**Educational Administration: Theory and Practice**
2024, 30(1), 7521-7528
ISSN: 2148-2403
https://kuey.net/

**Research Article**

# "The Personal is Political": Examining Gendered Political Consciousness Among Undergraduate Female Students at ANS College, Nabinagar

Akshay Jain[1*]

[1*]Assistant Professor, A.N.S. College, Nabinagar, Bihar (Magadh University, Bodhgaya) Email: akshay.anugrah@gmail.com

**Citation:** Akshay Jain (2024). "The Personal is Political": Examining Gendered Political Consciousness Among Undergraduate Female Students at ANS College, Nabinagar, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(1) 7521-7528
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i1.10694

**ARTICLE INFO**

**ABSTRACT**

This paper revisits the feminist claim that the personal is political by examining how young women in a semi-rural Indian college absorb and reproduce gendered roles through everyday culture. Based on qualitative engagement with 100 undergraduate students at A.N.S. College, Nabinagar, the study explores how songs, serials, jokes, and proverbs shape emotional choices and moral expectations ; not as individual preferences, but as outcomes of cultural hegemony.

Using Harold Lasswell's framework," who gets what, when, and how"; and drawing from theorists like Foucault, Bourdieu, Chakravarti, and Menon, the research reads the personal as a site of symbolic power and quiet political allocation.

The study does not aim to expose resistance or false consciousness, but to listen for how power becomes intimate, familiar, and emotionally sustained. It offers a pedagogical perspective on how classrooms can become spaces to notice and name the Political within the Personal and to create awareness among teachers and students.

**Key Words:** Personal is Political, Culture, Hegemony, Gender, Allocation, Power

## Introduction

We often speak of personal choices as if they belong only to us — our emotions, our likes, our silences. But much of what we call personal is already shaped, sometimes gently, sometimes firmly, by stories we have been told since childhood. These stories come through songs sung, proverbs repeated without question, characters we admire on television, or the advice we quietly accept from those we love. They do not shout, but they teach. And through them, something deeper happens ; they decide, slowly, what is possible for us, and what is not (Drummond, 2020).

This paper begins with a simple thought: What if the personal is not just emotional or cultural, but political in a very quiet way? Feminists have long said that "the personal is political" however this paper doesn't take that as a slogan. Instead, it puts that thought next to Harold Lasswell's (1936) definition of politics: "Who gets what, when, and how." When seen together, they ask something more precise, for instance, Who gets to speak? Who gets to stay? Who is asked to sacrifice, and at what moment? Who adjusts, and who decides, who gains and who looses and at what cost?

In semi-rural places like Nabinagar, Bihar, these decisions don't come through laws or institutions but they come through small, everyday things. A girl sings a song at her cousin's *bidaai* (farewell in wedding), and she already knows it will be her song too someday. A proverb is quoted at the dinner table, and it settles an argument without needing one. A serial is watched each evening, and without anyone saying it aloud, a certain kind of woman is praised again and again and certain gets spark criticism. These things don't feel like power, but, that is exactly why they work.

Thinkers like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu remind us that power doesn't only function by controlling us from the outside. It works by shaping what we think is normal — what we admire, what we don't notice,

what we never even think to question (Christensen, 2023). Indian feminist scholars such as Uma Chakravarti (2003) and Nivedita Menon (2012) have also shown how the family, and the emotional life inside it, is a site where gender and caste are kept in place not through force, but through values, expectations, and silences.
This paper is based on conversations with 100 undergraduate girls from A.N.S. College, Nabinagar. It doesn't aim to measure their beliefs, but to sit with their responses as what they say, what they admire, where they hesitate. It looks at songs, proverbs, serials, jokes and the way these ordinary things quietly divide the world into who gets what, when, and how. It asks: Do the students notice this? And if not, what makes these messages so easy to accept. Whether it is love, habit, or the comfort of tradition?
The study does not try to prove a theory. It simply listens — to the way political structures pass through personal life, dressed as culture, memory, or affection. And in doing so, it returns to a quieter, slower way of thinking about power: not just as something that rules us, but something we learn to live with, often without noticing at all.

## Theoretical Framework: Reading the Personal as Political Allocation

By highlighting famous feminist slogan " Personal is political," (Hanisch, 1970), this paper does not treat the personal as a space untouched by politics. Rather, it begins with the understanding that the personal is one of the first places where political decisions settle, not as laws or policies, but as customs, emotions, and shared moral truths. In asking what young women admire, obey, or accept without question, this study leans on the idea that power often operates not by declaring itself, but by appearing as normal life (Tong, 2018).

At the core of this approach is Harold Lasswell's (1936) definition of politics as "who gets what, when, and how." This idea shifts attention away from institutions and toward distribution, and not just of resources, but of roles, legitimacy, and the right to speak or stay silent. When a proverb tells a girl that her real home is her husband's, or when a song mourns her departure from her parental house, these are not simply emotional traditions but they are acts of allocation. They answer, in advance, the Lasswellian question: Who gets to belong, and on what terms?
To understand how this kind of power works so quietly, the study draws on Michel Foucault's idea of disciplinary power. Foucault reminds us that modern power does not always punish or forbid. Instead, it trains. It teaches individuals to adjust themselves through routines, language, affection, and even through what feels like care. In this light, culture becomes a form of soft governance. The songs we sing at weddings or the characters we praise on television do not look like rules, but they carry the weight of instruction as telling girls how to feel, what to accept, and when to disappear without protest (Bartky, 2020).
Pierre Bourdieu takes this further by showing how such structures of control become most effective when they are misrecognised as natural. His concept of symbolic power helps explain why young women may feel uneasy about certain customs or media portrayals but still hesitate to name them as unjust. They are not simply obeying external pressure; they are participating in a world where obedience looks like virtue and adjustment is read as strength. Their emotional responses are not apolitical but they are shaped by the very structures they do not yet have language to question (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 159-171)

This is where feminist thinkers, especially in the Indian context, become important. Uma Chakravarti has shown how gender and caste are reproduced not only through rules, but through moral teachings , through who is asked to adjust, who is kept at the centre, and who is made to feel like a guest in her own home (Chakravarti, 2003, pp. 49–72). Nivedita Menon reminds us that the family and culture are not outside politics, they are where politics is most often hidden. When students admire sacrifice or celebrate the bride's silence during *bidaai*, they are engaging in a political economy of emotion, even if they do not name it as such (Menon, 2012, pp. 35–68).
Together, these thinkers shape the lens of this study; a lens that does not look for resistance or victimhood alone, but tries to understand how roles are allocated, accepted, and emotionally lived. What appears to be personal preference is often the outcome of cultural distribution and determination of what is admirable, permissible, or ungrievable.

## Research Objectives and Questions

This study does not begin with a hypothesis, but with a series of quiet observations that many of the things we call "personal" in the lives of young women are deeply shaped by shared moral expectations, cultural rituals, and emotional scripts. These are not random or private experiences. They follow patterns. And those patterns, when looked at closely, reflect a system of allocation of roles, of voices, of freedoms, and of silences.

### Objectives:

1. To explore how undergraduate female students in a semi-rural Indian college respond to everyday cultural expressions including proverbs, songs, serials, and common sayings and how these shape their understanding of self, duty, and desire.
2. To understand how power operates quietly through such expressions, assigning emotional and moral positions without appearing coercive.

3. To examine the gap between what students feel (discomfort, admiration, adjustment) and what they are able to recognise or name as political.
4. To use the framework of Lasswell's idea of politics — "who gets what, when, and how" — to analyse how gendered roles are distributed through personal and emotional life.

## Research Questions:

1. To what extent do students perceive their everyday emotional and cultural experiences as politically structured?
2. What forms of power, control, or expectation are embedded in the songs, sayings, and serials they engage with and how are these internalised or resisted?
3. What does the emotional alignment with certain roles or silences reveal about the way gender is distributed in ordinary life?
4. How can Lasswell's political framework help re-read the personal as a site of social and cultural allocation?

## Research Methodology:

The methodology for this research is qualitative and interpretive, aiming to explore the perception of undergraduate female students regarding the phrase "the personal is political." The study does not rely on a traditional survey model but instead employs direct classroom engagement, informal discussions, participant observations, and focused group interactions. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of lived experiences, implicit biases, and patterns of political disengagement in personal domains.

### 1. Selection of Research Site and Justification

The research was conducted at ANS College, Nabinagar, a higher education institution located in Aurangabad district of Bihar. This location was chosen for multiple reasons:

- Geographical and Cultural Context: The college serves students from both rural and semi-urban backgrounds, with a significant number coming from remote villages where traditional gender roles and patriarchal values are deeply entrenched. This provides a rich socio-cultural backdrop to examine how young women conceptualise politics in everyday life.
- Interplay of Regional Influences: Due to its proximity to Jharkhand, the student population reflects a blend of Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Jharkhandi cultural influences, making it an ideal setting to examine variations in gender perception, political literacy, and media consumption habits.
- Academic Background of Respondents: While the research does not exclusively focus on Political Science students, a significant number of respondents were from the social sciences, humanities, and science streams. Their academic exposure to political concepts varies, which helps analyse whether formal education plays a role in shaping political consciousness in everyday matters.

### 2. Respondent Selection and Sampling:

- Total Sample Size: 100 undergraduate female students.
- Sampling Method: Non-probability purposive sampling was used, as the study focused on female students with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds rather than aiming for statistical generalisability.
- Demographic Profile: Most respondents belonged to lower-middle and economically weaker sections, which further informed the study's insights on gender, media, and political awareness.

### 3. Data Collection Methods:

Since the research explores the cognitive and ideological dissonance in how women perceive politics, data was gathered through multiple qualitative methods:

1. Classroom Discussions & Participant Observations
- Students were engaged in spontaneous discussions on media, entertainment, and gender roles in family life.
- Their verbal and non-verbal reactions to specific questions about gender, politics, and personal space were noted.
- Some responses indicated laughter, dismissal, or disinterest, reinforcing how entertainment and social norms normalise gender hierarchies.

2. Visual Media and Content Analysis Approach
- Selected clips from Bollywood films, daily soap operas, and stand-up comedy shows were shown to students and then structured discussion was held to observe whether they are able to identify gendered political issues in them.
- Folk songs and proverbs reinforcing gendered expectations were discussed, analysing their influence on subconscious political biases.

## 4. Challenges and Limitations

- Limited Conceptual Exposure: Many students lacked awareness of feminist discourse, making it challenging to frame questions without pre-conditioning responses.
- Cognitive Dissonance: Respondents often contradicted themselves, acknowledging injustice in one context but denying it in another.
- Media Influence: Bollywood and regional entertainment heavily shaped respondents 'notions of gender, reinforcing a detachment between personal struggles and political discourse.

## Data Analysis and Findings:

1. **Entertainment and the Disconnection from the Political, a striking pattern emerged during the study:** The majority of students failed to recognise television and film as spaces where political ideas, especially gender politics, are actively produced and reinforced. For them, entertainment was seen as harmless, apolitical, and emotionally engaging, not as something that shaped their views about gender roles, family structures, or personal freedoms. When asked about their favorite shows, students most frequently named Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah, Nadiya Ke Paar, Sasural Simar Ka, and Balika Vadhu. Despite each of these shows embedding clear ideas about what is expected of women, how families function, and who gets to make decisions, students did not identify these patterns as political. For example, Balika Vadhu deals directly with the issue of child marriage, a deeply political and social problem in India. Yet most students remembered the character of Anandi not for her resistance or suffering, but for her patience and ability to "adjust." One respondent said, "Anandi sab kuch seh kar bhi sabka khayal rakhti hai, isi liye sabko pasand hai" (Anandi tolerates everything and still cares for everyone, that's why everyone likes her). This glorification of endurance, rather than questioning injustice, reveals how patriarchal expectations of women are internalised through serials. Likewise, Sasural Simar Ka: a show filled with supernatural and domestic conflicts was described as "entertaining" and "family-friendly." When asked whether they noticed how women in the show are confined to household roles and often shown competing with each other for approval, most students responded, "Aise hi hota hai ghar mein" (That's how things are in families). This normalising of domestic hierarchy among women, and the absence of male accountability, went unquestioned. In Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah, male characters are shown handling jobs, solving problems, and making community decisions, while the women are limited to cooking, shopping, or gossiping. This division of public and private roles reflects a strong gender bias, but students never perceived it that way. One girl said, "Yeh to masti ka show hai, isme kya bura ho sakta hai" (This is just a fun show, what could be bad in it?). Such responses show how humor and simplicity often mask deep gender inequalities. Students also nostalgically mentioned Nadiya Ke Paar, a rural love story where the ideal woman is soft-spoken, obedient, and emotionally dependent. Instead of recognising the narrow boundaries assigned to the female lead, students praised the story as "cultural," and "pure".They admired the same traits such as obedience, silence, and compromise that have historically been used to limit women's agency. The key finding here is that entertainment was viewed purely as personal emotion and not as political communication. Students were emotionally engaged with characters and narratives, but not critically aware of the messages being absorbed. They consumed gendered content that reinforced traditional roles but could not identify its influence on their real-life ideas about what a woman should be. This disconnection confirms that the personal is political, even when viewers do not consciously realise it. The media they enjoy in their private time deeply influences their views on family, relationships, and morality. But because this influence comes wrapped in humour, music, or sentimentality, it escapes political scrutiny.

2. **Comedy, Misogyny, and Deprivation of Women's Rights: Partial Awareness, Missed Politics:** During the fieldwork, students were shown selected clips from popular comedy shows such as The Kapil Sharma Show and Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain, both of which have been widely viewed across rural and urban India. These shows were used to explore how humour normalises gender roles and whether students could recognise such content as political in gender terms.

The responses to these clips were mixed. On one hand, many students laughed along, stating things like "Mazak mein sab chalta hai" (Anything goes in jokes), indicating a lack of critical engagement. On the other hand, a smaller but notable group of students expressed discomfort, especially when jokes targeted women's bodies, their supposed incompetence especially in driving, public dealing and in mathematics or reduced them to gossiping housewives or sexualised figures.

One student remarked after watching a Kapil Sharma segment: "Kabhi-kabhi lagta hai ki sirf aurat pe hi mazaak banate hain" (Sometimes it feels like the jokes are always made about women). Another added, " All men in Bhabhi ji serial pathetically show their interest in multiple of women whereas women are very gentle in that." These remarks reflect a partial awareness. Students could sense the sexism or discomfort in how women were portrayed or joked about, but they did not categorise this as a form of political or social power play. For them, it was just "bad taste" or "overacting" and "immoral" not an example of structural misogyny that reflects real-life gender imbalances.

When asked, "Do you think these jokes reflect something about our society?"—most students responded with confusion. Some said, "Shaayad, par mazaak mein serious baat nahi sochni chahiye" (Maybe, but we shouldn't think of serious things in comedy), while others admitted they had never thought about it that way.

This hesitation to politicise misogyny in comedy reveals a crucial disjuncture. Students could feel something was problematic, but they lacked the vocabulary or confidence to call it out as political. The phrase "The personal is political" did not resonate with them, especially in the domain of humour. Laughter, in their view, remained apolitical, even if it came at the cost of women's dignity.

The idea that what makes us laugh reveals what we accept as normal was not a familiar concept to them. Jokes about women being shopaholics, irrational, nagging wives, or incompetent professionals were seen as individual caricatures and not reflections of widespread cultural assumptions. This indicates that even when students emotionally identify sexist patterns, they often fail to trace them to larger structures of power and gender politics.

Moreover, comedy was largely perceived as a "safe zone" for saying anything without consequence. One student said, "Kapil Sharma sirf hasate hain, unka koi personal matlab nahi hota" (Kapil Sharma just makes us laugh, he doesn't mean anything by it). This belief that intent erases impact shows how misogyny is excused if it entertains.

Only a couple of students attempted a deeper critique. One stated, "Yeh mazaak logon ki soch ko reflect karta hai... aur fir wahi soch normal ho jaati hai" (This kind of humour reflects people's mindset, and then that mindset becomes normal). However, such voices were rare and did not reflect the majority's awareness level.

In sum, this section highlights that while some students could intuitively recognise sexist or demeaning content, they did not view it as political. The separation of humour from serious thinking blocked their ability to see how comedy becomes a tool to reinforce stereotypes about women. Their emotional discomfort did not translate into a political understanding of gender or resistance to such portrayals. Thus, the subtle but pervasive misogyny embedded in "entertainment" continues to thrive, protected by laughter and by the illusion that it is harmless.

### 3. Proverbs and Songs: Inherited Morality and the Distribution of Roles:

In the classroom discussions, when students were Introduced with some popular sayings or songs related to women they had grown up with, the responses flowed easily. These weren't things they had reflected on critically, but they remembered them vividly as things told by mothers, sung at weddings, or repeated during rituals. What surfaced was not just cultural tradition, but a deeply moral framework, shaping how girls come to understand belonging, silence, and adjustment often long before they face them in real life.

Proverbs as Moral Directives: Certain proverbs were cited almost unanimously, often with a smile or a nod, indicating how familiar and accepted — they were:

1. "*Sasural hi asli ghar hota hai.*"( The Husband's Home is the real home)-

This proverb shifts a woman's emotional loyalty from her birth home to her marital home, presenting dispossession as maturity.

2. "*Ladki parayi hoti hai.*" (A girl belong to someone else.) -

A common phrase that reinforces the idea that daughters are never truly 'theirs' — always in transit, never central.

3. "*Chhori ke pair ghar ke andar hi acche lagte hain.*" ( A girl's feet are best within the house.) -

Restricts mobility in symbolic terms, drawing a moral boundary around physical space.

4. "*Sabhya ladki zyada bolti nahi.*" ( A good girl does not speak much) - Normalises quietness as virtue, aligning femininity with compliance.

5. "*Ladki ki doli uthti hai sasural ke liye, arthi maayke ke liye.*" (A girl leaves her parental home in a wedding palanquin, and returns only as a funeral bier)

This harsh but popular phrase communicates the expectation that a woman should never return to her natal home — not even in death.

Students rarely questioned these sayings in terms of political consciousness. Some admitted they had never really thought about their meaning and long implication. Others acknowledged a quiet discomfort but felt they were "just part of tradition." What emerges here is what Bourdieu (1977) calls symbolic violence — a system where roles are not enforced through threat, but through affection and repetition.

### Songs as Emotional Conditioning:

Similarly, songs cited during discussions — especially those associated with weddings — were deeply emotional, but their lyrical content carried instructions disguised as sentiment. Three examples stood out:

1. "Babul ki duāein leti jā, jā tujhko sukhī sansār mile."

This *bidaai* song ritualizes emotional departure, offering blessings as a form of closure — reinforcing that leaving is natural and final.

2. "Mehndi hai rachnewali, haathon mein gehri laali..."

Romanticises the preparation for marriage, not just as celebration, but as readiness for transformation, departure, and adjustment.

3. "Maayke ki galiyan bhool jana, sasural ki reet nibhana."

A direct line often included in folk variations or informal wedding performances, reminding the bride to forget her past and embrace the new with obedience. These songs were recited with emotion. Students spoke of crying at *bidaai* scenes or feeling proud when such songs played. But the pride came from fulfilling a role and not necessarily from freedom. These lyrics don't just express culture but they shape what kind of grief is acceptable, what kind of silence is dignified, and what kind of adjustment is admirable.

Through Lasswell's lens — who gets what, when, and how — we see these proverbs and songs as quiet mechanisms of allocation: the daughter gets blessings, but not return; admiration, but not voice; love, but not choice. The political is deeply present even if not named.

This section demonstrates how students 'cultural environment offers emotional scripts that organise who gets to stay, to speak, to belong and these scripts are presented as "natural," "beautiful," or "traditional," not as political design.

### 4. Everyday Choices: When Preference Reflects Allocation:

As part of the classroom reflections, students were asked a series of casual but open-ended questions: Which character do you admire? What kind of life do you imagine for yourself? What would you do if you had no restrictions? The answers appeared personal at first — sometimes humorous, sometimes thoughtful but a closer look revealed recurring emotional patterns that were anything but random.

Most students spoke of admiring characters who adjust, wait, or quietly hold the family together. Hardly anyone aspired to be someone who leaves, disrupts, or speaks too much. Even in fiction, ambition was modest which were imagined within boundaries, not against them. No one said they wanted to be like Draupadi. Some said they'd like to be like Anandi (Balika Vadhu) or Gopi Bahu — women who faced suffering, but won respect through patience.

These choices may seem personal, but they reflect a politics of emotional approval — where admiration is shaped by what society rewards in women. Through Lasswell's framework, we ask: Who gets to be admired, and for what qualities? Who gets to feel proud, and at what cost? In these answers, we find not just role models, but pre-approved paths.

Some students did express desires to live alone, to travel, to not marry early but quickly followed it with a smile or a "but that won't happen." These weren't just practical concessions; they were signs of internalised limits, of knowing one's place within an unwritten script.

Here, Bourdieu's idea of habitus becomes visible: a structure that lives inside the body, shaping what feels appropriate to desire, not just what one is told to do (Bourdieu, 1977). Students weren't resisting but they were not fully at ease either. The emotional tone of their responses carried both acceptance and hesitation.

This section shows that even what appears as personal ambition or taste is already negotiated through inherited permission. The political doesn't enter later. It is already there in the framing of dreams, in the choice of who to become, and in the silent knowledge of what not to want too much.

## Result and Discussion

As the conversations unfolded in the classroom around television shows, familiar songs, everyday proverbs, and hypothetical situations; a quiet pattern emerged. The students spoke with sincerity. They cried remembering *bidaai* songs, laughed at favourite serials, and described their choices with a sense of familiarity. But what passed for personal? These stories, preferences, values were never just their own. Each carried the outline of a script already written.

This is not a story of overt suppression. It is a story of allocation of who gets to stay, who must leave, who adjusts and who decides, who is remembered for her strength and who for her silence. The structures of power revealed in these conversations do not arrive through state policy or law, but through what feels like love, tradition, and entertainment. And that is what makes them powerful.

The students, for the most part, did not call these structures political. But when asked why a woman always leaves her home after marriage, or why a joke often targets a woman's inability or emotions, or why sacrifice is quietly expected of her, their answers paused. They had emotional responses — a sense of discomfort, an unease — but the political frame remained just outside the range of their gaze.

In Lasswell's classical formulation — "who gets what, when, and how" — politics is about allocation (Lasswell, 1936). And in these narratives, the answer was already culturally determined. The girl gets to speak, but only at the right time. She gets to work, but not at the cost of family peace. She gets to dream, but only within a permitted frame. And she is taught not to name these boundaries as boundaries but as values, or respect, or love.

A proverb like "Sasural hi asli ghar hota hai" is not simply a phrase. It is a redistribution of belonging. A song like "Babul mora naihar chhooto hi jaaye" is not only emotional. it is a ritual of removal, presented as beauty. These acts of emotional learning are deeply political, yet rarely seen as such.

Here, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power becomes relevant. He writes that domination is most effective when it is misrecognised as legitimate. When power hides itself behind culture and affection (Bourdieu, 1977). Similarly, what appears to the students as family guidance is in fact a soft but steady distribution of roles, values, and silences.

Foucault's understanding of power helps clarify this further. According to Foucault (1977), modern power does not rely solely on punishment or law but works through disciplinary techniques, where individuals learn to self-regulate within "normal" expectations. The songs sung at weddings, the proverbs taught at a young age, and the preferred characters in serials are all subtle instructions in how to govern oneself, how to feel, when to obey, and how not to question.

This form of power is most dangerous precisely because it is intimate. As Menon (2012) argues, the family, love, and cultural values are often the least questioned sites of political ideology. The personal, in this sense, is not only political but it is where politics hides most effectively.

The findings also resonate with Chakravarti's (2003) insights that gender in India operates through a moral order, in which girls are conditioned through affection and fear, through songs and silence. These systems allocate not just economic or legal power but also who gets to feel entitled to speak, to stay, to belong.

Even in situations where students recognised some discomfort such as when watching sexist comedy or encountering restrictive proverbs, they hesitated to view it as political. Their discomfort lacked language. So far as political reasoning is concerned, people often fail to recognise ideological influence when it is embedded in what feels ordinary, personal, or emotional (Jost, Gosling, & Nosek, 2008).

To call the personal political, then, is not a rhetorical gesture. It is an act of reframing the world of recognising that power is exercised not only through policies and institutions but through rituals of emotion, through the timing of silences, and through the allocation of what is grievable, admirable, or forgettable.

What this study reveals is that the most decisive acts of power are often performed without a name and that perhaps the greatest task of feminist political inquiry is not to invent new slogans, but to simply ask, again and again: Who gets what, when, and how?

## Conclusion:

This study began with a question that often escapes serious attention: What if the personal is not personal at all? In exploring the lives, responses, and cultural worlds of undergraduate women in a semi-rural Indian college, it became clear that personal choices, emotional attachments, and even silences are deeply structured by political arrangements even when not named as such.

Across proverbs, songs, television shows, and everyday decisions, what emerged was a pattern of pre-scripted allocation. Girls are not simply guided to be obedient or sacrificial; they are placed in positions where obedience appears natural and sacrifice becomes a virtue. They admire characters who adjust, sing songs that prepare them for departure, and speak of family expectations as though they were destiny. And yet, they do not perceive these as political experiences.

By applying Harold Lasswell's foundational question — "who gets what, when, and how" — the study re-centers political analysis not in institutions alone, but in bedrooms, courtyards, and minds. The findings show how power enters through affection, how control arrives disguised as culture, and how submission is taught as virtue, not oppression.

This does not mean the students are passive. Their moments of unease, hesitation, and emotional insight suggest a readiness to reflect. But without the tools to politicise their discomfort, the gap between feeling and critique remains. The personal is indeed political, not because women's issues belong in public debate, but because the very boundary between personal and political is artificially drawn to keep power hidden.

To notice this boundary, and to speak of it, is a political act in itself. This study hopes to be a small step in that direction, hence, not to condemn tradition or sentiment, but to open up a deeper conversation about where power lives, and why we so often fail to see it.

## Recommendations for Future Research

1. Expanding the Sample Size: A larger and more diverse sample across different regions could provide a comparative analysis of gendered political consciousness.
2. Intersectional Analysis: The study can be extended to analyse the role of caste, religion, and class in shaping perceptions of personal and political domains.
3. Longitudinal Study: Tracking the evolution of political consciousness among students over time may provide insights into the impact of education and socio-political changes.
4. Curriculum Development: The study suggests the need for integrating feminist and critical media studies perspectives within political science syllabi in undergraduate programs.

## References

1. Bartky, S. L. (2020). Foucault, femininity, and the modernisation of patriarchal power. In D. Taylor, K. L. Alcoff, & C. Anderson (Eds.), Feminist theory: A philosophical anthology (pp. 342–352). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003001201-41
2. Bourdieu, P. (1977). Outline of a theory of practice (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. Chakravarti, U. (2003). Gendering caste: Through a feminist lens. Stree.

3. Christensen, G. (2023). Three concepts of power: Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas. Power and Education, 16(2), 182–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/17577438231187129
4. Drummond, J. J. (2020). Self-identity and personal identity. Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 20(2), 235–247. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-020-09696-w
5. Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
6. Hanisch, C. (1970). The personal is political [PDF]. Retrieved Feb 10, 2022, from https://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html
7. Jost, J. T., Gosling, S. D., & Nosek, B. A. (2008). Ideology: Its resurgence in social, personality, and political psychology. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3(2), 126–136. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2008.00070.x
8. Lasswell, H. D. (1936). Politics: Who gets what, when, how. McGraw-Hill. Menon, N. (2012). Seeing like a feminist. Zubaan. Tong, R. (2018). Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction. Routledge.