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A Southern Feminist Approach to the Criminology of Mobility

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Abstract

While much of the mobility of displaced populations is within the Global South, the scholarship around the criminology of mobility is largely United States/Eurocentric. This article proposes a Southern feminist ethico-political lens from which we can view or engage with the criminology of mobility. The article first highlights the epistemological bordering processes and its implications in academic knowledge production. It then discusses the multifaceted processes of state bordering and the ways in which they produce difference and othering. The article further explores the role of transversal and situated intersectional feminist politics to undo them. It offers epistemological and methodological possibilities by engaging with concepts of reflexivity and accountability, vagueness and fuzziness, spatio-temporality, embodiment and resistance. It argues that reconfiguring our understanding of these concepts in light of the research experiences within South Asia, a Global South context, will offer crucial ontological, epistemological and methodological insights for the criminology of mobility and lay the groundwork for a Southern feminist approach.

Keywords: Global South; transversal feminist politics; prison; borders; situated intersectionality.

Introduction

Main sarhad pe khadi diwaar nahin,
us deewar pe padi daraar hoon.
(I am not the wall that stands at the border,
I am the fissure in that wall.)
—Kamla Bhasin

The criminology of mobility as an interdisciplinary field investigates the interconnections between border control and criminal justice (Aas and Bosworth 2013). It draws on three interdisciplinary lines of scholarly enquiry: criminological concerns with identity, scholarship on mobility and the border, and research on the global migration control industry (Pickering Bosworth and Aas 2015). Climate change, wars, economic instability, political and religious persecution, and global geopolitical inequities have resulted in mass migrations (Abel et al. 2019). The vulnerabilities of migrants are heightened when they reach a destination country and are confronted with racism and inequity in access to state services. Refugees and migrants on temporary visas are at the receiving end of exclusionary politics of border practices and do not receive the same human services support and economic benefits as citizens (Tazreiter and Metcalfe 2021). Socio-economic vulnerabilities pave the pathways to prison for different categories of migrants, foreign nationals, long-term residents and second-generation migrants. The criminology of

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mobility concerns itself with these issues and issues of 'crimmigration' when immigration laws and the criminal laws of a state converge to create particularly vulnerable circumstances for migrants (Stumpf 2006) through internal processes of bordering, surveillance and control (Aliverti 2021).

While much of the mobility of displaced populations is within the Global South, the scholarship around the criminology of mobility is largely United States (US)/Eurocentric. However, this is quickly changing with the emergence of critical work from different regions of the Global South, such as Waseem's (2022) work on police–migrant encounters in Pakistan, Gazzotti's (2021) work on humanitarian aid and border politics in Morocco, and Campos-Delgado and Côté-Boucher's (2022) work on the interactions between detained migrants and border agents in the context of Mexico's shift to humanitarian border politics, to name only a recent few. This article is an addition to this ongoing scholarship in the Global South and based on my work with Bangladeshi women in India, it proposes a Southern feminist ethico-political lens from where we can view or engage with the criminology of mobility. The first section of the article discusses the implications of epistemological bordering in academic knowledge production, which necessitates an ontology of the South. The second section provides an epistemological context for building a Southern feminist approach to the criminology of mobility. The third section discusses concepts that I engaged with while undertaking feminist research with Bangladeshi women in prisons in India who had been charged under the *Foreigners Act, 1946* (India), for crossing the border without valid documents (Mehta 2018) and research on cross-border child marriages across the India–Bangladesh border (Mehta 2019). I argue that reconfiguring our understanding of these concepts in light of the research experiences within South Asia, a Global South context, will offer crucial ontological, epistemological and methodological insights for the criminology of mobility and lay the groundwork for a Southern feminist approach.

Ontology of the South: Countering Epistemological Bordering

The implications of the North–South divide, in the way knowledge is produced, understood and disseminated has been discussed at length by various scholars. These discussions have ranged from the global economy of knowledge (Connell 2019), geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo 2000), epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) and epistemicide (de Sousa Santos 2014), amongst others. They allude to the processes through which knowledge from the South is silenced, invisibilised, marginalised or erased. I contend that these are effects of what I refer to as epistemological bordering, through which the difference between the knowledge produced from the North and the South is maintained and the latter is designated as the 'other'. This concept of epistemological bordering provides us with a useful framework to understand the processes of bordering and othering in academic knowledge production at two levels: logic and discourse.

At the level of logic, knowledge from the South is considered to be based on emotions, creativity and subjectivity and knowledge from the North is considered within the realm of rationalist knowledge. The two forms of knowledge are not only differentiated from each other, but they are hierarchised, with the latter deemed more valuable and credible than the former (de Sousa Santos and Paula Meneses 2019: 243-245; Khoury and Khoury 2013). Moitra (2002: 59) pointed out that 'rational "knowledge" is being hierarchically situated against emotive, poetic and imaginative forms of "knowledge". This creates a total hegemonic rationality'. This is normalised by maintaining the North–South flow of logic/knowledge through, as espoused by feminist philosopher Plumwood (1993), the following practices of dualism: backgrounding, radical exclusion or 'hyperseparation', relational definition or incorporation, instrumentalism or objectification, and homogenisation and stereotyping. These practices enable epistemological bordering and silence voices from the Global South, preventing them from being present on their own terms. They are either perceived as victims that need saving, need to be educated about academic conventions or are incorporated as case studies in a stereotypical and homogenised form.

At the level of discourse, epistemological bordering is also carried out by emphasising 'newness', wherein the neoliberal academic model emphasises citations from more recent publications, the politics of the peer review process and the metric system of calculating engagement with a particular text (Collyer 2018). Several journals in the Global South are not digitised, and with digital acceleration, they may have greater possibilities for citation now but could be eliminated because of being 'dated'. The expectation of international journals and conference organisers to fit diverse contextual research findings from the Global South into trending concepts and theoretical formulations in the Global North stifles and silences the scholarship of the former and limits its ability to be visible globally. These are processes of appropriation and codification of processes of knowledge production and construction of analytic categories that examine the Global South within a deficit framework (Mohanty 2003).

Challenging or reversing the effects of epistemological bordering will involve challenging processes of knowledge production and academic conventions that are rooted in positivism and binary logic while adopting methodologies that seek to homogenise and universalise people's experiences. It will also involve displacing the image of the white Western rational huMan as the

archetype for knowledge production and acknowledging the affordances and translational capacity of knowledge based on people's experiences in/from the Global South (Khoury and Khoury 2013).

The theoretical, conceptual and methodological advances made within a Global South context will provide an innovative understanding to the criminology of mobility. Voices from the Global South may not occupy all the canonical spaces of knowledge production, but there is a large body of scholarly work that is produced by and for the Global South. It is important that this work is acknowledged and listened to outside the South. If the criminology of mobility is committed to questioning borders and systems that govern mobilities, it must loosen the epistemic fixities and challenge epistemological bordering. The homogeneity and hegemony that often accompany academic convention in the way it defines and understands processes of bordering and criminalisation in the Global South needs to be fractured.

This article proposes an ontology of the South using the approach of situated intersectionality, wherein the South is an intersection of contemporary global processes, such as capitalism, globalisation, inequality, environmental crisis, mass migration, hyper-nationalism, militarism, religious fundamentalism and the legacy of colonialism. In such an ontology, the intersections are co-constitutive and historically connected, wherein every interaction between them creates new possibilities and is not restricted by the forces of circumstance. In such an interaction, the South is not defined as a deficit or 'other' of the North but as having its distinctive yet complex, dynamic, heterogenous and intersectional identity. Which intersections or axes of power need to be analysed in a particular space and time will be determined by the 'situated gazes of particular people in relation to their own social locations and social well-being' (Yuval-Davis 2015: 97).

The urgent need for the criminology of mobility to engage with the ontology of the South is evidenced by racialised construction of subjectivities in the detention centres, refugee camps, borderlands and prisons within the global securitised border regimes. Racial practices are maintained through bordering practices (Parmar 2020), as racial hierarchies facilitate mobility for some and not for others (Bosworth, Parmar and Vázquez 2018). There is also an over-representation of marginalised and minority communities in prisons around the world. In the US, 38% of people in federal prisons are Black (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2022) compared to 13.6% of the general population (US Census Bureau 2022). In the United Kingdom, 27% of incarcerated people identify as ethnic minorities compared to 13% in the general population (Sturge 2022). In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people constitute only 3.8% of the population of the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021) but represent 32% of the prison population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022). According to the 2021 report of Prison Statistics in India (National Crime Records Bureau 2022), 73% of the convicted prison population is Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or from Other Backward Classes. Additionally, in the same year, of the total convicted foreign national prisoners, 68% were Bangladeshis (National Crime Records Bureau 2022). These numbers expose internal and external processes of bordering and evidence how the idea of security is always ensured or secured through the insecurity of those created as an 'other'—primarily in terms of marginalised identities of race, class, caste, gender and religion, which may or may not intersect with citizenship status. Situating contemporary crime control within a broader context of international relations 'shows how global inequalities are inscribed into (domestic) crime control and criminalization patterns, and how they in turn reinforce and reify these inequalities' (Aas 2013: 22).

Given that people in prisons, detention centres and refugee camps in the North are mostly from the South, there needs to be a more nuanced understanding of their experiences of internal and external processes of bordering—before, while and after crossing borders. This applies to first-generation migrants and the subsequent generations who carry intergenerational trauma. There is a strong link between different kinds of mobilities and imprisonment, specifically in the context of forced mobilities (Moore 2020; Vogl 2021). There needs to be further research on how discrimination and marginalisation may not only lead to a person's imprisonment in their own country but may also be the cause of their migration—thereby creating a further risk of detention/imprisonment in the destination country. Vulnerabilities around cross-border mobilities have become increasingly complex with the rhetorical linking of immigration to national security in neoliberal states, economic crises and zoonotic infections like COVID-19 (Tazreiter and Metcalfe 2021). A historically connected and situated intersectional approach to the ontology of the criminology of mobility sets the premise for its Southern feminist epistemological and methodological formulations.

Southern Feminist Approach

In a global context where 'decolonisation' and 'Southern' have become buzzwords and epistemic inequalities are shaping the field (Tuck and Yang 2012), the concept of epistemological bordering can be used as a springboard to conceptualise a Southern feminist approach to the criminology of mobility. There are links between processes of 'othering' in academic knowledge production and the processes of the criminal justice system and the nation-state more broadly.

Carrington et al. (2019: 165-166) have argued that Southern criminology is not about creating global divides, but it is about injecting 'innovation, study, and theory from the periphery' or 'building epistemological bridges'. I argue that a Southernising project is about acknowledging the North–South divide and taking conscious political actions to reverse the effects of hegemonic control of the South by the North. A Southern criminology of mobility is not just about building bridges, viewing the issue from a different perspective or including/injecting case studies or theory from the Global South. It is about an active engagement with history and socio-political movements of the regions we concern ourselves with. An understanding of these complexities of histories brings to light the hydra-headed implications of power and the way it is intertwined with different intersecting identities. Southernising is an act of resistance and a process through which the fractured and complex Southern identities are claimed, presenting to the world the value and relevance of its standpoint and lived experience. Therefore, a Southern perspective not only opposes or modifies but also stands for itself, with its complexities and challenges.

In this article, I conceive the South not as a geographical location, but as a political grouping that signals the ways in which power and influence from the North are exerted in economic, political and cultural domains in the South (Byrne and Imma 2019). Therefore, any conceptualisation of the Global South needs to be attentive to histories of colonisation, spaces and people negatively affected by contemporary capitalist globalisation (Mahler 2017) and the enclaves of the Global South constructed within the Global North (Rajan and Park 2000). In an effort to Southernise, it is important to note that the process of reclaiming history prior to the colonial period for the Global South cannot be a simple return to the pre-colonial period. This is particularly problematic given the historical marginalisation and criminalisation, for instance, of lower caste communities and Indigenous communities in the Indian context. As Mary John (2015: 75) pointed out, in the context of India, 'it is true that, given our colonial and postcolonial histories, our intellectual spaces are cluttered with false universalisms. But it is equally true that we have been trapped by false particularisms, and even false rejections of the universal'. The process of putting forth a Southern approach cannot be devoid of an awareness of and accountability to these historical processes of marginalisation that have been further complicated through colonisation.

Integrating a feminist lens into our understanding of the historical processes of marginalisation and the effects of colonisation will highlight the gendered influence of these processes. According to Cornell (2015: 54) 'coloniality of gender concerns the most recent global upheaval of power and populations, the five hundred years of European empire and the global capitalist economy'. The control of gender and sexuality have been crucial to social stratification in the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial contexts (Banerjee 2005). Colonisers reordered—or disordered—gender relations in the colonies by redefining ideas of masculinity vis-a-vis the white coloniser man. Sexual violence perpetrated against Indigenous women by the colonisers fractured family relations and affected norms around inheritance. The appropriation of land by the colonisers created economic pressures within families, disenfranchised communities and created additional burdens for women to do both care work and support their families through labour outside the home. The change in women's roles during the colonial period continued to affect their lives during anti-colonial movements and even after the postcolonial state was established (Connell 2015: 54-55).

Knowledge about the coloniality of gender and violence associated with shaping it provides a context for understanding women's mobility across borders in contemporary times and the vulnerabilities that shape their experiences with global security regimes and international politics (Tripp, Ferree and Ewig 2013). Masculinised and heteronormative cultures are woven into the militarised construction of the state in its present form (Connell 1990; Nagel 1998; Iveković and Mostov 2002). A feminist critique of the securitised state and border regimes is crucial because, as Mohanty (2011: 77) pointed out, 'militarisation always involves masculinisation and heterosexualisation as linked state projects, and neoliberal economic arrangements are predicated on gendered and racialised divisions of labour and constructions of subjectivities'. The racialised sexist construction of subjectivities normalises violence against particular bodies—Muslim, female, immigrant, native, Arab—which 'reinforces the discourses of protectionism and citizenship in each country. In each case, we can identify states of exception whereby the suspension of law is required for the practice of empire' (Mohanty 2011: 80).

The intersections of gender with class, caste, religion, race, disability, age, sexuality and nationality have created internal and external borders between those considered legitimate citizens and those who are considered the 'other'. According to Mohanty (2011: 77), 'national security states or securitised regimes typically use connected strategies of militarisation, criminalisation and incarceration to exercise control over particular populations, thus remaking individual subjectivities and public cultures'. The gendered violence of the securitised states requires a situated intersectional feminist gaze, which is sensitive not only to patriarchy but to its intersection with ableism, heteronormativity, communalism, racism, neoliberalism, humanism and nationalism. This is not to suggest that patriarchy is not inherent in these 'isms' but to highlight that there are different ways in which they intersect in different contexts. To that effect, a Southern feminist approach will draw on transversal feminist politics where the participants engage with ' "others" belonging to different collectivities across borders and boundaries, [who] act not as representatives of identity categories or groupings but rather as advocates, how they are reflectively engaged in "rooting"

and "shifting" and how their strength lies in the construction of common epistemological understandings of particular political situations rather than of common political action' (Yuval-Davis 2016: 376-377).

Against this backdrop, I propose five conceptual formulations for us to consider while developing an ethico-political framework for the criminology of mobility with a Southern feminist approach: reflexivity and accountability, vagueness and fuziness, spatio-temporality, embodiment and resistance. Through this discussion, I seek to spotlight the conceptual, theoretical and aesthetic affordances of the Global South.

What Might Be the Constituents of a Southern Feminist Criminology of Mobility?

This section discusses a view of migration, borders and incarceration from a Global South women's standpoint, enabling a broader conceptualisation of mobility and processes of bordering and criminalisation. It draws on two research engagements. First, it draws on research focusing on the experiences of 40 young Bangladeshi women in two prisons in West Bengal who were charged under the *Foreigners Act, 1946* (India), for being in India without legal documents. It also draws on their experiences of crossing the India–Bangladesh border. The main themes that emerged from this research were love, 'honour' and violence (Mehta 2018). Second, it draws on research focusing on the experiences of 14 young Bangladeshi women living in five villages bordering the India–Bangladesh border, who, in their early or late teens, were married to Indian men and migrated to India without legal documents. The research focused on how they negotiated love, longing and desires of various kinds in the context of the securitisation of borders and criminalisation of border crossings (Mehta 2019).

Reflexivity and Accountability

A critical discussion of my positionality is crucial to provide a context to the Southern feminist approach that I propose in this article. First, I discuss my research engagements in India vis-a-vis my privileged status as a researcher and the Bangladeshi women in India, the research participants. My positionality as an Indian woman who is 'not a prisoner' was constantly evoked by the Bangladeshi women in prisons in India. While they found companionship in me as a young woman who came to the prison to speak with them and was keen to hear their lived experiences, they were acutely aware of my privilege and brought that up for discussion frequently. These discussions and their critique of my privileged position as an Indian and 'non-prisoner' were geared towards ensuring transparency in the methodology and representation of their lived experiences. Being attentive and responsive to their critique while being actively aware of how my positionality affected the women in prison formed an integral part of the research process for me. It involved inculcating an ethico-political awareness in the way I represent their stories within the South Asian context and beyond, the way I understand processes of bordering and criminalising practices in the context of histories of colonisation, while also being attentive to the conceptual and theoretical developments in the criminology of mobility globally. It also involved challenging the power relations in which I was embedded within the prison and the academia, and keeping the women's interests at the forefront.

Second, I discuss my positionality as a member of the global academic community, as a researcher living and researching in India before 2020. From such a positionality, making my work on processes of the criminalisation of Bangladeshi women in prisons in India visible beyond the region was always a double-edged sword. While the issue itself has received much interest, endeavours at publishing in international journals have always been met with comments such as: Why don't you use more postcolonial feminists in your work? Why don't you provide a footnote with more explanation for the partition of India? Academics from the Global South are expected to make themselves and their contexts visible in a more 'Southern' way, but at the same time, their style of writing/expression is made invisible by fitting them into normative structures of writing that are acceptable and familiar to Anglo-Saxon readers (de Sousa Santos 2014), who may or may not be aware of the histories of colonisation.

My relocation from India to Australia in the last three years has involved a renewed process of self-reflexivity about what this identity of a Southern feminist means to me, the implications it has on my field and research engagement, and the way in which what I produce is received by both scholars in the Global North and the Global South. This brings me to the questions of reflexivity and accountability—key principles in feminist processes of knowledge production (Haraway 1988). Given my identity as an Indian located in Australia, a settler colony, accountability and reflexivity for me lie not only regarding the specific subject of my research but also its possible implications on Indigenous communities in Australia, disenfranchised communities in India and more broadly in the Global South. Accountability and reflexivity also involves continuously negotiating relationships with different communities based on my shifting positionalities.

These principles of reflexivity and accountability can be realised by challenging the patriarchal, casteist, racist, colonialist and capitalist modes of knowledge production. This critique and engagement can only be beneficial if we are aware of our

complicity in the processes of bordering, our direct or indirect contributions to the sustenance of criminalising practices of the state and the representations of communities we research with and write about. This requires a critical questioning of the power relations in which we are embedded, the often-privileged positions from which we speak and our everyday practices. As Saba Mahmood (2001: 225) pointed out, our scholarly practice should depart 'not from a position of certainty but one of risk, critical engagement and a willingness to re-evaluate one's own views in light of the Other's'. To this effect, the discussions in this article are cognisant of my positionality in different contexts and are motivated to challenge echelons of privilege and shift our understanding of the criminology of mobility.

Vagueness and Fuzziness

Feminist philosophers have argued that the logic of exactitude, which is central to the problem of gender politics, leads to an artificial representation of the world. Conversely, vagueness, which is natural and in the 'fact of the matter' of our everyday lives, must be accommodated in theory constructions, paving the way for fuzzy logic (Chatterjee 1994; Moitra 2019). Women's experiences have been historically marginalised on the pretext that they are based on emotions and, hence, irrational, inappropriate and undesirable for theory. Moitra (2019: 492) elucidated, 'in the name of neatness and efficiency the existence of fuzzy categories are either denied, or mutated, or marginalized and silenced'. Realities are complex and 'incoherent'. We provide them meaning through what we understand as 'coherent'.

If we begin by examining the concept of vagueness and fuzziness from the standpoint of the Bangladeshi women in Indian prisons, we understand that they diverged from the dominant (legal) view of states as distinct entities, a normative perspective in which borders demarcate nation-states (Mehta 2016). Their narratives of how they understood borders and visualised two different 'countries' were drawn from, or based on, a variety of factors: the stories they had heard in Bangladesh, the frequency of travel they had witnessed between the two places or the information they gained from the mass media. While they recognised the difference between India and Bangladesh, for them, this variance was in terms of fluid boundaries of culture, religion and economics. However, this difference did not necessarily translate into an understanding of the two countries as distinctly separate from each other or as having political borders. Their reference point for understanding the difference between the two countries was not a printed map. It was based on conversations and lived experiences. These women were not exposed to the jargon of the state but created their own vocabulary, which varied from individual to individual. Their experiences illustrate how the colonial and androcentric construction of borders, based on 'neat lines' drawn on paper (Chatterji 1999), has serious implications for disempowering them and, therefore, deepening their marginalisation. The perspectives of these women offer an advantageous window from which one can perceive the arbitrariness, paradoxes and contradictions involved in the criminalisation of border crossing and within the construction of the border itself (Mehta 2016, 2018).

The Bangladeshi women in prisons in India challenged the idea of the nation-state in two ways: first, by rejecting the national identities imposed on them by the borders and, second, by foregrounding the vagueness within the formulation and operationalisation of border controls. Their narratives provide the criminology of mobility with important directions and useful insights into alternative ways of understanding state security, sovereignty and governance. Bangladeshi women's struggles, negotiations and resistance give us insights into the everyday life of power and the systems of oppression that border controls create and maintain. Scholars and activists of the criminology of mobility can use these to bring about a change in the existing structures by imagining an alternative to the idea of the nation-state, which is based on how it is experienced and imagined by people on the margins, especially in and from the Global South.

Spatio-Temporality

Bodies must be considered not only in terms of 'matter' and 'form' but also in terms of their spatio-temporal location, as space and time are important correlates of the exploration of corporeality, which is a material condition of subjectivity (Grosz 1995). The articulation of spatio-temporal configurations becomes crucial to understanding the experiences of gendered bodies as they move from one country to another and cross social and political borders. Sur (2020) pointed out that time consciousness on borders is vital to the understanding of nations and nationalism. The temporal spaces that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers inhabit have an implication on the ways in which the destination states perceive them and may also lead to their pathways to prison or criminalisation. Temporally, cross-border mobilities in the South Asian context, for instance, are located in the history of the region—the partition of British India, kinship relationships across the borders, mobility of cattle and the farmlands and houses that are divided by the border (Ghosh 2019; Mehta 2019; Sur 2021). With respect to the Bangladeshi women in Indian prisons, they often referred to their mobility across the border in terms of the historical relationship between India and Bangladesh and the relationships between families across the border, which were interrupted due to the creation of a political border (Mehta 2016). They continuously negotiated with the idea of regimented time in prison, which, in turn, was defined by the border time. Their narratives in prison began with 'when I crossed the border'. The act of crossing the border was a starting point for them to begin the process of understanding their experiences of incarceration (Mehta 2022).

Prisons or detention centres are spaces where both time and space are a priori. The spatial and temporal designs of these closed institutions are geared to maintain the prisoner as a docile body (Foucault 1977). The Bangladeshi women in prisons in India moved beyond the everyday surveillance and control over their bodies, space and time for their survival. They re-imagined and re-conceptualised the space and time that was imposed on them. They changed the course of time imposed on them in the prison with the help of rumours and love. Both rumours and expressions of love gave them a virtual location outside the regimented space-time location of the prison (Mehta 2022). It helped them transport themselves from the physical space and time of the prison to a world in which they could be in control of their lives. This sense of control was crucial for their survival, especially in the context of the minimal autonomy that people living in and between borders have over their own time (Bhatia and Canning 2021).

Integrating an understanding of the different spatio-temporalities that people and nation-states inhabit will enrich our conceptualisation of the criminology of mobility by providing a better understanding of the processes and effects of bordering.

Embodiment

Who embodies the nation-state? What are the ways in which the manifestations of the embodiment of the nation-state are visible? Feminists have argued that violence is used to keep women's sexuality and labour under control (Enloe 1989; Mies 1982). The mobility of women across borders is dominated by their prominent role in jobs that are characterised by sexual and gender-based violence (Tan and Kuschminder 2022). Bangladeshi women in India, for instance, work in the informal labour market, including construction and domestic work. They are in low-paid, risky jobs and deprived of collective bargaining power (Chakraborty 2018). Associated with these mobilities for labour is the stigma and taboo that is attached to it. The narratives of the Bangladeshi women in Indian prisons foregrounded the notion of 'honour', which, in turn, shaped the experiences and vulnerabilities of women who engaged in cross-border mobilities. Perceived violations of the 'honour' of the family or community may create vulnerable circumstances for the women, necessitating their movement across the border. Crossing the border and being in prison add to the stigma and taboo they carry, creating further chances of being ostracised from their communities. In this way, women are perceived as embodying the 'honour' of their family, community and nation (Mehta 2018).

Through their mobilities, they fulfil demands of labour in each of the countries but are considered in violation of the 'honour' of the community at large. Movements for labour and marriage are often intertwined in the case of Bangladeshi women getting married in India at an early age or as children. In this case, their mobility is often facilitated by family members, and women remain tied to their marital families because of the uncertainties around their citizenship status. In India, they are merely considered corporeal evidence of a national difference, which is marked on the terrains of their bodies (Mehta 2019). Many women also resisted this designation of their bodies as serving the purpose of labour or marriage. They actively resisted the borders to maintain the kinship ties that mattered to them, as recounted by Koli (pseudonym):

> Earlier, I used to take the help of a *dalal* [intermediary] … depending on what kind of service we needed, we would pay the *dalal* accordingly … sometimes 1,000, sometimes 500, and a number of times, 2000 … we used to walk and go across … I went by boat once … that time, my son was very young … actually not even on a boat … that time the river level was really low … that time I took my son with me … I took him in a *kadai* [a large deep vessel used for cooking] … [laughs] … there was water … so, how would I take my son across the river … the *dalal* who helped me cross the border, he only took my son in a *kadai* … I swam across the river … [laughs] … I think this was in 2009 … before that, I had taken my daughter with me to Bangladesh … there was no problem when I took my daughter … that time the border was *bhalo* [good].

The narratives of several women, like Koli, highlight the different affective relationships they negotiate across the border—with their children, intimate partners, parents and friends. While some of them had adapted to the latest technology to communicate with their loved ones, others still relied on methods through which they could bribe the border security forces and make their way back into Bangladesh to meet those whom they longed to see while living on the other side of the border. Their negotiation with the border was, in essence, a negotiation with their emotions and desires towards their loved ones. Based on whether their desire for affect had been met, they labelled the border as '*bhalo*' or '*kharap*' [bad] (Mehta 2019).

Experiences of embodiment and mobility also need to be understood in their interconnectedness with the non-human world. Sur (2020, 2021) and Ghosh (2019) have drawn attention to migration and its embeddedness in the mobility of different life forms and objects across borders. They have evoked imageries of jungles, baskets and cattle to discuss mobility across the India–Bangladesh border and how they become entangled with the sociocultural and political worlds of humans. Dey (2022) drew attention to how tracing the history of *doi* (yoghurt), a food item, facilitates an understanding of territoriality, taste-making and labour in a region marked by histories of the redrawing of borders and forced migrations. These visceral experiences and embodied engagements, often in abeyance of the border, provide possibilities for alternatives to borders.

Resistance

A genuine effort at a Southern feminist criminology of mobility will need to go beyond the barriers set by language and binary norms of rationality and include sensory ways of knowing borders and embodied experiences of inhabiting and crossing borders and draw on histories of colonisation and its effects on border-making and of women's resistance to internal and external borders in different parts of the world—Black women, Dalit women, Muslim women and Indigenous women, to name a few. This will provide a context for listening to a 'different voice' (Gilligan 1982).

For Southernising the criminology of mobility, it is not just important to bring to light the history of border-making and criminology in countries in the Global South. This is not just a process of listing. It is a process through which we need to draw on the lived experiences of those who cross borders under forced circumstances to understand the ways in which they are resisting the borders as they are now but also the ways in which borders have affected generations in their family, whether in the Global South or through their movements to the Global North. Mobility across borders is emotionally charged. The act of crossing the border, particularly under forced conditions of migration, is a political act of resistance, symbolic of transgression and hope for a safer place. Everyday bordering practices by the state are accompanied by everyday practices of 'un-bordering' by people who resist them. How can these lived experiences be used to derive concepts and provide useful lessons for understanding history, politics, structures of inequality and repressive laws in different contexts? Histories of resistance to colonial borders have important contributions to contemporary resistance to borders all over the world. With resistance, there is also a re-conceptualisation of and a proposition of alternatives to borders.

Of the many lessons I learnt while working with women in the different prisons, an important one was when the Bangladeshi women refused to answer questions about violence that were posed by me, someone who identified as a feminist researcher, and rather preferred to talk about their stories of love. As a 'good feminist' researcher, asking questions about violence occurred almost naturally to me. However, they spoke about love: love they had lost, love stories they wove together in prison, and love they aspired to. Each time I asked a question about violence, they would ask me: 'why do you want to hear those things? Let me tell you about my love story'. They would then begin speaking about the women and men they met in the prison or the court, the love letters they exchanged and the way they inked the names of their lovers on their arms. Their narratives indicated that they wanted to be represented through their stories of love. The stories of love, nonetheless, reflected the violence and marginalisation they had experienced, but they wanted the framing of their stories to be different. Expressing and weaving relationships of love in prison was, for them, an act of resistance towards the heteronormative idea of the family and women's role in it; it was also a resistance to the everyday monotonous prison life and structure that was designed to prevent intimate relationships. The love narratives of the Bangladeshi women about Indian men and women were also a form of resistance to colonial borders. Most importantly, they were a form of resistance to my questions and my way of building knowledge about their lives. They refused to be viewed as helpless victims or as those languishing in prison; they wanted to be represented as agents (Mehta 2018). Their resistance to the patriarchal understanding of the role of women in the family and the state, their resistance to the prison norms and their resistance towards me as a researcher are crucial for an understanding of their lived experiences.

Stories or narratives of resistance offer us an insight into the structures and processes that marginalise people. Understanding the varied ways in which people resist power structures in their everyday lives will enable us to understand their strengths, their ability to reframe their circumstances and the new directions that their narratives may offer (Scott 1985). While identifying resistance, we also need to be cautious that we do not lay the onus of the resistance only on the marginalised groups. As Abu-Lughod (1990: 42) pointed out, 'all forms of resistance should allow us to get at the ways in which intersecting and often conflicting structures of power work together, and they should not be seen as signs of human freedom but as telling us more about forms of power and how people are caught in them'. This will pave the way for activism and struggles against systems of power that maintain border controls and processes of criminalisation of mobile populations.

The narratives of the Bangladeshi women in Indian prisons offer a view of their lives and throw light on the complexities in the South Asian context. They provide alternatives to globally assumed constructs of borders and penal institutions. The voices of these Bangladeshi women are useful for understanding the South Asian context and other contexts where similar conditions or marginalisation may be limiting women's abilities to survive and thrive. Bangladeshi women's experiences of crossing the India–Bangladesh border may also inform our understanding of embodied experiences of refugees, people seeking asylum, prisoners and detainees elsewhere. How we re-imagine the criminology of mobility will depend on where we are willing to view reality from. The Bangladeshi women prisoners in India provide one standpoint; as a researcher, I provide another standpoint. A situated intersectional feminist gaze of these standpoints will provide the scope of alternatives to the way we understand borders, policing, detention and mobilities across borders. It is not only about who we view and how we view reality but from where we view it.

Exploring Solidarities: Towards a Transversal Politics

An intention for meaningful engagement can help build sustainable relationships between the Global North and Global South. According to Butler (2020), 'we do not need to love each other to engage in meaningful solidarity'. There is a need for strategic conversations and solidarities. It is important to break local and global boundaries but also to work with particularities without necessarily promoting ethnocentrism. Supporting struggles against identity, citizenship and belongingness across borders can prove to be powerful expressions of solidarity. South Asian feminist activists and scholars have demonstrated the ways in which cross-border solidarities may be built in defiance of dominant trends in nationalist politics (Azim, Menon and Siddiqi 2009). There is an urgent need to follow these exemplars and forge deeper solidarities between international women's political struggles, considering each other as subjects of their own history. They must be 'forged in concrete historical and political practice and analysis' (Mohanty 2003: 20).

Feigning ignorance of the historical and political context of the Global South is also a way of denying the colonial past. Reductive cross-cultural comparisons/cultural reductionisms are counterproductive to the political project of Southernising. Isolating the countries in the Global South and not situating them within the simultaneous developments in the world, in effect, orientalises the South. Additionally, decontextualisation and isolated case studies analysed within universalised Western frames of reference are all colonising methodologies. They silence and make the complex socio-political histories of each of the cultural contexts invisible. Learning about each other's context is a two-way process and not the burden of Global South researchers. This will necessitate thinking outside the Western modernist framework of empiricism and rationality and reconfiguring ontological and epistemological positionings.

A Southern feminist approach underlined by transversal feminist politics opens possibilities for forging solidarities and countering epistemological bordering to listen to the voices of those historically silenced and made invisible. The use of creative methodologies such as audiovisual mediums, artwork and podcasts as some of the tools to create, engage with and communicate knowledge in non-conventional ways will be crucial for a transversal feminist politics. Reflexivity, accountability and reciprocity will be important components of this politics as we locate ourselves within intersectional positions of power to engage with the diversity of voices. Researchers will need to acknowledge the co-dependence of the Global South and Global North but also the former's autonomy.

I embarked on this discussion with the intention of engaging in a constructive dialogue and collectively re-imagining the criminology of mobility. The intention was not to present a prescription for what will work for re-imagining the criminology of mobility but to lay bare the various opportunities for us to come together, think of and experience alternatives, and visibilise the precarious lives of people moving across borders.

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