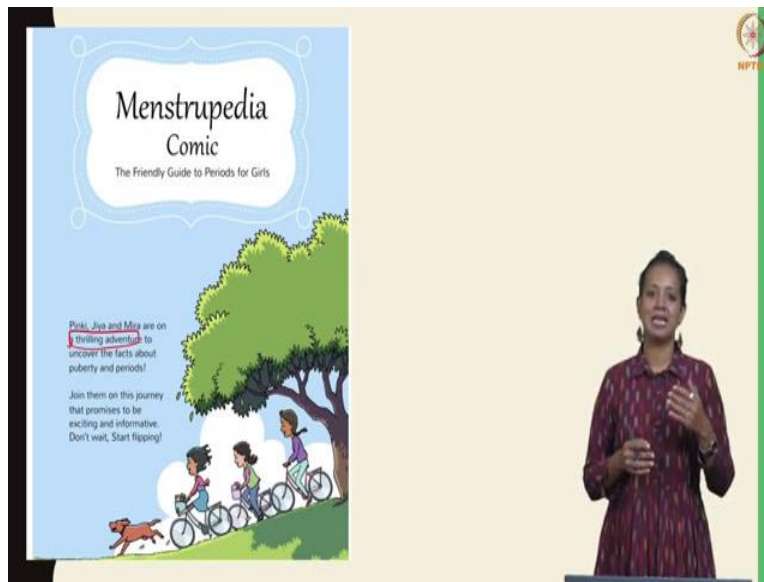


**Feminism: Concepts and Theories**  
**Dr. Mathangi Krishnamurthy**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Feminisms: Fourth Wave, Popular Culture and Social Media Part 1**  
**Session 2**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:15)



Here is one of the comic resources from Menstrupedia meant to familiarize young girls with the idea of menstruation, I will read you just the front page. It says, “Pinkie, Jia and Mira are on a thrilling adventure to uncover the facts about puberty and periods. Join them on this journey that promises to be exciting and informative. Don’t wait! Start flipping.” It is a familiar form, you speaking to children in their language; you are restaging periods and menstruation as a thrilling adventure of discovering our bodies; you are normalizing the factor of menstruation and therefore a platform like Menstrupedia has the capacity for long-term radical change in relation to the goals of body-positive feminism.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:08)

CONTENTS	PAGE
GROWING UP .....	05
Physical changes in girls during puberty. ....	09
Physical changes in boys during puberty. ....	12
What is a healthy diet? .....	18
WHAT ARE PERIODS .....	29
How are babies made? .....	34
How do periods happen? .....	35
Tips to relieve pain during periods. ....	44
WHEN IS MY NEXT PERIOD? .....	51
How to track menstrual cycle? .....	53
Premenstrual syndrome. ....	56
How to deal with premenstrual syndrome? .....	57
TAKING CARE DURING PERIODS .....	59
What is a sanitary pad and how to use one? .....	61
How to make a sanitary pad at home? .....	65
How to dispose a used sanitary pad? .....	72
What to do when you get your first period? .....	75
Hygiene measures during periods. ....	80

Here is a table of contents from the comic: Growing up: Physical changes in girls during puberty; Physical changes in boys during puberty; What is a healthy diet? What are periods? How are babies made? How do periods happen? Tips to relieve pain during periods; When is my next period? How-to track the menstrual cycle? Premenstrual syndrome; How to deal with premenstrual syndrome? Taking care; A sanitary pad; How to make a sanitary pad? How to dispose a used sanitary pad? What do you do when you get your first period? Hygiene measures.

Look at the ways in which a comic is capable of addressing multiple aspects of something that is quite important in the development of bodies, puberty itself. What are the ways in which one can look at biological changes without adding on cultural baggage? What are the ways in which young girls can get acclimated to the idea of menstruation? How do we look at material culture around period, sanitary pads, disposing them off, so on and so forth?

And how can it also be a foot in the door in relation to sex education? Also, very important for young girls and boys to then go on to own their sexuality, to be comfortable with their sexuality instead of speaking about all of these in hushed tones.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:48)

## #METOO

- Me Too! movement was founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke
- to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly young women of colour from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. Empowerment through empathy
- Letting other women know that they're not alone in the journey.
- The movement became an internet sensation when actress Alyssa Milano stumbled upon this phrase and tweeted this.



## EVERYDAY SEXISM – LAURA BATES

- "The sadness of the stories was a heavy thing to bear, as was the continued abuse I received. A man who had offered me directions crossed the street in disgust when I told him I was on my way to give a talk about workplace sexual harassment, snapping: "For God's sake, we've got to have some fun!" An interviewer asked me live on air whether it was difficult having no friends because I was so humourless. An American commentator wrote a blog publicly warning my husband he would one day come home to find I had burned down our house, murdered our children and joined a "coven of lesbian witches". Somewhere around the time I received a death threat alongside the claim I was a dripping poison that should be eradicated from the world, I started seeing a counsellor."



I want to spend the next few minutes discussing one of the most iconic movements of fourth wave feminism namely #MeToo! #MeToo the movement was founded in 2006 by an activist called Tarana Burke to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. It advocated empowerment through empathy.

So, in many ways you saw some of this in the everyday sexism project, which is that one begins to build a community of survivors of those who have undergone similar

experiences and are now able to talk about. This allowed women who had survived to let other women know that they are not alone in the journey and the movement became an internet sensation. It went viral so to speak even as it was a consistent movement in multiple ways, when actress Alyssa Milano stumbled upon the phrase and tweeted this. Ofcourse it was part of high profile campaigns against some very well-known predators including Harvey Weinstein who was recently sentenced to 23 years in prison and therefore it garnered a lot of eyeballs. Even as it began very particularly to help young women of color, it was adopted by women across the race, class, caste spectrum.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:20)



In this I want to discuss an article by Srila Roy from 2018 that spoke about #MeToo, as a crucial moment to revisit the history of Indian feminism. # MeToo was subject to similar kinds of critiques as fourth wave feminism that it was exclusive to the experiences of urban elite women; it did not speak about the experiences of a large portion of say the Indian population. And therefore it was exclusive, it was insular, it really did not quite matter in the same fashion. But Srila Roy discusses it very specifically as part of a larger trajectory of the development of Indian feminism and it is in this context that I want to discuss it for the next few slides in this lecture.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:14)

The slide features a title '#METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM' in bold black text. Below the title is a bulleted quote from Roy. The quote is partially underlined in red. On the right side of the slide, a woman in a maroon patterned dress is speaking. A small NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

**#METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM**

- “The 2000s signified a new visibility and direction for Indian feminist activism, a third wave if you want. At the start of the decade, there were a number of spontaneous public protests and vigils led by middle-class youth in urban areas in response to high-profile cases of violence against elite women. An example is that of protests against the murder of model Jessica Lal (Dutta and Sircar 2013)...important forerunners of new feminist interventions into issues of public safety, street sexual harassment, and wider rape culture (epitomised by the anti-rape protests of 2012).”

Roy writes, “The 2000 signified a new visibility and direction for Indian feminist activism, a third wave if you want,” so while this is called a third wave for Roy remember it exists at the same time that the movement is being called fourth wave in other parts of the world. So, in many ways it is important to understand that the continuity between third and fourth wave is up for debate.

“At the start of the decade there were a number of spontaneous public protests and vigils led by middle-class youth in urban areas in response to high-profile cases of violence against elite women. An example is that of protest against the murder of model Jessica Lal, important forerunners of new feminist interventions into issues of public safety, street sexual harassment,” or what is normally called without irony eve-teasing “and wider rape culture.”

If you remember there was a movie made about this called *No one killed Jessica* and therefore you see these kinds of urban elite protests also giving rise to cultural production because it is now popular enough to be consumed.

Epitomized by the anti-rape protest of 2012 which brought to the fore in a dramatic fashion the ways in which street sexual harassment, wider rape culture had become almost normalized in Indian public imagination.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:53)

## #METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM

- Towards the end of 2017, the Indian feminist community was riveted by an unexpected and ferocious controversy, following on the heels of the global #MeToo movement that brought these generational conflicts to a head. Raya Sarkar, a graduate student of Indian descent at the University of California, Davis, published (on Facebook) a "list" (hereafter the List) of sexual predators in Indian academia. The cautionary list contained, in the first instance, 60 prominent male academics, located in premier Indian institutions as well as in North America. No context, incidents, details or explanation of crimes were provided. The "public secret" (Baxi 2014) of sexual harassment in the academy exploded in the creation of this digital archive—a hall of shame.

“Towards the end of 2017 the Indian feminist community was riveted by an unexpected and ferocious controversy following on the heels of the global #MeToo movement that brought these generational conflicts to a head.”

Even as we are looking at a wider participation in the issues that are close to feminism Roy is also identifying generational conflicts between second, maybe early third wave feminists in India and third wave, fourth wave feminism as a set of movements in India.

“Raya Sarkar, a graduate student of Indian descent at the University of California, Davis published on Facebook a list, here after the List of sexual predators in Indian academia, the cautionary list contained in the first instance 60 prominent male academics located in premier Indian institutions as well as in North America. No context, incidents, details or explanations of crime were provided;” and this is important to try and understand this generational conflict. “The ‘public secret’ of sexual harassment in the academy exploded in the creation of this digital archive – a Hall of Shame.”

And in many ways call out culture, public shaming are all becoming important tools for fourth wave feminists especially on the heels of earlier decades of disappointment in relation to legal due process and forms of punishment and redressal available to complainants and victims.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:44)

## #METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM

- “As the List gained traction on social media, a statement was issued by 12 established Indian feminists on the popular political blog, Kafila. It expressed deep discomfort with the act of anonymously naming men as sexual aggressors “with no context or explanation,” and even argued that this could “delegitimise the long struggle against sexual harassment, and make our tasks as feminists more difficult” (Menon 2017). It asked for this initiative to be withdrawn while emphasising the importance of “due process, which is just and fair.”

“As the List gained traction on social media a statement was issued by 12 established Indian feminists on the popular political blog Kafila. It expressed deep discomfort with the act of anonymously naming men as sexual aggressors “with no context or explanation” and even argued that this could “delegitimize the long struggle against sexual harassment and make our tasks as feminists more difficult.” It asked for this initiative to be withdrawn while emphasizing the importance of “due process which is just and fair.” So, just to draw out for you the contours of this argument while the list was publicized by a number of young women in academia as a way of saying that within existing power relations it was dangerous for them to name their attackers, to name their harassers, this was a way in which social media allowed them to be able to say their names out; to call them aggressors, to call and to witness each other’s pain, to understand that academia was a difficult space and a space of power-laden harassment. Other feminists said that this act of anonymously naming men would push the goals of the feminist movement back it would delegitimize feminists especially if they were naming aggressors without any details, without any evidence, without any recourse to due process.

As you can tell each of these groups had arguments that make sense, had arguments that were particular to their location in relation to the feminist movement and therefore it is difficult to say one is right or the other is wrong.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:38)



The slide features a title '#METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM' in bold black text at the top. Below the title is a list of three bullet points. The third bullet point is circled in red. On the right side of the slide, a woman in a maroon patterned dress is speaking. A small logo is visible in the top right corner.

- A post-Nirbhaya (2012) moment
- Deep disagreements and divides among feminist voices
- ...it is ultimately the voices of middle class and metropolitan women, journalists, actors, and other professionals..."

Therefore, in Roy's understanding, even as this exposed deep disagreements and divides among feminist voices, in Roy's understanding this was therefore a revelation of the deep disagreements and conflicts in Indian feminist voices.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:00)

The slide features a title '#METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM' in bold black text at the top left. Below the title is a bulleted quote from Farris and Rottenberg (2017) discussing the Indian case and feminist challenges. On the right side of the slide, a woman in a purple patterned dress is speaking. A small logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide area.

**#METOO – INDIAN FEMINISM**

- “Here, the Indian case is evocative of a more general and global predicament that contemporary feminism seems to find itself in. Across the north and the south, there is a new visibility, potency, and legitimacy to feminist knowledges, affects, and struggles, but there is also an intensification of internal contestation, charge, and conflict. If feminists are unable to respond in a unified voice to sexual violence, then they are also faced with an increased backlash from patriarchal forces, not to mention the threat of “co-option” from external agents, such as the state, the market, neo-liberal capitalism, and right-wing nationalisms (Farris and Rottenberg 2017).”

And therefore she argues, “The Indian case is evocative of a more general and global predicament that contemporary feminism seems to find itself in. Across the North and the South there is a new visibility, potency and legitimacy to feminist knowledges, affects and struggles but there is also an intensification of internal contestation, charge and conflict. If feminists are unable to respond in a unified voice to sexual violence then they are also faced with an increased backlash from patriarchal forces not to mention a threat of “co-option” from external agents such as the state, the market, neoliberal capitalism and right-wing nationalisms.”

So, the question here to ask in relation to #MeToo would be what would a unified appeal both by the feminists who had problem with the anonymous calling out of men and the women who suffered aggression and attack, what would a unified appeal look like? Because ofcourse, it stands to reason that both sets of feminists would want the violence to end and this is the question that Roy is asking which is, if feminists are unable to respond then they will be faced with an increased backlash, it will be easier to fragment the feminist movement in this instance.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:31)



In short, whether in India or elsewhere this is a conjuncture in which feminism and ideals of gender equality enjoy more widespread legitimacy than ever before but paradoxically at the same time the fundamental contradictions of feminism as a political project have also never been more visible and obvious.

So, in my understanding, my reading, this is also a moment of truth to ask where is it that we are located, these will be the meeting point between feminist theory and feminist movements; and this is an important and possibly liberating point and having sketched out the contours of this set of arguments I want to move on finally to the work of *Agents of Ishq*, a multimedia project about sex, love, and desire that may have the capacity to allow us to think about these questions of conflict and change differently.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:23)



**AGENTS OF ISHQ**

- Agents of Ishq is a multi-media project about sex, love and desire. Or, to put it another way, we make cool video, beautiful images and great audio about sex, love and desire in India.
- Agents of Ishq is brought to you by Parodevi Pictures, an independent media and arts company based in Mumbai.
- **WHY DID WE BECOME THE AGENTS OF ISHQ?**
  - Because we wanted to create many, many positive conversations about, love, sex and desire. We are often asked to speak about moral policing, sexuality, violence. And this is what we have heard in discussions: people want a place to talk about sex and love honestly, without feeling un-cool or ashamed about their confusions.
  - We began to wonder – where is the good stuff and the helpful stuff about sex for Indians? Didn't seem to be much. So we decided to make some.

– <http://agentsofishq.com/about-us/>

On their website they say, “we make cool video, beautiful images and great audio about sex, love, and desire in India.” In many ways the work of Agents of Ishq also provides us different possibilities about pleasurable feminist activity, about the ways in which pleasure, joy, and happiness also have to be part and parcel of the feminist project and it need not always succumb to a particular set of disappointments or rigors. Both can be held together.

Agents of Ishq is brought to you by Parodevi Pictures an independent media and arts company based in Mumbai. And the answer the question, why did we become Agents of Ishq or love? ‘Because we wanted to create many-many positive conversations about love, sex, and desire.

We are often asked to speak about moral policing, sexuality violence and this is what we have heard in discussions. People want a place to talk about sex and love honestly without feeling uncool or ashamed about their confusions. We began to wonder where is the good stuff and the helpful stuff about sex for Indians? Didn't seem to be much. So we decided to make some. And here is their website for those who are interested in exploring their wonderful work further.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:07)



This is what the website looks like and you can immediately see how is it that they are invested in these values of pleasure, and love, and desire, and beauty.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:19)



And for today's lecture I want to play to you a couple of videos that they have put out in public space both for enjoyment and for education. So, let's start with a video that discusses the idea of consent itself which is often been something that has drawn battlegrounds between people who say you have systematized everything. Surely consent cannot be that clear in relations between desiring subjects; what if there is some amount of vagueness some dilly-dallyingness; why take all the fun out of romance? And this video I think provides a very useful set of considerations.

(Song being played from 16:02 to 23:12)

I hope that was fun and in that video you can see the deftness and the light handedness with which Agents of Ishq is addressing a series of very serious issues, you saw the appearance of #MeToo, you saw the appearance of consent, there is a clear joy in the ways in which all of the protagonists inhabit their own desires.

Even in the instance of the woman who speaks about having given in to her partner and despite having no heart in it, you see that she has expressed her desire before and he has not responded therefore, it is also gesturing to the ways in which there has to be some kind of egalitarianism, mutual consent, in the ways in which we understand love and it need not be serious or without pleasures.

So, you can see how this is very much located within fourth wave feminism but at the same time it also draws upon a differently, it also draws upon a whole different set of idioms to be able to convey this message, there is sisterhood, there is oral narrative, there are traditions of Qawwali, it is drawing upon film traditions of song and dance and play, it is truly a veritable joy to watch.

In the same sort of vein let us then look at their video on consent but now conveyed through the dance form of Lavani particular to Maharashtra.

(Song being played from 24:48 to 32:50)

In this set of mediations, so very fun, so very invested in women as desirous beings and as protagonists of their own desiring lives, you see the ways in which this can produce feminists of a joyful nature.

I mean if this is what feminism is about give me feminism all day, every day, and here you see the video focusing on clear communication both for men and women in transparency in egalitarianism but all within the context of Lavani, in itself an immensely seductive dance form, now being included within how we understand feminism in a localized specific yet urban context.

And this is why I am such a big fan of *Agents of Ishq*; and lastly I want to play for you a very-very recent video speaking about the ways in which the police need to pay attention to women's complaints when they show up at the police station

(Song being played from 33:55 to 41:51)

I wanted to include that last example to show you a very-very different tonality and content from the previous two videos in many ways you are looking at the same dance form, Lavani, but here utilized for a very different set of purposes.

You can see the same set of values also in this video: inclusivity, pragmatism, and very-very importantly, a strong sense of humor a way in which you understand daily life to be fraught but one that can be addressed through everyday negotiation and communication.

There is also across all of these videos a dialogue with popular culture as a ferment for communication.

If feminist theory, feminists keep critiquing popular culture, videos like this also show you that it is possible to engage with cultural production in feminist ways, for feminist filmmakers to produce a whole different set of points of view that are important to combat hegemonic masculinity as the only value possible in society.

(Refer Slide Time: 43:06)



**AIKA TO THE BAIKA**

- As a departure from such notions, a new *lavani* video *Aika to the Baika* drives home the point in an entertaining and pleasurable manner. It is created by Agents of Ishq, a multimedia project that engages in conversations around gender, sexuality, desire and equality, in collaboration with Majlis, which operates as a feminist legal NGO.
- Aika to the Baika: Verse meets social critique – Aiswarya Sahasrabuddhe; (<https://www.firstpost.com/living/aika-to-the-baika-verse-meets-social-critique-in-new-lavani-about-how-police-can-better-deal-with-womens-complaints-8121741.html?fbclid=IwAR0zHoH4mqKjZ-IeismA476HVjHonMXb8JCtmleJT9qhyCsilaKTINB3XEo>)

In an article speaking about the last video *Aika to the Baika* Aiswarya Sahasrabuddhe writes, as a departure from such notions, a new Lavani video *Aika to the Baika* drives home the point in an entertaining and pleasurable manner.

It is created by *Agents of Ishq*, a multimedia project that engages in conversations around gender, sexuality, desire and equality in collaboration with Majlis which operates as a feminist legal NGO. Here you see the coming together of two different modes of operation with the same set of goals.

(Refer Slide Time: 43:50)



**AIKA TO THE BAIKA**

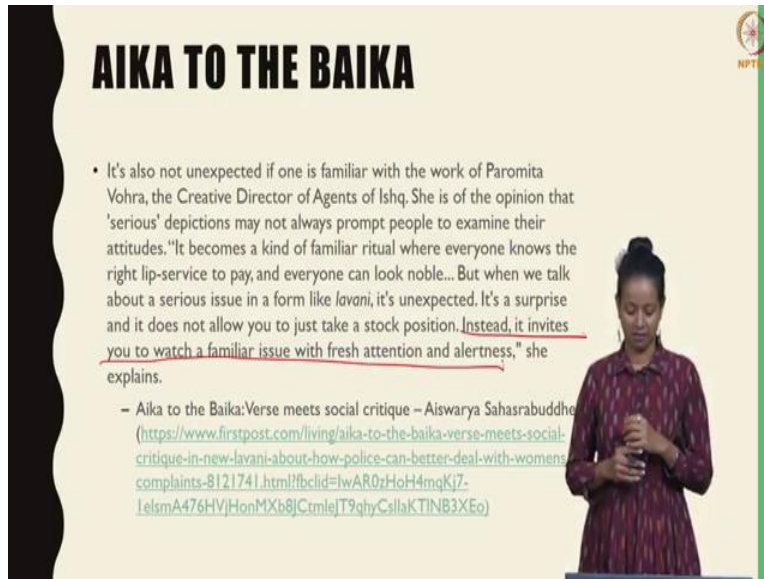
- But this manner of depiction is not surprising or unexpected, if one is clued into the *lavani* performance art: Infamous for indulging only in themes like desire, sensuality, love and longing, *lavani* has in fact for centuries been employed as a tool for social messaging through a form that is referred to as the *samajik lavani*. *Aika to the Baika* is a modern iteration of the *samajik lavani*, a 'lyrical banter'.
- Aika to the Baika: Verse meets social critique – Aiswarya Sahasrabuddhe; (<https://www.firstpost.com/living/aika-to-the-baika-verse-meets-social-critique-in-new-lavani-about-how-police-can-better-deal-with-womens-complaints-8121741.html?fbclid=IwAR0zHoH4mqKj7-IelsmA476HVjHonMXb8JCtmleJT9qhyCsllaKTINB3XEo>)

The slide features a speaker on the right side, a woman in a patterned dress, and a small logo in the top right corner. The text on the slide discusses the historical and modern uses of Lavani performance art, specifically mentioning 'Aika to the Baika' as a modern iteration of 'samajik lavani'.

Sahasrabuddhe continues, but this manner of depiction is not surprising or unexpected, if one is clued into the Lavani performance art, infamous for indulging only in themes like desire, sensuality, love, and longing. Lavani has in fact for centuries been employed as a tool for social messaging through a form that is referred to as the *Samajik Lavani*, *Aika to the Baika* is a modern iteration of the Samajik Lavani a lyrical banter.

I will not analyze this any further lest I remove all enjoyment from it but I do suggest that you go over these videos once again in order to try and understand what are the ways in which theory works in cultural production.

(Refer Slide Time: 44:40)



## AIKA TO THE BAIKA

- It's also not unexpected if one is familiar with the work of Paromita Vohra, the Creative Director of *Agents of Ishq*. She is of the opinion that 'serious' depictions may not always prompt people to examine their attitudes. "It becomes a kind of familiar ritual where everyone knows the right lip-service to pay, and everyone can look noble... But when we talk about a serious issue in a form like *lavani*, it's unexpected. It's a surprise and it does not allow you to just take a stock position. Instead, it invites you to watch a familiar issue with fresh attention and alertness," she explains.
- Aika to the Baika: Verse meets social critique – Aiswarya Sahasrabuddhe (<https://www.firstpost.com/living/aika-to-the-baika-verse-meets-social-critique-in-new-lavani-about-how-police-can-better-deal-with-womens-complaints-8121741.html?fbclid=IwAR0zHoH4mqKj7-IeismA476HVjHonMXb8jCmleJT9qhyCsllaKTINB3XEo>)

Sahasrabuddhe also adds, it is also not unexpected if one is familiar with the work of Paromita Vohra, the creative director of *Agents of Ishq*, she is of the opinion that serious depictions may not always prompt people to examine their attitudes. It becomes a kind of familiar ritual where everyone knows the right lip service to pay and everyone can look noble.

But when we talk about a serious issue in a form like *Lavani*, it is unexpected, it is a surprise and it does not allow you to just take a stop position. Here Vohra is gesturing towards the kinds of complexities that are part and parcel of the feminist project and how they have to be dealt with in an everyday process of encounter.

This is what *Agents of Ishq* tries to do: to produce those encounters in a surprising pleasurable fashion. Instead it invites you to watch a familiar issue with fresh attention and alertness she says.

(Refer Slide Time: 45:46)

The slide has a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The title 'AIKA TO THE BAIKA' is in bold black text at the top left. A small circular logo with a star is in the top right corner. The main text is a quote: "Eroticism and intelligence are two petals of the same flower. We apprehend the world; make sense of the world through our senses. Lavani uses its pleasurable qualities to focus us on ourselves in relationship to the world," she adds. Below this is a sub-point: – Aika to the Baika: Verse meets social critique – Aiswarya Sahasrabuddhe; followed by a long URL. On the right side of the slide, a woman with dark hair, wearing a maroon patterned dress, is speaking and gesturing with her hands.

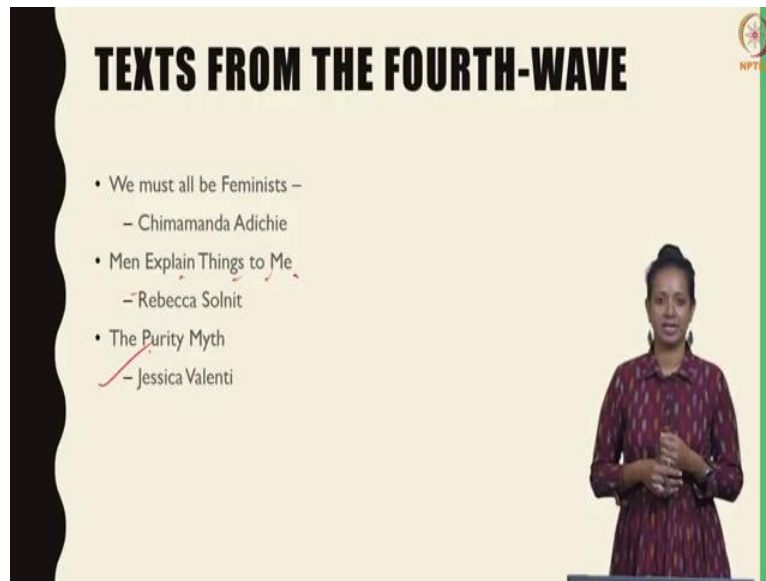
**AIKA TO THE BAIKA**

- “Eroticism and intelligence are two petals of the same flower. We apprehend the world; make sense of the world through our senses. *Lavani* uses its pleasurable qualities to focus us on ourselves in relationship to the world,” she adds.
- Aika to the Baika: Verse meets social critique – Aiswarya Sahasrabuddhe; (<https://www.firstpost.com/living/aika-to-the-baika-verse-meets-social-critique-in-new-lavani-about-how-police-can-better-deal-with-womens-complaints-8121741.html?fbclid=IwAR0zHoH4mqKjZ-lslsmA476HVjHonMXb8JCtmleJT9qhyCsilaKTINB3XEo>)

And this is something that I thought was very important to put forth in this lecture. Vohra adds, “eroticism and intelligence are two petals of the same flower. We apprehend the world make sense of the world through our senses. Lavani uses its pleasurable qualities to focus on ourselves in relation to the world. “

And this I thought was so important for us to consider as well as we move forward in our apprehensions of gender, body, sexuality, and communicative feminism. That brings us to the end of all the examples that I wanted to run you through for this lecture, I just want to also give you a set of suggested texts that typify fourth wave feminism and for our last lecture for the week.

(Refer Slide Time: 46:40)



I will read you a few excerpts from some of these texts. Here I am talking about Chimamanda Adichie's *We must all be Feminists*, which is now being printed across t-shirts worn by many a feminist woman, *Men Explain Things to Me* Rebecca Solnit which is also given rise to the fairly familiar word mansplaining, Men Explain Things to Me and other such words like Manel which is a panel that consists entirely of men. And also from Jessica Valenti's *The Purity Myth* that brings us to the end of this lecture. I look forward to your comments and questions. Until next lecture...