beautician and was doing relatively well. She had a number of clients and her rising business enabled her to rent a small room to attend to her clients. She became the only one in her family with a regular income. Things came to a head, however, when she decided not to take the abuse any more and approached a feminist NGO active in the Camp. They advised her to file a case against her father and sent her to live with one of their case workers in the same Camp. Ameena did not like living there since she felt forced to work and take care of this caseworker’s family even when she was unwell. She then asked Sujata if she could live with her and they moved into a rented room, close to her parents’ home. This brought matters to a head when the parents found out and then approached the customary leaders of the Camp, accusing Sujata of abducting their daughter (Ameena was over 18 and therefore an adult) and converting her to Sikhism even though they had found a suitable match for her. They also contacted her clients who then refused to do business with Ameena, which made her close her shop and rely on Sujata to support her financially.

Sujata on the other hand appeared to be an independent woman. She was separated from her husband and lived with her two young children. No one knew what exactly her means of income was; however, there were various versions. Some claimed that she was a police informer, some that she was a prostitute. Sujata claimed that she worked with civil

defense but was unemployed now. Sujata was very restrained in her interview, answering questions in hyperbole and in abstract terms in the third person. In the middle of talking about the difficulties and abuses they had faced in the neighborhood on account of living with each other, Sujata abruptly asked to end the interview. I saw her several times during my fieldwork, and she acknowledged me in a cursory way.

Ameena, in contrast, was far more open and trusting of me and my research assistant. With her continuous harassment and abuse from her family and her disappointment in getting this resolved through the feminist NGO, Ameena went to the police to file a complaint against her parents. At the police station, she was further interrogated about her relationship with Sujata.

She [a policewoman] said I will beat you. You are acting smart. Your parents are thinking well for you, do whatever they wish. Then I also put my foot down, I asked her, "How can you beat me when I haven't done anything?" Another lady police took me in to talk. Instead, she started talking nonsense. She asked, "Why do you wish to stay with didi? Does Sujata have your pictures? I told her, "I am not afraid of anyone. You can call didi inside, I will talk in front of her." Then she stopped talking. She didn't listen to me in front of my parents...I had taken a legal notice from a lawyer, he practices in Madangir, he is also a Muslim. I took it and gave it to them. The lady police threw the application on my face and said, "Take it away, you stay wherever you wish to. Now even if you go to the court no one will sympathise." She was scolding me and beating me in front of my parents. When we went to the other side, she took Rs 9000 from me that way.

Ameena's experience with the police, within the Camp, and with her family illustrates a few critical points about the relations of intimate power. First, it illustrates how

intimate violence travels from the body to the state and back. Ameena's experience and perception of the city as a place of danger is tied to her experience of intimate violence within the home, suggesting how intimate violence is reinforced within the walls of state institutions and through the bodies of the state. The state as the moral regulator continuously attempts to redraw the boundaries of intimacy within the home, even when this is dangerous and violent. The police's attempt to isolate Ameena from the city (denying her life as a single woman) by defining the patrilineal family as the self-evident place for unmarried women shows how they seek to actively isolate intimate violence from the city and return this to the home as "ordinary." In this process, Ameena becomes a "burden" that cannot be "protected" by any of those morally constructed as her protectors – the state, community or family; yet her 'protection' by another unrelated woman is considered dangerous .

Second, it suggests how the state and law "regulate intimacy and violence in the city" through the notion of "community." I draw here upon Das's argument that the community has the ability "to make substantial acts of violence and acts of moral solidarity" (2004). In Ameena's case, intimate violence enacted by the community is substantiated by the state by transforming this into a symbolic and moral violence at the scale of the city – Ameena was denied the right to live as a single woman in Delhi. The fact that her family was able to approach the community leaders to intervene on their behalf, and that Ameena was bound to return back to live within her community despite her support from the feminist NGO show the pernicious ways that intimate life is regulated within the public life of the city. Her further harassment from her family and neighbors in the settlement highlights the notion of the community as a moral regulator of intimacy.

Das (2004) notes that because certain forms of violence are “unsayable” within the normal frames of one’s life, therefore violence has to be an acknowledged aspect of one’s being and inhabiting the world. Sujata and Ameena’s story construct a similar notion of unsayable intimacy because their relationship could not be uttered in any normative terms. Yet daily reminders that the city is a dangerous space for women forced Ameena and Sujata to live within the same slum neighborhood that posed the greatest violence in their lives. And it was precisely because their relationship could not be named within the moral constructs of the family or kinship that made intimate violence an everyday occurrence in their lives. The city as the site of danger became the regulator of a normative home for women’s bodies and intimacies.

Meenu Kumari: Embodied sovereignty

Meenu Kumari came from the eastern Indian state of Bihar where she had completed her school education. Once in Delhi, she completed a BA in Sociology and an MBA from the Open University. Her husband was a contractor with the Public Works department of the state and her two children were about to take the finishing school exams. Meenu Kumari became interested in social work when she was working in a chemist shop near the industrial area of Okhla and it was there that she became aware of the difficulties and challenges facing women working in the factories there. She began to counsel women in her neighborhood not to go to “quacks” but to approach medical doctors, go to the hospital, get medical checkups done on time, and so on. She encountered a number of survivors of domestic violence in her work – those who had been burnt by their husbands or in-laws, and so on. After a brief period working with an NGO where she trained

in social work, Meenu Kumari was inspired by her mentor to open a primary school for slum children.

At the start Meenu recruited a few women from the settlement who were educated till 12th grade to assist her in teaching. They did not ask for a salary and she did not offer them any. Meenu and these teachers did a house-to-house survey in the neighborhood to gather information about school dropouts, trying to persuade them at the same time to come to her school. At first she faced a lot of opposition. Parents accused them of interfering in their private life, stealing government funding which they assumed Meenu had received, and even brainwashing their children. But Meenu persisted and slowly through her initiative and through word-of-mouth children began to come to her school, confide in her, and trust her advice.

Over time, however, Meenu Kumari became much more than a schoolteacher in the neighborhood. She gave advice on health and nutrition, counselled drug users towards rehabilitation, dispensed medication for common diseases such diarrhea, fever and indigestion, and most crucially became a mentor for young men and women making intimate liaisons outside their community. As an older, unrelated person, Meenu Kumari often made herself unpopular with men who tried to court young women in her school, by asking “You say ‘I love you’ ... Do you know the meaning of ‘I love you?’” She then took it upon herself to teach these young women about the reproductive system in order to produce what can be argued was an “embodied sovereignty” or control over one’s bodily terrain.

By ‘figure’ I explained to them ... the construction of male and female ... This is the construction of the female ... and this is how it happens ... With age, these are the changes ...

this is how the changes take place ... then this happens ... then this ... then this ... children are born ... this is what it is ... and if you become a victim of misunderstanding, you will get disease ... then you will be shamed ... you will run away ... this kind of thing will happen ... there are some people here who have run away and ... this will happen ... Then they said, ok, we will not do these things. [Meenu Kumari]

Meenu argued that in doing so she was “protecting” girls from inevitable intimate violence. By giving them knowledge about intimate details of their bodily terrain (i.e., their reproductive system), she was producing bodily sovereignty (that is, knowledge and power over one’s bodily terrain) among young women. This was evident in one story about a girl who did not agree with her and decided to go out to watch a movie with her boyfriend. Meenu warned her in advance of a sequence of events to watch out for. As she had warned, the man first took the young woman to a friend’s house in another slum in the city where he made her watch an x-rated film with his friends, after which they attempted to rape her. The young woman recognizing the signs that Meenu had warned her about earlier, managed to escape unhurt, and returned to Meenu to ask for her “forgiveness” for not trusting her advice.

This and several similar stories made Meenu Kumari conclude that the problem of intimate violence in the slum was largely due to a lack of access of its resident to the wider public realm.

There is no outing ... in some party, or some club ... or some meeting ... no such life, routine ... must do this, in this way ... When you and me get very [stressed]... then we move around a bit, have an ice cream and come back. This is how we think. Come let us go see a movie ... some ‘freshness’ will come ... let us go out for a couple of days ... some freshness

will come. But entertainment options for these people ... are television ... films ... you will find cable here in everybody's house ... there is no house where there is no cable ... one boy told me, madam, they show very dirty films on tv at night. Violence, hatred ... for these people this relation is the only form of entertainment available. It's because there is no privacy.

Meenu framed the 'problem' of intimate violence in two ways – first, as a consequence of the social and physical exclusion of slum dwellers from the public life of the city and, second, on account of their withdrawal within the “oppressive” spaces of the slum. Thus Meenu was making an argument around the physical and social exclusion of slum dwellers from the urban public sphere as an exclusion from the spaces of privacy. For Meenu, the one-room home was key to the regulation of intimacy in the slum. As a space shared by the family, it was unable to shield young children from the intimacies between their parents or what their parents watched on television. Children were introduced not only to adult intimacies by observing their parents, but also when parents sought adult entertainment through the cable channels in the home, children were exposed to these images. This introvertedness within the domestic sphere and the intense proximity and exposure therefore to adult intimacies were noted by Meenu as the causes of intimate violence over women's bodies in the slum. While the city turned its back to the slum dwellers, Meenu Kumari argued that slums dwellers internalized the wider symbolic and structural violence within their ordinary domestic life in the city.

Meenu Kumari similarly advocated and counselled women to exercise control over their bodies by regulating and controlling their husbands' desires, not only because such desires were seen to increase the number of children, but also because children who were witness to sexual acts between parents were in danger of enacting these with others. When

one of her minor female students decided to initiate intimate relations with her boyfriend, Meenu called the student's mother.

She started crying, said 'There isn't even space, Madam, where does the husband listen? He drinks. I keep saying the children will see. He doesn't listen'. I told her that the girls go off to school in the morning, all your children go off to school. Only one son remains. Send him to me as well. I will give him tuition. Meet your husband at that time.

Uncontrolled sexualities were mapped along a continuum from the home to the city, where children turned to family members to fulfill their sexual curiosities and women turned towards neighbors and the city to satisfy their sexual desires beyond the marital relationship. At the same time, the city itself was insecure and unsafe for women, who in seeking out these liaisons put their bodies in danger. Meenu Kumari took it upon herself to follow her young female students in their liaisons with men in the city and intervene if necessary before the women made a "mistake." She also claimed that she had intervened in the activities of a gang recruiting young women from the slum to provide escorts to influential men in the city by. She followed the auto driver who transported these women and managed to get a list from him. She met with the parents of the women on the list advising them to be more vigilant of their daughters' movements.

According to Meenu, one of the women on the auto driver's list was Ameena. Meenu immediately went to meet Ameena's father, who refused to believe her story and abused her. Meenu then reminded Ameena's father that his daughter's earnings as a beautician were not enough to buy a refrigerator, washing machine and food processor, good clothes for all of them, meat for their meals, and so on. Meenu asked the father to follow Ameena one day and see for himself. According to her, he discovered that Meenu

was right and then beat up Ameena, after which Ameena complained to the police that her father had raped her. Meenu claimed that her statement was key to the police in establishing the “truth,” based on which they refused to believe Ameena. Ameena then began to live with Sujata, who Meenu claimed was a mediator between the young women in the slum and the city escort service.

The conflicting versions of Ameena’s story reflect how intimacy itself is an ambiguous terrain of power continually regulated and weighed against slippery norms of morality, respect, and honor across the public and private realms. It shows that a focus on intimate relations of power reveals particular politics of morality and bodily regulation not yet fully understood or acknowledged in feminist or urban studies literature. Meenu’s story reflects this politics at its pinnacle, where she argues that control over one’s bodily terrain is the key mediator of morality and social control in the city. In doing so, Meenu overturns the argument of slums as the underbelly of violence in Delhi and, rather, provides a much more nuanced articulation of intimate knowledge and power over one’s body as a way to regulate and control intimate violence from the home to the city. This was seen as an inherently gendered ‘power’ in its mapping over women’s bodies and intimate spaces through which intimate relationships were regulated or restrained by women. In doing so, it produced the intimate city as a gendered terrain where “intimate incursions” on women’s bodies were regulated through “critical consciousness” (Kabeer 1999) of bodily intimacies, thus locating intimate violence and its control squarely as the responsibility of women.

Shraddha: A right to intimate spaces

Shraddha was also a slum resident who was trained by Seva Bharati (the women’s service wing of a Hindu Nationalist party) as a social worker. She first came to Seva Bharati

to learn sewing but she showed to her supervisors very quickly that she had potential for becoming more. Since she was educated to the high school level, Seva Bharati asked to teach young children from the slums at her home. Although her in-laws and husband were not supportive of this, over time, however, they understood and Shraddha herself gained confidence. She began house-to-house surveys spreading the message of Seva Bharati, recruiting young women and children into their various service programs, and then training them in various vocational skills.

A very important work of Shraddha, however, was “character building” among young girls. Similar to the interpretation taken by Meenu Kumari, character building meant *‘explaining about character, how we can imbibe good values like honesty, protecting oneself in the slums.’* In Shraddha’s experience, young men and women in “transgressive” relations across community, religious or caste divides eloped from home and often came to live in the city’s slums as couples where they could be anonymous and would be hard to trace by their families. These young women often knew very little about bodily intimacies and were therefore exploited by men – either raped or abandoned or trafficked. Shraddha worked with these women to help them understand their parents’ resistance to their intimate transgressions and to return home. For married women, Shraddha counselled them on *‘How to behave with in-laws at home, with children, how we should mold children. What can we teach children so that our society can progress, our country can progress.’* It was most important to Shraddha that *‘whatever happens in life, one should perform one’s duties. Consider your father-in-law equal to your father; consider your mother-in-law equal to your mother.’*

For Shraddha, the one-room dwelling was an important site of fulfillment of these duties. Shraddha felt resigned about its material conditions: *'There is only one room, what will awareness among the women do?'* she asked. In these one-room dwellings, any form of social or moral development of women or even their children was seen as impossible. In her door-to-door surveys, Shraddha had observed the conditions in different homes and concluded that the one-room dwelling was the primary reason for the moral and social degeneration of slum communities. As she explained:

Once I had gone into a jhuggi, and there was a big child, around 10-12 years old, was sitting outside on a cot, with a sari draped over it. And there were 5-7 children, all small, I asked who they were. He said they are my brothers and sisters. [I asked] 'Where are your parents?' [He said], 'At work'. They [children] were all sitting on that one cot, the poor things. Those children see those walls, no play, no nothing. What will their life be like? When I saw that, I thought, perhaps this is what is called hell.

Shraddha advocated open spaces and larger size homes as key to the development of intimate relations within families. Like Meenu, Shraddha notes that those living in slums have a poor material environment where opportunities for leisure, growth, and personal development are very limited. One of the key issues was the education of children. Shraddha noted that there should be a separate room for children to develop their learning. The one-room home does not allow for quiet spaces for children to study and learn and this in the long run is seen to come in the way of overall development and employment opportunities for those living in slums. She noted that *'If from childhood they [children] have their own space, then their mentality is different'*. She noted that while slum women worked very hard, in India, *'4th [working] class men are very useless'*. It is these men, she suggested,

who are unable to create intimate relationships with their wives because values of becoming responsible for and supporting their families have not been inculcated in them from childhood, yet they have formed an attitude of entitlement towards women's bodies, spaces and earnings. For Shraddha, then, intimate violence was a result of the lack of an Indian masculinity that was economically and socially protective, a masculinity that could only be inculcated through a positive material environment.

Shraddha's observations were not simply as a social worker trained by Seva Bharati, which was ideologically focused on imbuing Indian cultural values within its training schemes. While an analysis of their ideologies around gender and morality are outside the scope of this paper, it was clear that Shraddha largely aligned her personal ideologies with those of Seva Bharati. Her training with Seva Bharati was reinforced by deeper personal experiences in similar material, social, and moral conditions in her life. She was married at a young age to live in an extended family. Her husband and father-in-law were both unemployed and alcoholic and she was not allowed to work. They survived on the income of their mother-in-law, who faced regular domestic abuse. Shraddha's first child, her daughter, was mentally handicapped. Before having her second child, a son, she went through a number of terminations since she felt she could not cope with two very young children. After the birth of her son, she decided to undergo sterilization surgery without the knowledge of her in-laws, who she knew would have resisted this decision. When they found out, her husband beat her up and they threw her out of the house. She went back to her natal home to recover and then returned to live with her in-laws. By then, people in her neighborhood were beginning to understand her reasons and she began to get more support from her husband as well. They moved out of the extended family home after 25

years of marriage. Shraddha says her husband is now a changed person, who supports her and understands her. He has also begun to work as a painter and is beginning to support his family.

Shraddha's narrative resonates with Das's (2004) interviews with survivors of intimate violence during the partition and the 1984 riots in Delhi, where she notes that "what comes across is not a standardised recognisable narrative of suffering but inhabiting the space of suffering and hence giving new meaning to agency in ordinary life." Shraddha verbalizes a violence that was part of her ordinary everyday conscious existence but which she was then able to overcome through her "strength of character." In this vocabulary, the "signature of the state" (Das 2004) is present in its inability to provide the material contexts for cultivating equitable intimate relationships. The responsibility of overcoming this lack is put squarely on the shoulders of women, who through the "morality" of their actions, control over their bodily terrains, and "strength of character" must be able to bring abusive male members of the family into reformed paths. Shraddha's agency was expressed not by "coping with violence in the conventional sense, rather by repairing and living with violent relationships" (Das 2004).

One thing is that there is a shortage of space; this is the biggest problem. Because the discussions the husband and wife need to have, in order to run the family, these they are unable to have, you can't do anything in front of the children. Then when they don't have these conversations, what happens is that when crises come in the family, their balance doesn't work. I have one room. If I had two, perhaps I would not have remained worried about my husband for 25 years; I would have covered it in 10 years. If I had a separate room, I would have found ways to run the family. So this is the biggest problem and five or ten

percent of people live in first [middle] class [colonies]. The rest of the country – 80 percent -- lives like this. Meaning family relationships cannot be built. This too makes our country backward.

Shraddha's argument is an argument for the right to intimacy within the home. It is, as Das (2004) would suggest, not just violence upon one's own body but also that "one's access to context is lost," that constitutes a sense of being violated across private and public domains. For Shraddha, intimacy or lack thereof in the home had a direct connection to urban violence, to intimate violence, and to (under)development. In India, such discourses of the moral degeneration of slum residents were prevalent during the colonial era (Gooptu 2001) and have been appropriated in postcolonial urban planning practices of slum demolition and resettlement. Developing Meenu's argument for an embodied sovereignty, however, Shraddha articulates a claim, an entitlement to particular material conditions in the slum, which is legitimized through personal experience. This claim, while internalizing the pathology of a one-room slum home and its overcrowding as a moral discourse, was also a speech act, a rhetorical device. In absorbing and internalizing the causes of intimate violence within the everyday material conditions of a slum home, Shraddha was articulating a connection between the material conditions of the private realm and the violence of urban development and Indian modernity that has been exclusionary for the urban poor. Significantly, though her argument is grounded in material determinism, the basis of her argument for the right to material conditions of family intimacy and privacy can be recast as an argument for the right to the city.

This right to the city is a gendered right to equitable intimate family relationships that can be sustained through the appropriate material conditions in the home. Although

grounded in essentialist gender claims, Shraddha's notion of intimate violence "disrupts the idea of scale" (Pratt and Rosner 2013) by breaking out from the confines of home to state spaces of modernity and development, making an important contribution in how urban violence itself is constructed and lived. However, this vocabulary is also essentially a desire for a 'middle-class' notion of a material home, seen in its connections between modernity and middle-class materiality in Shraddha's narrative. In doing so, Shraddha internalizes the discourses of middle-class notions of public and private, situating women squarely within the home and home squarely as the rightful site of women's "moral duties."

Rethinking intimacy in urban geography

In discussing the violence of African urban deaths, Pieterse (2009) suggests that the task of opening up the frame of urban violence "is not to look for an end to the horror," but rather to "simply stare terror in the face without any anticipation that it will come to an emancipatory end." The three vocabularies of violence in this paper do just that. However, they are not just stories of 'domestic terror' (Pain 2014). Instead they verbalize violence as an aspect of living and coping with it on a daily basis, not by elevating it to the extraordinary as in the cases of rape with which I began this paper. Violence in these stories descends into the rhythms of ordinary life, akin to what Das (2005) finds with the survivors of the 1984 riots in Delhi. Violence here is uttered through an "aesthetics" of speech that is grounded in and emerges from the material, social, moral, and structural context of violence in their everyday lives.

At another level, the three stories illustrate the active recruitment of the family "as a private, voluntary and responsible agency for the rearing and moralising of children" (Rose 1987, 74) and of women as urban subjects who can regulate and control intimate violence

over their bodies in the home and the city. This dichotomous relationship of the individual subject to the morality and precarity of family life drives the logics embedded in the materiality of intimate relationships in the home and beyond. This is not only through an intimate governmentality of the state that produces an exclusionary urban public sphere for women but also an embodied sovereignty that is constructed as the responsibility of women. The three stories illustrate three aspects of intimate violence: its unsayability in transgressive intimacies that question moral ideologies; embodied sovereignties as the responsibility of women; and the material lack of space that marginalizes the right to moral intimacies. These stories show that it was not just intimate violence upon the gendered body but also a loss of one's access to the material conditions that hold the potential of deterring this violence, which constitute a sense of everyday violation among slum dwellers. While material conditions are continually cited in these arguments to make wider claims to a right to the city, this calls for a more detailed scrutiny of "the forms of power flowing from claims to knowledge concerning family life, child rearing, sexual pleasure, health and hygiene, happiness and contentment" (Rose 1987, 74), and which constantly move to displace violence from the private realm to the city.

This also means that, as critical urban scholars, we need to move away from an articulation of slums as homogeneous entities united in resisting the exclusionary city and state sovereignty through alternative conditions of living. While building the slum and living with the violence of exclusion from the city requires collective agency, this should not be conflated with the very material conditions of their everyday lives, which they seek to overcome on a daily basis. Arguments for a right to privacy among slum residents should not be confused with arguments about slums as "underbellies" of the city present in the

media and in exclusionary urban planning practices. Violence in the sense of what constitutes pain, grief, hurt, and anxiety is constructed very differently in these stories from urban planning discourses. What it means to witness violence at close quarters makes the divides between home and outside, public and private, slum and city significant and compelling.

The separation between public and private forms of intimate violence in the city underlines urban geography's failure to connect the experience of exclusion from the urban public realm to the intimate relations of power within the home, family, neighborhood, and community. I have argued that relations of intimacy raise important questions around power and authority across the public and private realms and therefore should be mapped along a continuum from the home to the city. The domestic environment is an important site of production of the public citizen and along with that an experience of urban citizenship. Yet the intimate transactions of emotion, hope, desire, and affect that are so prevalent in feminist analysis have been largely kept hidden through political economic accounts of the city. The stories presented in this paper, however, highlight the construction of a "ubiquitous domesticity" (Palma et. al. 2008) – a particular typology of domestic life in the slums that stands for a particular typology of urban violence, and in doing so extend the horizon of intimate violence from the home to the public realm and back again. They construct slums as shaping and shaped by intimate violence across both the public and private realm, manifested through the changing uncertainties, anxieties, and desires of marginalized urban subjects as they inhabit these spaces.

The recognition of a right to intimacy creates progressive opportunities for feminist political action around a right to the city. It means recognizing how protests around the

Delhi rape can become a project of reclaiming women's bodies across both private and public domains. It means understanding how an urban subjectivity is assembled through the regulatory power of the state, community, family, and the gendered body. It means understanding how gendered agency emerges by absorbing the violence of intimate power relationships. It means that agency around intimate violence can be found not only in public protests claiming a right to the city but also in the lifelong gendered work of keeping and maintaining a family despite the everyday presence of violence. By producing and recognizing new subjectivities around unsayable intimacies and intimate sovereignties, the lens of the intimate city can expose how one attends to violence not by protests in the urban public realm but rather by demanding one's right to intimacy with a violent partner in the home. Expanding the horizons of urban and feminist geography to capture how those who experience violence make peace with it will show us how agency emerges not from the center of urban social and political action but from its margins.

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