

# ***Fighting Gender-Based Violence in India***

*Analysing gender mainstreaming policies and arguing for  
Transformation*



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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the effectiveness of current strategies in the fight to end gender-based violence in India, specifically focusing on the practice of gender mainstreaming in response to gender-based violence in the country. In order to conduct this analysis, I have used Carol Lee Bacchi's proposed "What's the Problem Represented to be?" method of policy analysis as a guiding framework to run throughout my research.

My research began by looking into the "problem" of gender-based violence in India as represented within gender mainstreaming policies, and how this problematisation is shaped by contributing assumptions, environmental circumstances, and other guiding factors in its formation. I then move on to consider how this representation contributes to lived societal effects, in particular how the underlying assumption that gender exists within fixed essentialist binary categories that necessarily depict women as the only victims and men as the only perpetrators of gender-based violence conflicts with gender mainstreaming's ultimate goal of achieving gender equality, and assessing how this assumption excludes the rights of those who do not identify within the gender binary (including many of India's transgender communities) from gender equality goals. I argue that building the problem representation based on this binary assumption fails to achieve the definition of gender mainstreaming's mission in that it works to perpetuate certain forms of inequality, and reinforces damaging gender roles and stereotypes that are counter-productive in their use by reinforcing and rigidly interpellating rigidly enforced gender norms and expectations. I apply a combination of theories, such as Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, Posner and Rasmusen's theories on norm adoption and social enforcement, and West and Zimmerman's theory of "doing gender" in order to argue that gender mainstreaming's understanding of gender as existing within the binary reinforces gender hierarchies that place masculinity in the hegemonic position, and femininity in the subordinate as a social norm, in a way that is adopted and "done" by individuals. I propose that the reinforcement of these norms ensures that gender mainstreaming policies are actually paradoxically and unconsciously complicit in the very structures that they are working to dismantle.

I conclude by proposing that gender mainstreaming policies would be greatly benefitted and work more efficiently towards their goals if they were adapted by dismantling the underlying binary understanding of gender that they are formed upon. I put forward that the

goals of gender mainstreaming policies should be broadened to become more intersectional, and to include individuals of all identities in the fight to end gender inequality. To do so would not only benefit those from frequently marginalised communities who are routinely subjected to gender-based violence, such as the long-existing Hijra community, but would also benefit society more widely by breaking down a damaging and restrictive dichotomy that reinforces a harmful gender hierarchy.

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## Introduction

On 16th December 2012, the brutal gang rape of female student Jyoti Singh took place on a public bus in New Delhi. The girl was travelling home from the cinema with a male friend when she was attacked by five men riding the bus who took turns in assaulting her, inserted a metal rod into her so forcefully that her internal organs were irreparably damaged, and threw her and her friend from the moving bus, leaving them for dead. She died in hospital thirteen days later as a result of her injuries (Boland, 2015).

International furore rose almost immediately following the attack, making headlines worldwide and resulting in activists taking to the streets of New Delhi to protest in the most public demonstration against the country's intensely high rate of gender based violence India had ever seen (Walia, 2014). The media surrounding the case drew attention to much needed stricter protection and enforcement of protection laws, and so in 2013 new legislation was introduced that maintained stricter punishments for sex offenders and the death penalty for repeat offenders. The attack's huge response triggered a number of positive effects, as it appeared to encourage more victims of assault to speak out, with statistics showing a fifteen percent increase in women reporting crimes committed against them from 2013 to 2014, and calls for greater care and justice resulted in the introduction of new fast-track courts and rape victim help. New guidelines were introduced in hospitals, banning the much criticised "two-finger test" (a test in which a doctor would insert two or more fingers into a woman to check for a hymen and thus determine whether or not she had been raped), and insisting upon designated rooms at hospitals to medically and forensically examine victims with a female attendant always present (Ibid.). Newspapers worldwide honoured Jyoti, referring to her as "Nirbhaya" (meaning "fearless") and sent Jyoti's parents tributes in memory of her bravery, and in 2015 the BBC released a documentary about the attack, *India's Daughter*, (Boland, 2015).

Despite these apparent developments following the recent high-profile focus on gender-based violence in India however, there have been multiple reports that many new policies are not routinely enforced, and India still remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to be a woman. For example, there have been reports that the "two-finger test" is still being taught to trainee doctors and statistics demonstrate that public transport is still no safer, with numbers showing that New Delhi's public transport ranked second worst in a transport systems survey with regards to safety at night and being subjected to verbal harassment (Walia, 2014). Following the reported rape of a girl in an Uber taxi in December 2014, Jyoti's parents

spoke publicly, with Jyoti's father Badri Singh declaring that despite the media attention and politician's proposed intentions, "Nothing has changed... All promises and statements made by our leaders and ministers have turned out to be shallow," (Ibid.).

The attack on Jyoti also received significant negative press and criticism, and social judgements on Jyoti's actions the night of her attack have been widely cast and reported upon. *India's Daughter* showed Jyoti's own attackers blaming her for their attack. Mukesh Singh, one of the convicted attackers, stated that Jyoti was in the wrong for fighting back as, "She should just be silent and allow the rape," (Boland, 2015). High-profile members of Indian society also criticised the event, with one of the defence lawyers serving in the prosecution of her attackers, AP Singh, quoted condoning the actions of Jyoti's attackers, stating, "If my daughter or sister engaged in pre-marital activities and disgraced herself and allowed herself to lose face and character by doing such things, I would most certainly take ... [her] to my farmhouse and, in front of my entire family, I would put petrol on her and set her alight." (Ibid.).

While these sentiments may appear repulsive and extreme to many following the aftermath in the media, and are certainly framed to be shocking by the documentary, in actuality they are fairly representative of many commonly held views existing throughout Indian society. An International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) survey carried out in 2013 that polled over 12,000 people across India reported around forty percent of men polled held "rigid and discriminatory gender views", that demonstrated their support for the belief that women are not equal to men and that they strongly supported actions to control women (Weiss, 2013). The study revealed that the men holding these "rigid and discriminatory" views were also four times more likely to prefer male children over female, and three times more likely to engage in physically assaulting their intimate partners (Ibid.). These attitudes support and are representative of statistics detailing that there are 940 women for every 1000 men, 914 female children for every 1000 male children, and around thirty million "extra men" between the ages of fifteen and thirty five, due to the high bias in favour of son preference that leads to female infanticide and sex-selective abortions (Timmons and Trivedi, 2013). Further to this, whilst international figures demonstrate that one in four women worldwide have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives, the ICRW survey reported that fifty two percent of women polled in India had experienced some form of violence throughout their life, and sixty percent of men polled admitted committing an act of violence against an intimate partner at some point in their life (Priya et al., 2014). These discriminatory attitudes are reflected throughout women's interactions and existing within India society, as there are a multiplicity

of side effects caused as a result, such as lack of adequate healthcare and protection for women throughout the whole of India that, for example, result in numbers showing that India has the highest HIV rate amongst transgender women in the world, with almost forty four percent of Indian transgender women infected with the virus (Baral et al., 2013).

Much of the activism and responses to gender-based violence and gender inequality more generally in India have attracted criticism due to much of their focus being specifically addressed to women. For example, in the *Country Information: India: Women Fearing Gender-Based Harm/Violence* guide created by the UK Home Office, all guidance and information is specifically directed at informing women of their rights, seeking help after an assault, safe places they may go or help in relocating to a safer area, without acknowledging anything men could contribute to helping end gender-based violence and keep women safe, therefore indirectly holding women responsible for their own safety (2015). Although attitudes such as this undoubtedly do help women protect themselves, it again places the responsibility of keeping safe from violence solely on potential victims, rather than calling out perpetrators of violence and governing bodies. As a response to these women-centred reactions to gender-based violence, there have been multiple calls to bring the nature of structural inequality more into the mainstream. As Manasi Sinha states, “initiatives specifically addressed to women, which often operate at the society, although needed, are insufficient on their own to bring change. While these initiatives are innovative and benefit women, they do (...) little to reduce or end inequalities between women and men,” (No Date, p. 13). Instead, Sinha puts forward the merits of a strategy for gender equality known as *gender mainstreaming*, which, “recognizes interlink [sic] between women’s relative disadvantages and men’s relative advantage and therefore focuses on the social differences between women and men: differences that are learned, changeable over time and vary within and between cultures,” (Ibid.).

### **What is gender mainstreaming?**

At the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, gender mainstreaming was adopted as a key strategy in the fight for gender equality (Angela King in the UN Gender Mainstreaming Overview, 2002, p. v). Gender mainstreaming strategies aim to confront core, structural gender inequalities by analysing the different, “needs, priorities, roles and experiences of women and men as well as the integration of specific actions to address any gender-based inequalities that may have emerged from this analysis,” (UNIDO, 2014, p. 4). Mainstreaming gender perspectives aims to ensure that issues regarding gender inequality are at the forefront of all policy-making decisions, analyses,

projects, and institutional processes. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) agreed definition of gender mainstreaming is:

...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (King for the UN, 2002, pp. v - vi)

Gender mainstreaming is now viewed to be so effectively essential that it is often considered to be a necessary component in all policy-making processes, project designs and implementations, and development work in order to work towards ending gender inequality on both individual bases and on a global scale. It looks to current situations and differences between the roles, expectations, needs, considerations, and voices of both men and women in order to lessen gaps between the sexes in a way that holds society at all levels accountable and responsible for the existence of gender inequality and the fight to end it. In societies that systematically privilege men and masculinity over women and femininity, it is necessary to approach processes with a gender perspective, in order to counteract initially supposed gender-neutral strategies that could actually end up unintentionally privileging men's needs. Strategies, tools, and guides proposed by the United Nations (UN) and implemented by governments, nongovernmental organisations, and influential decision makers therefore are becoming increasingly promoted, adopted, and adapted, and viewed to be a crucial component in systematically altering society to end gender inequality forever.

### **Problem Formulation**

Due to the credibility given to the adoption of gender mainstreaming policies, this thesis aims to look into the effects of gender mainstreaming on the problem of gender-based violence in India, and how effective current guidelines and strategies are, and have previously been, at contributing to lessening gender-based violence in India, as well as the struggle to eradicate it entirely. I am especially interested in looking into the effects gender mainstreaming has had on representation of gender and gender identity, and how these effects have translated to affecting

the lives of individuals of all gender identities in India. It is my intention therefore to analyse the gender mainstreaming strategies, tools, techniques, and practices devised, encouraged, and implemented by the UN, governing bodies, scholars, and nongovernmental organisations in order to assess how necessary, effective, and thorough they are in relation to the case of gender inequality in India, and to investigate how efficient these strategies and practices are in achieving the gender mainstreaming's ultimate goals not to perpetuate inequality, and ultimately achieve gender inequality (King for the UN, 2002, p. vi). Therefore, my main problem formulation is:

*How effective are gender mainstreaming policies in working towards ending gender-based violence in India?*

## **Methodology**

The overall research, theorising, analysis, and writing of this paper has taken place over a five month period, from March 2016 to July 2016. It takes an inductive approach that relies on five research questions in order to analyse India's situational context in relation to gender mainstreaming from a different perspective and form a conclusion based on my analysis. Throughout the course of this paper, I hope to first analyse current gender mainstreaming guidelines and strategies that aim to work for victims of gender-based violence and against gender inequality in India, before applying gender and gender norm theories in order to examine the effectiveness of current methods of gender mainstreaming that are targeted at dealing with gender-based violence, and the effects gender mainstreaming has on gender representations.

Throughout the course of this research I have relied largely on secondary sources to help reach my conclusion. The sources I have referenced are a combination of both quantitative data such as statistics and direct polls and interviews with community members, and qualitative research such as theory building and policy analysis that I have applied alongside each other in order to gain further insight and greater understanding of the context of gender inequality and gender-based violence in India today. I have used such sources to guide my research with certain theories and methods of analysis, reports and guidelines in order to examine current gender mainstreaming policies in the Indian context, numerical data and statistics to give specific concrete understanding of the problem of gender based violence in India, and theories of gender and norm creation to apply to these contexts. I made the decision to rely on secondary data so heavily as I wished to reach a theoretical and suggestive hypothesis based on current policies and strategies used to deal with gender inequality and gender based violence in India that is formed out of an analysis of current methods, and so it was necessary to examine those methods via secondary data analysis. However, as argued by Bryman, relying on secondary data does not necessarily impede research, but merely allows the researcher more time to spend on researching and analysing the proposed problem and collected data (2014).

In order to conduct this research, I have used Carol Lee Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' approach to policy analysis as a guiding framework in conducting my research. Bacchi proposes five questions to use as guiding factors when conducting one's own analysis of certain policies, and I have applied these to current gender mainstreaming guidelines and policies in order to complete my research. I use Bacchi's five questions to header five separate chapters that initially focus on analysing the current problem represented within

gender mainstreaming policies and how and why it is shaped as it is, then progress to examining the lived effects such a representation has on current communities and contexts in India, before moving on to considerations of how the problem could be represented differently in order to suggest amendments to current gender mainstreaming policies.

### **Bacchi: ‘What’s the Problem Represented to be?’**

Bacchi’s approach to policy analysis was developed to challenge what she argues are “reactive” understandings of policy decision-making processes that assume that policies are formed as a reaction to identifiable social problems in order to form an effective response to “solve” them (2007, p. 1). The problem with such an approach, for Bacchi, is that supposedly “reactive” responses to social problems appear to be neutral, but in actuality all policies are formed based on interpretations of what decision makers view the “problem” to be, which often has causal effects according to such an interpretation and agenda. In comparison, her approach aims to challenge the view that policy makers give particular “shape” to social problems in their perception, language surrounding them, and proposals for policies made in order to address them. This approach especially considers the language and discourse surrounding supposed social problems, and how they influence the formation of certain problems into specifically constructed “problematizations”. These so called problematizations are taken into so much consideration via this approach because they impose particular interpretations upon the suggested social problem that are not so much neutrally reactive, but in fact actually create certain impressions of what the problem actually is. These impressions made by the shaping and formation of certain problems have verifiable significant lived effects upon those surrounding the supposed problem, whether they are considered to be causes or victims of such problems. This method of analysis aims to identify the ways in which problematizations are shaped by policy-makers’ representation of them, and the knowledge assumed throughout this process (2010, p. 2).

In order to guide on how to conduct this form of analysis, Bacchi has devised five questions to apply to certain policies in order to guide understanding into the problem represented within a certain policy, how this representation affects the lives of those under its jurisdiction, and how different representations of the problem could result in different effects (2007, pp. 3 - 4):

1. *What is the problem (of 'problem gamblers/gambling', 'drug use/abuse', domestic violence, pay equity, health inequalities, etc.) represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?*
2. *What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem? Identify binaries, key concepts and categories.*
3. *What effects are produced by this representation of the problem? Consider the following kinds of effects: how subjects are constituted within this representation, the limits imposed on what can be said and lived effects.*
4. *What is left unproblematic in this representation of the problem? Where are the silences? How would 'responses' differ if the 'problem' were thought about or represented differently? [Here it is useful to think about shifts in representation of the 'problem' over time and/or across cultures.]*
5. *How/where are dominant problem representations produced, disseminated and defended? How could they be contested/disrupted? Explore contradictions and discursive resources for reconceptualisation (re-problematization).*

## **What is the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?**

Gender mainstreaming strategies that have been designed, implemented, and carried out in India aim specifically to combat the problem of gender inequality within the country. They are designed to target the twelve critical areas of concern determined by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action that need particular focus when addressing gender inequality in order to most efficiently work towards gender equality and equity. These are: women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women in disaster management, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl child (UNDP, 2008, p. 2). Gender mainstreaming strategies represent the high prevalence of gender inequality and its lived effects, especially within these twelve arenas, to be a problem which is in dire need of being addressed. As the ECOSOC definition states, achieving gender equality is the “ultimate goal” of gender mainstreaming (UN overview, 2002, p. vi). However, the “problem” as represented by gender mainstreaming divisions, strategies, and practices is not merely the existence of gender inequality in and of itself, but the way in which it is so deeply entrenched within a multiplicity of arenas, such as decision making and development processes. As the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) guide to implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies states, gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that, “*a concern for gender equality is brought into the ‘mainstream’ of activities rather than dealt with as an ‘add-on’*,” (UNIDO, 2014, p.2). To bring a gender perspective into the mainstream challenges deep-seated and innately accepted gender inequality, with the aim of restructuring the ways in which gender is thought about, and emphasise when it is not thought about, in order to highlight differences and encourage productive discourse regarding how men and women are affected and treated as a result of different activities. As the UN overview to gender mainstreaming states, “Achieving greater equality between women and men will require changes at many levels, including changes in attitudes and relationships, changes in institutions and legal frameworks, changes in economic institutions, and changes in political decision-making structures,” (2002, p. 1). Strategies in gender mainstreaming aim to work by introducing a gender perspective into multiple discussions in such a way that determines the gendered effects of decision making processes are necessarily considered at every level. This is a crucial aspect to consider in order to reconstruct supposedly gender neutral events that hide gendered effects and differences.

It is clear to see where this problem representation prevails in India. Men hold extremely privileged positions over women that simultaneously advantage them and disadvantage women in a multitude of forms. In India female infanticide, sex-selective abortion, and repeated forced pregnancies are common occurrences as a result of son preference over daughters, leaving the country with a disproportionately low ratio of females to males, with the ratio predicted to be as low as 793 women for every 1000 men in some regions (Gupta & Sharma, 2002, p. 115). Selective schooling and educational opportunities has ensured that only fifty four percent of women in India, compared to seventy six percent of men, are literate (FSD Foundation, No Date), and gender-based and sexual violence is rife, with figures showing that a woman is raped every twenty minutes, and experts predicting that the actual amount of rapes committed is likely to be much higher (Ignatius, 2013, pp. 2 - 7). Women are routinely harmed over dowry disputes, with a study of dowry victims showing that a quarter of victims were murdered or driven to suicide, and sixty one percent of victims were thrown out of their husband's home after extended periods of harassment and torture (Gupta & Sharma, 2004, p. 115). Contributing factors to gender based violence are visible at all levels; despite multiple legal protections for victims of gender-based violence, many are not fully implemented or respected in a number of cases, and trust in the justice system is resultantly low. Although recent years have seen an increase in policies aimed to protect victims of gender-based violence, these laws are often not implemented and so necessary protection is often not provided. For example, although child marriages are criminalised, Unicef reported that forty seven percent of girls were married before they turned eighteen (Dhillon, 2015), and certain acts of violence are still legal, such as the rape of one's spouse. Police corruption is also a huge problem for victims of gender-based violence in India; police officers often rely on political connections, strategically-formed allegiances, and bribes to get by due to their low wages, and as a result of deeply embedded cultural understandings of women's purity, modesty, and shame it is not uncommon for police officers to focus on reconciliation between the victim and their attacker/s than justice for the attack (Harris, 2013). As Varshney states, "A woman's body as the site of cultural purity is the predominant theme in the epics (...) And dishonoring a woman is equal to dishonoring a family and even a culture," (quoted in Harris, 2013). This attitude is so widely accepted and adopted that officers often feel that it is more their duty and obligation to protect the modesty of the victim rather than secure her justice, and there are multiple reports of officers encouraging victims to marry their attackers in order to escape the societally-imposed shame upon themselves and their families. Further to this, there are a distinct lack of available officers to actually respond to and follow up with victims' needs and reports of

violence, with statistics showing that there are only 1,585,117 police officers in India. With India's total population being over 1.2 billion, this equals to around 130 officers per 100,000 people (Ibid.). The lack of trust for justice through the legal system is reflected in estimates that show that for every hundred rape cases in India only ten are reported, and for every hundred reported rape cases only five offenders are actually convicted (Gupta & Sharma, 2004, p. 116).

In their 2004 research project into gender-based violence in India, Gupta & Sharma summed up how gender based violence inherently exists at every level within society, stating that,

The phenomenon of violence against women arises from patriarchal notions of ownership over women's bodies, sexuality, labor, reproductive rights, mobility and level of autonomy. Deep-rooted ideas about male superiority enable men to freely exercise unlimited power over women's lives and effectively legitimize it too. Violence is thus a tool that men use constantly to control women as a result of highly internalized patriarchal conditioning coupled with legitimacy for coercion to enforce compliance and increasing aspirations, frustrations and 'might is right' becoming a legitimate view and increasing need for assertion of individual egos and control. Within this context, several developments serve as a backdrop to the discussion and analysis of increased violence against women. (Ibid.)

Gender mainstreaming attempts in India in this context are therefore designed to help combat the huge problem of gender inequality and the high rates of gender-based violence by bringing attention to the structural realities that allow it to prevail. By bringing gender into mainstream discourse, prevailing inequalities are more likely to be considered at levels where they otherwise wouldn't necessarily be. Gender mainstreaming's interpretation of gender-based violence in India is shaped by the understanding that such violence is permitted to exist, and perpetuated, by dominating unequal power structures throughout society.

## **What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?**

### **Identify binaries, key concepts and categories.**

The initial assumption underlying the problem representation within gender mainstreaming is that the existence of gender inequality and high rates of gender-based violence in India is a necessarily bad thing, and that definitive measures need to be taken during each and every step of decision making and development processes to bring gender differences into the mainstream in order to eradicate it. Although the interpretation shaping this assumption may seem to be somewhat of a given, it actually conflicts with a number of fairly commonly held views throughout Indian society. As the ICRW study conducted in 2013 showed, forty percent of men polled displayed “rigid and discriminatory views” towards gender equality. However, perhaps surprisingly, the study also showed that women often held similarly rigid views with regards to gender roles, expectations, masculinity, and violence. Twenty eight percent of women and twenty five percent of men polled agreed that, “when a woman is raped, she is usually to blame for putting herself in that situation,” sixty five percent of both women and men agreed that, “There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten,” and fifty one percent of men and fifty seven percent of women agreed that, “A woman should tolerate domestic violence in order to keep her family together,” (Priya et al., 2014, pp. 27 - 28). The study determined that, “social expectations are translated into internalized values for women,” (Ibid., p. 27), and this acceptance, internalisation, and normalisation of deeply-entrenched inequality in India has been quantifiably demonstrated with Geert Hofstede’s model to quantify different nations’ tolerance of hierarchies and inequality. The model, known as “power distance”, calculates, “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally,” and shows that India scores highly on this scale, signifying Indian society’s “appreciation for hierarchy” that leaves individuals dependent on those who hold power for purpose and direction and especially accepting of these un-equal structures and rights between those in positions of power and those “lesser down in the pecking order.” Hofstede identifies that “control is familiar” in India that is so ingrained, accepted, and uncontested that it even provides a “psychological security” (Hofstede 2015). Studies such as this demonstrate the potential problems and conflict that could arise with assumptions such as gender inequality and gender-based violence necessarily being a bad thing,

as the presupposition that gender inequality and occurrences of gender-based violence necessarily need to be eradicated shapes a new understanding that contrasts with and challenges the status quo in many regions throughout India.

There are also a number of relevant assumptions regarding gender that underlie many gender mainstreaming strategies, both in theory and in practice. Many representations of gender mainstreaming, including those devised, perpetuated, and implemented by the UN, demonstrate an underlying binaristic understanding of gender, and gender inequality, working with the assumption that there are only two, opposite, gender categories. The gender binary is a mode of dichotomous mainstream thinking, especially throughout Western culture, that classifies all people into one of two genders, man or woman, and does not give much allowance for deviation from the two categories. Throughout a number of documents created and used by the UN in order to guide and assist with gender mainstreaming projects, such as the UN's detailed Gender Mainstreaming in Practice Handbook (2005) and Gender Mainstreaming Overview compiled by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (2002), there are plenty of referrals to 'both' genders, women and men, with no outright recognition of the possibility of any deviation from either of the two categories. This can be seen throughout both documents and is symptomatic of the ECOSOC definition of gender mainstreaming that aims to ensure that, "women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated" (Ibid, p. v). Language used when categorising the beneficiaries of certain policies is significant, as it clarifies exactly who is included and who is excluded from specific motions and therefore who is to benefit or who is to suffer as a result. Passages such as, "both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes," (Ibid., p. vi) are inclusive in their determination to ensure that women are equally involved in decision making and development processes, but the use of the dual term "both" when referring to men and women is exclusive in that it implies not *just* two genders, but *only* two. This is especially problematic as because when gender is understood as a binary concept, gender identity is often innately connected with sex assigned at birth – the very act of assigning a gender to a child occurs after viewing a child's genitals, and they are necessarily assigned either "boy" or "girl" in correlation with either male and female genitalia viewed between their legs (Gender Spectrum, 2016). This correlation is directly made within UN gender mainstreaming guidelines, such as within the Gender Mainstreaming Overview which states that, "There was increased understanding of the importance of seeking out male allies and in working with men to jointly redefine gender roles and relations," (Ibid., p. 9). This suggests an explicit equation between sex category and gender identity, as it links being "male", a supposed biological

reality, and gender identity in being a “man”, which does not merely suggest that the two are inextricably linked, but by using the two terms interchangeably suggests that they mean essentially the same thing.

The understanding that gender exists within a binary structure of gender also underlies gender mainstreaming projects in practice. For example, in 2008 the UNDP collected a number of case studies of “Good Practices in Gender Mainstreaming”, a compilation of gender mainstreaming examples in practice across India which demonstrate the pragmatic lived effects of gender mainstreaming within the country. The document lists a number of cases, such as the Dilaasa (meaning “empathetic reassurance” in Hindustani) partnership, a coalition between two Healthcare initiatives that was designed to provide better treatment and aftercare to victims of domestic violence. The project was praised for its accomplishments by the UNDP due to its successful implementation and the increased amount of women who were referred and received beneficial treatment that catered specifically to their personal needs and requirements after suffering domestic violence (UNDP, 2008, p. 14). However, the formation of Dilaasa’s representation of domestic violence centred around a rigidly binary understanding that framed, and therefore specifically catered itself to, only female victims of domestic violence who had been subjected to violence only by a male aggressor. Similarly, another project discussed in the UNDP report that was praised for its successful attempt at gender mainstreaming was the Parivartan project, a Delhi Police initiative that aimed to provide better protection for women against violence by challenging patriarchal ideas regarding violence against women both in the community and within the police force. The project was commended by the UNDP due to its success in changing mind-sets to become more sympathetic and sensitive towards female victims, both within the police system and within the local community (Ibid., p. 6). The Parivartan project was similar to the Dilaasa project in its framework and representation of gender as, whilst these two examples demonstrated successful attempts of gender mainstreaming in practice that aim to bring gender perspectives into mainstream discourse in such a way that benefitted women and contributed towards the goal to end gender inequality, by only identifying individuals pertaining to one of two genders, with Dilaasa in reference to male aggressors and female victims, and Parivartan in reference to male police officers and female victims, both projects acknowledge gender identity existing only within two rigidly defined categories.

The understanding of gender existing within a binary clearly underlies the representation of the problems gender mainstreaming in India aims to work against, by solely

representing gender-based violence as a clearly divided act in which individuals can fit into one of the two proposed groups: male perpetrators vs. female victims.

## **What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?**

**Consider the following kind of effects: how subjects are constituted within this representation, the limits that can be imposed on what can be said and lived effects.**

Gender mainstreaming's representation of the problem of gender inequality in India aims to highlight inequalities in all aspects in order to most effectively and efficiently identify and combat them at all levels, which can be seen in practice in a number of cases. Take for example again the Dilaasa partnership, an initiative between the Public Health Department of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) which was the first hospital-based crisis centre in India with specific designs to address the needs of women facing violence in their homes and from their families (Deosthali et al., 2005, p.1). The Dilaasa partnership arose following studies that showed that, whilst many women who had experience gender-based and domestic violence were treated for their physical injuries, this was the extent of their treatment and there was no aftercare or provision for the emotional trauma, or much consideration into root causes of their injuries (UNDP, 2008, p. 14). The Dilaasa partnership recognised the damaging nature of this treatment, as the UNDP state, "the attitude of neglect and apathy that [domestic violence] victims encounter leaves them feeling extremely vulnerable and often exacerbates the vicious cycle of violence that they face," (Ibid.). They recognised the different needs of patients, called the health system out on their, "complete lack of gender sensitivity within the system," (2005, p. 4) and thus formed in order to better equip hospitals with tools to deal with victims of domestic violence and to, "[represent] the mainstreaming of this issue into a larger public structure," (Ibid., p. 6). The partnership established two main goals in dealing with the victims of gender-based and domestic violence: to, "(1) institutionalise domestic violence—and more broadly, violence against women—as a legitimate and critical public health concern within the government hospital system, and (2) build the capacity of hospital staff and systems to adequately, sensitively and appropriately respond to the health needs of the victims and survivors of domestic violence," (2005, p.1). Their centres provided counselling aid to referred victims to help deal with their emotional trauma, legal aid such as the provision of legal access, and social support such as helping set victims up with temporary safe shelters, as well as adequately providing training for healthcare professionals to deal sensitively and appropriately

with victims of domestic violence. They were trained on how to take forensic evidence that could later be used in court, provide emotional support, and to recognise when to refer a patient to the Dilaasa clinics (UNDP, 2008, p. 14). The Dilaasa centre noticed a gradual increase over the years of its implementation, from 111 attending in 2001 to 340 in 2004, which indicated that, “the recognition of domestic violence as a health issue within the health system [was] taking place slowly,” (Deosthali et al., 2005, p. 35). The overall acceptance and growth of the Dilaasa initiative deemed it a success by the UNDP (2008, p. 14).

The Dilaasa case demonstrates how gender mainstreaming strategies can play out effectively in practice, and shows the positive and promising effects of bringing gender perspectives into the mainstream agenda. Dilaasa acknowledged a gap in India’s healthcare system, identifying that the system of adopting a seemingly gender neutral approach ignored crucial gender differences that left victims of domestic violence without adequate treatment and aftercare. Their project aimed to challenge the supposed gender neutrality of treatment of victims of domestic violence and identified why a lack of gender perspective with regards to such issues was inadequate. As Michaela Raab states, “in organisations without any explicit focus on gender equality or gender justice, the levels of awareness for gender-based discrimination (and the need to end it) tend to be uneven,” (2013). By bringing gender differences into focus and training hospital staff to effectively identify and treat these differences, Dilaasa reconstructed the staff’s perception and treatment of patients in such a way that not only were aftercare treatments improved in order to provide much-needed emotional care, but that by recognising signs of abuse, violence could be stopped earlier on in the abuse cycle and preventative measures could be established in order to protect the victim from further violence (2005, p. 23).

Dilaasa also recognised some of their own limitations and addressed criticism of the project, acknowledging that whilst their aftercare treatment programs were more developed, they lacked established preventative measures to stop abuse occurring before it happened, rather than dealing entirely with women who had already experienced varying levels of abuse. They recognised that the nature of their work was very new and still developing, and that there was still plenty of work to continue to be done, and so recommended further research and action into preventing occurrences of domestic violence in the first place. Dilaasa is just one example of how the problematisation represented within gender mainstreaming policies can both shape practical initiatives and directly contribute to, and benefit, the lives of individuals affected by gender-based violence whilst simultaneously working to destabilise patriarchal structures that innately deprioritise women’s issues, rights, and needs.

However, the problematisation as represented by gender mainstreaming policies circulates and interpellates ideals that contribute to a number of lived effects that negatively impact individuals, and could even be argued as working against gender equality goals. The framework of gender mainstreaming's problem representation is shaped in such a way that assumes that gender exists within an essentialist binary. There is a case for suggesting that by equating gender with biologically assigned sex at birth the cause for gender inequality is furthered as the act of doing so perpetuates norms and stereotypes that construct gender roles that are difficult to break apart. As Judith Butler states, the "distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny; *sex* is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas *gender* is the cultural meaning and form that the body acquires," (1986, p. 35). By equating sex and gender as inevitably linked (and therefore that sex necessarily determines gender) such as in the underlying of this problematisation, the argument that gender roles and expectations are a result of biology rather than social construction and imposition gains more traction. Whilst classifying people into two gender groups in this way can be a simplistic and helpful mode of categorisation for those working towards ending gender inequality as it easily identifies the largest focus group whose rights, social status, and representation need to be raised and centred upon in order to match the more privileged group, this representation can also be problematic in a number of ways. Attaching gender identity to biological understandings of sex often suggests that gender expression, presentation, and identity is as essential, inherent, and "natural" as biological makeup. This creates and normalises ideas of how men and women should, and do, behave, contributing to structured gender roles and forming the groundwork for the differential gendered socialisation of male and female children. As Andrew Gilden states,

Gender's regulatory effectiveness in our culture largely stems from biologically essentialist understandings of the production of gender identity. By creating the appearance that gender identity is rooted in biology, biological essentialism casts the primary means of gender perpetuation, the category of "sex," as outside the realm of social construction as an aspect of one's pre-social self. If situated as prior to being, "sex" cannot be deconstructed and reformulated as more inclusive of human diversity because it appears as if it has never been constructed at all. (2008, pp. 88-89).

What this means is that binary representations of gender within gender equality policies could be considered to be somewhat paradoxical. Whilst gender mainstreaming aims to deconstruct patriarchally assigned hierarchical gender roles, referring to gender in such rigidly defined categories somewhat restricts the potential of the goals that mainstreaming gender perspectives aims to achieve. In their essay arguing for a non-binary approach to feminism, Meg-John Barker states that,

it seems to me that (most) feminism is about challenging the notion that men and women are meaningful categories of difference which legitimise women being regarded as inferior to men and therefore treated less well (...) [and] there has been a lot of pressure to binarise and to keep people in fixed categories of men and women with restrictive norms about what counts within each category. This has an adverse impact on pretty much everybody concerned: on those who struggle to fit those norms, and on those who manage it but then experience immense pressure to remain within the tight confines it imposes. So I think it is important politically to expand what is possible within each of these categories, to question the importance that is placed upon these particular categories, and to point out the arbitrariness of the categories themselves. (2015).

By the nature of the problematisation, gender mainstreaming guidelines and practices demonstrate their complicity with binary gender ideals in such a way that they not only adopt it, but by reusing it and forming their problem representation based on it, actively (and contradictorily) contribute to its interpellation and reproduction.

The reproduction of this representation creates some problematic lived effects. For example, despite the obvious positive lived effects of the Dilaasa project, including increased availability and accessibility for victims of domestic violence, improved treatment and aftercare, and recognition of the lack of awareness regarding gender issues and differences within Indian healthcare systems, the Dilaasa project's similar representation to guidelines on gender mainstreaming in their representation of gender existing within a binary is problematic, and could arguably contribute to negative effects of such a problem representation both with regards to gender inequality and members of transgender, and gender-nonconforming individuals, existing within queer communities. The Dilaasa project's problem representation is rigid in its casting men as the perpetrators and women as the victims of violence as it fails to

recognise the possibility of any deviation from this framework. This is evident in the copies of intake forms for patients entering the Dilaasa centre, only female pronouns and language are used to refer to the victim receiving treatment (“Her relationship to the abuser,” “Belting the woman,” etc.) and only male pronouns and language are used to refer to the abuser (“Does he or his family threaten to kill you?”, “Is he violent towards your children?” etc.) (2005, pp. II - IV). Not only does this reinforce the binary understanding of woman/victim vs man/abuser, it is inherently heteronormative and cisnormative to inherently assume that all of the patients referred to their clinics will be women who have been abused by men. This representation limits potential discourse surrounding gender-based violence as it does not allow for the consideration or possibility of domestic violence within non-heterosexual relationships, or of violence committed against somebody who does not identify as a woman. This rigidly confines promising discussions surrounding gender-based violence and therefore the potential of resultant actions that can be strategised and carried out, and rigidly reinforces gendered stereotypes regarding male aggression and masculinity and female passivity. However, despite its problematic nature, this representation is a fairly normative narrative that can be seen at state levels within Indian legislature. For example, the legal definition of rape provided in Section 375 of the Penal Code describes all of the acts that a man could commit against a woman that would count as rape - with no coverage of many acts that could be committed by a non-male perpetrator or against a non-female victim of rape. The language used in the penal code specifically refers to male and female body parts in its description, stating, “A man is said to commit “rape” if he (...) penetrates his penis, (...) inserts, to any extent, an object or part of the body, (...) applies his mouth to the vagina, anus, urethra of a woman or her to do so with any other person, (...) Against her will (...) [or] Without her consent,” (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2013, p. 5). To represent sexual violence in such a way – as necessarily relating to body parts and gender identity assumed from those parts – reinforces this strict binary into which individuals are categorised into one or the other meaning that if one does not fit into either category - such as a male victim of rape – Indian law provides no actual protection. It is not clear why this is the case, whether acts of sexual violence carried out against certain individuals are not simply recognised as rape by the law as it is viewed exclusively to be a crime that can only afflict women, or that the law deems variant cases to be less important and so less necessary to ensure legal protection is provided. However, one such argument for the existing framework of legally defined rape is discussed by the Centre for Civil Society in an essay calling for male rape to be recognised by Indian law, stating, “These groups [campaigning for the definition to remain as it is] argued that rape was an explicitly patriarchal

crime, directly stemming from the grotesque abuse of male power and privilege (...) [They] have raised two distinct issues: the idea of rape being divorced from female-specific consequences for the survivor and the exploitation of gender-neutral language by men. // In looking at the former, it is obvious enough that, apart from feelings of humiliation and shame experienced by both genders, there are certain burdens placed on female survivors, such as the higher value Indian society places on maintaining female virginity”, (Ibid.). This argument considers rape not as a need for sexual gratification, but as an exertion of power, and pertains that the current framework of male rapists and female victims is formed in order to necessarily identify existing patriarchal power structures. Yet, as the Centre for Civil Society points out, “there are burdens placed on male survivors, such as being perceived as effeminate or perhaps even homosexual, unfortunately taboo topics for men, that would not be equally felt by female survivors,” (No Date). By bringing attention to specific issues relating to male victims of sexual violence, an interesting point is highlighted – that patriarchal displays of power do not necessarily need to be carried out specifically against somebody of a particular biologically assigned sex or gender in order for them to be considered an act of gender-based violence. Female and non-female victims of rape alike are forced to live with the physical, emotional, and social after effects and consequences of experiencing such an attack, and so the framework that excludes all non-female victims from language and discourse surrounding rape, as represented within the penal code and gender mainstreaming practices such as Dilaasa’s, ignores a large amount of victims of rape and sexual violence. For example, statistics demonstrate that around eighteen percent of adult Indian men report having been coerced or forced into having sex, with sixteen percent of these reporting that their attacker was female, and two percent that their attacker was male (Ibid.).

Necessarily determining the gender of perpetrators and victims of both sexual and domestic violence, as the problem representation within gender mainstreaming responses to gender based violence does, is problematic in a number of ways. Whilst its justification could be attempted via claims that it reflects the demographic of statistics detailing the huge amount of violence committed by men, against women, the reliance and use of the gender binary as reflected in gender mainstreaming guidelines and practices such as Dilaasa’s work, and in Indian legal definitions of sexual violence is extremely exclusive. With such a binary presupposing their representation of the problem of gender inequality and gender-based violence, any individual existing outside of the two proposed gender categories, such as many gender non-conforming, transgender, or genderfluid people, are excluded as if it is simply not possible for them to be victims of such crimes, or as if they simply are not as deserving of the

same protection, treatment, and consideration as female victims of violence. The exclusion of certain members of society in such a way not only casts that group as an othered identity existing outside of what is considered to be normal, but actively contributes to normative ideas regarding gender roles, gendered traits, and gender identity.

In a country as richly diverse as India, the representation of gender as existing within a binary is both contradictory and puzzling. India is home to a multitude of different communities and individuals who identify as a number of different gender identities, such as the long-existing Hijra community. Acceptance of gender fluidity is so much a part of Indian culture that 2014 saw the Supreme Court publicly acknowledging that it was a human right for each individual to be able to determine their own gender and so legally recognised an established “third gender” category which enabled transgender citizens to legally change their gender identity (BBC News, 2014). The legal recognition of the third gender alone, even without any social aspects considered, makes the reliance on the binary construct of gender all the more questionable as to do so excludes a legally accepted and protected group of society members from gender mainstreaming discourse. Binary gender ideas not only erase the identity of such individuals and contribute to pre-existing issues such as social exclusion, and transgender and non-binary invisibility; it also excludes those who identify outside of the gender binary from consideration in gender-related issues, such as gender mainstreaming attempts to lessen gender-based and domestic violence.

This understanding suggests that gender mainstreaming guidelines and practices assume that the main issue behind gender inequality is gaps between those with certain sex characteristics (characteristics that define their gender identity) - the hierarchical arrangement that affords higher status to males/men within society and oppresses and subordinates females/women. Whilst the truthfulness of this representation cannot be highly contested with regards to the heightened status of males over females and men over women, representing gender inequality in this way, as an issue solely concerning certain people with certain *bodies*, frames the problem at hand as inextricably sex-linked. This provides a somewhat limited representation of existing gender hierarchies.

Gender inequality is enforced not just by the privileging of male over female, man over woman, but also masculinity over femininity. Raewyn Connell developed a theory of “hegemonic masculinity”, depicting an integral set of gender hierarchies, with hegemonic masculinity being in the dominant position as the, “pattern of masculinity which is most honoured, which occupies the position of centrality in a structure of gender relations, and whose privileged position helps to stabilize the gender order as a whole, especially the social

subordination of women. [It] is contrasted not only with femininity, but also with subordinated or marginalized masculinities that exist in the same society,” (Connell, 2014, p. 8). Connell argues that masculinities and femininities do not relate directly to definitive types of people, and are instead “gender projects” adopted by individuals (Schippers, 2007, p. 86). These theories lend to an interesting thought - that gender inequality is not necessarily the sole oppression of *females* but *femininity* more generally, and all traits, acts, and mannerisms associated with the feminine. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity adds credence to this view that it is not certain sex characteristics in and of itself that are privileged within society, as she demonstrates that there are a number of hierarchies even just within masculinity that deems certain forms as dominant over others. Although being assigned male or being viewed as a man is assumed to be a privileged position, being male, or being perceived as being male, isn’t enough in and of itself to avoid falling victim to the hierarchy. The nature of hegemonic masculinity being the ultimate, true embodiment of what it is to be masculine dictates that the majority of men will never be able to attain it, and must therefore exist in subservient positions to those who fulfil the quota. (2014, p. 8).

Due to the disproportionate amount of violence committed by men against women, it is difficult to find fault with gender mainstreaming implementation strategies that focus heavily on female victims of violence. It could be considered that, whilst violence against individuals who do not identify as women (such as male or transgender victims of violence) may be an important issue, it is nevertheless a separate issue. However, there have been a number of studies that resulted in conclusions that demonstrated that certain kinds of violence against non-female individuals has the same root causes and contributing factors as violence against women. Despite how the gender binary frames aggressors and victims of gender-based violence, certain theories suggest that violence against women, and violence against other individuals, are not as disjointed as they may seem. For example, a 2009 USAID study focussing on transgender and men who have sex with men (MSM) communities conducted by Myra Betron and Evelyn Gonzalez-Figueroa discusses the need to further discourse surrounding gender-based violence to include non-female victims of violence, stating,

for MSM and TG [transgender], gender identity is an important underlying cause of such [gender-based] violence. This paper examines the immensity of GBV [gender-based violence] against MSM and TG without detracting from the problem of violence against women and girls. Indeed, female victims do suffer greater physical damage than male

victims (WHO, 2005) and their subordinate status (both economic and social) “contributes to an environment that accepts, excuses, and even expects violence against women” (Heise et al., 1999). Still (...) violence experienced by MSM and TG has similarities to violence against women in that it usually occurs because MSM and TG do not ascribe to traditional gender roles or because they are viewed as effeminate, and so, subordinate to others. // In the case of intimate partner violence among MSM and TG, including those who engage in sex work, violence appears to be a way to subordinate them to inferior feminine roles, similar to women who experience violence within heterosexual relationships (p. 2).

This statement offers a contribution to more open discourse on gender-based violence by widening the parameters of those who could potentially be considered a victim. Betron and Gonzalez-Figueroa reconsider the assumption that gender-based violence is committed only against women, and by doing so challenge underlying rigidly categorised binary perceptions. By proposing that violence may occur because victims are effeminate rather than because they are exclusively female, or in order to subject victims into subordinate feminine roles, Betron and Gonzalez-Figueroa suggest that femininity and its traits, mannerisms, and physical presentations, is oppressed in the same vein as femaleness and so those who exhibit feminine traits and ways of presenting themselves – including women – are relegated to the bottom of the gender hierarchy. This oppression of femininity, or “femmephobia”, reinforces the gender hierarchies Connell discusses that systematically privilege and honour masculinities in such a way that necessarily places femininity at the bottom of the order. As Natalie Reed states, “Femmephobia (...) is a particular subset of sexism that suggests that femininity and things regarded as feminine are inherently inferior, bad, weak, stupid, non-preferable, valueless, [and] disempowering,” (2011). These feminine traits can be embodied and presented by potentially any body, a concept discussed by Connell that proposes that femininities and masculinities can become projects in the lives of any person in such a way that shapes their individual ways of performing, presenting, acting, and identifying. As Connell determines that femininity is not exclusive to females, then it follows that neither should its oppression be. The widespread and systematic subordination of femininity affects individuals of many and all gender identities as well as women, and intersects with a multiplicity of issues. Julia Serano develops this idea with regards to one such crossover in her theory of “trans-misogyny”, a concept that describes how

the intersection of transphobia and misogyny forms a type of oppression aimed specifically at transgender women, and transgender and gender non-conforming folk who live and present themselves towards the feminine end of the spectrum (Ibid., 2007, p. 14). As Serano states, “In a male-centered gender hierarchy, where it is assumed that men are better than women and that masculinity is superior to femininity, there is no greater perceived threat than the existence of trans women, who despite being born male and inheriting male privilege “choose” to be female instead. By embracing our own femaleness and femininity, we, in a sense, cast a shadow of doubt over the supposed supremacy of maleness and masculinity,” (Ibid., p. 15). By determining that the root of the oppression of trans-feminine individuals is founded in an opposition to their deviation from accepted socially assigned gender norms, specifically towards the feminine and therefore inferior end of the gender hierarchy, Serano highlights how the roots causes of gender inequality pertaining to violence against women often exist within the same vein as the causes for multiple forms of oppression. As she states,

While often different in practice, cissexism, transphobia, and homophobia are all rooted in oppositional sexism, which is the belief that female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires. Oppositional sexists attempt to punish or dismiss those of us who fall outside of gender or sexual norms because our existence threatens the idea that women and men are “opposite” sexes. (...) Our natural inclinations to be attracted to the same sex, to identify as the other sex, and/or to express ourselves in ways typically associated with the other sex blur the boundaries required to maintain the male-centred gender hierarchy that exists in our culture today, (2007, p. 13).

If, as Connell states, hegemonic masculinity is “most honoured” and assumes the central position in a structure of gender relations (2014, p. 8), then trans-feminine individuals who supposedly consciously *choose* not only to not attempt to live up to this ideal, but to embody the opposite, challenge the very structure of gendered society.

This male-centred hierarchy is so rigidly enforced that, in accordance with cisgender women, trans-feminine individuals often accept, reinforce, and even welcome their own subordinate societal status. For example, in a report researching violence against sex workers, transgender women were quoted telling of their complicity with the violence their partners committed against them because it reaffirmed their status and role in their relationships. One

woman stated, “I don’t mind if my girya (man) beats me up. It only shows how manly and powerful he is,” whilst another stated, “When my parik (“husband”) beats me, I feel as helpless as a woman. Since I want to be a woman, it actually makes me feel good,” (Ordek et al., 2010). These interviews offer an insight into the lasting effect controlling and coercive power of gender-based violence has on gender roles and representations. In these cases the violence exerted reinforced the victims’ feminised and therefore inferior role in such a way that they felt their feminine gender identity became more legitimate and validated. The necessary equation these women made between being a woman and being a victim of violence demonstrates how rigidly gender hierarchies are enforced, to become so ingrained in individuals that enable them to become complicit in their own submission.

The reliance on binary understandings of gender depicts these rigid gender hierarchies, necessarily placing individuals at one or other end of the spectrum. By doing so, roles are assigned to individuals, in this context with individuals being at increased likelihood of being either aggressors or victims of violence. The nature of these hierarchies is that they are self-fulfilling, with violence being inextricably linked to aspirations of achieving true hegemonic masculinity in such a way that forcibly oppresses those presenting themselves at the feminine end of the spectrum, and acceptance and complicity with being subject to violence being associated with femininity. By relying on the gender binary, gender mainstreaming guides and implementation practices not only erase a number of issues such as widespread violence against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in India, but also therefore appear to be somewhat counter-productive in their mission. Whilst they actively work to reduce effects of gender inequality and to challenge oppositional gender roles, by using and relying on binary ideas of gender they are actually, paradoxically, complicit in their own struggle.

**What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? How would ‘responses’ differ if the ‘problem’ were thought about or represented differently?**

**Here it is useful to think about shifts in representation of the ‘problem’ over time and/or across cultures.**

The reliance on the gender binary correlates with the most common and prevalent kinds of gender-based violence - that which is perpetrated by men, against women. It is certainly unproblematic that a large part of the focus of gender mainstreaming is to ensure full equality and equity for women considering that they are statistically the most likely demographic to become victims of gender-based violence, as a United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) study states, “Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Therefore a critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives.” (2005). As demonstrated by a number of gender mainstreaming implementation strategies in practice, such as the Dilaasa project, this specific focus on empowering and working towards equality for women has had a number of brilliantly positive effects in enacting a number of changes in India, such as encouraging more women to report violent attacks and seek aftercare following incidents of violence, assisting victims in finding a temporary safe space, and training professionals to recognise signs of abuse so that violence can be stopped early on in the abuse cycle (Dilaasa, 2005, p. 35). It is essential to recognise not only what is “unproblematic” within this problem representation, but to develop analysis further to consider the beneficial and positive aspects of such a representation with regards to the goal for achieving gender equality, in order to restructure and reform the problem formulation in a more inclusive, intersectional manner that would aim to broaden its equality goals.

However, it is possible to both commend gender mainstreaming strategies and projects in practice for the progressive steps they have taken and continue to put into motion, whilst still recognising a number of silences left by the interpretation of the problem represented within gender mainstreaming policies. As discussed in the previous chapters, binary understandings of gender, whilst understandable, are unproductively exclusive in their

ignorance of many types of gender-based violence. Domestic violence within homosexual relationships, sexual violence committed against men, non-binary and gender nonconforming individuals, and violence based on temporarily assumed gender roles are just some of the issues that are overlooked, and as a result the potential for productive discourse around the issues in relation to the wider problem of gender inequality in general is erased.

Responses may differ if the underlying assumptions regarding the problem were thought about differently in such a way that allowed the range of inequalities addressed and fought against to broaden. If the problem were to be represented without such a binary presupposing its interpretation then the opportunity may rise for gender hierarchies to be addressed in a more determined and absolute way, and more various forms of gender-based violence could be drawn into focus. The gaps and silences left by the current representation of the problem could be made visible by a conscious, determined effort to make gender mainstreaming policies more wholly intersectional. Meg-John Barker discusses this idea in their essay on non-binary feminism, specifically calling for more intersectional approaches in order to deconstruct the binary and better work towards gender inequality, stating, “Intersectional feminism is about challenging the notion that there are any categories into which people can be divided which justify one group being treated less well than another. [It] is also about recognising that we need to challenge all axes of oppression rather than just one of them because they cannot be disentangled.” For Barker, intersectional approaches are essential not only because they work towards ending multiple forms of oppression, but a feminist approach that does not have an intersectional focus is counter-productive to its goal. As they state, “If we remove one whilst leaving the others intact then (...) that is not feminism, it is bullshit!” (2015). They argue that tackling both the issue of one group’s dominance over, and subordination of, the other, and “the bit about dividing people into two categories in the first place,” are as crucial in the project of feminism as the other, stating that, “it is part of the same battle to point out and try to change oppression, and to point out and try to change the assumption that gender is binary.” Barker sees the two as innately connected and inseparable, in such a way that the challenging of one cannot prevail without simultaneously tackling the other - and so by representing the problem of underlying binary assumptions in this way, taking on both is fundamentally necessary in order to deconstruct a damaging dichotomy that both enables and furthers the oppression of one group over another, and renders invisible a whole host of wider issues connected with gender inequality (Ibid.).

These underlying binary assumptions have not always been so rigidly enforced, however. It is difficult to think of this representation without considering the different

perceptions of this representation over time. An especially significant influence on representations of gender has been the colonisation of India by the British Empire in the 19th Century. Indian scholar Ruth Vanita carried out extensive research into queer narratives in the history of Indian literature and culture and, together in her research with Saleem Kidwai, found that, pre-colonialism, same sex romance and acts were most often represented with either a neutral or a positive attitude, but that this attitude drastically changed after India's colonisation (2009, p. 48). In 1871, Britain introduced the The Criminal Tribes Act, which perceived certain tribes and communities to be "criminals by birth, with criminality being passed on from generation to generation", that's implementation coincided well with Indian ideas of hierarchical social orders (PUCL-K, 2003, p. 44). Once a tribe was identified as criminal, all members were required to register with local authorities and were placed under surveillance that restricted their movement and placed them under constant suspicion of criminal activity with local law enforcement, and in 1897, an amendment was made to the Criminal Tribes Act under the subheading, "An Act for the Registration of Criminal Tribes and Eunuchs". Sexual immorality had long been equated with tribes, as, "for the keepers of social morality, [their] lack of visible social institutions implied complete disorder in their community life. Their lack of written codes of conduct, and absence of articulated norms of morality implied absolute licentiousness," (Meena Radhakrishna, quoted in PUCL-K, 2003, p. 44). This attitude was directed especially harshly towards "eunuchs", defined as, "all members of the male sex who admit themselves, or on medical inspection clearly appear, to be impotent," (p. 44), with a British officer reported stating his disgust toward eunuch communities, "they are absolutely the scum, the flotsam and jetsam of Indian life, of no more regard than the beasts of the field," (Ibid., p. 45). Attitudes such as this led to eunuchs being recognised as criminal, and therefore their lives were placed under surveillance. The worth of their very existence was diminished by dehumanising restrictions that invalidated eunuch's place in society by removing some of their basic rights, such as making gifts or adopting sons, due to the perception that they were not capable. What is especially significant about acts such as this is the influence it has had on societal perceptions of those who deviate from gendered identity norms. As a study conducted by the Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, Karnata (PUCL-K) collecting reports of violence experienced by hijra and kothi sex workers in Bangalore states, "the contemporary perception of hijras as thieves as well as the brutal violence which is inflicted against them can be traced back to this colonial legislation which stands repealed today in theory but continues to exist as part of the living culture of Indian law", (p. 46).

Colonial rule also saw the introduction of Section 377 under the Section, “Offences Affecting the Human Body” that criminalised “unnatural offences” (Ibid.). It is a little ambiguous what these offences exactly and specifically are, but the section in essence criminalises “basically any form of sex which does not result in procreation” (Ibid., p. 47). This does not explicitly affect members of transgender communities, in that they are not directly mentioned or referenced, but as the PUCL-K study states, “due to the nature of the homophobic discourse, these acts are specifically located in the bodies of queer people. To be a homosexual or a hijra is to draw the presumption that the hijra or the homosexual is engaging in ‘carnal intercourse against the order of nature’. This particular interpretation of Sec 377 means that all queer people, particularly the kothi and hijra sex worker population are particularly vulnerable to harassment under this provision.” (Ibid.).

Post-colonialism, Indian society was torn between colonial influence and long-existing cultural traditions and ideals. Some right-wing groups believed homosexuality and gender transgressions were the influence of Western rule, and opposed them vehemently in order to maintain “traditional” Indian values (Vanita, 2009). After Indian independence, many Indian nationalists fought against what they believed to be Britain’s corrupt influence, by attempting to reinforce pure moral values, and Indian society saw a number of changes. Abstinence from alcohol, vegetarianism, and the strong encouragement of procreational marriages were seen as tactics to decolonise India, which had a strong influence on ideas regarding gender attitudes and roles. As Thomson et al. state in their essay on social stigmatisation of transgender communities in South India,

Viewed against this background, the normative sexuality of contemporary India is procreative and heterosexual within the confines of marriage and still largely arranged along the lines of caste and religion, with other forms of sexual behaviour outwardly considered taboo and even stigmatising. Although opportunities for women have expanded in recent decades, masculinity continues to be defined through marriage, fatherhood and reproduction and non-procreative sex, whether heterosexual or same-sex, continues to be viewed by many Indian conservative politicians and right wing Hindu nationalist organisations as threatening the ‘moral fabric’ that constitutes the Indian Nation-State. (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 1240)

India's post-colonial reaction reinforced heteronormative, cisnormative, and cissexist ideals and assumptions that prioritised masculinity and lead to increased intolerance towards gender and sexual deviances that transgress the socially imposed binary that influences representations of gender inequality by gender mainstreaming policies. If these binary ideals and assumptions were to be broken down, disproved, and reconsidered with a more intersectional lens, gender mainstreaming responses may differ and become broader in their beneficiary consideration and fundamental framework.

## **How/where are dominant problem representations produced, disseminated and defended? How could they be contested/disrupted?**

**Explore contradictions and discursive resources for reconceptualisation (re-problematization).**

The fight to end gender inequality in India has certainly received increasing amounts of media attention in recent years, largely triggered by Jyoti Singh's public rape and murder. Worldwide activists and journalists, and members of local communities, decision makers, and victims and families have spoken out in efforts to bring India's high rates of gender-based violence into mainstream conversation. Attempts have been made by influential figures and organisations, such as the United Nations and state governing bodies, to ensure that gender perspectives are considered at all levels of decision making and development processes, and nongovernmental organisations such as the Dilaasa and Parivartan projects have enacted efforts to ensure issues related to gender-based violence are brought into mainstream consideration in multiple sectors, such as healthcare and law enforcement. Such organisations have spread their mission by working extensively at community levels to both implement concrete policies to provide assistance, care, and greater protection to victims of gender-based violence, and to challenge widespread acceptance of gender-based violence and provide sensitivity training and greater and more specific education to influential community members in positions of care, such as law enforcement officers and healthcare professionals.

The work of these organisations, as well as the prolific attention in the media on gender-based violence in India, ensures the perpetuation and reinforcement of gender mainstreaming's ultimate problem representation by highlighting gender inequality on multiple communal and structural levels throughout Indian society. Drawing attention to gender-based violence in such a way aims to ensure that the dissemination of the problem representation occurs at all levels – from top-down measures such as policy implementation, to bottom-up approaches from grassroots initiatives and nongovernmental organisations who engage with local communities to educate individuals and challenge commonly held prejudices.

Gender mainstreaming's problem representation is also produced and disseminated throughout the societal enforcement of gender norms, despite the aim of implementing gender mainstreaming challenging gender roles in its attempts to break apart hierarchical gender

perspectives that devalue women. As Manasi Singh states, “gender mainstreaming goes beyond women’s issues and deals with gender perspective as a whole and strives to achieve gender equality by restructuring the gender roles and relations in society,” (No Date, p. 11), although the nature of challenging in such a dichotomous way ensures gender mainstreaming practices are complicit in the reinforcement of binary gender norms. A norm is defined by Posner and Rasmusen as, “a social rule that does not depend on government for either promulgation or enforcement (...) Often a norm will result from (and crystallize) the gradual emergence of a consensus. Norms are enforced by internalized values, by refusals to interact with the offender, by disapproval of his actions, and sometimes by private violence,” (1999, pp. 369-370). Although it would be unfair and inaccurate to suggest that gender mainstreaming strategies and implementation projects in practice were necessarily active in the *creation* of such social norms, the frequent use of, and reliance upon, these norms suggests complicity in the cycle of reproducing and fortifying them - and so gender mainstreaming plays its part in the “consensus” in accepting the norm. In their exclusive referral to two existing genders, gender mainstreaming policies demonstrate an internalised understanding of gender identity in which the subjects in question must fit into one of two categories or else risk being excluded from projects altogether. The essentialist equation between gender identity and biologically assigned sex at birth as represented by gender mainstreaming policies only further exemplifies this complicity with the binary norm. It bolsters the idea that gender identity is given and not self-determined, and thus those who deviate from one of the two gender options, or appear to transition from one category to the other, violate socially accepted gender norms by existing outside of the essentially proposed categories.

According to Posner and Rasmusen, norms are, “an attractive method of social control,” that are enforced by sanctions carried out against those who transgress (1999, p. 370). Exclusively belonging to one of the two proposed gender categories is a commonly and rigidly enforced norm throughout Indian society, and those who breach the proposed gender divisions risk facing a strict backlash via the exertion of social sanctions. As the PUCL-K study states, “What became apparent in the course of our study is that discrimination against hijras and kothis is embedded in both state and civil society. The violence that this community faces is not only due to the state but also has deep societal roots,” (2003, p. 76). Posner and Rasmusen identify six types of sanction that threaten those who violate social norms, three of which are especially enforced in this context; automatic sanctions, guilt, and shame (1999, p.371). Automatic sanctions are self-fulfillingly enforced by not complying with the actions of others - such as somebody choosing to drive on the other side of the road than the accepted side of

the country they are in, and therefore crashing their car. Guilt is enforced through an individual's upbringing and understanding of what is right and wrong. If they violate some norm or other, that they have been raised to understand is wrong, it is likely that the individual will feel guilty for their action. Shame is enforced by ensuring that the violator feels that their status has been lessened in either their own eyes or the eyes of others who would be likely to condemn their transgression (Ibid.). All three types of sanction are routinely employed against those who violate binary gender norms in India, and gender mainstreaming strategies have their part to play in this.

For example, transgender individuals in India often face automatic sanctions due to their deviation from societally imposed gender norms excluding them from a number of protections, rights, and services. For example, with forty percent of the community testing positive, India has the highest rate of transgender women infected with HIV in the world (Baral et al. 2013). However, due to the exclusion of transgender issues from mainstream discourse, and a general lack of prioritisation of transgender rights, healthcare services that offer treatment for, and work to prevent, HIV amongst transgender women is inadequate. A UNDP report looking into the effects of social exclusion of Hijras and transgender women in India (Chakrapani, 2010) called for specific, holistic healthcare to be provided for individuals from Hijra and transgender communities, including separate health surveillance centres and improved psychological care as well as physical (Ibid., p. 5). Transgender women and Hijras in India often find that their living outside of socially accepted essentialist norms excludes their specific needs from mainstream healthcare considerations and training of healthcare professionals. As the UNDP report states, "Often, healthcare providers rarely had the opportunity to understand the sexual diversities and they do not have adequate knowledge about the health issues of sexual minorities. Thus, TG people face unique barriers when accessing public or private health services. Barriers in accessing HIV testing, antiretroviral treatment and sexual health services have been well documented." (Ibid., p.8). By violating the norm of conforming to binary gender roles, transgender and Hijra individuals in India face automatic sanctions such as increased risk of receiving no or inadequate healthcare.

Many transgender individuals in India also face being shamed by the communities they exist within. The PUCL-K study reported a wide variety of stories from kothis and hijras detailing their experiences of discrimination, humiliation, and shaming from member of their local communities, law enforcement officials, and even members of their own families. For example, Swati, a hijra, tells of one experience she had when she invited some friends over to her house for a party. Eight police officers turned up at the party, claiming that they'd been

called under suspicion that they were carrying out sex work at the house. When Swati and her friends explained they were just having a party the officers subsided, until they discovered that Swati and her friends were hijras. They began deliberately shaming the party by asking humiliating questions, such as “Are you all impotent, are you all ‘chakkas’ (derogatory term for hijra)?”, forced them to show their breasts, and groped them (2003, p. 33). Another testimony from “Smita” details similar attempts from police officials to humiliate her. Whilst standing outside a commercial complex one evening, Smita and her husband Tejasvi were violently arrested and she was sexually assaulted by the officers on their way to being taken to the local police station. Once there, her and her husband were locked in a room where between fifteen and twenty officers stripped and then stood around her and abused her naked body, forcing her to carry out humiliating sexual acts in front of them. They physically abused her by hitting her across her body and shaving her hair, and, “verbally abused her by repeatedly referring to her as ‘khoja, gandu, bastard, son of a bitch’ and used the foulest language as they continued to beat her, making vile comments like: “Did you come here to get fucked anally?”, “Whose cocks did you come here to suck?”, “People get AIDS from you, one day you will die of AIDS, chakka, I will fuck your mother”, (Ibid., pp. 28 - 29). Brutal as they are, violent acts of degradation and humiliation such as these are not isolated incidents as acts of violence are reportedly incessant occurrences in the lives of transgender individuals in India (Ibid., p. 30). The degrading nature of these acts of violence is deliberately constructed in order to punish and aim to “correct” the victims’ transgression from the norm, as the PUCL-K study states, “The source of such violence is clearly the prejudice about hijras’ ‘deviant’ sexuality and gender identity which transgresses society’s binary division of gender into male and female – indicating that what appears as random and arbitrary violence is in fact part of a methodical policing for the preservation of mainstream, therefore heterosexist, society”, (Ibid.). The USAID study researching rates of violence amongst MSM and transgender communities in India backs up this claim, stating that the widespread internalisation of homophobia and heterosexism lie at the roots of incitations of such acts of violence (2009, p. 2). Because transgender, hijra, and MSM individuals deviate from these socially imposed heterosexist binary gender norms, they are stigmatised by state and society alike. The act of stigmatisation is an effective method in shaming an individual, as it highlights, “an undesirable or discrediting attribute that an individual possesses, thus reducing that individual’s status in the eyes of society”, (Goffman, 1963, quoted in Betron & Gonzalez-Figueroa, 2009, p. 2).

The casting of guilt as a social sanction is often inextricably linked with feelings of shame and the individual’s guilt of bringing shame to one’s family or loved ones for having a

family member who transgresses social norms so transgressively and thus many transgender individuals report attempting to hide their transgender identity in order to spare their families the shame of having a transgender relative. As Abir Day, a transgender person from Kolkata, states, she refrained from legally seeking to change her gender to transgender as her family, “would not be able to handle” such a public transition (Murray, 2016). Feelings of guilt often originate in the fear that the individual’s violation of the societally imposed norm will bring the family the collective shame that has already been imposed upon the individual subject. Jan Cornish, a transgender individual, told of their intense feelings of guilt related to their gender dysphoria, stating, “In my experience I am not the victim but the villain. It is seen that I have made a lifestyle decision that will embarrass my nearest and dearest and that I am being very selfish and not considering them in any way. They feel that they are the victims and therefore I am guilty of being uncaring and self centred”, (2013). Feelings of socially sanctioned in India can often be deeply linked with cultural expectations that an individual should uphold their family’s reputation. Familial reputation and honour are extremely important in Indian culture, as each individual member of a family is seen in the light of their family reputation, with the family’s reputation considered when individuals make most of their important life decisions (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 37). These norms are especially enforced with regard to the transgression from a masculine to feminine presentation and identification that ties closely in with Julia Serano’s theory of trans-misogyny. As she discusses, “there is no greater perceived threat than the existence of trans women, who despite being born male and inheriting male privilege “choose” to be female instead. By embracing our own femaleness and femininity, we, in a sense, cast a shadow of doubt over the supposed supremacy of maleness and masculinity,” (2007, p. 15).

As Butler states, gender norms are “exercised coercively,” (Hartley, 2011) by the rigid enforcement of social sanctions, to the extent that they are adopted and thus individuals become complicit in their doing and reproduction of them. From a young age, children learn how to act in accordance with their assigned sex category (male or female), and adopt seemingly essential gendered natures. West and Zimmerman’s 1987 work on “doing gender” offers great insight into this adoption, and the production and reinforcement of gender norms. They argue that doing gender is utterly unavoidable to the extent that it leaves individuals “hostage to its production” (1987, p. 126), and that doing so means, “creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the “essentialness” of gender,” (Ibid., p. 137). West and Zimmerman state that if we produce gender appropriately, “we

simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate (...) institutional arrangements (...). Doing gender furnishes the interactional scaffolding of social structure, along with a built-in mechanism of social control,” (Ibid., pp. 146 - 147). What this essentially means is that individuals appropriate gender ideals that leads to them adopting gendered identities that they endeavour to sustain.

Due to individuals’ innate attachment to gender norms as part of their own identity, they are somewhat self-sustaining. The act of “doing gender” as set out by West and Zimmerman becomes so naturalised that performance of gender is often unconsciously done, and so individuals reproduce and perpetuate the same binary gender norms they are subjected to. Norm reinforcement, by way of “doing” gender and coercively imposed by social sanctions “produce, disseminate, and defend” underlying binary assumptions of gender mainstreaming strategies, and the reliance and use of the binary as seen within gender mainstreaming guidelines and practices suggest not simply its complicity with binary gender norms, but its active involvement in their reproduction.

Because much of the reproduction of the underlying binaries constructing the problem represented by gender mainstreaming strategies is so innately ingrained in every aspect of society, from patriarchal lenses on policy making to individual acts of doing one’s own gender, such binaries are difficult in their nature to deconstruct. As Posner and Rasmusen state, “Eliminating a norm requires promulgation, too, and also the destruction of the expectations and tastes that support the sanctions for its violation—a process of taste changing that may be as costly as their creation in the first place. Changing a norm, which requires elements of both destruction and creation, can be the most difficult trick of all.” (1999, p. 377). They argue that norm deconstruction or change should be enacted slowly, in order to allow society to gradually adapt. This is arguably the case even when the change occurs in favour of a superior norm, because norm change or deconstruction inevitably takes time to settle in smoothly. If a norm were forcibly employed suddenly, the risk of a, “rent in the fabric of social control” increases as too quick an introduction may make the new norm dysfunctional, as the “normative system” has not yet had enough time to adapt and transition (Ibid., p. 378). Introducing new norms tentatively and steadily is also not necessarily enough to ensure their eventual acceptance and adoption of a new norm. As Posner and Rasmusen point out, norms enforced by the social sanctions of guilt and shame, such as rigidly enforced binary gender norms, are particularly difficult to dismantle due to strongly emotive principles or morals of society members heavily influenced by social conditioning (Ibid., p. 379). As they point out, nongovernmental organisations may be more effective than small individual efforts or large-scale impositional

governmental motions to change norms, but that it remains unclear whether societies will have more or less norm creation and stability if they allow norm-creating organisations free-rein.

If guilt and shame as social sanctions keeping binary gender ideals in place is so effective then before the norm can be deconstructed or changed work must be done to weaken those sanctions. As Cavanagh states, “Humane gender recognitions depend on the availability of trans-positive imagery, discourses, and ‘ways of seeing’ that are not reducible to binary gender assignments at birth and national identification papers authorizing two unalterable and mutually exclusive gender positions (male and female)”, (2010, p. 58). It is essential to raise trans-positive imagery and discourses in order to lessen ignorance and stigma surrounding both trans-identities and any individual transgression from binary and essentialist gender norms. Increasing visibility of identities that divert from expected norms helps humanise stigmatised existences, as the UNDP state in their research into transgender health and human rights, “It is impossible to be included within a community and society if one’s very existence is denied. Yet such exclusion is routinely experienced by trans people when there are only two, binary sex options (male or female)”, (2013, p. 29). What this entails is that it is essential to include non-binary and transgender perspectives in mainstream discourse in order to increase the “availability” of positive perceptions that leads to “humane gender recognitions” (Cavanagh, 2010, p. 58).

It therefore seems that, in order to break down damaging essentialist binary gender norms, gender mainstreaming policies need to be adapted in such a way that dismantles the underlying binary assumptions. If gender mainstreaming policies were to represent understandings of gender that focused more on structural gender hierarchies not essentially linked to sex category rather than dichotomous representations of violent males and female victims, then gender-based violence in India could be addressed more broadly and effectively, and intersectional forms of oppression could be recognised.

## Conclusion

The research I have carried out throughout the course of this paper has led to my understanding that gender mainstreaming policies in theory are an overall effective, efficient, and necessary tool in dealing with high rates of gender-based violence in India. By aiming to bring previously not-talked about issues into mainstream discourse and challenging traditionally enforced gender roles, gender mainstreaming plays a crucial part in the fight towards gender equality. However, unless the binary presuppositions underlying gender mainstreaming's problem representation are deconstructed, I advocate that the achievement of gender mainstreaming's "ultimate goal" to achieve gender equality is not possible. I have argued that these presuppositions help to maintain damaging gender hierarchies that privilege masculinity and subordinate femininity in a way that contributes to detrimental socially-imposed gender norms.

Gender mainstreaming policies aim to challenge the existence of gender inequality at all levels of society. This representation is formed upon the assumptions that gender inequality is inherently a bad thing that *should* be challenged, and that gender-based violence is a rigidly categorised thing that consists of female victims subjected to violence by male aggressors.

These assumptions produce a number of effects – on the one hand, gender mainstreaming is essential in the fight to end structural inequality and reduce acts of gender-based violence as they challenge commonly accepted social hierarchies and injustices and force routinely ignored gender perspectives into mainstream considerations in such a way that necessarily entails the gendered effects of any level of decision making is taken into account.

On the other hand however, the binary recognition of gender-based violence as portrayed by gender mainstreaming policies and pragmatic accounts of implementation are exclusive in their representation, which ignores complex structural gender hierarchies that actively create and distribute widespread femmephobia. This leads both to furthered exclusion of marginalised communities that do not fit into such a categorisation, and limits the scope of gender equality goals. By relying on dichotomous accounts of gender identity, gender mainstreaming policies inadvertently and paradoxically reinforce essentialist norms and stereotypes that help keep gender hierarchies in place, and thus are complicit in the interpellation of reproducing these norms. By excluding certain identities from their representation, gender mainstreaming policies also demonstrate their complicity with the social imposition of coercive gender norms, therefore contradicting their own goal to further the cause for gender equality and not to further perpetuate any form of inequality.

It is my hope for the future that gender mainstreaming policies are reconsidered, and attempts are made to deconstruct the binary assumptions that underlie their formation, to include broader and more flexible understandings of gender identity. Though well-intentioned and socially progressive in accordance with high-rates of gender-based violence in India, gender mainstreaming policies will continue to fall short of their goals until policy-makers first accept that gender transcends the prevailing narrow and dichotomous conceptualisation that gender identity purely consists of male and female. If gender mainstreaming policies aim to become more wholly intersectional, and work together with multiple progressive movements, then the potential increases that more inclusive and widespread methods of addressing gender inequality and tackling gender-based violence will develop. Only then can gender equality goals be effectively and truly realised.



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