



Autonomous Organizations and the State: Thinking through Foreclosures in the Indian Women's Movement

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“The people are scared of the word anarchism... The word anarchism has been abused so much that even in India revolutionaries have been called anarchist to make them unpopular.”

Bhagat Singh (quoted in Rao 1997)

Where Do We Even Begin?

This paper began as a series of stray reflections. The reflections inadvertently wandered towards why a self-avowed anarchist articulation with a significant following never took shape in postcolonial India. Maia Ramnath, in her book *Decolonizing Anarchism* (2012), one of the only significant book-length studies of anarchism in India, circumscribes this rather difficult question while looking for tendencies in India that an anarchist can find affinity with. While productive, such a framing doesn't answer the aforementioned question satisfactorily because other so-called 'western' political thought such as liberalism, socialism and communism could find a significant vernacular articulation while maintaining their internationalist outlook. Anarchist thought also found a distinct footing across various Asian societies such as China and Japan. Hence going forward, a sustained effort is required to understand the lack of self-identifying anarchist thought in India.

This is a question we do not have a definite answer to at the moment. This would require a longer dwelling on the subject, of thwarted possibilities, language, the role of vanguard communist parties in India, the peculiarity of the Indian political economy, the nature of the Indian state, culture, and the role of liberal civil society. We obviously cannot cast our net so wide in this essay. Instead, we look at the Indian women's movement (IWM) and its discourses to map out certain foreclosures. This decision to focus on the IWM, however, is not merely heuristic. The postcolonial IWM comes closest to incorporating some of the key anarchist elements such as mutual aid, anti-



authoritarianism, autonomy, and voluntary association. For instance, post-70s, some sections of the Indian women's movement explicitly embraced their role as an autonomous movement that rejected existing party affiliations (Ray 1999), were suspicious of foreign funding (Roy 2015), rejected direct involvement in electoral politics (Deo 2012), and extensively debated their relationship with the state (Phadke 2003). It is during its autonomous phase that the movement was able to foreground the patriarchal nature of the Indian nation-state.

The signifier of 'autonomous' attached to the postcolonial IWM between the 1970s and 90s allows for an entry into marking out a tendency towards non-party politics. The women's movement during this time was populated by a wide variety of autonomous groups engaged in a diverse set of activities which were not affiliated with any distinct political party. However, other women-based organisations such as the National Federation of Indian Women (formed in 1954), All India Democratic Women's Association (formed in 1981), and All India Progressive Women's Association (formed in 1991) have flourished under the tutelage of the communist parties. All major political parties today have instituted women's wings that operationalize the women's question albeit not in the garb of feminism. The difference between autonomous and party-affiliated groups pivots around their understanding of gender. The autonomous women's movement invested in developing gendered analysis of social, political, and cultural relations and privileged gender as a category of analysis over other categories.

These organisational movements later succumbed to NGOisation producing both despair as well as an acceptance of capital flow in directing social movements in India. Srila Roy, in her article on NGOisation of the women's movement in India, called "to move beyond... an autonomy fetish in evaluating the IWM" (2015: 111). She justifies her call on the ground that the "ideal of autonomy is largely untenable given the 'indistinct boundaries' between the structures of the state, civil society and the market" (2015: 111). In pointing out 'indistinct boundaries,' Roy sets aside the political potentials inherent in practising autonomy. It is important to keep in mind when responding to such a framing, that while each one of us is implicated within the state and market, it doesn't exhaust all of our life. While Roy perceives in the discourse of autonomy as a backward looking fetishization of earlier feminism, the point of prefigurative politics or practices such as "autonomy, voluntary association, self-organization, mutual aid, direct democracy" (Graeber 2004: 2) is to live as if we are already living in the world that we want. Roy essentially disavows the autonomist history of IWM for a women's movement premised around *accepting* 'indistinct boundaries' i.e., in being "many things at once: [...] co-opted and autonomous" (2022: 102). Roy's cynical call reeks of nothing but the acceptance of the state of affairs, as it is.



Following Jonathan Dean (2008), Roy argues “that the valorization of a specifically 1970s or second-wave feminist model marked by autonomy, anti-institutionalism, and anti-statist radicality serves to relegate from view certain types of feminist practice not because of their actual everyday activity but because of their failure to live up to this mode of what feminist politics ought to be” (2015: 111). Roy’s naive call to do away with the notion of ‘ought’, expels any possibility of living otherwise with meek acceptance of the market and the state. One could twist Roy’s own formulation to ask why one ‘ought’ to be a feminist at all if ‘ought’ is such a dirty word.

We raise the above polemical question to drive home the fact that if feminism has to remain a political project, it must accept the utopic ambitions needed of any serious political articulation. Roy’s expurgation of the political (Rancière 2004) from feminism points towards a radical foreclosure of feminism/IWM in India. Roy’s tacit and meek acceptance of the current state of affairs was prefigured in the original foundational moment of IWM. We discuss this original moment in a later section.

With this essay, we want to foreground certain trajectories of the IWM that foreclose any possibility of an anarchist articulation emerging from within the movement. Roy’s acceptance of the state, market and civil society is symptomatic of a longer acceptance, albeit critical, of state and civil society by the IWM through the decades. Roy misreads the IWM’s critical engagement with the state as “anti-state” (Roy 2015: 110) where others have argued that the IWM’s involvement and critical engagement vis-à-vis the state worked towards giving another life to the postcolonial state and its promise of pseudo welfarism (John 1996; Arora 2020). The foreclosure of an anarchist formulation becomes pertinent in the face of diverse issues and heterogeneity that has characterised the movement and has allowed it to branch out into various strands such as ecofeminism, Dalit feminism, indigenous feminism etc.

While one encounters authorial figures such as MPT Acharya or groups/individuals professing anarchist politics on university campuses in India, it’s rare to come across anarchist groups in India or a body of work that engages with anarchism as a political perspective. Anarchism’s viability for the women’s movement in India has also not gathered any significant attention even though it is otherwise “marked by heterogeneity... [with] no centralized organisation, no commonly acknowledged leadership, no unifocal programme... Groups do not share a commitment to any one analysis of women’s oppression, its relationship with other forms of oppression/exploitation, or the strategies necessary for action or change. In fact, even an intra-group consensus is often not assumed or demanded” (Tharu quoted in Katzenstein 1989: 54-55).

By mapping the trajectory of the women’s movement in India, we do not aim to foreground the anarchist elements in the women’s movement. We are quite sure that if



one digs deeper, one can find various degrees of anarchist sentiments among individual members or some stray obscure articulations. Rather, we are more interested in foregrounding that these sentiments never acquire a concrete body of work, political articulations, and movement and merely remain an affective configuration, that one perceives and feels but isn't compelled to articulate for political and theoretical interventions. This echoes Jeppesen, where one understands but refuses "to take on the anarchist label" (Breton et al. 2012: 157). In a stray mention of India, Graeber too notes that "Revolutionaries in Mexico, Argentina, India, and elsewhere have increasingly abandoned even talking about seizing power, and begun to formulate radically different ideas of what a revolution would even mean. Most, admittedly, fall shy of actually using the word 'anarchist'" (2004: 3). While we remain unable to answer why this non-labelling persists—a question worth persisting with in future—we limit our focus to foreclosures within the IWM that haven't allowed the autonomist movement to take on an anarchist character.

In foregrounding this trajectory, we note within the women's movement a tendency to either think/act with or against the state, in tandem or antagonism but never *without* the state. This leads to certain theoretical/political accents within the movement that have been noted and debated but have mostly led to a political impasse. That is, its inability to respond to the hyper-visibility of women and gender politics post liberalization where "Suddenly 'women' are everywhere. Development experts name 'gender bias as the cause of poverty in the third world'; population planners declare their commitment to the empowerment of Indian women; economists speak of the feminisation of the Indian labour force" (Tharu and Niranjana 1994: 93). By foregrounding the trajectory of IWM and its foreclosures, we hope to clear a theoretical and political space that can allow the anarchist sentiment to think without the state to develop into a concrete mode of thinking and acting that can help escape the impasse that has encompassed the women's movement in India for the last few decades.

Like Graeber (2004), we know that there are very good reasons why anarchist articulations within the women's movement in India ought to exist, but we start by tracing the contours of why it doesn't. We hope that these preliminary moves allow for a longer engagement with anarchist theory as such in the future.

What, Who and Where Is an Anarchist? The Problems of Delineating an Anarchist Genealogy in India

Anarchist tendencies have existed in India since the colonial period albeit these tendencies might not always have self-identified as anarchists or displayed only partial or hybrid tenets of anarchist ideals. Ramnath's (2012) work is an authoritative account



tracing an anarchist genealogy in India's anticolonial and postcolonial movements. While self-avowed anarchist thinkers remain difficult to come by, echoes of anarchist thought can be found in the most unlikely places. Consider for example the paradigmatic figure of the twentieth century India, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a figure written to death, who today symbolizes money-as-such in India, who supported capitalists, argued for the merits of the caste-based division of labour in his early texts (Fattal 2006) but later advocated a decentralized governance model of village councils, and withdrew from statist politics post-independence (Kolge 2015). Consider the other paradigmatic aesthetic figure of twentieth-century India, Rabindranath Tagore, whose aesthetics and politics reached "against and beyond the formal considerations of nation, state and community" while launching a "universalist politics... in the registers of theology and aesthetics" (Choudhuri 2022: 46). Such parastatal articulations and imaginations which Ramnath (2012) calls "romantic countermodernism" have existed and exist in postcolonial India as well but are often overshadowed by state-gazing politics. Many such echoes of anarchism are well documented by Ramnath (2012) hence we do not elaborate them here.

The lack of writings professing themselves as anarchist remains a problem for tracing a genealogy of anarchism in India. The writings of MPT Acharya remain a rare exception of a self-identifying anarchist (Laursen 2018). This is not to suggest that certain popular genealogies cannot be charted. Bhagat Singh, a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, and a key figure in the revolutionary terrorist tradition during the anti-colonial struggle remains a popular icon and a key reference point to turn toward when tracing a genealogy of anarchism (Rao 1997). References to anarchist philosophy abound explicitly in his texts and his prison notebooks. This revolutionary terrorist tradition, which traced its lineage back to the militants in Europe through the terrorists in Bengal, was branded anarchist by the colonial government. As Ramnath notes,

while they rejected the label itself, they had considerable affinity for some of its referents. Besides the philosophical and tactical orientation towards propaganda by the deed (not to mention a quasi-mystical fascination with the bomb), they shared with certain contemporaneous strands of the western anarchist tradition a voluntarist ethic of individual action, disregard for conventional standards of law and propriety in the face of what they saw as greater truths, a frictional relationship with bourgeois materialist society, and a marked anti-government stance. (2012: 64)

There also remains a more contested project of revisiting various thinkers during the colonial and nationalist movement and locating in them certain anti-state or non-state political worldviews. Such a project of the reappropriation and re-articulation of certain universal philosophies from within Indian philosophical tradition to thinking against and without the state remains problematic without the annihilation of caste, a



persistently sticky feature of social organization in India. Yet, such a reference to Indian philosophical tradition is also found in Bhagat Singh's writings, by no means a conservative thinker, when he referred to anarchism as an expression of *vasudev kutumbakam* (cosmos/world is one family) (Rao 1997).

Despite a dearth of self-professing anarchists in India, to disregard the rich presence of anti-state and non-state thinking that pervades the geography of India would be dishonest. Experientially, one grows up in working-class India with a persistent call to distance oneself from everyday state machineries such as the court and the police. They are not just seen as inefficient, as liberals like to point out, but they are also framed as an alien force that is embroiled in the machination of capital. Such dismissals of the state persist in the quotidian but remain an anomaly for high theory. This is particularly because such quotidian affects have not led to a growth of vernacular anarchist theory as such.

In a conversation with Baer, Spivak suggests that it's "when a particular class can think anarchism, it does think anarchism", referring to intergovernmental organizations and forums such as World Social Forum. This evocation of 'anarchist' articulations according to Spivak, however, should be seen as "feudality without feudalism" brought forth by a class that can afford to do so since "among the grassroots, there is [no] disruptive, anarchistic concept of the state" (Spivak and Baer 2008: 636). With such a dismissal, Spivak insists on reinventing the state, especially in the Global South. In accepting the "current state of affairs from within which we can perhaps try to make a change... where there are people trained to represent, then let them represent within a robust structure" (ibid.), Spivak betrays the liberal anxiety of the "unruly" (Tadros 2014) and a liberal thinker's inability to stay with that which often erupts in the quotidian. Spivak's dismissal of any disruptive, anarchistic tendencies vis-à-vis the state in the grassroots forecloses the potentials inherent in the quotidian calls to distance oneself from everyday state machineries. It remains symptomatic of the liberal anxiety vis-à-vis the unruly as it cannot imagine how "disenfranchised groups of grass-roots subalterns... can actually take the problems of the world upon their shoulders and know how to solve them" (Spivak and Baer 2008: 636).

Spivak, most known for her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), ironically forecloses any possibility of acknowledging the thought of the subaltern as valid modes of political reasoning. Spivak echoes the tired airs of modernization theorists and colonial officials who for decades and centuries noted the inability of the savage mind to think of the cosmos and the political. A similar line of reasoning is deployed by the patronizing Indian state to justify the censorship of cinema, books, and the internet in India, infantilizing the people who live in this part of the world.



Spivak, one of the key proponents of postcolonial theory, is at heart a responsible hierarchical thinker. Spivak dismisses subaltern anarchism by invoking the inability of the subaltern to carry the “problems of the world upon its shoulders and know how to solve them” (Spivak and Baer 2008: 637). This imposition of the ‘world’ on a body limits politics to one scale, ignoring the entangled scalar processes that make this so-called ‘world’. Spivak forecloses the ability to think, not just in tandem or in antagonism but *without* the state by imposing the necessity of state and representation as being the only valid mode of doing politics. The above jumps in Spivak’s rhetoric hide her sleight of hand where anarchism for Spivak is suddenly equated with international civil society organisations and their well-oiled machinery of spectacles. Unlike Roy, for whom the IWM must be open to capitalist funding, Spivak draws a distance from “international civil society” and “self-selected moral entrepreneurs who distribute philanthropy without democracy” (2005: 482) but in the process dispels any possibility of thinking without the state.

Such a framing of the subaltern agency is particularly striking coming from Spivak, a key thinker of the Subaltern Studies Group which played a significant role in establishing postcolonial studies in India and beyond. Postcolonial studies, particularly the thinkers associated with the Subaltern Studies Group helped shed light on the co-constitutive character of the colonial and nationalist discourse while also problematizing colonial discursive constructions. It is particularly surprising to see Spivak resort to similar discursive manoeuvres which devalue subaltern reason.

Decolonial thinkers from Latin America have noted the limitations of postcolonial studies by arguing that postcolonial studies remains stuck in the western canon and epistemology (Colpani, Mascot, and Smiet 2022). This is accompanied by a radical call for delinking from European modernity and epistemology. While Spivak’s above political overtures could well be read as symptomatic of a general limitation of postcolonial approaches, it is also important to grasp the limitations of decolonial approaches which call for delinking and propose identitarian models of thinking. Summarizing Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Colpani (2022) notes how such “anti-modern theories of decoloniality are complicit today with the liberal multicultural relegation of Indigenous peoples, as ‘original people’, to a static past that ‘excludes them from the struggles of modernity’” (2022: 64). While anarchist thought has been welcoming of the call toward decolonization, it is important to pay heed to such critiques of decolonization which remain serious limitations (Dunlap 2021). It should be noted in passing that in India, the decolonial call has been appropriated by the right to value bodies, knowledges, and identities and their indigeneity (Subramaniam 2000).

An egalitarian thought, while it ought to be cognizant of the gross inequalities and violence caused by colonization, should remain vigilant of micro-fascisms that



identitarian approaches and wholesale dismissal of European modernity risk introducing. While we disagree with Spivak's politics vis-à-vis the state, we agree with her that if the postcolonial condition is a "child of rape" and "if there is a child, that child cannot be ostracized because it's the child of rape" (Spivak 2013: 19).

A serious engagement with anarchism makes it evident that the state is a contingent historical formation and not a necessity as is capitalism. Similarly, the postcolonial moment is a historical formation and not a necessity. Instead of limiting our thought and politics because of our shared colonial past, an egalitarian project ought to build from these shared genealogies which include both violent and utopian visions. To start thinking of anarchism is to both start thinking without and to start thinking with. To think of anarchism, as Graeber notes, is to think with and of practice and not to think with and of strategies (2004). To think anarchism is to think of practice without something and with something, to think and practice a social without hierarchies and to think and practice a social with fellow humans (and non-humans) in free association. Free association seems particularly difficult when the terms of the debate are set in a particularly antagonistic fashion where one genealogical heritage is valued while another genealogical heritage is devalued.

In the next section, we narrate, in broad strokes, the history of postcolonial women's movement in India and its relationship with the state. We narrate this history to map the IWM's affiliation, autonomy, and antagonism vis-a-vis the state (Desai 2002) and clear theoretical space for thinking/acting *without* the state.

The Tale of the Women's Movement in India

The history of the women's movement in India has been told and retold countless times by the godmothers of the women's movement in academia and beyond (Mazumdar 1994; Kumar 1993; Agnihotri and Mazumdar 1995; John 1999; Ray 1999; Phadke 2003). We do not intend to repeat the given story once more. Instead, our concern is to highlight the intricate relationship between the women's movement and the state in post-colonial India in order to foreground another possibility. We use the word relationship not only to establish a strong positive bond between the two categories as has been the case with the Indian Women's Studies Movement (Sreekumar 2017; Arora 2020) but to also note the antagonistic and agonistic relationship between the two wherein the state remains a node around which women's movement gathers as "watchdogs" (Ray 1999) or to raise grievances across various gradations and types. In addition to these existing relations of affiliation, autonomy, antagonism vis-à-vis the state (Desai 2002) or surpassing the state to enable transnational conversations, we foreground another possibility and viability of thinking/acting *without* the state.



To begin with, unlike feminist movements in the west, the IWM does not trace its initial moment to the suffrage movement. This distinctly post-colonial problematic frames 'women' as always-already part of the citizen-nation-state-imaginary. In the sixties, for example, the erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, noted that "Indian women did not need to fight for their rights, they had them" (Bald 1983: 2). One of the reasons for the lack of non-state thinking in the IWM can well be attributed to this always-already included relationship of women as a part of the Indian state.

Women as an object of governance through a pseudo-welfare approach were mobilized immediately after independence (John 1999). However, as the postcolonial state witnessed its first crisis in the 1970s, it brought forth the cracks in the promises of the newly independent post-colonial state. The unequal status of women was brought forth in the *Towards Equality* report commissioned by the Government of India for the first United Nations women's conference in Beijing which launched the autonomous post-independence women's movement in India (Sharma 2017). The report highlighted the paternalistic approach intrinsic to the welfare measures of the 1950s and 1960s (John 1999) to argue for more active involvement of women in the development process (Kosambi 1999). While it is regarded as a 'watershed' (Sharma 2017) report for the women's movement in India, it was brought forth by an authoritarian state that was simultaneously curbing civil liberties (Sreekumar 2017). Existing work on the report has noted its role in granting another life to an otherwise dwindling state. This state-sponsored report launched an autonomous women's movement that worked in tandem with the state to grant an active role to women in national development and in turn, helped legitimize the postcolonial nation-state (John 1996; Arora 2020). Thus, while the postcolonial state and its paternalism were the targets of the women's movement, the state also acted as a 'sponsor' of the women's movement in India (Desai 2002).

To enable an active role of women in national development, however, also allowed the women's movement to foreground an intrinsic link between patriarchy and state function. This unleashed a series of campaigns to reform the law, specifically pivoting around the violence against women: reformation in existing anti-rape laws, anti-dowry, anti-Sati, amniocentesis (Agnihotri and Mazumdar 1995). This series of campaigns were also typical of its origins where the movement was sponsored both by the state as well as the UN Women's agenda. Centring around the violence against women problematic, however, the movement soon spiralled into explicitly articulating the violence inherent in the very function of the state moving on from target/sponsor to an antagonistic relationship, best articulated by women from conflict zones of the state (this includes territorial or capturing the commons in the name of development), or from women from the oppressed castes. Given that this antagonistic relationship foregrounded the entanglement between gendered violence, state violence, territorial conflicts, conflicts



over natural resources etc. the antagonistic relationship couldn't translate into a clear state reform and continues to remain antagonistic contrary to the previous target/sponsor relationship that emerged with the *Towards Equality* report (Desai 2002).

The movement also branched into transnational networks and interrogated the construction of the 'third world' women "under western eyes" (Mohanty 2003) and certain homogenization of the third world women and the postcolonial nation-state wherein the problem of violence is assumed to be a cultural problem, a problem of 'backwardness', of societies that are not yet 'modern'. When the scale of politics shifted to the transnational, it was not the form of state-as-such that was interrogated, but the relationship between states. This is often rationalized by the aim to build a broader movement of alliance between different national groups. These alliances, however, aim to act as international pressure groups to tame different nation-states and continue to fall within the spectrum of target, sponsor, and antagonistic relationship vis-à-vis state.

In all these three trajectories, one might be able to locate individuals who would share certain anarchist sentiments, but the broader tendencies announce the inevitability of the state which subsequently informs the mode of thinking/acting. Instead, we argue for a need to think without a state i.e., to think and live beyond the state as an inevitable scale. This allows thinking from the position of a certain indifference vis-à-vis the state to arrive at strategies that strengthen horizontal relations between individuals and groups.

It should be noted that these foreclosures are not unique to the IWM. Our repudiation of certain tendencies within IWM shouldn't be seen as reiterating the older conflict between the women's movement and the traditional communist organizations. The traditional left dismissed IWM's focus on 'gender' as narrow as opposed to a communist focus on class relations. It is important to note that communists have had a chequered past in India. Most adapted to the demands of a liberal democratic order after independence and moved their goalposts accordingly. The Communist Party of India for example gave its tacit approval to the emergency that was declared by Indira Gandhi in 1975 which led to the suspension of all civil liberties. Both the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and their allies have more or less catapulted to neoliberal market visions (Banerjee 2015).

To Think without the State: Where, What, Who Is an Anarchist?

The difficulty of locating the contours of anarchism in India is not something that we wish to dispel. The lack of self-avowed anarchists in contemporary India is not a cause



for concern. Following Ramnath, we agree that the work of anarchist genealogy in India needn't merely look for self-avowed and self-identifying anarchists. A move towards locating anarchist tendencies in the quotidian can provide us with a different genealogy of anarchism which needn't resemble anarchist high theory. On the other hand, this task of tracing genealogy, we believe, must also be accompanied by tracing the contours of foreclosures in projects that matter such as communism, feminism, environmentalism, annihilation of caste, etc.

Our critical outlook toward the IWM must not be read as a dismissal of the movement's goals and achievements. Instead, we believe that the IWM's initial articulation of autonomy remains an interesting and important reference for any political articulation going forward. The question of autonomy is a fruitful node from which we can start questioning the reliance on state, capital, and political parties in thinking the political, a reliance which is taken for granted as we witnessed in the cynical outlook of Srila Roy.

It is important to keep in mind that anarchism doesn't always manifest as 'anti-state' thinking but rather as thinking that in being indifferent to the current state of affairs, is able to think the contemporary without hegemonic spatial, scalar, or temporal imaginations. It is by being open to thinking without a state that the women's movement in India can tackle some of its political impasses. Limiting the women's movement's relationship with the state as either a facilitator or a watchdog leads to state-gazing politics which is unable to think of egalitarian relations where the state wouldn't matter.

It is worth asking what feminist politics indifferent to a state would look like. Some cursory remarks are certainly due. To begin with, a feminist politics that is indifferent to a state wouldn't repeat the logic of the state: of politics limited to reforming existing laws or introducing a new favourable legal order or being concerned with the bureaucratic classification of life and world or be limited to representational concerns within the electoral politics or continuing the existing regime of wage-labour under new guises. It would not despair at the rightward shift in state politics (or, for that matter, rejoice about the seemingly leftward shift in state politics). It would shift its energies away from thinking, translating, or politicising the vertical order of the state, law, police, and management, and towards strengthening the horizontal order. In strengthening the horizontal order, it would preoccupy itself with building infrastructures that give strength to the quotidian, give meaning to affects, logics and desires that are otherwise dismissed as 'absurd', 'non-sense', 'impractical'. It would work towards materializing a future immanent to these quotidian absurdities and impossibilities rather than infrastructures that merely work towards translating the quotidian for the vertical order of the state, law, police, and management.



As we saw in the text, the autonomous women's movement, while remaining autonomous, continued to work for the vertical order. Mobilizing ground politics to speak against regressive laws, albeit fruitful, continued to justify the existence of a centralized state. Within this understanding of feminist politics, one mobilizes only to put pressure on the nation-state, to rethink its laws, or appropriate the order for some minimal gains. The logic of the state, in turn, informs one's knowledge-making practices, the strategies deployed, and the concepts used to make sense of this state-gazing feminist politics (Roy's work and how it concedes to co-option to describe all feminist politics is a case in point). A state-gazing feminist politics is more prone to micro-fascist tendencies as representational concerns often dominate discussions and calculations, and politics is perceived as a trade-off.

Feminist politics without a state, on the other hand, would mobilize to strengthen the horizontal, the quotidian and the future that is immanent to it. Following this, the knowledge-making practices would focus on exchanging the visions of the future that are not tied to existing state-market-ordered spatial, scalar, and temporal arrangements. Once the site of politics is expanded to interrogating the existing spatial, scalar, and temporal order, the conversations can begin from a present that's truly one's own rather than a present that's co-opted by the centralized powers of the state or the market.

While we agree with Graeber that "there are times when the stupidest thing one could possibly do is raise a red or black flag and issue defiant declarations" (2004: 63-64) we are of the opinion that deeper engagement with anarchist thought and genealogy can only enrich the feminist movement. Deeper discussions on non-hierarchical organisation structures and form can be one of the first concrete ways to begin thinking of establishing new relationships.

We began the essay with a quote attributed to Bhagat Singh. Even today, almost a century later, it is not uncommon to hear individuals who pose difficult questions to organizations of the left in India to be branded an anarchist, to dismiss them as fringe uncooperative figures. Such dismissals do not merely dismiss stray individuals but a whole tradition of non/modern political thought which can open up new political horizons as well as new modes of thinking and doing.

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