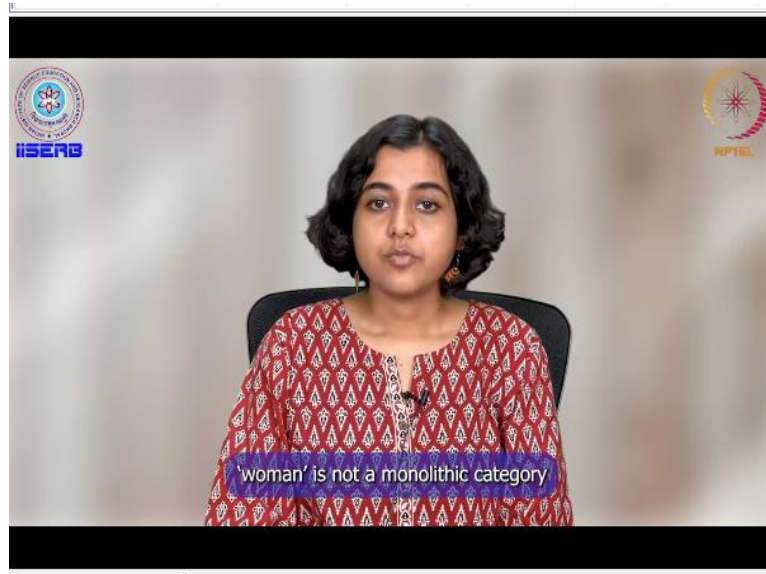


Indian Feminisms Concepts and Issues
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Lecture-08
Identity, Difference and Intersectionality-Part 2

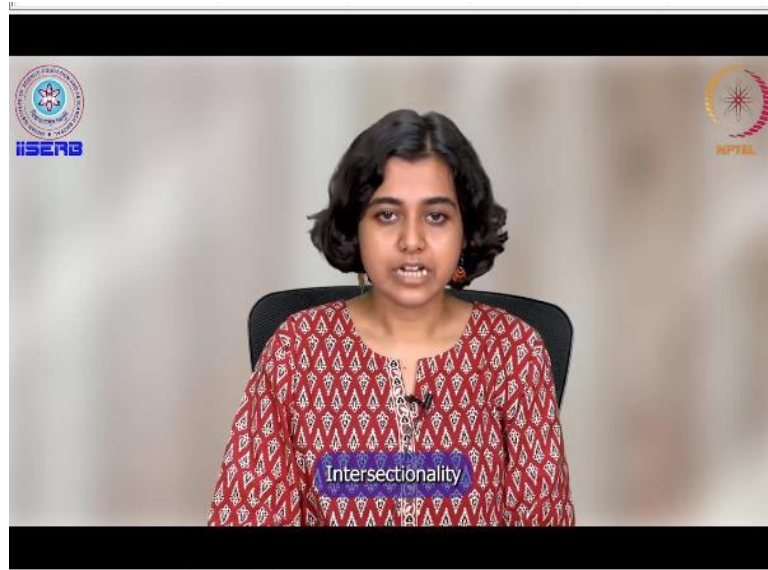
Hello everyone. In the previous lecture we learned about the importance of identifying the difference among women and Indian women.

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We learned that woman is not a monolithic category and it is important to recognize the difference among them. Moreover, gender often functions in conjunction with other structures of oppression such as caste, class, etcetera.

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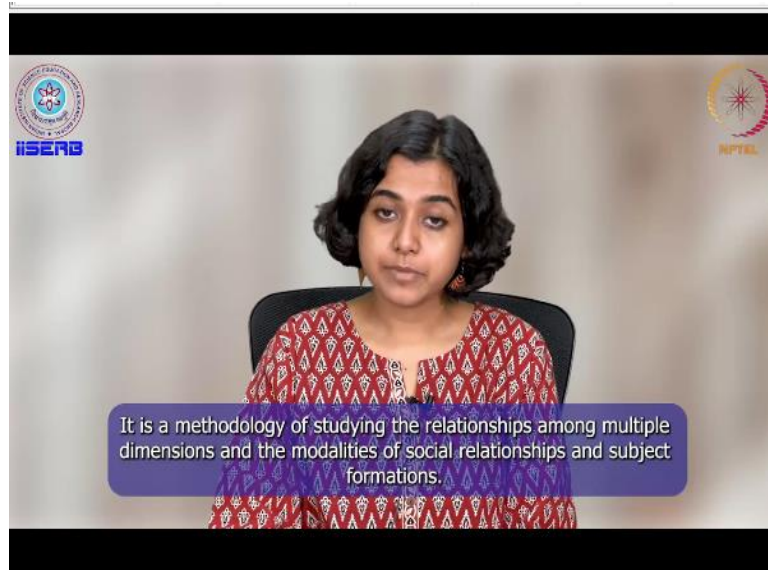
This is where the idea of intersectionality comes in. Today we will talk about intersectionality. You have to remember that this methodology has come to be one of the key methods in contemporary feminist theorization and articulation across the world. Therefore, it is very important for you to know about it. Now what is intersectionality?

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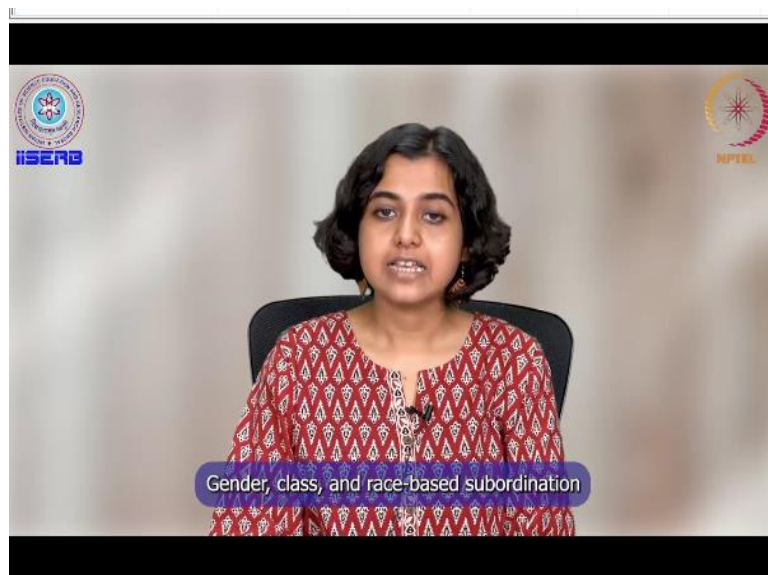
Intersectionality is the study of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination.

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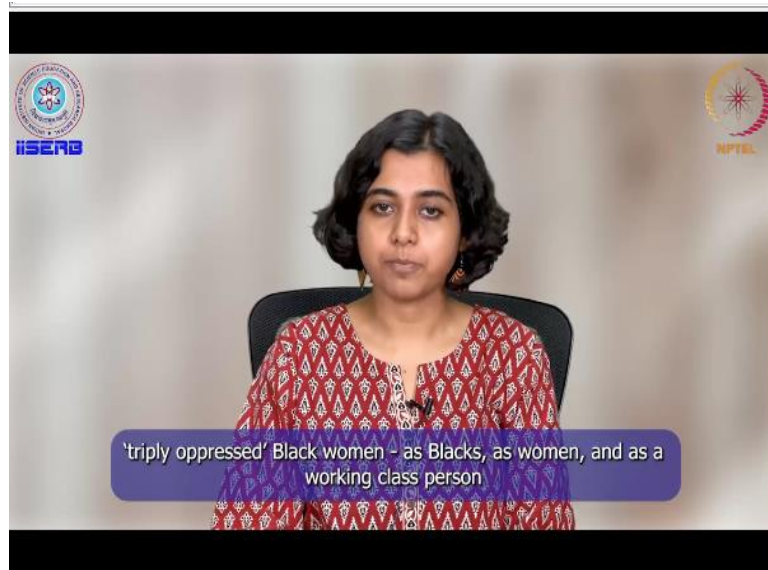
It is a methodology of studying the relationships among multiple dimensions and the modalities of social relationships and subject formations. Intersectionality emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s from the legal academy with a view to develop a single framework for analyzing power that encompasses and connects.

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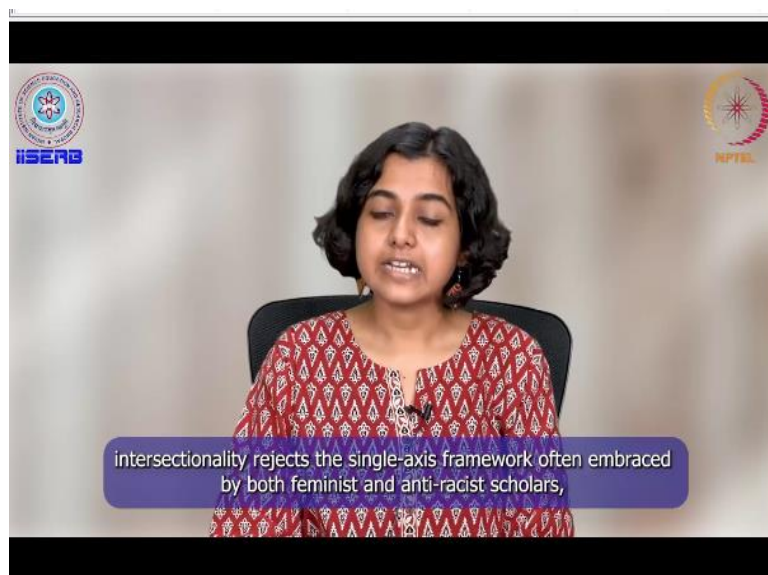
Gender, class and race-based subordination.

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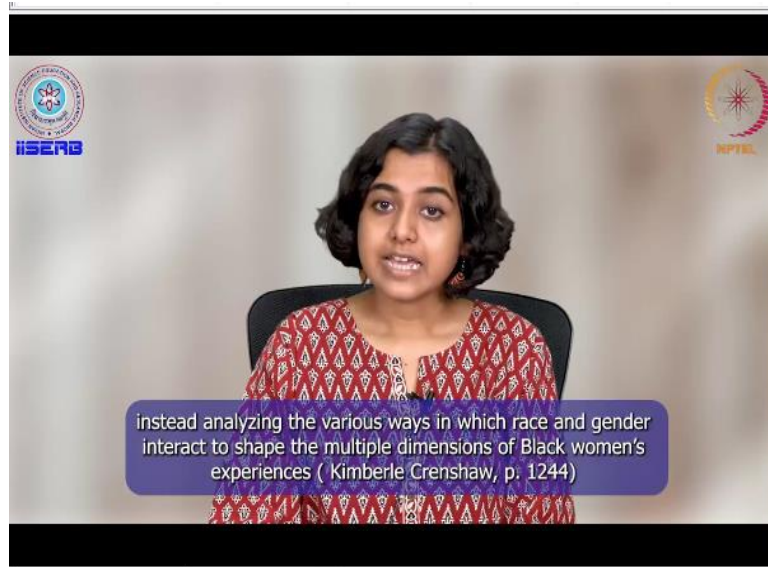
The notion of intersectionality arose out of the criticism of feminists of colour which focused on triply oppressed black women. They were triply oppressed as blacks as women and as working-class persons.

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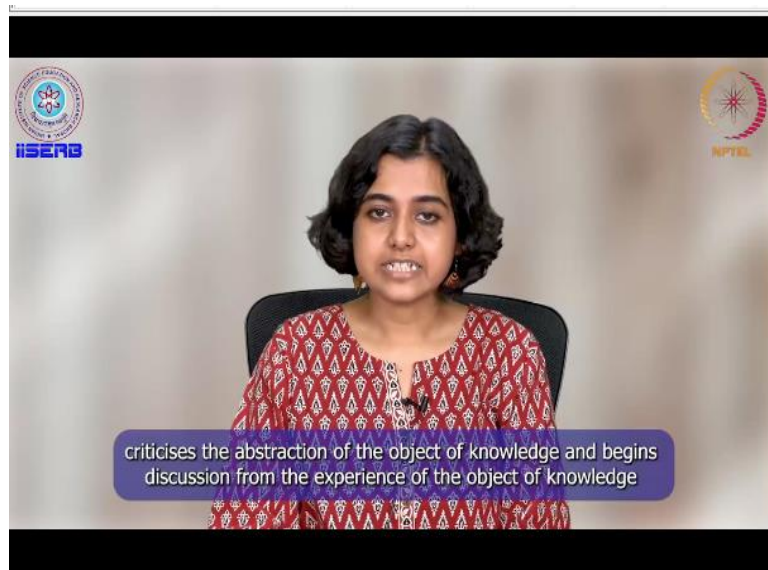
As legal theorist Kimberly Crenshaw argues intersectionality rejects the single axis framework often embraced by both feminist and anti-racist scholars.

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Instead analyzing the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's experiences.

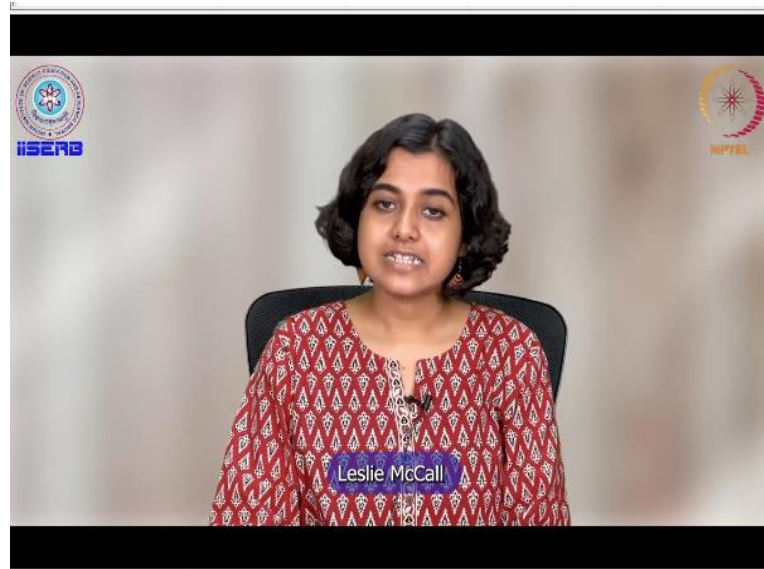
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Intersectionality criticizes the abstraction of object of knowledge and begins discussion from the experience of the object of knowledge. In this way it questions the homogenization of categories such as woman instead recognizing that there are multiplicities and differences among women. And the best way to understand that is to start from the experience of women. A major inference is that both the non-privileged as well as the privileged groups can become beginning points of intersectional analysis to investigate the interlinked axis of oppression and domination.

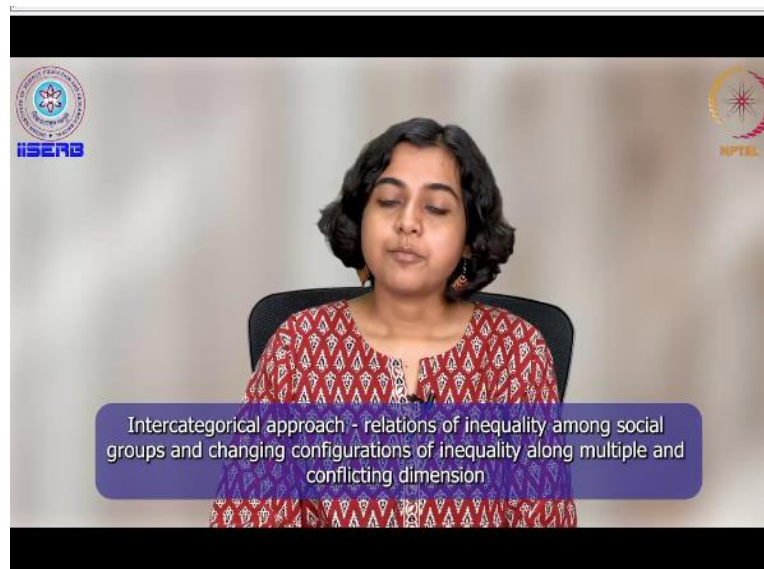
Intersectionality the methodology provides an enabling way for feminist analysis by proposing an approach that recognizes multiple axes of oppression affecting black women and challenges the homogeneity so far resumed by both feminist and anti-racist discourses.

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In this context Leslie McCall's theorization of intersectionality through inter-categorical and intra-categorical approaches become important.

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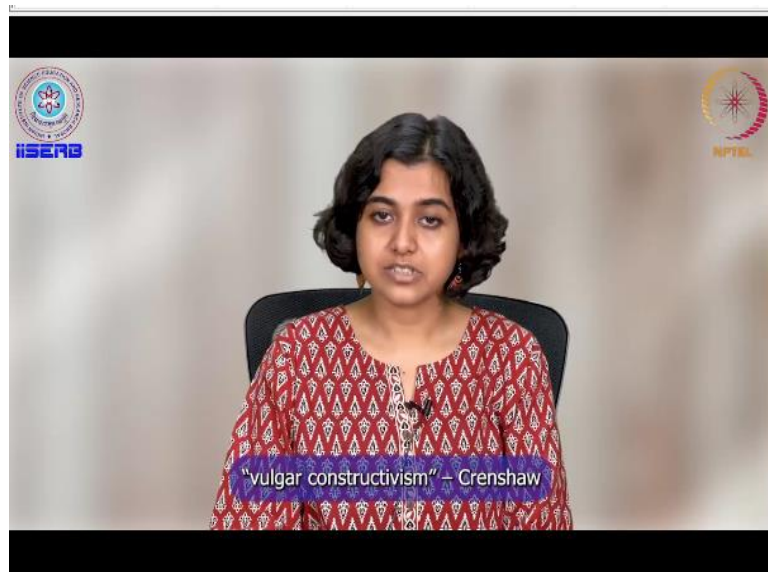
By inter-categorical approach McCall refers to the recognition of relations of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions.

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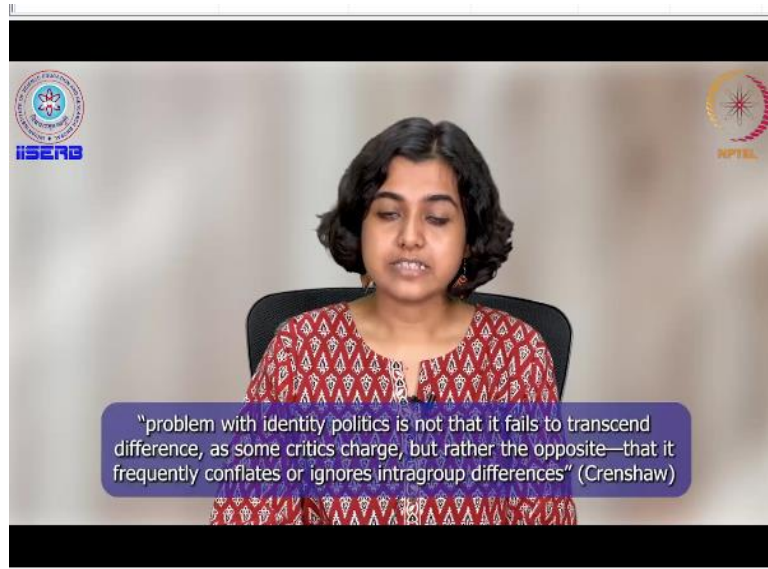
While the intra-categorical approach interrogates the boundary making and boundary defining process itself, where it maintains a critical stance towards categories that are predominantly seen through a single axis of identity. Political formulations based on single axis of identity have been strongly criticized by theories of intersectionality.

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Terming such politics as identity politics and vulgar constructivism.

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Crenshaw appoints that the problem with identity politics is that not that it fails to transcend difference as some critics charge but rather the opposite that it frequently conflates or ignores intra-group differences. She argues that in minority politics such as anti-racism and feminism black men and white women gain prominence; thereby erasing black women who face both racist and sexist oppression simultaneously.

Hence a major drawback of identity politics is the inability to perceive subjects through multiple axes of identity and understand the multi-pronged facets of oppression.

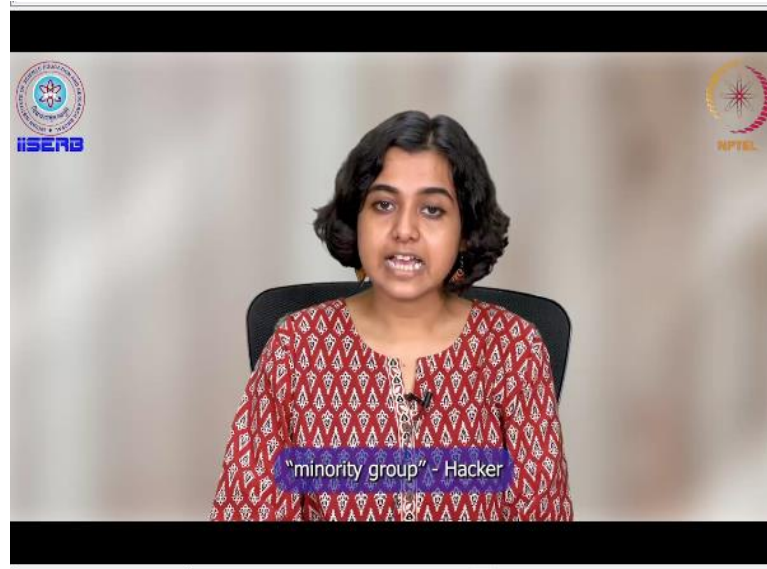
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It is in this more nuanced strategical possibility that intersectionality is seen as an enabling methodology through its acknowledgment of difference. In Western feminist politics the

concept of difference is invoked by black feminists to problematize the category woman. Conceived as a homogeneous category wherein oppression is linked to womanhood.

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Women in general have been seen as a minority group by white feminism. This universalization presents woman as a unitary subject that cuts across race, class, ethnicity etcetera.

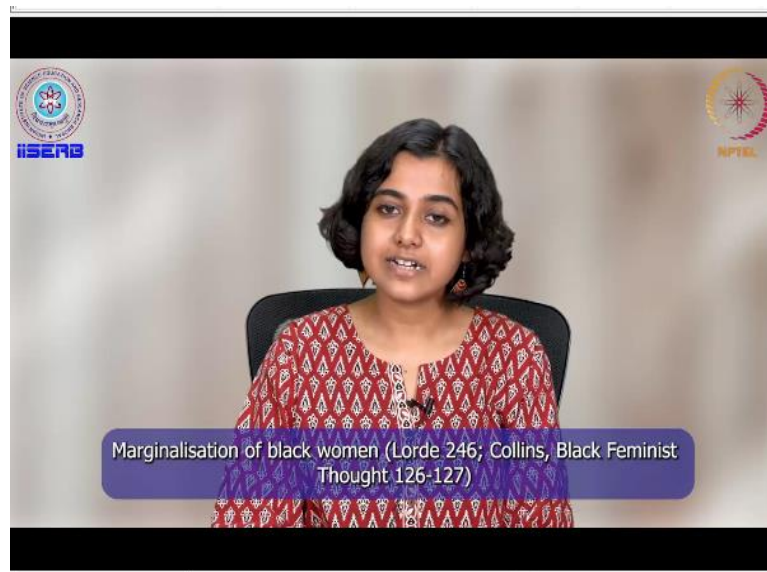
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Such an epistemological postulation highlights a unitary form of patriarchal oppression, a universalized experience of Womanhood resulting in the erasure of differences among women in an attempt to homogenize them. As a result, women belonging to minority groups such as women of colour come to be excluded as a structural consequence of the classification of the category woman and its subjective experience.

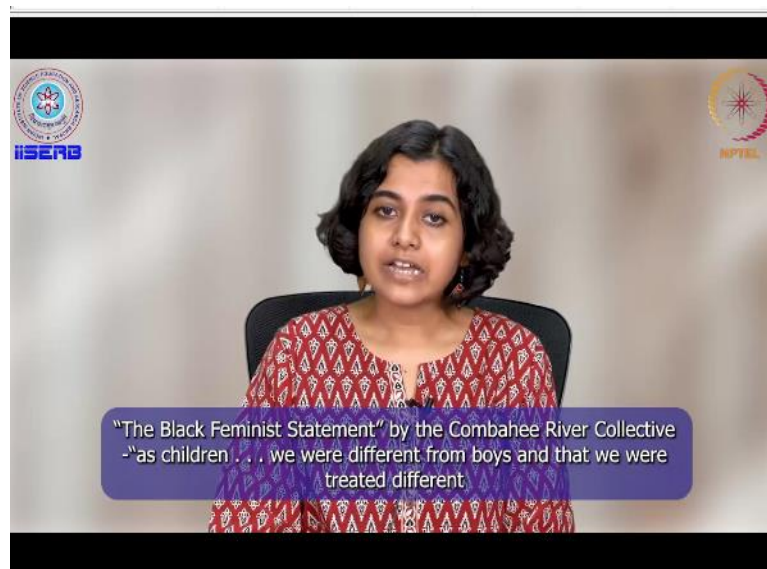
Black feminists have pointed out that while feminist view of sisterhood helps in constituting a collective resistance it empowers only certain groups of women.

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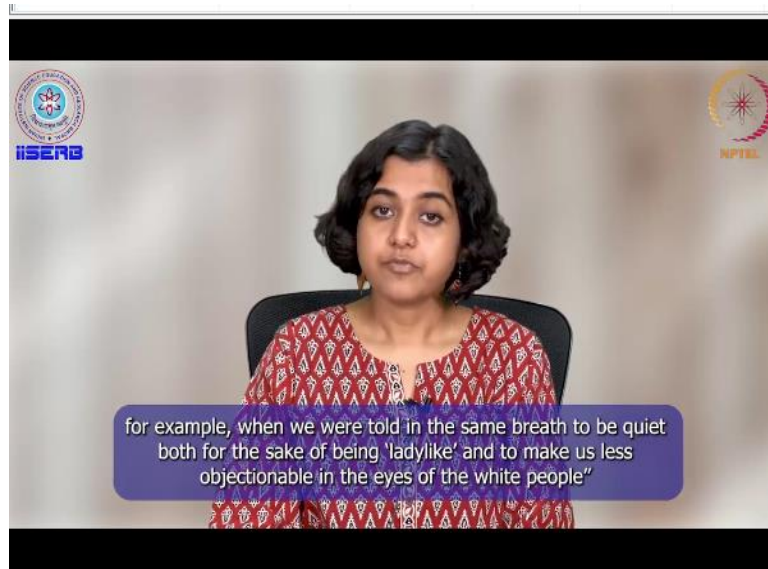
While marginalizing others. Intersectionality highlights not only the uniqueness of black women's experiences but also the differences within. This intra-categorical difference is recognized not only vis-a-vis white women but also vis-a-vis black men.

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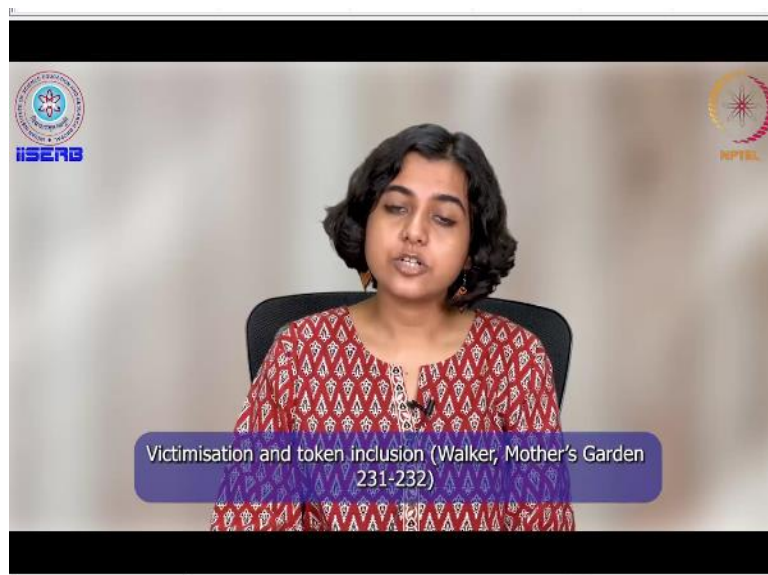
The black feminist statement by the Combahee River Collective mentions how they realize that as children we were different from boys and that we were treated for different.

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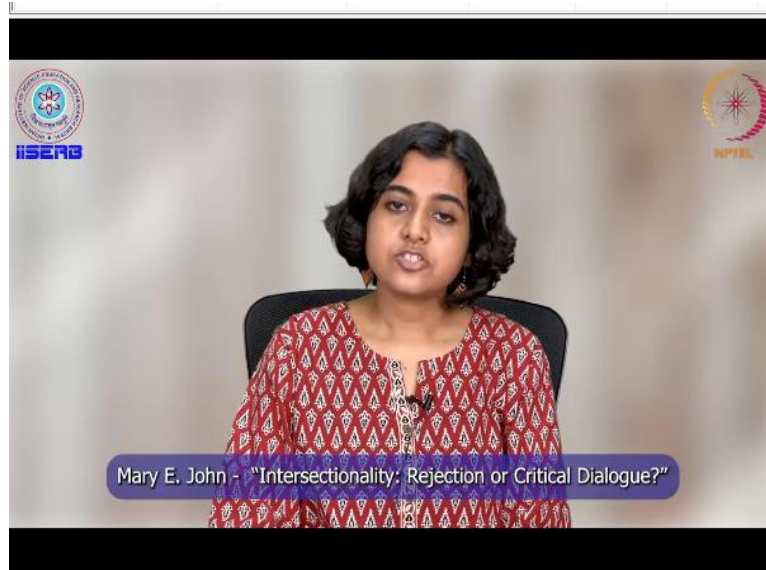
For example, when we were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being ladylike and to make us less objectionable in the eyes of the white people. Black feminism therefore unveils the complexity and specificity of race and gender-based oppression of black women which both anti-races and white feminists often fail to see. Black feminists argue that black women are either represented as victimized objects by black male writers.

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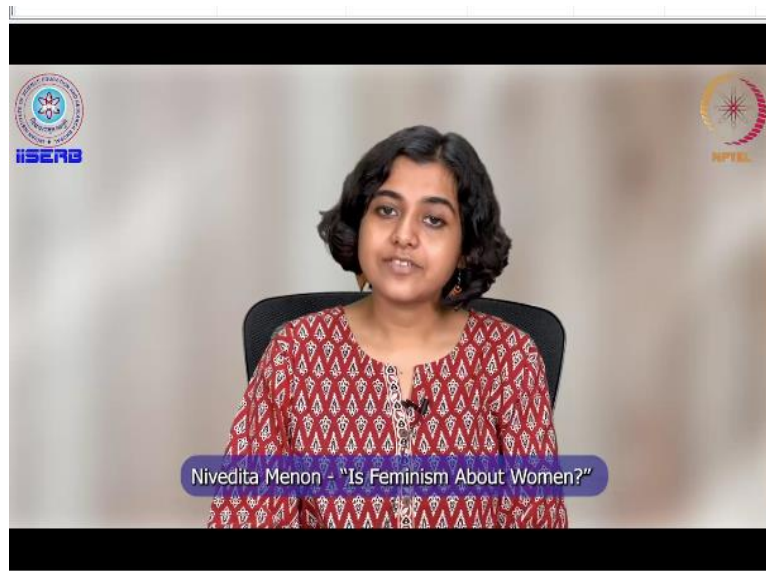
Or are included as tokens by white feminists out of a sense of guilt. Such conceptualization can become very useful for the Indian context as well.

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Mary E. John's article intersectionality rejection or critical dialogue.

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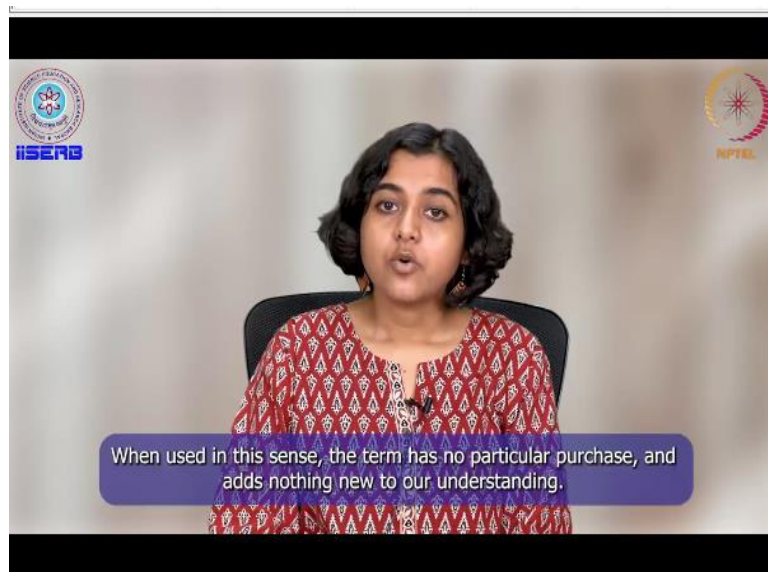
And Nivedita Menon's article is feminism about women explored the pros and cons of the methodology of intersectionality in the Indian context. According to Menon the term intersectionality has become a buzzword, it has a redundant usage in India because there is an already existing diversity in Indian feminism.

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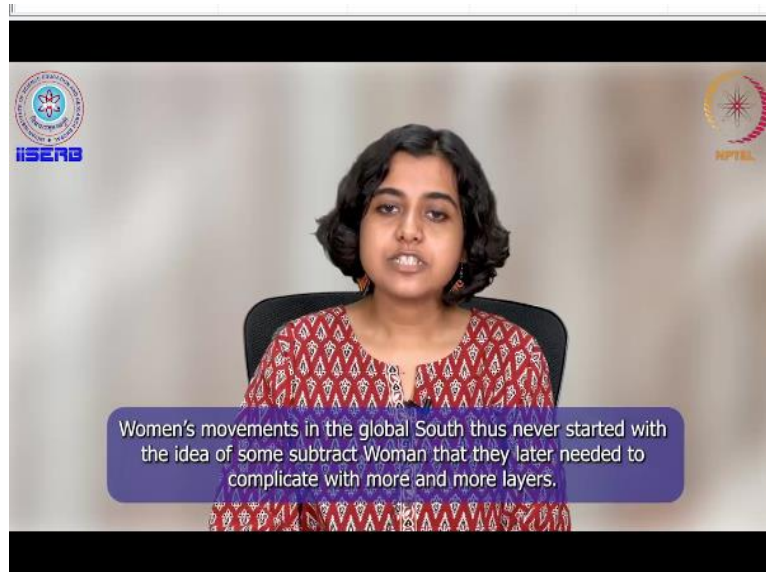
She writes generally the term intersectionality when used in India expresses one of two familiar feminist ideas; double or triple burdens are that women must be complicated by caste, religion, class.

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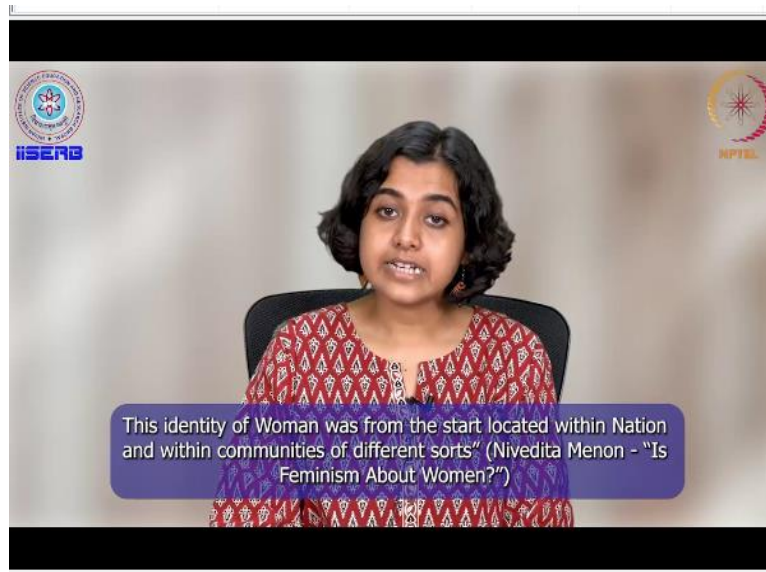
When used in this sense the term has no particular purchase and adds nothing new to our understanding.

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Women's movements in the global South thus never started with the idea of some subtract women that they later needed to complicate with more and more layers.

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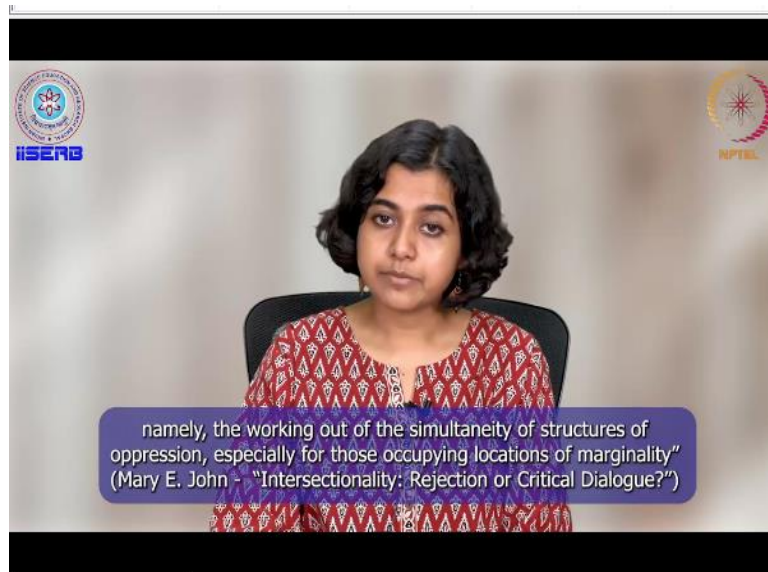
This identity of woman was from the start located within nation and within communities of different sorts. Mary E. John on the other hand suppose intersectionality as it gives space to all marginalized voices instead of privileging one over the other. She argues that despite the apparent existence of gender, class, caste and religion.

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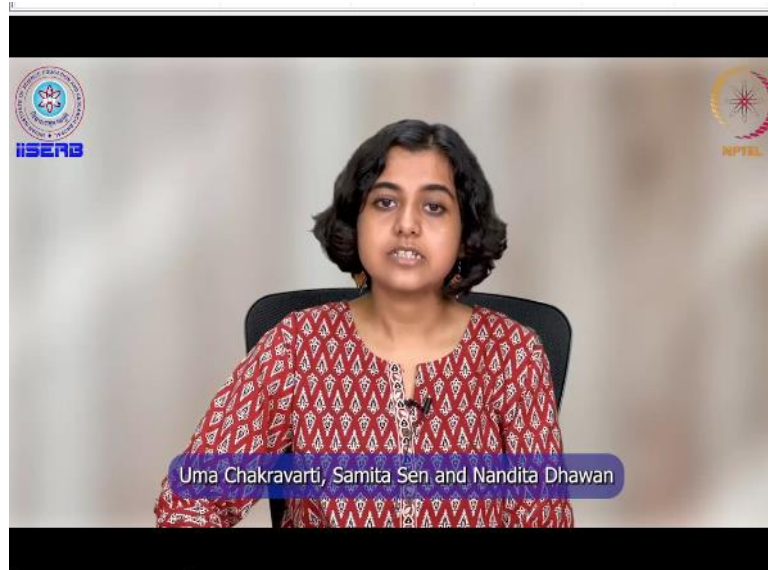
The particular trajectory is taken by Indian feminism have not always reflected a successful engagement with the problem that intersectionality identifies.

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Namely the working out of simultaneity of structures of oppression, especially for those occupying locations of marginality and for this reason that Mary E. John promotes this term intersectionality. In fact, we cannot help but agree to this observation. As we have seen in the case of the ways in which Indian feminism dealt with the issues of religion and caste there was often a gap in the understanding of in which they interact with each other.

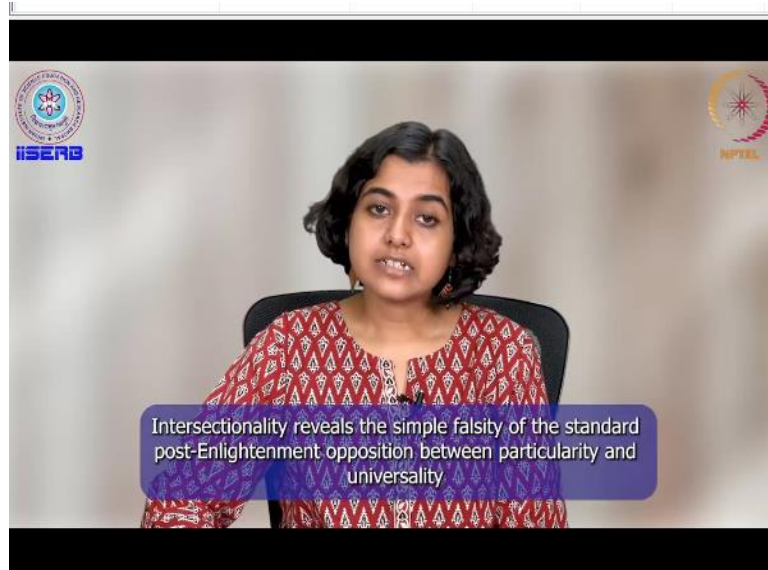
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Moreover, as we have seen in the analysis by Uma Chakravarti, Samita Sen and Nandita Dhawan. At the beginning of this lecture mainstream feminism often saw issues through the single lens of gender. There was a lack of attempt at integrating the various factors that affect different women differently. And this is why the concept of difference and intersectionality becomes so intricately linked.

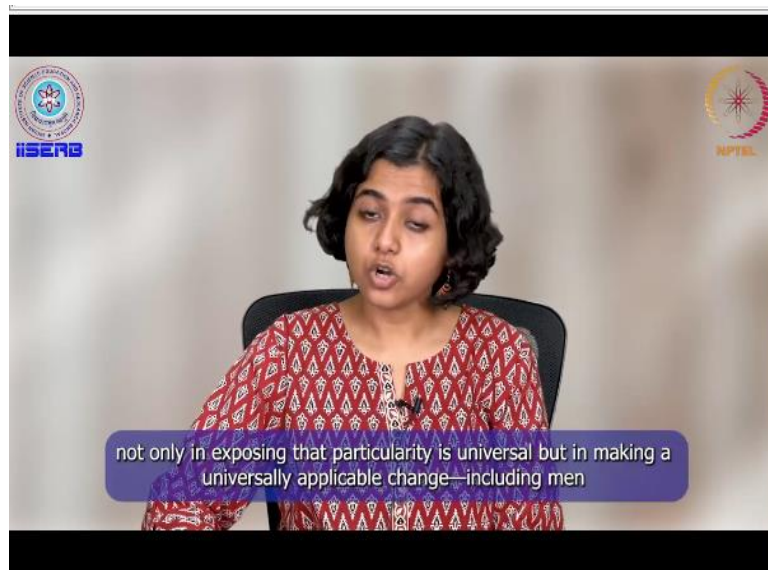
This marks a shift from imposing homogeneity to the acknowledgment of difference in seeing how different structures through their intersection with gender affect different groups of women differently. Commenting on the importance of particularity in intersectionality Catherine McKinnon notes that particularity does not mean considering knowledge arising from experience of a particular group as narrow static and restrictive. Rather particularity is invoked to provide a more nuanced understanding of systems.

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McKinnon writes intersectionality reveals the simple falsity of the standard post-enlightenment opposition between particularity and universality.

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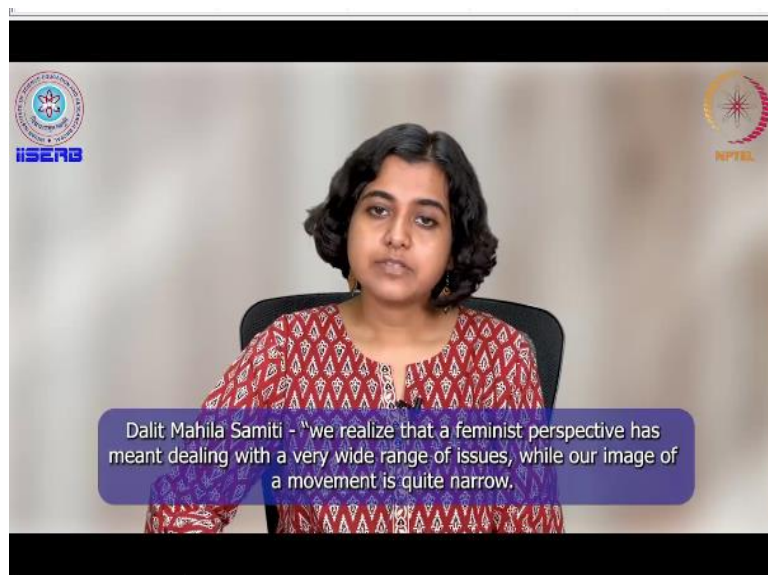
Not only in exposing that particularity is universal but making a universally applicable change including men.

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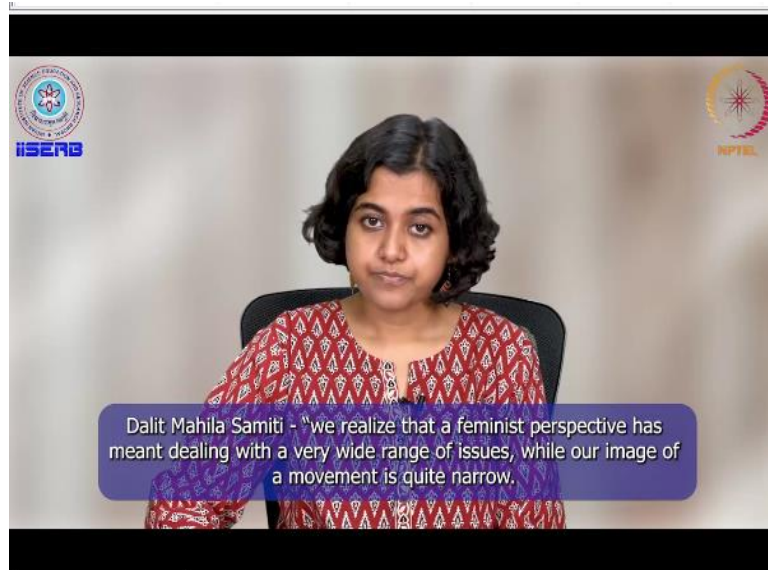
Through embracing, not through obscuring or denying or eliding particularity. Similarly, Dalit feminism emerges as an intersectional politics because it accounts for difference within and among groups. And in the process transforms the frameworks of mainstream Indian feminism and Dalit politics.

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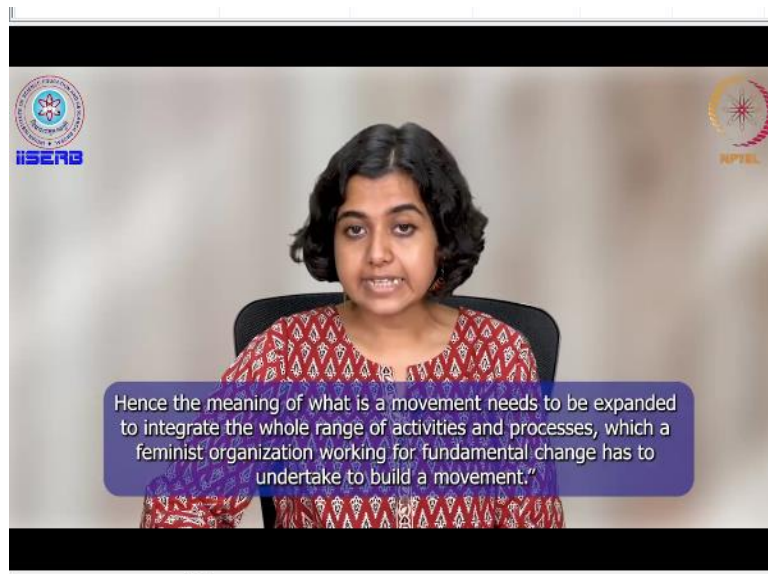
As the report by Dalit Mahila Samiti reads, we realize that a feminist perspective has meant dealing with a very wide range of issues, while our image of a movement is quite narrow.

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The enemy that is patriarchy manifests itself in many ways and is therefore everywhere. It is not a monolithic structure to be overcome or brought down.

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Hence the meaning of what is a movement needs to be expanded to integrate the whole range of activities and processes which a feminist organization working for fundamental change has to undertake to build a movement. So, now let us summarize what we learned in today's lecture. When we talk about feminism whether in India or in West there is no one kind of feminism nor is there a single definition of women.

Depending on the issues, histories and the communities the definitions vary a lot. Therefore, it is impossible and in fact useless to talk about feminism and women as homogeneous, monolithic entities. This is where the relevance of the theories of difference and

intersectionality lie. Difference teaches us that not all women are similar, it is necessary to identify the specificities that underlie these constructions.

Intersectionality or the study of intersecting structures of oppression provides the necessary methodology to look at difference and critically analyze it. In the next lectures we will learn about specific components of Indian feminisms and the various ways in which they have been approached. Thank you.