

Abstract

In recent years, as neoliberalism pervades every aspect of our lives, the crisis of care created necessitated increased dependency on the institution of family, and whenever the nuclear family failed, a reliance on informal networks of friendship. This has renewed search for intimate relationalities outside market exchange. One of the objects of this thesis is to explore how theorisation of friendship has evolved in particular ways in different geographical and historical contexts, acquiring an important role in defining political and social systems of the West. In doing so, it will unpack the androcentrism that lies at the heart of these theorisations and show how an alternate historiography of women's friendships questions this very understanding of the political. It is in this context, that this thesis will unfold why a project of revisiting the history of autonomous women's movement in India through the politics of friendship becomes critical in not only bringing to light an alternate history of the movement, but also in tracing the way politicisation of women's friendships can question the current organising of sociality itself to posit of a different idea of worldbuilding.

The autonomous women's movement in India has so far mostly been historicised diachronically. Writing an affective history of the movement through histories of friendship then brings to light a history of not just what the movement did, but also why and how it did what it did, the negotiations of its fragile collective 'we' with institutionalisation and growing identitarianism. By following the journey of two autonomous women's collectives, it will unpack the role friendships, with all its personal and political, liberal and revolutionary manifestations, played in shaping the movement, its ability to stand up to neoliberal forces as well as its partial surrender

to them. It will explore how politicisation of feminist friendships opens up queer possibilities of reimagining care, and push for a revolutionary ethics of feminist friendship.