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when your idea of India is rooted Hindutva, no Hindu is anti-national. if your idea of India is rooted in humanity, no person would be anti-national - nationalism is *an infantile disease* (Einstein), *cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world* (Tagore)

> Killing Gandhi was an act of patriotism? https://t.co/VIGzUR3GC7
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> — Subhashini Ali (@SubhashiniAli) January 2, 2021

people from times immemorial have used religion for its spiritual valence - radical, progressive political leaders have used theology & spirituality to advocate emancipatory politics rooted in love, universality, look beyond superficial differences that power leverages to divide

every single religion I can think of is rooted in patriarchy & horrors have been perpetrated in its name, words can't capture the shame & barbarity - but until nonreligious spiritualism & morality is widespread, we have to contend with religion, its resonances & internal shifts

danger with leveraging religion instead of religion-agnotic spiritualisms is what you see happening today - absurdly grotesque formations - RSS, Gandhi's own murderers, claiming Gandhi while refashioning his religious spirituality of ahimsa into political religiosity of violence

religion has significant but ultimately limited political value, where someone can use religion to draw on universal values of love, fraternity, morality to advocate for progress, the other can use the exact same language to justify hate, genocide, heterobrahminical patriarchy

what the RSS is doing is quite obvious - it's a shameless corruption of & violent project of totalising what to be *Hindu* comes to mean - both personally, politically in this time - by creating a violent binary of *with us or against us* they lay a trap - if you try to reclaim

Hindu from their grotesque formulation, you concede space to them - by battling on their ground, you legitimise their project of linking nationhood, politics to religion - religion shouldn't be the source you leverage in the political realm, our Constitution morality is enough

this is not to take away from the inherent & explicit violence of religion itself, especially the unique barbarity of brahminism in the name of Hinduism. But if you dismiss religion, it's spiritual/ political valency, you also concede to RSS in their singular construction of it

the fact is like with anything in the world - as with people, ideas, histories - this is incredibly messy - totalising narratives that obscure complicated mixed feelings, internal strife / critique, multiplicity & dynamism only serves those who want to gain power - reject that

the problem is rather complex & incredibly old - I've learnt in therapy, working with old patterns needs patience: 1) identify the feelings 2) make conscious the unconscious emotion & trace the
unhealthy pattern 3) identify, understand association 4) find alternative, let it go

it's not difficult to apply this to politics - if you're speaking to friends or family, start with identifying their feelings around what religion means - if it's overt & only brahminism, fuck them. If its mainly spirituality or cosmology, then talk to them abt RSS & what they do

about the political leveraging of religion which inherently seeks to freeze what should be a dynamic system of spiritual beliefs - how power whether brahminical or fascist, seeks to get people to give up their agency, choice - spiritual or political, outsource it to someone else

when you take away the emotional power of religion by providing alternatives - like I've seen for women in my fam, religion is the sole, legitimate chance to get time alone, travel with their women friends - pilgrimages are sleepovers really - space & time from domestic drudgery

trips to temples are the socially sanctioned & approved ways to get out of the house, escape the husband and children for few hours, to find connection with onself in a misogynistic culture that destroys a woman's individuality on marriage & motherhood, meditate for mental health

if you speak demeaningly of your mother's religion from your intellectual context & privilege of a liberal education *atheism is obv better* (I've done it) - you risk alienating & hurting someone who may not be able to articulate why & what it means to her, cements the difference

allow your atheism to be spiritual, to be deeply kind and patient - remember that the people you love & respect, those who inspire it, might prolly reach similar intellectual conclusions as you, if they had the opportunity for exposure & growth - help empower them in their vocab

when you approach people with kindness, empathy & understanding - ofc, this is limited by the people themselves, only been able to do it with women so far - they're far more open to critique on how they're behaving re caste gender to manage their powerlessness - they'll listen

it may not reflect in immediate change - it's not easy to undo a lifetime of conditioning but it pays off! Next time someone calls your mom to complain about their child's intercaste love, she might say, hey, ultimately don't we want our children to be happy? that is change.

In my experience, most cismen but esp. brahmin men are too full of themselves to ever listen to anything but themselves, their own worldview, whether the shastras or the modern *ultra-rational, high intellectual data-driven fact oriented* - they exhaust & bore me. Talk to women.

you learn so much. the things women in the fam drop when you've made a *woman's space* - anyone can make it, it's gender agnostic - safe, non-judgemental space of trust, sharing, bonding - the skeletons in the closet, their own experiences, silences - listen with a feminist ear

this is what personal is political means. understanding how large political constructions of ultra nationalist religiosity that seemingly have nothing to do with the personal have everything to do with it - they're rooted in keeping women in homes silent, compliant, complicit

radicalise yourself & radicalise women in your families, chosen as well as birth / adoptive - create space for non-religious spirituality, make your women only group meditation / yoga spaces grounds for your feminist & anarchist politics, every space matters, everyone matters

expand your feminist politics from representational & limited forms of protest - feminism is a revolutionary ideology to critique power - when we begin to do that, the rest follows, subverting power needs to happen in private spaces, Covid induced lockdown is an opportunity too!

make reading groups in your mother tongue, get the women in your family to read radical works from feminist & anti-caste women from their background - if you're Telugu, you could start with Volga, there's so many I'm only discovering - flood fam WhatsApp groups with excerpts too

Occupying public space is an extremely gendered privilege - it always has been for women - which is why the women led protests this past year have been so revolutionary, both in India & around the world - we need women to come out, to occupy equal space as political citizens

but at the same time, please note that even in pre-pandemic times, coming out is costly, ableist, difficult - for women, it needs someone cooking, cleaning, caring for children - it's why feminism is inherently socialist & incorporates mutual aid - women already do it every where

the private space is of crucial, overwhelming importance as a site for struggle with power - especially if call yourself a feminist, can always figure out those who pay lip-service to feminism when they treat public space as inherently more imp or worthy to study over the private

At a time, when none of us can congregate safely in public, not only due to Covid but increasing fascist laws of this hypermasculine insecure state, private spaces are ripe with opportunity to create feminist consciousness, against brahminical patriarchy, Hindutva, capitalism

Requires a lot of effort as any revolutionary praxis does - it needs you to read feminist works, understand power, make connections in non-binary, non-totalising, sitting with messy realities, paradoxes, emotional intelligence, so much kindness & patience, work on yourself first

amazing thing is you don't have do it alone! Do it with women - women you like, friends, those you want to be friends with, those who are frustrated, helpless and angry like you - read and connect what you're reading to your life, practice being intersectional in your thinking

Start radicalising your mothers, siblings, close friends, whoever you're close to - it's an amazing edu in political articulation - how do you debate with someone you deeply love? You don't. You listen, you talk, you synthesise something that's common, from your own standpoints

You get better at this in private & political contexts as you fine-tune your own feminist ear (as @SaraNAhmed puts it) - none of this is easy, you will prolly end up in rage shouting matches 1st few times but it's to be expected, you're reorienting things, you'll learn as you do

once again, my stream of consciousness has run away with me - tldr: Hindutva islamophobic brahminical patriarchy can be fought from home through creative feminist consciousness building - ofc goes without saying, only possible if you have receptive, less than abusive families

if you're in an abusive context, please focus everything on getting out. you can do nothing for yourself or anyone else when trapped in an abusive / hostile environment. Fin. independence, chosen family/ fam-like friends, showing up with time + food + material care is essential

all of this is painfully slow - you don't see immediate changes but you are sowing seeds of kindness, consciousness - trust the process, if you are bonding with women, your age & older is such an enriching & teaching experience, they know so much about mutual aid & community

as your work on your own feminism as an emancipatory politics - intersectional, trans & NB inclusive, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-caste, secular, ecological - you'll find a lot to engage & exchange in the stories & doubts you swap with each other, it's hope affirming