MASCULINITY IN HINDUTVA

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Masculinity in Hindutva" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university and is my own work.

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28/7/06

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ABBREVIATIONS

RSS-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

VHP- Vishwa Hindu Parishad

VKA- Vanavasi Kalayan Ashram

NDA-National Democratic Alliance

BJP- Bharatiya Janata Party

BJS- Bbbharatiya Jana Sangh

MP- Member of Parliament

PHS- Punjab Hindu Sabha

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world has witnessed two contrasting developments moving simultaneously. One is the rise of individualism (under the influence of neoliberal economic policies) which have resulted in massive globalization and shrinking sovereignty of the nation-state. The rising individualism or too much of individualism have been manifested in growing political apathy of the elite, nuclear family becoming the norm everywhere, declining welfare measures by the state and so on. The rising individualism can be understood simply by observing the rushing traffic in a city[1] or dominance of the language of 'rights' in the political discourse[2]. The other contrasting development which is equally true is the concretization of ethnic identities based on language, region, caste and particularly religion. Community boundaries based on religion embraces large number of people. As Sudhir kakar notes, 'our time are witness to a world wide wave of religious revival. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, the new religions in Japan, born again Christian in the United States and the protestant sects in Latin America are undergoing a resurgence which is regarded as with deep distrust by all modern heirs to the enlightenment.'[3] . Kakar attributes this rising concretization of boundaries and religious revival to the process of modernization and globalization itself. He says that with modernization a deep sense of alienation and humiliation have arisen. The alienation and the consequent feeling of loss and helplessness have resulted because of dislocation and migration from rural areas to shanty towns of urban megalopolises and the disappearance of crafts skills which underlay traditional work identities. The humiliation is caused by the homogenizing and hegemonizing impact of the modern world which pronounces ancestral cultural ideals and values as outmoded and irrelevant. But this is not to say that communal or religious identities are being increasingly asserted only because

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[1] Rajeev Bhargava in 'The Ethical Insufficiency of Egoism and Altruism: India in Transition'argues that India is ravaged by a full blooded egoism which is likely in societies transiting from hierarchy towards an egalitarian order.In his view altruism is as insufficiently ethical as egoism.Therfore it can not check this egoism.Rather egoism can be checked by rehabilitation of the other regarding (moral) domain. In *Indian Democracy Meanings and Practices* Ed. By Rajendra Vora and Suhas Palshikar.Delhi:Sage,2004.pp.215-232.

[2] Nivedita Menon, *Recovering subversion: Feminist Politics beyond the Law* Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004.

[3] Sudhir Kakar,*The Colour of Violence*, India:Viking Penguin Books, 1995.p.239

of a sense of alienation and humiliation but also because of clashing economic interests and a perceived or real discrimination by the state of different communities.

In Indian politics also we have witnessed the rise of BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) through the Ramjanambhoomi movement of the late 1980s. BJP is a heir to Bharatiya Jana Sangh which was founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951. It virtually became a party of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which declared itself to be a cultural organization. It had taken a new avatar in 1980 in the form of BJP out of a political necessity. BJP had two seats in the Parliament in the 1984 General election but its tally continuously increased from 1989 and in 1996, 1998 and 1999 it become the single largest party and from 1998 to 2004 it exercised power at the centre under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee. BJP came to political prominence in India because it is strongly bonded with the ideology of the Sangh Parivar, affiliated organizations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevek Sangh. The Sangh Parivar and the BJP have come to be known as 'Hindutva' political forces in our country chiefly because they espouse the cause of Hindutva or Hinduness.

In this dissertation we will discuses the second process, i.e. the increasing concretization of communal identities in the context of India.'Communal' identities are created from a perceived incompatibility of the pursuit of economic, social and cultural or other secular interest of followers of different religious communities having a shared space. We will limit our study to the politics of Hindutva. Here we will analyse mainly the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and some of its affiliated organizations and mainly the women's organization. It is observed that the rhetoric of 'loss of masculinity' appear very strongly in the discourse of the Hindutva project. Therefore the question arises whether the rise of communal identities result in assertion of a masculine subject? Is the project of Hindutva is to create a masculine Hindu subject?

One of the most significant contributions of feminism to political theory is that it has made gender 'visible' as a category of analysis. Now it has also been realized that analysis of gender should not limit itself to the creation of feminine identities alone.

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Taking its lead from feminist theory studies on masculinities are also coming from 1960s and in the last two decades a large volume of work on masculinities have come up. Obviously the studies on masculinities cannot be regarded as a coherent body of work having unified objectives. Scholars have identified some historic moments in the development of studies in masculinity. Rachel Adams and David Savaran in their 'The Masculinity studies Reader' says that during the 1970s writings of Joseph Pleck, Marc Fashe and Jack Sawyer contributed to the first wave of the men's movement which was avowedly preeminent and dedicated to personal and institutional change. The second wave or the mythopoelic men's movement that arose during the 1980s represents (as many of its critics argued) something of a backlash against feminism. These men organized under the aegis of Robert Bly' (whose best selling volume *Iron John* is the movements bible) believe that they have been emasculated by feminism and an effeminizing culture.[4]

Pro-feminist scholarship has tried to demonstrate that like femininity, masculinity is also constructed. Pierre Bourdieu in his 'Masculine domination' mainly tried to show that masculinity is also acquired.[5] This line of argument helps in doing away with the natural superiority assigned to men by patriarchal society. Or rather men in general the agents of patriarchy think themselves as naturally superior to women. Bourdieu denies that biology of a man necessarily determines the masculine dispositions that he often displays. Rather he says that masculinity is first and foremost a duty and that men are continuously hounded by the masculine fear of being excluded from the world of men. It is this 'masculine fear' which forms the basis of many of the dispositions which are associated with manliness. We will use this formulation later while analyzing the Hindutva discourse of Indian politics. Such an analysis also leads us to ask the question why do most men respond to the anxieties created by such rhetoric? Why is it that men 'fear the loss of masculinity'? Why is it that men endorse a notion of masculinity which associates itself with valour, courage, aggressiveness, self control etc?

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[4] Rachel Adams and David Savaran, *The Masculinities Studies Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, Introduction, p.1-8.
[5] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination,* Cambridge:Polity, 2001

This is because Masculinity is also associated with power. The very fear of 'loosing masculinity' is about loosing power because the patriarchal system enables most men to exert power over other women. Therefore calling a man womanly or effeminate is seen as ultimate humiliation. The controversy over the age of consent Bill of 1891 can also be seen in this same vein. People like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and others opposed the British effort to increase the age of girls for giving consent to sexual intercourse from 10 to 12.[6] The capability to exercise power over the women of its community is regarded as a chief ingredient of masculinity.

In the first chapter we will discuss this notion of masculinity as power. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which is at the centre of the Sangh Parivar was initially founded as a 'cultural organization' by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. But its stated objective was establishment of the 'Hindu Rashtra' (a clearly political aim) through the process of 'man-making'. It is to be noted that RSS is an all men organization and Hedgewar refused to admit women into the organization when approached by Lakshmibai Kelkar. Rather he preferred to help her set up a separate women's organization to inculcate the (same) values needed for the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra. They criticize the existing notion of secularism enshrined in our constitution as 'pseudo secularism' because it is based on the principle of 'appeasement' of minorities and not based on a universal principle of treating every religion equally where equality is equated with sameness. Instead they want to propagate the idea that the principle of 'Hindutva' on which the future Hindu Rashtra would be based is inherently tolerant and therefore secular.

The 'man-making' process of the Sangh is ostensibly to counter the corrupting influence of western culture. In fact, the Hindutva discourse is so obsessed with things 'western' that any thing that is western becomes pejorative term.

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[6] Janaki Nair, in her *Woman and Law in Colonial India: A Social History*, says that the Age of consent Bill raised the consent of girls to twelve but left the arrangement and performance of marriage unrestricted. This was an indication of the compromises that had been affected by opponents of the Bill. The Indian panel code and criminal procedure code were amended in March 1891, to raise the age of consent to twelve for married and un married girls. Sexual intercourse with girls below that age was punishable with up to ten years in prison or transportation for life. However, since it was consummation rather than marriage that was prohibited, prosecution under the act was difficult, if not impossible (chapter 3) p 75.

Yet they ended up mimicking the colonial ideology of putting masculinity at the top of the gender hierarchy.

So far we have been using the term 'masculinity' instead of masculinities. In fact what is found from the studies of India's freedom struggle and from other studies on masculinities is that there is no one notion of masculinity. There are different competing notion of masculinities. But one notion of 'masculinity' becomes hegemonic. The notion of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' is used by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee in their 'Towards a new Sociology of Masculinity'[7]

The term 'hegemony' was popularized by Gramsci by which he meant that power operates not only by coercion but also by generating consent. Explaining 'Hegemonic Masculinity' Carrigan et al. says that the constitution involves at least 3 things[8]:

a)   Hegemony means persuasion and one of its important sites is likely to be the commercial mass-media. An examination of advertisement shows that they amplify the sense of virility, creating anxiety and giving re-assurance about being a father, playing games with stereotypes (men washing dishes and so on).
      The Sangh Parivar extensively uses the myths and images of the past and future as tools of persuation. During the famous Ramjanambhoomi movement the image of Ram became main instrument for mobilizing the masses.

b)   Hegemony clearly involves the division of labour, the social definition of tasks as either men's work or women's work and the definition of some kind of work as more masculine than others.
      But as we will see in the second chapter, the Hindutva political forces encourages women to participate in communal violence along with men Sikta Banerjee studying the role of women in the politics of the Shiv Sena, a party which strongly aligns nativism with Hindutva says that women activist of the Shiv Sena have

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[7]Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee, 'Towards A New Sociology of Masculinity', In Rachel Adams and David Savaran eds.*The Masculinities Studies Reader,* Oxford, Blackwell, 2002,pp99-118
[8] Ibid. pp.14

feminized violence and there is a serious destabilization of traditional role of women as peace makers.[9] (But it does not encourage men to do domestic work)

c)   The negotiation and enforcement involves the state. The criminalization of male homosexuality as such was a key move in the construction of the modern form of hegemonic masculinity.

The Hindutva forces are still struggling for state power. As we have noted some of the differences with the present 'hegemonic' form of masculinity, the Hindutva masculinity is still competing for hegemony.

The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is very useful because it admits that there is not one notion of masculinity overwhelmingly present all over the world for all the time. It also means that there is a consenting agency in making a particular form of masculinity 'hegemonic'. As they themselves say;

"The culturally exalted form of masculinity, the hegemonic model so to speak may only correspond to the actual character of a small number of men. Yet very large number of men is complicit in sustaining the hegemonic model. There are various reasons–

a)   gratification through fantasy

b)   compensation through displaced aggression (e.g. poofter bashing by police and working class youth) and so on.

c)   But the overwhelmingly important reason is that most men benefit from the subordination of women and hegemonic masculinity is centrally connected with the institutionalization of men's dominance over women."[10]

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[9] Sikata, Banerjee 'TheFeminization of Violence in Bombay: Women in the Politics of Shiv Sena' *Asian survey* vol. XXXVI, no. 12, December 1996. pp1213-1225

[10] Tin Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee, 'Towards a New of Sociology Masculinity' in Rachel Adams and David Savaran eds. *The Masculinities Studies Reader*, Oxford Blackwell, 2002, pp. 112-113.

A general condition of masculine hegemony is possible only through subordination of the feminine. A notion of masculinity becomes hegemonic through devaluation of other forms of masculinities and if it can sustain the general condition of masculine hegemony. Therefore a gender just system would be possible not by replacing one form of hegemonic masculinity by another but by eliminating the general condition of masculine hegemony.But very importantly, the concept of hegemonic masculinity as we have pointed out refers to the fact that there are competing notions of masculinities in a society.

In the first chapter we will discuss the Hindutva notion of masculinity as it is developed by the Sangh Parivar. We do so by discussing the context of its rise, its discourse and the images that it creates. The Hindutva movement emerged during the time of India's encounter with British imperialism. It stood for cultural nationalism and here we will see how cultural nationalism uses the muscular symbols and images and perpetuates the ideology of masculinism. Many scholars describe the Hindutva forces as Hindu revivalism as it romanticizes the past. But it is both revivalism and constructed ness as it selectively uses certain images for imagining the future. Hindu revivalism became very strong in India in the 19th century with the establishment of the Arya Samaj by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875 and its famous programme of 'bringing the Hindu back home' from other religion, popularly known as *Shuddhi*.

Sudhir Kakar notes that in the Hindutva discourse, though the Britishers shared some cultural practices with the Muslims like eating beef, the Britishers became the stranger and the Muslims became the other.[11] Because the number of Muslims were large and they lived in closer proximity, their cultural practices are more visible and seen as outrageous to Hindu beliefs. On the other hand Britishers were at worst seen as indifferent Britishers, especially historians like James Mill and John Stuart Mill tried to project British rule in a territory like India, as a 'civilizing mission'. This is the masculine justification of the British rule. They being more virile and rational are in a position to civilize the Indian people and therefore have a right to rule over India. This masculine

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[11] Sudhir Kakar, *The colour of violence* India:Viking , Penguin Books 1995, p 27

justification necessitated a narrative to demasculinize the Indians. Macaulay therefore said,

"The physical organization of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movement languid. During many ages he has been trumpeted upon by man of bolder and more hardly breeds. Courage, independence, veracity are qualities to which his constitution and situation are equally unfavorable"[12]

As Mrinalni Sinha points out though the charge of 'effeminacy' was initially pointed against the Bengalees, towards the end of the 2nd half of the 19th century, it was used quite specifically to characterize the Indian middle class characterized as babus.[13]In a bid to demasculinize the Indians, they pointed out the pathetic and extremely unequal position of Indian women. This is projected as a failure of Indian men or lack of their masculinity. This helped them to legitimize their superior position and justly reform some of the practices of the Hindus such as sati pratha, widow remarriage and child marriage. Many Hindu nationalists though could not deny the subordinate or rather oppressive conditions of women found these developments very humiliating and therefore they felt the need for alternative narrative. Thus the western notion of masculinity was seen as an improvement upon the Hindu notion of masculinity which bluntly subordinated women. But the central idea remained the same that men are responsible for the condition of women and that men should have control over their women.

It is perhaps because of these reasons that the Altekarian paradigm became very dear to the Hindu nationalist. A.S. Altekar in 'The position of women in Hindu civilization' argued that the position of women was much better during the Vedic period. The age of marriage, he said was 16, 17. They were properly educated, could choose their own groom, absence of seclusion, they had an absolute equality with men on the eye of religion, in theory she was joint owner of the household with her husband though in practice she was the subordinate partner, monogamy was the rule, sati custom was not in

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[12] Cited in Mrinialini Sinha's *Colonial Masculinity: the manly English man and the effeminate bengalee in the late nineteenth century*,New Delhi: Kali for Women 1995.pp. 15-16
[13] Ibid. pp.1-32

vogue, the widow could if she like contract another marriage or under the custom of *niyoga*. He noted that that position of women started deteriorating after 500 B.C. mainly because of inter-caste marriage and foreign invasion starting with the Greeks.[14]

The project of Nationalism soon became a process of remasculinisation which emphasized on two continuous developments. One is to build up the physical strength ofthe Hindu male and second is to assert greater control over their women. A third development, which was less important than the above two was also in the process. This was a much scrutinized development of the women which will ultimately help the men folk of the community and their progeny. The development of the status of women got a utilitarian justification. Moreover it helped to demasculinize the Muslims. The reference point became the Hindu women. So, while at the individual level the measure of masculinity becomes physical strength, courage, valour, assertiveness, self controll, patriotism, rationality etc, at the community level, it is the control over their women and the relative status of their women. The individual measures of masculinity are not be dissociated from the community. They are seen as initial condition of preserving the community.

This notion of masculinity which developed during the colonial period, as we would argue in the first chapter is sustained by the Sangh Parivar even today.The first chapter would delineate the context in which the Hindutva discourse arose. There are some differences among the different organizations of the Sangh Parivar. Savarkar was critical of Golwalkar for refraining RSS members from actively participating in electoral politics. More recently BJP developed some differences with the RSS when L.K. Advani remarked in Pakistan that the demolition of Babri Masjid was the saddest day of his life and that M.A. Jinnal was secular. This annoyed the RSS and got Advani resigned from the post of party chief.[15] The new President of the BJP, Rajnath Singh has time and again mentioned its special bonnding with RSS and emphasized the key demands of the

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[14] A.S.Altekar, 'The Position of Women In Hindu Civilization' In Kumkum Roy ed.*Women In Early Indian society* Delhi :Manohar,1999.pp.49-71

[15] News Paper, *Hindu*, June,4, 2004.

Hindutva forces.[16] The binding force of all these organizations is the ideology of Hinditva.

The followers of Hindu religion do not follow one single text as sacrosanct, nor do they have a founder prophet. Therefore during the colonial period an effort was on to discover the essence of the Hindu religion to find commonness in its followers. The definition of Hindutva or Hinduness by Savarkar is widely accepted by Hindu nationalists as the most comprehensive one. He defines a Hindu as one whose homeland, place of birth and holy land, place of the origin of the religion, is Bharat which is a sacred land which spreads from the Indus to the Sea.[17] By this definition he brings the Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs to the Hindutva fold because their holy land is same. At the same time he excludes those members whose religion happened to origin in a foreign land such as Islam and Christianity. The next step was to project Hindutva as the essence of Indian ness. Being Hindu was equaled with being an Indian and being an Indian was equaled with being a Hindu. This is the ideology of Hindutva. This ideology of Hindutva is most successfully followed by the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and its affiliated organizations. We would argue that this ideology inevitably creates masculine Hindu subject.

In the second chapter we would see that the project of making masculine Hindu subjects is not limited to male members only. Hindu nationalism's intimate relations with masculinity compels it to make women also complicit subject although it insists on clear boundaries between the work of man and women in many matters in line with Hindu tradition. The second chapter seeks to analyse the increasing participation of women in violent activities sponsored by the Sangh Parivar.

One of the Chief arguments of feminists have been that women are being rendered invisible in the public domain by confining them to the domestic sphere. Most of the communalists organizations also emphasize the importance of confining women to

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[16] News Paper, *Hindu*, January, 21, 2006.
[17] V.D. Savarkar, *Hundutva- who is a Hindu?* Hindu Sahitya Sadan, 2003 edition. First Published 1923.

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the domestic. But Hindu communalist organizations like VHP, RSS, or the Shiv Sena have facilitated the participation of women in the communal riots especially during the Ramjanambhoomi movement and its aftermath. So the question arises-will this visibility of women in the public sphere further the interest of women? If not whose interest does it serve? Some of the women's organization of the Sangh Parivar gives physical training to women apparently to make them strong. We must make a difference between women receiving training in martial arts for the purpose of defending themselves and women getting trained in organizations of the Sangh Parivar. Looking at the increasing participation of women in the communal violence, it can be said that the Hindu communalist organizations are training women so that they can perpetuate aggression on other women and men rather than defending themselves. The difference is based on the purpose.

These questions have led us to raise another question-what is feminist agency? Can consenting to a masculine ideology be seen as an exercise of feminist agency?Women are generally thought to be non-violent. And most of them are. But women's role in communal riots defies any essentialisation of women's behaviors. They act not only as women but also as members of a community, a religion or a nation. But the question is- do they continue to act as women when they act in other different roles?

Urvashi Butalia, studying the partition riots brings out how lot of Punjabi women committed sucide to save the 'honour' of their community and religion by escaping conversion. The *Statement* of 15th March, 1947 reported.

"The story of 90 women of the little village of Throa Khalsa, Rawalpindi district..... who drowned themselves by jumping into a well during the recent disturbances has stirred the imagination of the people of Punjab. They revived the Rajput tradition of self-immolation when their men-folk were no longer able to defend them. They also followed Mr. Gandhi's advice to Indian women that in certain circumstances even suicide were morally preferable to submission.

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...... about a month ago, a communal army armed with sticks, tommy guns and hand grenades surrounded the village. The villagers defended themselves as best they could .... But in the end they had to raise the white flag. Negotiations followed. A sum of Rs. 10,000 was demanded.... It was promptly paid. The intruders gave solemn assurance that they would not come back.

The promise was broken the next day. They returned to demand more money and in the process hacked to death 40 of the defenders. Heavily out numbered they were unable to resist the onslaught. Their women held a hurried meeting and concluded that all was lost but their honour. Ninety women jumped into the small well. Only three were saved- there was not enough water to drown them all".[18]

Can we read this act as a violent act? Violent activities involved in self-sacrifice are everyday part of women's lives. But these acts are not meant to harm others. But the women of the Hindu communalist organizations are increasingly taking men's role of aggression. These developments lead us to a more complicated question. Do we have an alternative? Should we confine women to the domestic sphere? Should femininity be the universal norm for all human being because we had enough of masculinity? M.K. Gandhi seriously interrogated the colonial ideology of domination and subordination which the Hindu nationalists could not. Can we look at his work and practice as an alternative to find a way out from this form of masculinity? These are the questions that we would seek to address in our third chapter.

Gandhi is perhaps the most controversial figure of modern India. He provides enough space for critics to either appreciate or criticize. While some accused him of laying the foundation of Anti Islamism in India[19], others look up at Gandhism as a panacea for current communal confrontation that India is facing. While Ambedkar criticized Gandhi vehemently for opposing separate electorate for the depressed classes, it

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[18] Quoted in Urvahsi Butalis's 'Community State and Gender: On Women's Agency During Partition,' *EPW*, April 24, 1993. pp. WS-16

[19] Amalendu Misra, *Identity and Religion-Foundations of Anti Islamism in India*, Delhi:Sage, 2004.pp.64-109

was a Brahmin Nathuram Godse who killed Gandhi. Gandhi is truly loved by many and bitterly hated by lot others. Gandhi was the man who lived his private life most publicly. While he proclaimed himself to be a Hindu, they were the ideologue of Hindu nationalism who criticized him the most. Nathuram Godse was a former Swayamsevak and a member of the Hindu mahasabha, the two organizations which espoused the cause of Hindu nationalism the most. When Gandhi sat for fast unto death for the payment of some money to the newly created Pakistan, Godse could no longer tolerate. He believed that Gandhi would end up ruining the country and rob it of its masculinity.

Gandhi sincerely believed that it would be possible for India to achieve Independence from the clutches of British colonialism only through a non-violent method. He tried to give philosophical justification to demonstrate that a non-violent method was better and he bitterly criticized those who practiced in the violent method for falling pray to modern civilization. But as it is axiomatic that Gandhi derived all his theories from practices.

His method of struggle i.e. non-violent satyagraha through hunger strike, civil disobedience are interpreted as non-masculine or feminine as opposed to violent or masculine method. He adopted such a method so that maximum number of people can be brought to the forefront in India's struggle for independence. He was successful to free a large number of women from the domain of the domestic sphere and bring them to participate in the political struggle for independence. Then the question rises – can we regard Gandhi as some one who would free himself and the political practice from the ideology of masculinity which is at the centre of a patriarchal society?

There are moments when Gandhi explicitly expressed his desire to transcend his biological sex.[20] Ashish Nandy says that it was Gandhi who successfully countered the

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[20] "In her aptly titled book "Bapu, My Mother" his grandniece Manu Gandhi recalls how Bapu often said to her that though he had been a father to many, he was a mother to her. On another occasion, when replying to some workers of the Kasturaba Memorial Trust who wanted the programme to be run by women, Gandhi endorsed their point of view but said that he counted

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colonial ideology which preferred masculinity to femininity and androgyny. (masculinity > femininity > androgyny). According to Ashish Nandy against this model Gandhi ✓ offered two models —

Androgyny >Purusatva

Naritva

i. e. manliness and womanliness are equal but the ability to transcend the man-women dichotomy is superior to both, being an indicator of godly or saintly qualities. The second ordering of Gandhi, according to Nandy is-   Naritva>Purusatva>Kapurusatva[21] this would lead us to look at what did Gandhi mean by Naritva and Purusatva.

Although Gandhi's relation with his wife Kasturba Gandhi was very much patriarchal and always imposed his decisions like the decision to abstain from having sexual intercourse, upon her, he says that he derived his principle of non-violence and passive resistance from women in general and particularly from his wife and mother.

It becomes important for us to discuss Gandhi for another reason. Gandhi came to political prominence through the Khilafat movement because he thought it would bring amity and unity between the two communities. He refused to accept the advice of many prominent congress leaders who pointed out to him the dangers of mixing religion and politics. Gandhi in Hind Swaraj famously said "Those who do not mix religion and politics understand neither religion nor politics."[22] The point is that Hindu-Muslim Unity for Gandhi was both a means for achieving independence and it was also an end for him. But Pakistan was created purely on the basis of religion when a living Gandhi was there in India. Therefore Gandhi during his life time failed to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity, nor could he achieve Independence for the country without getting it divided. He became

himself as a women, he made such statements on several other occasions as well." Madhu Kihswar " Gandhi on women", *EPW* Vol. XX, No. 41, October. 12, 1985.p.1754.
[21] Ashis, Nandy, "*Intimate Enemy:Loss and Recover of Self under Colonialism,*Delhi:Oxford University Press1983, pp. 52-53.
[22] M.K, Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Ahmedabad:Navjivan Publishing House, 1938

extremely unhappy during the last days and his experiments with truths became rigorous.[23]

At a time when religious identity of the people of India are increasingly becoming concretized and both Hindu nationalist and Muslim fundamentalist seem to prefer violence as a legitimate means to achieve their respective political goals, it becomes important for us to examine whether the Gandhian practices can be seen as a panacea to the ills of violent politics.While analyzing Gandhi, we tend not to interrogate Gandhi's intentions, but the unintentional consequences that his politics might have had.

The study is based mainly on the analysis of available secondary literature on Masculinity and Hindu nationalism.We have focused on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its women's wing Rashtra Sevika Samti.We have also explored the alternatve conception of Masculinity provided by Gandhi and its feasibility.

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[23]Bhikhu Parekh in *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse,*New delhi: Sage, 1989 says that his sexual *yajna* was a way of mobilizing the capital of his spiritual *shakti* and making it yield vitally necessary political dividends . Gandhi believed that personal purity and political success 'hanged together' , especially when the politics was based on non –violence.(chapter 6,page 194)

CHAPTER I

MASCULNITY IN THE SANGH PARIVAR

CHAPTER 1

Masculinity of the Sangh Parivar

From the late 1980's the right wing forces in India are gaining continuous importance in the political life of the country. It has mobilized the masses through the Ramjanambjoomi movement of the late 1980s in which various organizations belonging to the Sangh Parivar actively participated. It is alleged that the participation of women activists like Sadhvi Rithambra, Vijayraje Scindia and Uma Bharti were significant. In 1989, the Sangh Parivar started the *Ramshila puja* with the objective of collecting and consecrating foundation bricks for the future temple in Ayodha and in September,1990 L.K.Advani began his *rath yatra* from Somnath temple in Saurashtra in a Toyota van. The *rath yatra* was marked by communal riot ,distribution of *Trishuls,* saffron flags and stickers inscribing slogans like, 'Say with Pride that I am a Hindu'[1]The *rath yatra* culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Bharatiya Janata Party was born in 1980 out of Bharatiya Jana Sangh whose major office –bearers were former Swayam Sevaks. Though the BJP has never mustered the majority of seats in parliament, it became the single largest party in 1996, 1998 and 1999 parliamentary election. From 1998-2004 BJP exercised power at the centre with other coalition partners under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee. Like its rise, its real exercise of power was also marked by bloodshed. There came the Gujarat riot of 2002. The state machinery was actively involved in the massacre of the minorities.[2] Gujarat was referred as the laboratory for experimenting the Hindutva ideology by which Sangh Parivar swears. It became the classic example of state terrorism. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government headed by the BJP was thrown out of power in

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[1] Ghanashayam Shah in 'The BJP's Riddle in Gujarat' says that during the *rath yatra* communal riots occurred in 26 places killing 99 persons between 1st September and 20th November, 1990. In Christophe Jaffrelott and Thomas Blom Hansen eds.*The BJP and The Compulsions of Politics in India* In *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics:An Omnibus,*New Delhi:Oxford,2004.p.248.

[2] Tanika, Sarkar "Semiotics of Terror: Muslim children and women in Hindu Rasthtra", *EPW*, July 13, 2002. pp.2872-2876.

the 2004 parliamentary election. Even more importantly, the right wing forces are occupying a significant space in Indian polity because as Madhu Kishwar pointed out that their various grouses are shared by most people in India today, no matter what shade of political opinion they proclaim. And this grievance list includes the following

➢ Muslims are traitors because they forced the partition of India

➢ Since the majority of the Hindus were driven out of Pakistan and later even from Bangladesh, the Congress Party led by Mahatma Gandhi betrayed the nation by insisting that Muslims should not like wise be driven out of India.

➢ Muslims living in this country are not loyal and harbor pro-Pakistan sentiment.

➢ Muslims put their religion above the nation and the Koran above the constitution. The refusal of Muslims to accept a common civil code and their insistence on being governed by their religious personal laws are touted as proofs of their lack of nationalist spirit.

➢ Muslims are inherently intolerant and obscurantist and do not allow even reasonable criticism of Islam.

➢ The congress party has followed a policy of appeasing the Muslims by submitting even to their un-reasonable anti-national demands.[3]

It is also important to point out that the support base of the right wing forces includes the upper caste, middle class, well educated urban population who occupy important position in their spheres of activity. And therefore the position of the right wing organisation is quite secure.

Therefore it can be argued that even though the Sangh Parivar does not exercise power at the centre at present, many of its values are shared by a powerful section of the Indian population. It has also been successful to slowly inject its values to the marginalized section of the population like women and adivasis by organizing them and

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[3] Madhu Kishwar, 'Religion at the service of Nationalism An analysis of Sangh Parivar Politics.', *Manushi*, 76, May June 1993, pp.2-20.

giving them some public space in a largely hierarchical structure.[4] Left parties had decided to come together with the Congress mainly to prevent BJP from coming to power after the 2004 parliamentary election. They identify the Hindutva forces as a threat to the secular India and therefore a challenge to the very democracy of India. The point is that BJP has captured the centre position around which Indian politics is moving.

BJP, as already mentioned, has succeeded in garnering support from the masses through the Ramjanambhomi movement which started from 1986. It has resulted in the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. It was built by Babur, a 16th century ruler. Prof. Rajendra Singh,then Sar-Sangh-Chalak of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh said.

"No one but the government is responsible for what happened. And how unfortunate it is that the leaders of our country carried on a false propaganda all around! By so doing they bring their own country into ignominy. It was stated that Babri Masjid has been demolished. There could not be a greater lie than to call it a masjid when no Namaz had been offered there for the last 50 years and where the entry of Muslims into a distance of 200 meters was banned by court's orders! This was a thought less propaganda that was carried on without considering its pros and cons....." (Speech delivered by Rajendra Singh at Ramila Maidan on 10.4.1994)[5]

This movement of dismantling the disputed structure and establishing in its place a Ram Mandir was carried out mainly by the Sangh Parivar. The Sangh is the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and Parivar refers to its affiliated organizations. The Parivar is a well knit unit in terms of ideological faith. The aim of the parivar as Jaffrelot points out

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[4] The RSS launched several national organization during 1949-1965 including the BJS &VHP after the late 1970's many other organizations affiliated to RSS proliferated. During the 1980's &1990's there was a massive expansion into an extra ordinary wide range of fields seeking to incorporate the marginalized section of the society like the Dalits and the Tribals. But Ghanashyam Shah in 'The BJP's riddle in Gujarat' in Christophe Jaffrelot and T.B. Hansen eds. *The BJP and the compulsion of the politics in India*. In *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics ;An Omnibus* , New Delhi oxford 2004, argues that the upper and middle caste members of the BJP still dominate its apparatus and constituted the hardcore that resist the late comers from the Dalits and OBC communities. Pp. 243-266.

[5] Rajendra Singh, *Ever Vigilant we have to be'*, Suruchi Pralashan, Delhi, 1994. P6

in 'The Sangh parivar- A Reader' is to penetrate society into depth at the grassroots level and to convert it into Hindu Nationalism. The Parivar emerged out of the desire to reach to the domains in which the RSS is not active. Though theoretically these constituents are independent and hence can choose their course of action, in reality the RSS seems to control by unambiguously laying down the contour within which they are defined and their programmes are articulated.[6] "The RSS front organizations while relatively autonomous, share the RSS's core ideology and their existence emphasizes the wide ranging transformations in the political cultures of Indian civil society that the RSS wishes to induce and manage."[7]

BJP occupies a significant position in Indian politics today because it continues to enjoy the support of the Sangh Parivar of which Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh is at the centre. Celebrating its twentieth years in April 2000 L.K.Advani remarked "....the ten years between 1989-1999 had been water shed decade in the party's history as the party saw miraculous rise .... It was only because of the BJP's association with the RSS that it had been able to imbibe the feeling of Cultural Nationalism".[8] Therefore an analysis of the Sangh parivar politics must start with the Sangh. In this chapter we would like to look at the masculine aspect of the Sangh by focusing on its ideology, narratives, rhetoric's and the Symbols that it uses to pursue its politics.

There are fairly just explanations as to why should one choose to examine the masculinities such as they may be of Hindutva. As P.K. Vijayan says these explanations can be- there has been a consistent machismo with the agents of the various branches of Hinditva organizations and fronts-not least by these bodies themselves. Secondly, there is a growing literature on the phenomenon of this association trying to documents, analyze and understand it. Thirdly, there is an increasing body of literature on masculinities in general, analyzing constructions of masculinities and their status in gender relations which in itself warrants an extension

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[6] Christophe Jaffrelot , *The Sangh Parivar – A Reader Delhi*, OUP,2005
[7] Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origin ,Ideologies and Modern Myths*, Oxford.NewYork: Berg 2001. p149.
[8] Organiser, "BJP- then and now", New Delhi, April 23, 2000, p.2

of the scope of the analysis to the examination of such constructions of masculinity in the context of Hindutva.[9]

1.1 The Context

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was formally founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar on the *Vijayadashmiday* in 1925. The RSS literature describe the foundation as a unique contribution of Hedgewar which was a reflection of his far sight and divinity. The Sangh emerged at a time when India was under colonial rule by the British. As it is evident the idea of a Sangh or an organization of the Hindus was there in Indian polity for quite some time. It would be quite naive to interpret its emergence as a contribution of a single individual though Hedgewar was undoubtedly the founder of the organization.

RSS was founded in Maharashtra and all the Sarsangh Chalak, the supreme authority in a hierarchical power structure, were Brahmins from Maharashtra until Balasaheb Deoras handed over the authority to Prof. Rajendra Singh, a *kshatriya* from U.P. in 1994. Colonialism brought with it tremendous socio- political and economic change to the Indian society. The Peshwa rule in Maharashtra came to an end in 1818and the Brahmins lost monopoly over the political power.[10] The sense of a loss of power arose.The British administration later on introduced some institutional change. The most important of them happened to be the census. The mutiny of 1857 taught the Britishers that the Hindu Muslim unity was inimical to efficient administration and organized exploitation. The census helped to get the communities consolidated.It also started showing somewhat declining number of Hindus in Punjab and other parts of India and the corresponding increase in the population of Christians and Muslims.[11] Punjab was a place where the percentage of Hindus was marginally lower than the Muslims. With the consolidation of the religious communities in 1906, the Muslim League was formed. In

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[9] P.K. Vijayan, "Outline For an Exploration of Hindutva Masculinities, in *Translating Desire* ed. Brinda Ghosh Delhi Katha.pp83-105.

[10] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence; Naming and Identity in Post Colonial Bombay* Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press. pp 20-36

[11] P.K Datta "Dying Hindus'; Production of Hindu communal common sense in early 20th century Bengal", in *EPW* June 1993 p.1306.

the following year Punjab Hindu Sabha was also formed. Thus some people came to be organized as Hindus. In 1909 All India Conference of the Hindu Sabha was organized. This was also the year when separate electorates for the Muslims were recognized through the Morley Minto Reform. Of significance was the publication of U.N. Mukherjee's *"Hindus: A Dying Race"* in the same year from Punjab. Mukjherjee articulated and promoted the clash of interests between the Hindus and Muslims in the following words.

"We Hindus are most ridiculously, most contemptibly, ignorant: we have no idea about what is going on around us. Others are not quite so ignorant .... How do the two communities stand? The Mohammedans have a future and they believe in it. We Hindus have no conception of it. Time is with them....... Time is against us. At the end of the year, they count their gains, we calculate our losses. They are growing in number, growing in strength, growing in solidarity, we are crumbling to pieces. They look for ward to a united Mohammedan world...... we are waiting for our extinction"[12]

What is important to notice is that Mukherjee beautifully transforms the 'others' to Muslims. In other words the Muslim becomes the other as against the Hindu self. In 1915 all India Hindu Sabha was formed and in 1922 Madan Mohan Malviya inaugurated the first session of Hindu Mahasabha. The workers of Hindu Mahasabha claim that it was just a change of name of earlier all India Hindu Sabha. The Hindu Mahasabha preached the idea that Indian History is Hindu history and it is a history of Hindu resistance to foreign invasion.[13]

The ideology of Hindutva got political maturity in the 1920s. As the effort of Mahatma Gandhi to bring genuine Hindu-Muslim unity though the *Khilafat* movement and communal riots on the Malabar coast broke out in South Western Province in 1921where many Hindus were killed and alleged to have been forcefully converted, the

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[12] Cited in Indra Prakash's *Hindu Mahasabha Its contribution to Indian Politics*, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, New Delhi, 1966.pp10-11.
[13] Ibid. p.8

Shuddhi and *Sangathan* movement got intensified from 1923.The Shuddhi programme or bringing the Hindus back to the Hindu fold was an innovation of the Arya Samaj which was established in 1875. The Shuddhi movement reflected an anxiety-an anxiety of loosing power. It got intensified from the 1920s and the Muslim Ulemas responded by tabligh. Swami Shraddhananda was the star campaigner for Shuddhi who wrote the look, "Hindu Sangathan:Saviour of the Dying race" which was a direct response to Mukherji's book mentioned earlier. The book was published in 1924. The target of the Shuddhi and the tabligh happened to be the same section of population, the lower caste people and the people who practiced synergetic culture like the Malkana Rajputs or the Gujar community. This intensified communal tension.

Another important development which led to the intensification of the Shuddhi and Sangathan movement was the rise of the depressed caste movement under the earlier ideology of Jyotiba Phule. By looking at the caste composition of the Rashtriya Sweayam Sevak Sangh Pracharak and its recruits in the formative decades, Chettan Bhatt argues that 'the peaking of the non Brahmin movement during the early 1920s and the influence of non-Brahmin candidates in the government of Bombay was considered a major threat to Maharashtrian Brahmin Power within the legislatures. "Lower castes and untouchable political ascendancy in Maharashtra was powerfully represented by the political emergence of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar during a conference on the depressed classes held at Nagpur in 1920."[14]

These are the circumstances which led to the formation of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh at Nagpur in 1925 by Chitpavan Brahmin, K.B. Hedgewar.

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[14] Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origin, Iideologies and Modern Myths*, Oxford. NewYork; Berg 2001.pp-41-76

1.2 It's Ideology:

RSS and its affiliates like to call themselves as nationalist. Critics describe them variously as communalists (Bipan Chandra, Kanungo), Hindu nationalists (Bruce Graham) and fascist (Sumit Sarkar)

Though dangerous, these criterions need not be exclusionary and can go together. Organic nationalism based on primordial identities as against civic nationalism which is based on citizenship rights can be both communal and fascists.The Sangh discourses argue that their nationalism is based on Hindu identity and that Hindus constitute a nation. Golwalkar says that the Hindus have all the attributes which are necessary for the formation of a nation. These are Geographical unity, Racial unity, Religious unity, Cultural unity and Linguistic Unity.[15] Thus territory is not the only important constituent for the Hindu nationalists.

The identity of a Hindu is a deeply contested Idea and Hinduism is marked by its heterogenity. But efforts were on to find on essence of a Hindu or what constitutes Hindutva from the 19th century. Ashish Nandy says that it was a compulsion of modernity and a reflection of deep penetration of colonial culture.[16] In fact the socio-religious reforms movements tried to project a model of a society based on Christion or other Semitic ideals. For example, the Brahmo Samaj which was established in 1828 in Calcutta by Ram Mohan Roy tried to present Upanishads as the Book. Roy criticized idol worship ands seeked to introduce devotion to 'one true God'. In Dayananda's definition, an *arya* was one who had knowledge, virtue and was noble and the *arya* was one who worshipped only one God and had accepted the Vedic religion. As Nandy says, "....... The main elements of their Hinduism were, again an attempt to turn Hinduism into an organized religion with an organized priesthood, church and missionaries; acceptance of the idea of proselytization and religions 'conscientization' (*Shuddhi*, the *bete noire* of the Indian Christians and Muslims was a Semitic element introduced into

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[15] See Pralay, Kanungo RSS's *Tryst with politics,* Delhi, Manohar, 2002.
[16] Ashish Nandy *The Intimate Enemy; Loss and Recovery of Self under colonialism, Delhi, OUP, 1983.*

nineteenth century Hinduisms under the influence of western Christianity); an attempt to introduce the concept of the Book following the Semitic creeds (the Vedas and the Gita in the case of the two swamis Dayananda and Vivekananda); the acceptance of the idea of linear, objective and causal history; acceptance of ideas akin to monotheism (Vivekananda even managed to produce that race variant of it: a quasi monotheistic creed with a feminine god head as its central plank); and a certain Puritanism and this worldly asceticism borrowed partly from the catholic church and partly from Calvinism."[17] Therefore it was indirectly collaborationist.

Christophe Jaffrelot says that the ideology of Hindu Nationalism can be called 'strategic syncretism' and this can be found also in the socio-religious movements. "Syncretism because there is strong intention to reform one's society through the assimilation of western values consistent with the Hindu cultural equilibrium; and strategic syncretism since the equilibrium in question remains the prime concern. The strategy combines two dimensions, the first one being directed towards 'psychological' demands, the second one concerning 'mimetic' aspects of ideology building."[18]

Of significance is the point that the genealogies of the ideology of Hindu nationalism which gained political maturity in the 1920s can be found in the socio-religious movement of the 19th century.

The Hindu nationalists viewed the differences within Hinduism as a weakness. Questions arose regarding whether Sikhs, Janis, Buddhists, members of different bhakti sects such as Kabirpanthis and vallabhacharyas, untouchables and tribal groups belonged to the Hindu community or not. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's definition of Hindutva expressed in his 'Hindutva: who is a Hindu?' published in 1923 fulfilled a much awaited need for the Hindu nationalists. Swami Shradhananda, the author of 'Hindu Sangathan, the savior of a Dying Race' responded to the first publication of the book in the following

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[17] Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy; Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism,* Delhi: OUP,1983. p.25
[18] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindu Nationalism: Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building, *EPW,* March 20-27, 1993. P.518

words. "It must have been one of those Vaidik dawns indeed which inspired our seers with new truths, that revealed to the author of 'Hindutva'"[19] Here Savarkar argues that Hindus constituting a nation is only very natural and one who regards this land of Bharatvarsha, from the Indus to the seas as his Fatherland as well as his Holy land, that is the cradle land of his religion is a Hindu. With this definition Savarkar eliminates the Mohemmedan or the Christian from the Hindutva fold. As he says "we have tried to determine the essentials of Hindutva and in doing so we have discovered that the Bohras and such other Mohemmadan or Christian communities possess all the essential qualifications of Hindutva but one that is that they do not look upon India as their holyland." [20]

But 'ideology', as Althusser says also 'has a material existence'.[21] An ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices. This existence is material. The Sangh came to provide that apparatus where this ideology of Hindu nationalism could be practiced. As K.R. Malkani says that Dr. Headgear and his associates came to the conclusion that Hindus must be united to be able to stand up to Muslims- and they must be radicalized to hasten the day of British withdrawal from India. It was to attain these twin objectives that the RSS was founded in 1925.[22]

1.3 Masculinity in the Sangh discourse

The apparatus where the ideology of Hindu Nationalism was sought to be practiced happened to be an all men organization. The nation that these men are supposed to protect is symbolized in the feminine. A section of the prayer that every swayam sevak sings at the start of the Sakha, the basic unit of the organization reads as follows, "......may we be inspired with the spirit of *stern heroism* which is the role and ultimate means

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[19] Cited in Gyanedra Pandey, 'Hindus and others: The Militant Hindu construction', *EPW*, 28 December, 1991p.3000

[20] V.D. Savarkar,*Hindutva:Who is a Hindu?* New Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan,2003 p.113

[21] Cited in Supriya Akerkar Theory and Practice of Women's Movement in India; A Discourse Analysis, *EPW* April 29 1995 P.WS 4

[22] K.R.Malkanni, *RSS Story* New Delhi:Impex India,1980

of attaining the highest spiritual bliss with the greatest temporal prosperity ...... victory to Mother India" (emphasis mine)[23]

The prayer of the RSS invokes an image of continuous war which the Mother India is waging and seeks to inculcate in the minds of the Swayam sevak that "stern" heroism is the only means to attaining almost everything from attaining highest spiritual bliss to temporal prosperity to making the mother India victorious.

It becomes a necessity because the ideology of Hindutva seeks to universalize the particular. It seeks to make India Hindu. Explaining the idea of the Hindu nation K.R. Malkani quotes Golwalkar, the second sarsanghchalak of the R.S.S., "Golwalkar who often talked about Barr V.V. John who became Madras BJS President in the Fifties. He said, "... John was as staunch a Christian as I am a staunch Hindu. I asked him if he was aware of the allegation that RSS dominated Jana Sangha and he replied, "After all this is a Hindu nation. Everybody should accept this obvious fact. I have therefore decided, after due thought, to accept the assignment"[24]

Thus the acceptance of Hindu dominance is naturalized for the followers of other religion. This idea of dominance is very much masculine.

1.4 Domination of the feminine

Domination of the feminine becomes an essential condition of masculine dominance. This can be seen from the attitude of the Sangh Parivar towards the agents of the feminine. The RSS was made an entirely all male organization deliberately.When approached by Laxmibai Kelkar,K.B. Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS refused to admit women into the organization. Kelkar thought that women also need to undergo physical training to protect themselves from the physical assault of the male. Instead of admitting women into the Sangh he helped her set up a separate organization for the Hindu women

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[23] K. R. Malkani, *RSS, Story*, New Delhi:Impex India, 1980. p.199
[24] Ibid p.72

and Rashtra Sevika Samiti came into existence in 1936. "The two organizations", he said, "must run parallel but separate-like the railway track."[25] Malkani says that, had the two rails met, the national movement represented by the Sangh and the Samiti would have got derailed long ago. The sangha, he says, understood human nature too well to make any such mistake.

Thus the Sangh seeks to maintain a radical distinction between the sexes. One of the major objectives of the Sangh is the attainment of the identification of the nation with the Hindu society. But the Hindu society represented by the Sangh treats the women as separate and openly treats women as detractors in its endeavor of establishing the Hindu Rashtra.

Golwalkar's attitude to women as mentioned by Malkani is a clear manifestation of the natural supremacy of male. Once describing the importance of Sanskrit education, Golwalkar said, "In Bombay, High School students are asked to choose between science and Sanskrit. Naturally the best students opt for science and only some girl students are left to study Sanskrit. It is a very wrong kind of choice. One must study both science and Sanskrit. There seems to be no appreciation of the national integrating value of the Sanskrit language."[26]

Such an attitude clearly reflects that Golwalkar and the Sangh believes in the "Natural inferiority" of women. There is no recognition of the fact that the status of women and some other castes are low in Hindu society because of systematic exploitation by men and upper castes. These attitudes clearly reflect the masculine ideology that the Sangh subscribe to. Another instance will prove the point better. For Malkani an attempt to show that Indian women are systematically oppressed by Indian men, also the agents or carrier of masculine ideology is treated as a divisive agenda or an influence of a foreign ideology. Women in India experience multiple oppression because of their sex, caste and religion or class position. But Malkani says, "fact of the matter

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[25] Ibid. p.177
[26] K. R. Malkani, *RSS, Story*, New Delhi, Impex India 1980, p.68.

however is that Indian women are backward only because and to the extent that the whole country is backward. Otherwise, history is witness, that the position of women is better in India then anywhere else in the world."[27] He cleverly shifts the argument and tries to find legitimacy to women's oppression by making it a general condition. Malkani further says that 'the stable family becomes the basis of a stable society. The secure family and the caste have given Indian society a stability which is the wonder of the world. Iqbal wondered about that "some thing which makes that country immortal" (kuch baat hai ki hasti mitti nahin hamari). Apart from our size and our numbers this something was our family and our caste that saw us through some of the most tumultuous times in history."[28] Of significance is the point that in Malkani's word the caste and patriarchal family structure gets legitimacy. Malkani says that Hindu marriage is for life and because of this reason; she has no danger of being thrown out. This, he says, gives her security, poise and honour and he thinks it is the greatest right a woman can have. In an earlier instance Hedgewar quickly collected some money to get revolutionary leader Shyam Sunder Chakravarty's daughter married. He did not make an issue of dowry and this becomes a point of appreciation for the Swayamsevak. The family is projected only as a site of communitarianism bonded by love. The family as a site of oppression is erased.

In a communal discourse, communities are defined in and through the identity of women and women are in turn defined in and through the identity of the community.[29] Therefore the identity of women and the community are thought to mutually constitute. Therefore any attempt to change the identity and position of women is regarded as an attack on the community. An attack on the community is then interpreted as an attack on the masculinity of the community. Loss of manliness or the failure to demonstrate manliness is regarded as the ultimate humiliation for the community because of the superior position of masculinity in the gender and sexual hierarchy. Therefore the images of masculinity get reshaped according to the perceived or real threat posed to the

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[27]Ibid p.172.
[28] Ibid, P.175.
[29] Ratna Kapur, Brenda Crossman., "Communalizing gender/engendering community", *EPW*, April 24, 1993.

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community. Accordingly a legacy or heritage is rediscovered for present imagination to be realized in the future.

The *shuddhi* and *sangathan* movement which got intensified from 1923 was itself thought of as restoration of masculine power to the Hindu male.[30] This is because conversion from Hinduism was thought to be representative of loss of power, weakness and misery and *Shuddh*i represented a reversal of this loss. Lack of physical prowess was regarded as a loss and not as a fact. Regaining the physical prowess becomes an initial condition for the future security of the community. Therefore it becomes imperative to paint the picture of the present as weakened power. There is perpetual romanticisation of the past and victimization of the present. Romanticization brings in self-esteem to the victims; the victimization becomes an initial condition for future power.

Hindu publicists therefore portrayed the present images of Hindu as living caracasses and as cowardly weak and lazy and this was contrasted to a mythical past of Hindu masculinity especially those of brave and strong Rajputs and Marthas.[31] Therefore an effort was made to reshape Hindu masculinity by universalizing the *Kshatriya* dharma or the masculinity of the warrior type.

1.5 Loss of Masculinity

Golwalkar in 'Bunch of thought' says that a serious perversion has crept into the tradition of recollecting the ideals set up by the great ancestor. The Hindu people see in the extraordinary power of such great souls a sign of manifestation of divinity, a sign of the divine effulgence and this leads to the belief that great men are superior human beings far above and beyond the reach of the common man. This he says is a reflection of weakness. Thus Golwalkar emphasizes the need for historisation of the myths as a first condition of remasculinisation.[32]

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[30] Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women Muslims, and the Hindu Public in colonial India*, Permanent Black, 2001. pp.223-224.

[31] Ibid. p.222-267.

[32] Golwalkar, *Bunch of thoughts*, Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashna, 1980

V.D. Savarkar says that the Buddhist expansion and the glorification of the culture of non-violence was disastrous to national virility and even the national existence of the Hindu race. He says that a universal faith that instead of smoothening the ferociousness and brutal egoism of other nations only excited their lust by leaving India defenseless and unsuspecting. India recovered from the evil effects of Buddhist culture under the leadership of Vikramaditya and Lolitaditya or Chandragupta Maurya to some extent but it never fully recovered. But Gandhi with his principle of non-violence made things worse and Gandhi remained his chief target through out his political career until he was killed by a colleague of the Hindu Mahasabha which Savarkar served for long. The only safeguard Savarkar feels are valour and strength that can come from a national self-consciousness.[33]

It is because of these reasons that one of the stated aim of the all India Hindu Mahasabha was to improve the physique of the Hindus and promote the martial spirits amongst them by establishing military schools and organizing volunteer corps.

A similar concern is reflected in the organization of the RSS. The organizational structure of the RSS is hierarchical. At the top is the Sarsangh chalak (supreme director). He is assisted by an all India assembly. Then the country is divided into geographical units: Kshetras (zones), Prantas (states), Vivbhags (divisions), Zillas (district) Nagars (cities) and Mandals (blocks), having a clearly defined leadership at every level. At the bottom is the *sakha* which is the basic unit of organization.

The activities of the *sakha* are described by Golwalkar in the following words.

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[33] Savarkar outlined the objective of Hindu Nationalism in the following words in his presidential address to the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha (21st session Calcutta 1939) "as our movement goes on gathering strength we may soon arrive at a point when it may march on with the irresistible strides of a giant and may grow powerful enough to demand and dictate things with a reckless heroism, which the puny beginnings of today can hardly conceive or dare to express." In his *Hindu Sangathan, its ideology and immediate programme: A Collection of Three Presidential Addresses*, Bombay, Hindu Mahasabha presidential office, p.154

"There is an open playground. Under a saffron flag groups of youth and boys are absorbed in a variety of Bharatiya games. Resounding sounds of joyous enthusiasm fill the air. The sight of daring young men pressing forward with the cry 'Kabaddi Kabaddi' on their lips thrills the heart. The leader's whistle or order has a magical effect on them; there is instant perfect order or silence. Then exercises follow – wielding the lathi, suryanamaskar, marching etc. The spirit of collective effort and spontaneous discipline pervades every programme. Then they sit down and sing in chorus songs charged with patriotism. Discussions follow. They delve deep into problems affecting the national life. And finally they stand in rows before the flag and recite the prayer..... (Many salutations to thee, O loving Motherland!) whose echoes fill the air and stir the soul. 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' uttered in utmost earnest furnishes the finishing and inspiring touch to the entire programme."[34]

The objective of the Shakha is to catch young boys and train them physically and mentally for the practice of the Hindutva ideology.

The Sangh believes that in celibacy lies the moral authority. The Pracharaks of the RSS are celibate living an austere life. The RSS network depends mainly on the devotion of the Pracharak and their main mission consists in establishing shakha and supervising their functioning all over their zone, a town, a tehsil, a district, a division, a state.

1.6 Constituting the other

The power that comes from the control over sexuality can be found in tradition of *brahmacharya* and in the world of renouncement. But in the Hindutva discourse, control over sexuality becomes an important constituent of Hindu masculinity primarily to contrast the constructed other. Lucherious behaviour, a high sexual appetite, a life of luxury and religious fanaticism were inscribed as the dominant traits of Muslim character and medieval Muslim rule is portrayed as a chronicle of the rape and abduction of Hindu

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[34] Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thought*. Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashna, 1980 pp.511-512.

women.[35] And these traits came to form the essence of Muslim masculinity in the Hindutva discourse and it no longer remained limited to Muslim rule.

During the colonial period the stories of rape and abduction of Hindu women by Muslim men became widespread in the media. Many of them were exaggeration. But it helped consolidating the patriarchal hold over women by controlling their mobility as many public places were declared unsafe for women. Because women become the mother of the community, it also helped homogenizing the Hindus. Men assume the duty of protecting its women by the masculine logic.

1.7 Building a muscular image

Power also operates through images. To entrust masculinity with power powerful masculine images either had to be rediscovered or recreated. A heroic figure of ancient India was needed to demonstrate Hindu muscularity. Chandra Gupta Maurya and not Ashoka became the favourite hero of the nationalist historian. This was because Chandra Gupta Maurya was a king of the pre-Muslim period who came to power immediately after Alexandar's invasion. Further he founded the first empire in India, battled the Greek General Seleucus defeated and imposed an unequal treaty on him and thereafter ruled with an iron hand. The celebration of warrior hero Chandragupta was accompanied by a critique of Ashoka for his rejection of wars as a valid means of expanding the frontiers of kingdom and his pacification was regarded as having emasculated the nation.[36] It was a celibate hero Chanakya who rescued the emasculated nation and anointed Chandra Gupta Maurya at the throne.

Two other historical figures whose images were often evoked to construct Hindu masculinity were Shivaji and Rana Pratap Singh. Their struggles are presented as national struggle against Muslim invaders. Bal Gangadhar Tilak started Shivaji festival to mobilize the Hindu masses. Today one of the major Hindutva forces in Maharashtra is

[35] Charu, Gupta; *"Sexuality, Obscenity, Community."* *Women Muslims, and the Hindu Public in colonial India,*New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001 p. 222-320

[36] Uma Chakravarty, "Inventing Saffron History: A Celibate Hero Rescues an Emasculated Nation.", In Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia Eds,*Women and the Hindu Right*, New Delhi: Kali for women, 1995.

the Shiv Sena and its members regard themselves as Shiv Sainik or soldier of Shivaji as they regard their chief Balasaheb Thakre as reincarnation of Shivaji.

Another image that has worked wonder for the Hindutva forces is the image of Ram. The Ramjanambhoomi movement from 1986-92 could mobilize the largest number of people in Independent India. But as Anuradha Kapur says there was a marked iconographic change in the popular imagery of Ram from a soft, smooth bodied, almost pudgy, smiling, benign and above all gentle and tranquil to the more recent muscular version whose *rasa* or mood is predominantly *ugra* "angry exercised,....punishing, emphasizing his bow and arrows in their capacity as weapons rather than as mere iconographic markers".[37]

Thus the images in the Hindu-nationalist discourse have been very muscular. Thus the ideal man in the Hindutva discourse is a Hindu nationalist who is virile, fearless, and physically strong and a celibate.

1.8 Conclusion

Thus it is evident that it is the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh which is the sole of the Hindutva forces in India. Apart from providing the affiliated organizations an ideology, it also ensures electoral success to the sympathetic political parties through its vast organizing networks. Despite having a clearly political goal and no bar on swayamsevaks on joining a political party, as an organisation it has focused on hegemonising the cultural space of the country or what it calls raising the consciousness of the people. It has successfully injected its values and influenced the popular and the political culture. The culture that it seeks to imbibe in the people of India was conceived by the organization in its encounter with colonialism and when the coercive mechanism of the state was strong and there was a deep sense of loss of power among the dominant section of the Indian society. A dual process of imitation of the (colonial) imperial culture and a simultaneous reconstruction of the Hindu culture defined its strategy for replacing

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[37] Anuradha Kapur, "Deity to crusader: The changing Iconography of Ram in Gyanendra Pandey Ed. *Hindus and others: The question of identity in India Today,* 1993, New Delhi: OUP. P-75

the colonial masters. Domination over the cultural space was seen as a legitimate means for domination over the political and the social. Authenticity of the culture was sought in its history. Thus history became a resource for reinterpretation to justify its ideology. The history that it emphasized was the ancient or the pre-Muslim history. Thus there was continuous romantisization of the past and victimization of the present. The degeneration occurred because of the degradation of the varnashramadharma (which gave it order but ultimately degenerated to the caste system) and a loss of manliness. Therefore the non-violent traditions of Buddha and *sufi-bhakti* tradition which was later followed by Ambedkar and Gandhi came much under attack. The victimization of the present needed an outside agency. The Britishers became only the later version of that outside agency, the Muslims became the first and primary. The hope of recovery and hegemony over the cultural and political space was based on a perceived numerical majority. Though less Hindus than more identify themselves with the Hindutva project, it still hopes to raise the consciousness of the people. We have also seen that the project of establishing the Hindu Rashtra is also a project of masculinizing the cultural space. Why does it associate itself with masculinity? This they do because there exists a general condition of masculine hegemony. It seeks to capture the masculine hegemony in its own terms.

CHAPTER II

MASCULINITY AND FEMALE PARTICIPATOIN IN THE HINDUTVA MOVEMENT

CHAPTER 2

Masculinity and Female Participation in the Hindutva Movement

In the previous chapter, we have tried to explore the communal and the masculine aspects of the Hindutva ideology and the movement. We have stated that the chief bearer of the Hindutva ideology today, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is an all men organization and Hedgewar refused to admit women to the organization. Rather he helped in the formation of a separate woman's origination which came up after 11 years of its formation, that is in 1936 in the form of Rashtra Sevika Samiti with the stated aim of establishing a Hindu Rashtra was described by K.R. Malkani, a Swayamsevak as like the Railway track, parallels but separate which never meets. It is very significant that the RSS which was established as a 'character building' organization of the nation has to exclude women from its own fold. But unlike other communal organizations the visibility of women is much more in the Hindutva movement. Though their presence is not overwhelming or equal as compared to male in every organization affiliated to the Sangh, some women never the less occupy important position and in its most successful Ramjanambhomi movement, presence of women like Uma Bharati, Sadhvi Rithambra or Vijayaraje Scindia were significant.

Keeping these things in mind, we would like to discuss the front organisation of the Women's wing of the Sangh parivar. We will limit our studies mainly to Rashtra Sevika Samiti(women's wing of RSS) and Durga Vahini and Matri Shakti(affiliated to VHP).Second, we would like to explore, how can we look at the participation of women in the Hindutva movement in the context of feminist arguments in India?Is visibility of women a sufficient condition for demasculinising the Hindutva agenda?

One of the main arguments of the feminists have been that the subjects of history has always been man and the work of women has been rendered invisible by confining them to the invisible sphere —the domestic. Feminists intervention have made the

domestic sphere visible to some extent in recent time and the personal has also become political. But public sphere continue to get more importance as it is seen as the productive sphere and access to the public sphere or the productive sphere is seen as a primary condition for eliminating the subordinate position of women in a society. But not all feminist regard the mere visibility of women in the productive sphere as a subversion of patriarchy. The advertisement agencies in the free market phase deliberately project women as mere sexual objects, as an object of man's lust.[1] So also in the Hindutva movement, we can not take the visibility of women as an indicator of women's empowerment uncritically. Rather we would argue that women by participating in the Hindutva movement are consenting to the Hindutva project of constructing masculine Hindu subject.

Nationalist projects are also gendered because as Sikata Banerjee says it 'draws on socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity to shape female and male participation in nation building, as well as the manner in which the nation is embodied in the imagination of self –professed nationalists.'[2] Thus in a nationalist project women generally play three important roles-

First, they act as social reproducer of cultural forms. One of the characteristics of a good mother is seen as the ability to acquaint her children with the myths and stories of the nationalist project or what Hobsbawm would call the 'invented tradition.'[3] One of the main reason for the focus on women's education in the socio- religious movement of the 19th century in India was that without education women would not be 'good mothers' or good wives. Thus women are bestowed the responsibility of making children loyal to an 'imagined community'.[4]

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[1] Jasodhara Bagchi in 'Women's Empowerment: Paradigms and Paradoxes' argues that the present development paradigm based on economic liberalization and the model by which empowered women or shakti becomes an identity marker of the dominant religious community in India result only in 'empowered' powerlessness. In Kumkum Roy eds. 'Women in Early Indian Societies',New Delhi: Manohar, 1999. Pp368-379

[2] Sikata Banerjee, 'Gender and Nationalism: The Masculinization of Hinduism and female political participation in India', Women's Studies International Forum, vol. 26, No. 2, March-April, 2003.P167

[3] Eric Hobsbawm, and Terance Ranger eds. The Invention of Traditions, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1983)

[4] Benedict, Anderson, Imagined communities. London: verso. 1983

Secondly women become the bearer of collective honour. In the Hindutva discourse even an idol of 'Bharat mata' or Mother India is created. The warrior of the nation are called upon to protect her honour.

Thirdly, women as bearer of future citizen. The Hindutva discourse is based on numerical majority. Its claim to democracy and arguments for secularism is based on this idea. Therefore women would have to play a very important role in this regard. It compares its rate of growth in population with that of the Muslims. In colonial period the census of 1901 and 1911 were extremely important in fuelling a militant Hindu nationalist idiom of Hinduism under demographic threat from Christianity and Islam. In recent times, K.S. Sudarshan, the present Sarsangchalak asks Hindu women not to follow the official policy of 'Hum do, hamare do' (we are two we have two) and bear more children so that it can effectively counter the Muslim policy of 'Hum Panch, Hamare Pachis' (we are five, we have Twenty five) As Charu Gupta motes, the stories of abduction and rumours therefore occupied a significant place in the colonial period.[5] Even today these rumours keep the potential of intensifying communal tensions. Thus glorification of motherhood becomes important in this nationalist project.

It is because of these reasons that the women's body becomes the site of violence and torture in the communal riots. As Muslims become the primary other in the Hindutva discourse, their women and children has to bear the burden of some innovative violent technique. During the Gujarat riot 2002, a leaflet of VHP, singed by state General Secretary Chinubhai Patel promises "we will cut them and their blood will flow like rivers. We will kill Muslims the way we destroyed Babri mosque."[6]

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[5] Charu, Gupta, "Sexuality, Obscenity, Community : Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India", New Delhi, Permanent Black. 2001 Chapter 6 Pp222-267

[6] Quoted in Tanika Sarkar, 'Semiotics of Terror; Muslim children and women in Hindu Rastra' EPW, July 13, 2002. p2874

This was followed by a poem:-

"The volcano which was inactive.... Has finally erupted.

It has burnt the arse of miyas and made them dance nude

We have united the penises that were tied till now

We have widened the tight vaginas of the bibis...."[7]

Thus she rightly notes that during this riot, women's body first became the site of almost inexhaustible violence, with infinitely plural and innovative forms of torture. Then their sexual and reproductive organs were attacked with a special savagery. Thirdly, their children, born and unborn, shared the attacks and were killed before their eyes.[8] Women thus as embodiment of collective honour and bearer of progeny has to bear the burnt of a masculinist nationalist construction defined on a strict 'we' and 'they' binary opposition.

But these roles of women as bearer of future progeny, as a good mother inculcating in their children nationalist values and as embodiment of collective honour are generally defined as passive or feminine role. But women in the Hindutva discourse play another role, a mixture of feminine and masculine role of the warrior type. Given the sex-gender distinction in the feminist discourse, it is quite possible and true that sex need not determine the gender role.[9] Rather it is the process of socialization which affects the gender role to a large extent.In the Hindutva discourse women are entrusted to play a dual role both feminine and masculine. Does this then has the capacity of transcending the division of labour based on gender which has been a major determinant of female subordination? Is this in the interest of women to participate actively in the Hindutva movement?

We will explore these questions by discussing the Rashtra Sevika Samiti and some other affiliated women's organization of the Sangh Parivar.

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[7] Ibid. P2874
[8] Ibid.
[9] Alison, Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* ,Roman & Littlefield Publisher 1988.

2.1 Femininity, Masculinity and Rashtra Sevika Samiti

As already mentioned Rashtra Sevika Samiti came into existence in 1936 after Hedgewar denied women's entry into the Sangh. In the context of this exclusion we can understand the emergence of the Samati.

There are three versions regarding the emergence of the Samiti.[10] First, some Samiti literature attribute it to Laxmibai Kelkar's propensity towards nationalism. Her participation in the Gandhian programme of picketing and spinning, impressed upon her the imperatives of an independent woman's organization for awakening women's consciousness to the cause of the nation.

Second, other sources illustrate that Kelkar felt the urgent need of organizing Hindu women as she witnessed the defenselessness and helplessness of women in the face of male sexual advances. But the Samiti literature does not specify that the male sexual advance can only be initiated by Muslims aggressors.

The third version lists the influence of Tilak and Vivekananda on her, especially the latter's conception of an 'Ideal Hindu Women' and traces the origin of the Samiti to the need to defend and resurrect cherished Hindu values being frittered away by women seeking to compete with men. Therefore the Samiti was established to wean the Hindu women away from the influence of western women's movement to their traditional task of imparting *samskaras* to children in order to mould them to patriots and men of character.

It is, however evident that Kelkar was deeply attracted to the art of self-defence which her son learnt at the Sakha of the Sangh. Those were also times when stories of abduction of women were widely circulated. So Kelkar definitely felt the need of learning the art of self defence which were taught at the Sangh. The recent publications of the

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[10] Manisha Sethi, 'Avenging Angels and Nurturing Mothers :Women in Hindu Nationalism',*EPW,* April 20, 2002, pp.1545-1552.

Samiti says that its basic principle is Hindutva. "The Samiti firmly believes that every person born Hindu must practice this principle (Hindutva). In the absence of it there is every possibility of Hindu loosing his identity and loosing identity is a crisis in a nation's life. Samiti is committed not to allow it."[11]

It defines the Hindu as one who honours the tradition having its origin in the Vedas, the tradition which was led further by Shri Ram and Sri Krishna and glorified by Chatrapati Shivaji and Rana Pratap and other great sons of this land. " A Hindu identifies himself with the glory, the insult and the calamities of Bharat and responds to it in a very spontaneous way disregarding his personal interest. Awakening these sentiments and organizing the Hindus on a cultural basis is the life mission of Samiti."[12]

This definition itself points out that the Samiti accepts the patriarchal history and points out that it is 'the great sons' of this land who have so far put forward the Hindu tradition. And therefore it is the great sons again who would have to further this tradition. But at present they seem to be lacking the awakening and it is the job of the Samiti to awaken them. Hindu women by their specific and special role in the family either as a daughter, sister, wife or mother possess the capability to influence the great sons of the land. So the primary role as envisaged by the Samiti for its members is located in the domestic sphere. But for this also women needs to be trained because women retain the capacity to mould the family in either way. Its cherished ideal is 'enlightened motherhood' and motherhood symbolises love, sacrifice, devotion, dedication fearlessness and sanctity. Thus the femininity of its members are declared sacred as most of its justifications are based on religious symbols.

But it also says that the tender hearted women becomes bold and aggressive when time demands. Many right wing woman's organization came up only during the Ramjanambhomi movement and they became active and aggressive. As Manisha Sethi points out the development and honing of the women 's ability for leadership and arousal

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[11] http://hindubooks.org/rssw/ch3.htm
[12] Ibid.

of the sense of duty and motherliness-'Kartatva' and 'Netratva' to enable her to dedicate herself to the service of the motherland is another aim of the Samiti."[13]

Thus for the Samiti maintenance and cultivation of mere motherly virtues are not enough. Because of this reason there arises some differences regarding the masculine and feminine identity, in the Samiti and the Sangh literature. The RSS and the Samiti often assigns different meaning to the same event. For example, in the Sangh discourse the *Vijyadashmi* day marks the victory of the God Ram over evil (Ravana); For the Samiti it is the victory of Goddess Durga over evil. While in the first case the elimination of evil is due to masculine agency (Rama) but for the Samiti it is a female agency (Durga). In both the cases evil is personified in the masculine.[14] She has brought out some other important differences between the Sangh and the Samiti literature.[15]

First, while for the Sangh each phase of the decline of the Hindu nation is countered by examples of 'national heroes' (who are overwhelmingly male) the Samiti has its own nationalist heroines, Vadhrimati (of the Rig veda), Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi (who fought the British in the war of 1857) and Bengali nationalist Kalpana Dutt, Viva Das and Pritilata.

Second the Samiti's discourse on inter-marriage rests on a pre-supposed division between Aryan and others. This notion has its origin in the Aryan thesis of the 19th century orientalism which the Sangh has always expressly refuted.

Third, for the Sangh the nation is represented by the feminine Bharatmata because it is something which needs to be protected by its patriotic sons. But for the Samiti Bharatmata represents both the land and the characteristics that Hindu women are supposed to emulate. Her motherliness is powerful for it nurtures the entire society and that power is capable of destroying evil practices as well as tendencies. But it is also

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[13] Manisha Sethi 'Avenging Angels and Nurturing Mothers: Women in Hindu Nationalism' . *EPW*, April, 2002, pp. 1545-1552.

[14] Paola Bacchetta, *Gender in the Hindu Nation : RSS women as Ideologue* New Delhi, women Unlimited. 2004, Chapter 1 pp.2-59.

[15] Ibid.pp.2-59

potentially dangerous and women must have the discrimination to use it in a way benevolent to our nation.

Laxmibai Kelkar had configured a model goddess named Ashthabhuja (literally the eight armed one) for the members of the Samiti to follow.She is regarded as an integral combination of Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. In her iconographic representation she hold a saffron flag (Bhagawa Dhwaj), the Sangh appropriated symbol of its Hindu Nation, a lotus (the electoral insignia of the BJP), the Bhagavad Gita, a bell, fire, a sword, a rosary; the eighth hand is empty but posed in a gesture of blessing. Six of her hands carry arms including a prominent trident. In the Samiti prayer, she is referred to as eight handed goddess who rides a tiger.[16] Thus as Kelkar envisaged, women as Samiti members who take inspiration from the Ashthabhuja are supposed to play not only the traditional feminine role which confine women to the domestic sphere. But rather the traditional (based on religion) role is modified with the iconographic image of the Ashthabhuja.

The samiti is organized in the same pattern as that of the Sangh. The samiti members are also given physical, martial arts and boudhik (ideological discussion) training at the Sakhas. The Samiti provides lessons in yoga, sword and lathi play, judo and stengun fight. Like the Sangh it does not have internal elections and the pramukh Sanchalika nominates her successor.[17]

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[16]Paola, Bacchetta "All our Gods are armed" in her *Gender in the Hindu Nation : RSS Women as Ideologues* New Delhi: Women Unlimited 2004 and Sucheta Mazumdar "Women on the March : Right–wing Mobilization in Contemporary India", *Feminist Review*(49) Spring 1995 pp.1-28.

[17] Tanika Sarkar, 'The woman as Communal Subject : Rashtra Sevika Samiti and Ram Janambhoomi Movement', *EPW*, August 31, 1991. pp.2057-2062

2.2 Some other women's organizations following the ideology of Hindutva:

Matrishakti (literally the power of the Motherhood) and Durga Vahini are two other women's organization affiliated to VHP formed during the Ramjanambhoomi movement. Matrishakti defines itself in active and explicit opposition to those women's organization which according to it offer women only an illusion of rights and equality with men but undermine their glorious status and divine duties as mothers. Like the Samiti, it also calls upon the women to expand her own self beyond the family to the nation. And it is engaged in many welfare activities like running schools, arranging tuition in slums, constructing hostels, libraries, setting up blood donations, medical camps in tribal areas etc. It also recognizes the urgency for economic independence especially for destitute women and organizes income generating programmes. But as Manisha Sethi points out all their activities are organized either to counter missionary activities of the church or to ward off the overtures of Muslim men[18].

Durga Vahini recruits mainly lower caste Hindu women (with upper caste women as leaders) to pursue agitational programmes on issues such as dowry, pornography, cultural corruption from the west and so on. It is alleged that Durga vahini was at the centre forefront of the attack on M.F.Hussains paintings of nude Saraswati and the film 'fire' depicting lesbian relations in a joint household. But in migrant slums of metropolis and in tribal areas these *durgas* reach out in the spirit of 'civilizing mission'.[19]

Shiv Sena's (a militant Hindu nationalist political party powerful in Maharashtra) women's wing Mahila Agadhi has a wide network. They also work and live among the slum dwellers but also become active aggressively in communal riots. As Sikata Banerjee notes, the violence which engulfed Mumbai in 1993 was marked by a surprisingly large

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[18] Manisha Sethi 'Avenging Angels and Nurturing Mothers : Women in Hindu Nationalism', *EPW*, April 20, 2002. pp1545-1552

[19] Ibid,pp.1545-1552.

number of women.[20] The Shiv Sena mobilized women to block the arrest of several of its leaders to prevent fire engines from going to Muslim areas engulfed in flames and even loot stores and attack Muslim women. And a male Shiv Sena leader commented,

'At Radhabhai chawl [tenement], they (Muslims) bolted the door from the outside and set it on fire and all our (Hindu) children, families, they were roasted...... when it hit the head lines the next day, even my wife told me, "I should offer you bangles now. What are we? In our own country Hindus are being burnt," and everybody got down into the street and the situation went out of control. Thousand of women also came down. They were so hostile. So hostile.'[21]

The participation of women in significant numbers in post independence India started from 1985-86 during the Mandal agitation. As Bacchetta notes, "The most significant change in 1985-86 was that, for the first time, Hindu nationalist women of all classes, including middle class member of the Samiti and the related Mahila Sabha, actively participated in the violence in significant numbers in a meticulously organized way."[22]Some women occupied leadership position during the period 1989-1993 in the wake of the demolition of Babri Masjid. The speeches of Uma Bharti and Sadhvi Rithambra were wildly circulated in Ayodha and they were available at a very cheap price. The government later banned the circulation.

2.3 Two speeches

We will discuss two speeches, one by Uma Bharti and the other by Sadhvi Rithambra to highlight the violent nature of their speeches. Madhu Kishwar notes that, "the shrill blood thirsty tone of the hysterical voice pouring out hatred is strikingly similar to those we can still hear in the recording of Nazi leaders at mass propaganda

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[20] Sikata, Banerjee, 'The Feminization of violence in Bombay', *Asian Survey*, vol. XXXVI, No. 12, December 1996. pp.1213-1225

[21] Ibid,pp.1213-1225.

[22] Paola, Bacchetta "All our Gods are armed" in her *Gender in the Hindu Nation : RSS Women as Ideologues* New Delhi : Women Unlimited 2004. pp. 62-91

rallies."[23] A condensed and translated version of speech delivered by Uma Bharti went as follows:

".............Throw off the cloak of cowardice and impotence. Learn to sing songs of valour and courage. Whoever wanted to rob, you let him in. Your silence, decency and magnanimity were interpreted as cowardice.........

Your strength has been divided. Unite across caste, province, language, breaking these three artificial walls...........

Destroy the tyrant in the same way that Ravana was vanquished. Do not display any love (*nij preet*). This is the order of Ram. Announce it boldly to the world that anyone who opposes Ram can not be an Indian..........

We could not teach them with words, now let us teach them with kicks. Let there be bloodshed once and for all.....

We have come to strengthen the immense Hindu shakti into a fist....

You kept saying you will offer sacrifices. We will not shed our own blood but the blood of other too...... that Mahatma Gandhi led you to ruin.....

Tie up your religiosity and kindness into a bundle and throw it in the Jamuna Maiya.....

......Those Muslims who stayed behind could do so because of the tolerance and large heartedness of the Hindus. Any non Hindus who live here does so at our mercy. Declare without hesitation that this is a Hindu Rashtra, a nation of Hindus. In future we have to prove that only those who honour Hindu womenfolk and holy men, believe in Hindu culture, Hindu history and gods and goddesses can stay in Hindustan.

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[23]Madhu Kishwar, 'In Defence of our Dharma', *Manushi*, No. 60, 1990. p. 4

Hindustan is foolish, it refuses to give up its foolish course, it gets beaten and forgives its opponent, why? Because this is the land of Buddha and the Mahatma, Guru Nanak Dev and other saints who sacrificed their lives, offered their necks, but could not break the neck of others........"[24]

At the time of the delivery of the speech Uma Bharti was a member of Parliament of BJP and she later became the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. The speech is an open invitation to kill its Muslim other. Those who refuse to come forward and do not listen to her call will be regarded as cowards. Therefore it was a call to prove the manliness of the Hindus not by sacrificing alone but by shedding the blood of others.

She expressed her fear that the non-violent tradition of India might hinder the people from expressing aggressive masculinity. Therefore she attacks Buddha, Gandhi and Nanak for their 'inability to break the neck of others....'and in a way question their manliness.

The next selected part of the speech is by Sadhvi Rithambra which was given at Hyderabad in April 1991, a few weeks after the general elections for the national parliament and many state assemblies were announced.

"In Kashmir, the Hindu was a minority and was hounded out of the valley. Slogans of 'Long live Pakistan' were carved with red hot iron rods on the thighs of our Hindu daughters. Try to feel the unhappiness and the pain of the Hindu who became a refugee in his own country. The Hindu was dishonored in Kashmir because he was in a minority. But there is a conspiracy to make him a minority in the whole country. The state tells us Hindus to have only two or three children. After a while they will say, do not have even one. But what about those who have six wives, have thirty or thirty-five children and breed like mosquitoes and flies?

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[24] Ibid. p.4 – 6 (this is a shorter version of the quotation)

Why should there be two sets of laws in this country? Why should we be treated like stepchildren? I submit to you that when the Hindu of Kashmir became a minority he came to Jammu. From Jammu he came to Delhi. But if you Hindus are on the run all over India, where will you go? Drown in the Indian Ocean or jump from the Rocks of the Himalayas?

What is this impartiality towards all religions where the mullahs get the money bags and Hindus the bullets? People say there should be Hindu Muslim unity. Leave the structure of the Babri mosque undisturbed. I say, 'then let's have this unity in case of the Jama Masjid too. Break half of it and construct a temple. Hindus and Muslims will then come together.'

You know the doctors who carry out their medical experiments by cutting open frogs, rabbits, cats? All these experiments in Hindu-Muslim are being carried out on the Hindu chest as if he is a frog, rabbit or cat. No one has ever heard of a lion's chest being cut open for a medical experiment. They teach the lesson of religious unity and amity only to the Hindus.

They said, "Let's post pone the mid-term elections till the Hindus anger cools down". I say, "Is the Hindu a bottle of mineral water? Keep the bottle open for a while and the water will stop bubbling?" It is nine hundred thousand years since Ravana kidnapped Sita and challenged God Rama. But to this day we have not forgotten. Every year we burn his effigy and yet the fire of our revenge burns bright. We will not forget mullah Mulayam and his supporter Rajiv Gandhi. I have come to tell the young men and mother of Bhagyanagar, listen to the wailing of the Saryu river, listen to the story told by Ayodhya, listen to the sacrifice of the kar sevaks. If you are a Hindu, do not turn your face away from the Rama temple, do not spare the traitors of Rama.

After the incident on the ninth of November, many Hindu young men came to me. 'Sister', they said, 'give us weapon to deal with mullah Mulayam.' I said, 'why waste a bullet to deal with a eunuch?' Rama had become tired shooting his arrows. Ravana's one

head would fall to be immediately replaced by another. Vibhishana (Ravan's brother) said, 'Lord you will not kill this sinner by cutting off his heads. His life is in his navel'. My brother Hindus, these leaders have their lives in their chairs (of power). Take away their power and they will die – by themselves. They are only impotent eunuchs. When Rama was banished from Ayodhya many citizen accompanied him to the forest and stayed there overnight. In the morning Rama said, "men and women of Ayodhya go back to your homes." The men and women went back but a group of hermaphrodites, who were neither men nor women stayed back and asked, 'Lord you have not given us any instructions.' Rama is kind. He said, "In the future Kaliyuga you will rule for a little while." These neither men nor women are your rulers today.

Make the next government one of Rama's devotes. Hindus, you must unite in the coming elections if you want the temple built. Hindus, if you do not awaken, cows will be slaughtered every where. In the retreats of our sages you will hear the chants of 'Allah is great'. You will be responsible for these catastrophes for history will say Hindus were cowards. Accept the challenge, change the history of our era. Many say Rithambra you are a sanyasin. You should meditate in some retreat. I tell them raising Hindu consciousness is my meditation now and it will go on till the saffron flag flies from the ramparts of the Red Fort".[25]

Rithambra's prefix 'Sadhvi' means a female renouncer of worldly life which conjures up the image of selflessness and Sadhvi is by definition a celibate. Like Uma Bharti, Rithambra also appeals to the manliness of people for the establishment and protection of the Ram temple. Being manly is being 'conscious' and awakening the consciousness or raising the manliness had become her life mission. But unlike Uma Bharti who called for a bloodshed once and for all', Rithambra appeals to the people to bring in power the political parties affiliated to the Sangh Parivar. Though ostensibly she asks the people to follow the democratic route bearing on the numerical majority of the Hindus, she does not ask the people to abandon their violent fantasies. She refers to

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[25] Taken from Sudhir, Kakar's 'A New Hindu Identity' in his *The colour of violence* Viking Penguin Books India (P) Ltd. 1995, pp.199-213. (This is a shorter version of the speech)

secularists as eunuch, impotent and therefore unmanly. They get importance in the Kaliyuga. This age in Hinduism is the worst or degenerated age, which should be ended through violence. Thus she gives violence a divine legitimacy. She constantly asks people not to forget the death of the kar sevaks during the movement. She asks them to maintain restraint only till they get the Hindutva forces elected. She tells the people that Hindus have become the victims of experiments by the secularists. This was facilitated by their weakness. They have been treated like frogs, rabbits and cats. Lessons of religions unity and amity, she says, are taught only to the weak. She therefore asks the Hindus to be like 'Lion' so that they are not picked up for experiments and lessons of religious unity and amity are not taught to them any longer.

Thus, in both Bharti and Rithambra's speeches gender is politically salient. While their own 'celibacy' status gives them a platform to address both man and woman, both of them use violence as a legitimate means for asserting religious right and performing national duty. Rithambra also asks women to bear more children so that the Hindu race might avoid an imagined future extinction. Reproduction is thus no more a women's right but a national duty. Women thus participate in violence against others for variety of reasons.

First, because they do not look at themselves only as women, but also members of other communities. Women associated with the Hindutva movement first identify themselves as a Hindu and are prepared to sacrifice their 'narrow' interest (which feminism promotes) for the establishment of the Hindu Rashtra. BJP MP Sumitra Mahajan in 1995 laminated that 'saman adhikar ke liye Mahila lalayait hai' (women are lusting after equal rights).[26]Second, there is relaxation of restrictions on women from their parents or guardians when they are engaged in violence against the perceived other of the community. As D. Parbhasarthy has pointed out during the nationwide anti reservation violence against the Mandal Commission report (which is a landmark event so far as women's participation in violent activities are concerned where their favourite

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[26] Tanika Sarkar, 'Pragmatics of the Hindu Right – Politics of Women's Organisation' . *EPW*, July 31, 1999 pp.2159-.2167.

slogan said that they did not wanted to marry unemployed man) many middle class young people especially women participated, their parents did not object to their ward coming late at night.[27] Third, women get a feeling of empowerment by participating in communal politics Fourth, participation in communal violence can enable some women to gain political prominence and break the masculine barrier. Sadhvi Rithambra, Vijayraje Scindia or Uma Bharti came to political prominence after their fiery speeches during the Ramjanambhoomi movement.

But these women's organizations have not mobilized women at a large scale. In fact the membership of the Rashtra Sevika Samiti has remained constant. Tanika Sarkar says that Samiti's membership has remained constant at two lakhs.[28] In constructing the 'Ideal Hindu Woman' in contrast to the 'feminist' towards maintaining conservative values like arranged matches, good home keeping, modesty in dress and behaviour, and diligent service to men and elders. Kamlabehn, a committed pracharika of the Samiti says that they advise the women to adjust herself to her husband and in laws when disputes arise in the family. (Hum Ghar Torne wali nahi hai). [29] They are taught not to succumb to the 'western' notion of equal 'gender right' but encouraged to look good in the modern way by cultivating the right figure and by spending money and time in beautifying herself. Social issues of discrimination against women and lower Castes are regarded as divisive and highlighting them in the public amounts to degradation of the nation. Therefore maintaining silence on these issues certify them as 'nationalist'. The Samiti prayer, which the members are supposed to recite reads.[30]

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[27] D. Parthasarathy, 'Women, Communal Violence and Rights Rhetoric' *Manushi*, No. 129,2002, pp. 38-42
[28] Tanika Sarkar, 'Pragmatics of the Hindu Right; Politics of Women's Organizations', *EPW*, July31,1999. pp. 2159-2167.
[29]. Paola, Bacchetta "All our Gods are armed" in her *Gender in the Hindu Nation : RSS Women as Ideologues,* New Delhi : Women Unlimited 2004. pp. 62-91

[30] Quoted in Tanika, Sarkar 'Pragmatics of the Hindu Right' . Politics of Womens Organizations, *EPW,* July31,1999. pp. 2159-2167.

Benevolent auspicious Hindu Land

I delicate my love to you..........

Your ideas about holy chastity

Embrace your beloved daughters ......

Bless your meek, pious, devout women

Dedicated to their religion and Tradition

We are the blessed mothers of this powerful nation ....

Thus women in these organizations are taught to be good biological and cultural reproducer of the imagined Hindu nation. But they are also trained physically to defend themselves in the face of male aggression. But in the Hindutva discourse, women are projected as being in perennial threat only from Muslim men. They are trained to defend themselves like warrior because they are the embodiment of Hindu collective honour. They are specially trained to endorse male form of violence. While Uma Bharti, Vijayraje Scindia or Sadhvi Rithambra's speeches during the Ramjanambhoomi movement were open call for bloodshed, Krishna Sharma, the leader of the Delhi Vishwa Hindu Parishad Mahila Mandal has justified the tearing open of wombs of pregnant Muslim women by Hindu rioters and the gang rape of Muslim women that are said to have been videotaped.[31]

It has widely been accepted that the patriarchal system could never have been sustained for so long without generating consent from the oppressed or in Gramsci's words without being hegemonic system. Thus it means that women always possessed the power to resist it and it is possible to do away with the patriarchal system. But the Hindutva movement denies the possibility of resistance from women to the masculine bias in the social order. As Sangari points out women's agency or the meaningfully acting women subject remains problematic in both theory and practice because women are simultaneously class differentiated and subject to the frequent cross class expansion of patriarchal ideologies, their agency is not open to historically self-evident modes of

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[31] See, Tanika Sarkar, 'Women Community and Nation ' in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia eds. *Women and the Hindu Right: A collection of essays*,New Delhi: Kali for women, 1995.

collectivization.[32] As we have seen from the examination of Hindu Right wing women's organization, women's situation in a particular religion is also a major impediment in the exercise of a feminist agency. As Sangari points out feminist agency consists of the organized initiatives of women and men committed to gender justice within an egalitarian framework and this definitionally excludes women committed to a right wing politics with its accompanying set of permissions to other women and men from different religions.[33] Women gives their consent to certain patriarchal system because as Wendy Holloway says they have an investment in doing so, or as Perrot et al argue they are able to extract compensation from the system in doing so.[34] And it is seen that some section of women have been benefited by being engaged in the women's organization of the Hindu Right.

Thus the Hindu Right on the one hand tries to maintain the traditional role of the good Indian woman and on the other provides limited access to public sphere which is already masculinised. The Hindu Right has ensured that women no longer remain passive spectators or recipient of masculine domination but by engaging them in violent speech and action against other religious communities it has made them active participant in promoting it. Though these women try to appropriate the feminist language by chanting slogans like "Hum Bharat ke Nari Hai, Phul Nahi Chingari Hai" on some occasion, they never organize themselves around issues like domestic violence that women has to encounter on a daily basis. Rather they are happy with making women's body embodiment of collective honour in the name of achieving unity or rather crudely to spread hatred and thus endorsing the Hindutva project. So mere visibility of women in the public sphere would not ensure the end of masculine domination in our society.There fore in the third chapter we would try to explore the notion of masculinity and femininity in Gandhi's thought and practices in search of an alternative.

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[32] Kumkum Sangari 'Consent, Agency and Rhetoric of Incitement' *EPW*, May 1st, 1993, pp.867-881.
[33] Ibid.pp.867-881
[34] Manisha Sethi, , "Avenging Angels and Nurturing Mothers : Women in Hindu Nationalism", *EPW*, April 20, 2002, pp.1545-1552.

CHAPTER III

GANDHI AS AN ALTERNATIVE?

CHAPTER 3

Gandhi as an Alternative?

In the previous two chapters we have tried to show how violence has become a vital part of Hindutva masculinity. Demonstration of violence becomes a strategic means for regaining masculinity. It is not only a means but also a proof of manliness. Therefore it becomes a condition of existence and a way of life in the Hindutva discourse. Women do not get excluded from this way of life always. They get their chance of living it.

Such a notion of masculinity is not yet dominant in Indian polity though there is a general condition of masculine hegemony. It is because of this reason that the ideology of masculinity becomes attractive as a strategy of mass mobilization. It can be understood also by looking at marginal position of woman in our society and crime committed against woman by man. Moreover the communal competitors of Hindutva masculinity also follow a similar pattern. In these conditions it becomes important for us to see if we can look for an alternative. Mahatma Gandhi is looked by some as the alternative to this masculine hegemony and especially the Hindutva notion of masculinity.[1]

Ashish Nandy says that the 'masculinity' becoming the dominant norm is reflection of deep penetration of colonial culture.[2] Hindutva nationalist's challenge to British colonialism ended up becoming indirectly collaborationist for it followed the similar culture. British colonialism for Gandhi meant not only political dominance and

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[1] Ashish,Nandy in *"The Intimate Enemy-Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism"* says that as against the colonial culture's ordering of sexual identity where manliness was put above womanliness and both of them were then put above femininity in man, Gandhi used two orderings, each of which could be invoked according to the needs of the situation. These two orderings are –

Androgyny> Purusatva,
Naritva

that is, manliness and womanliness are equal but the ability to transcend the man-woman dichotomy is superior to both. The second ordering is Naritva>Purusatva>Kapurusatva that is, the essence of femininity is superior to that of masculinity, which in turn is better than cowardice. Delhi:OUP,1983. pp.52-53

[2] see,Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: The Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism*, Delhi: OUP, 1983.

economic drainage but also injection of colonial culture.[3] Nandy says that even after the Britishers had left, Hindu nationalists continue to follow a similar culture which is based on the following pattern:

Masculinity>femininity>femininity in man.[4] At the height of colonial domination it was Gandhi who offered a comprehensive critique of British colonialism and sought to offer an alternative to the colonial culture.

Gandhi criticized colonialism because he believed that it was based on a false belief of sustaining a relationship of domination and subordination. The relationship of domination and subordination is not real because freedom is indivisible. Domination of one by the other cannot be a condition of freedom for either. He therefore said that he wanted to free the colonizers as much as he wanted to free the Indians. For Gandhi, the belief of the dominant that exploitation and oppression of others would not harm them anyway was naive. Gandhi believed that they suffered as much as their victims and even more. The colonizers could not dismiss the natives as 'effeminate' or child like without thinking of themselves as tough, hyper masculine and unemotional adults, a self-image to which they could not conform without distorting and impoverishing their potential. Misrepresentation of the other leads to self misrepresentation.[5] Such a notion stems from his belief in the inherent unity of man.

This critique of colonialism is also a critique of the Hindutva notion of masculinity because it is based on the relationship of domination and subordination Hindutva masculinity seeks to dominate the feminine in general and the non Hindus in particular.

Strength becomes a measure of masculinity even in Gandhi's thought and a satyagrahi who is supposed to fight colonialism through soul force rather than brute force

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[3] Bhikhu Parekh, *"Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourses"* Delhi: Sage, 1989.pp.139-171

[4] Ashish, Nandy *The Intimate Enemy: The Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism*,Delhi:OUP,pp.52-53.

[5] Bhikhu Parekh, , *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: a critical examination*,London: McMillan Press, 1989.pp.85-109.

is not an effeminate man. Gandhi even equates manliness with strength when he addresses the Britisheres as "It is likely that you will laugh at all this in the intoxication of your power. We may not be able to disillusion you at once; but if there be any manliness in us, you will see shortly that your intoxication is suicidal and that your laugh at our expense is an aberration of intellect".[6] But strength does not get limited to man. In fact the strength that he talks about or the soul force or the love force stems from a capacity to suffer. This is a special characteristic of femininity. Woman is better suited to be a satyagrahi because of her natural capacity for self-sacrificing, sexual purity and non-violent nature.

Thus Gandhi also had in mind a biological difference between man and woman. But he did not want to condemn femininity, rather he used the feminine technique for the independence struggle. He said that though he imposed his decisions on Kasturba, she with unlimited power of endurance was always the victorious. But in reality Gandhi was successful in making her follow his decisions. Moreover Gandhi says his ideal was his mother.

Thus Gandhi's concept of masculinity and femininity were complex and he often hierarchised it at different levels inspite of emphasizing its essential oneness. Thus we will be discussing Gandhi's notion of femininity and masculinity in the following sub-headings.

3.1 Femininity>Masculinity

Gandhi said that he considered himself lucky because women liked to hear his comments as it is hardly the case that men get a chance of addressing woman. Though he once said that he can 'become' a woman he thinks that femininity is primarily the virtue of woman and man generally possess the virtues of masculinity and he would like man to follow the feminine qualities rather than woman to follow the masculine. This would help

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[6] M.K.Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule,*Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1938. pp.86-87

man in self-purification and thus attaining swaraj as swaraj is primarily a project of self-purification. But the essential femininity that he talks about is not present in all women. There are some fallen sisters, prostitutes, devdasis fall in this category and there is a degeneration of woman in general. The regeneration of woman only assumes degeneration. The degeneration occurred because of wrong depiction of woman in some of the shastras. [It is worth noting that when he talked about women and women's issues he always keeps himself confined to the issues of Hindu women. There also he keeps himself confined mainly to the issues of urban middle class upper caste women. Neither did he comment on the women belonging to the tribes of Assam nor was he adequately concerned with the women belonging to the depressed classes]. However he said that women can regenerate themselves by following the ideals of Sita, Draupadi, Mirabai and Damayanti. Sita is Gandhi's favourite imagery because she is the embodiment of purity and from purity comes the strength which is needed for the attainment of Swaraj. Ravana who abducted Sita did not dare to touch her because she was pure.

Sita symbolizes purity, self-control, endurance, self-sacrifice, devotion. Strength coming from these qualities are absolutely necessary for waging a non-violent struggle rather than strength coming from brute force. Women even though not educated, do not possess any property, not engaged in earning money possess the above qualities and identify with Sita would be greater. He said that as women are the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, her advent to public life would therefore result in purifying it.

While women's participation would make the public sphere non-violent, a non-violent public sphere would make women flourish. On 10th April 1930, he wrote in Young India that, to call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to women. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. He asked, has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater power of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.

As against this, we have seen that the project of Hindu nationalists is entirely different. They do not disallow women from accessing the public sphere altogether. But they don't intend to change its nature. They want a change in the nature of women. They also want to strengthen women. But strength for them comes from the capability to exercise violence.

But even in Gandhi's thought, women's access to public sphere was very limited. This is because he believed in a natural division of spheres of activities between man and woman. Though many of Gandhi's ideas were radically different from traditionalists, he subscribed to the traditional distinction between the spheres of activities. In 1939 he said, "Equality of the sexes does not mean equality of occupations. There may be no legal bar against a woman hunting or wielding a lance. But she instinctively recoils from a function that belongs to man. Nature has made woman as complements of each other. Their functions are defined as are their forms".[7] He said he would love to find his future army containing vast preponderance of women over men and that would bestow him with greater confidence. Women would be his guarantee against any outbreak of violence. But here also the pre-ponderance of women over men in Gandhi's army comes only in the future and not in the present. For the present the pre-ponderance is of men over women. This however points that if circumstances allow he would put femininity over masculinity. But he does not want investment of energy in preparing women for the public sphere. Rather he would like to squeeze the public sphere and expand the private where women naturally rein over men.

3.2 Femininity = Masculinity

Gandhi believed that freedom can be realized in its indivisible form. This notion comes from his concept of unity of man which meant that man necessarily rose and fell together, that no man could ever benefit at the expense of another and that his relation to himself and to others, his internal and external world formed part of a single pattern.[8]

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[7] M.K.Gandhi, Harijan, 2-12-1939 in *Woman and Social Justice,* Ahemadabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1942. pp. 175-176.
[8] Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy:A Critical Examination"*,London: McMillan Press, 1989.p.90.

Equality for Gandhi is not sameness and in 1918 he said, "Man and woman are not equal in status but are identical. They are peerless pair being complementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived; and therefore it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both.[9] In 1940 he said "----- just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help".[10]

In Gandhi's thought a notion of the masculine erected on the domination of the feminine is false. Masculinity for him is based on equal treatment of the feminine as it is based on recognition of their differences on their spheres of activities. This he says can be achieved not through law but through proper education of woman and most importantly through cultivation of the public opinion against 'unmanly' conduct on the part of the male. Thus Gandhi attempted a reconstruction of femininity and masculinity though he accepted the distinction on the spheres of activities. Strength, courage or self-control which are generally associated with manliness embraces the feminine also in Gandhi's thought because strength, courage or self-control comes not from domination or violence but from non violence or ahimsa.

As Ramachandra Gandhi says, "Mahatma Gandhi's greatest contribution to our times --- is that: he has introduced the word non-violence into the vocabulary of heroism. Up until the 19 the century if anybody spoke of non-violence, they would have been regarded as a coward who was rationalizing his cowardice.... But today whether it is India or Pakistan or the Soviet Union or the USA or any power, for all of them non violence is a serious moral option. It may not always be a practical one. No one is

[9] M.K.Gandhi at the annual meeting of Bombay Bhagini Samaj on Feb. 20, 1918 – in *Woman and Social Justice*, Ahemadabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1942 p.5.
[10] M.K.Gandhi, 'Harijan, 24-2-1940', in *Woman and Social Justice*, Ahemadabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1942 p. 26.

Gandhi tells with utmost regret that his sexual desire prevented him from rendering service to his father at his death bed. Moreover Gandhi says that his married life became happier only after he succeeded to conquer his desire because he no longer felt possessive about his wife and perhaps because he could not blame his wife for his failure to control his sexuality anymore.

Desexualizing the relation between man and woman is seen by Gandhi as the best path of solving the problem of domination and subordination between the sexes rather than removing the socio-economic problems. For Gandhi, desexualisation makes one pure and from purity comes the power. Thus by becoming pure, man and woman would be equally powerful and enjoy harmony.

3.3 Masculinity>femininity

After discussing the higher or equal position of the feminine to the masculine in Gandhi's thought, a discussion of masculinity gaining a higher position in relation to femininity would amount to the accusation of showing contradictions in Gandhi's thought. But our intention here is not to show contradictions but perhaps unintentional consequences of Gandhi's thought and action.

Gandhi subscribed to a notion of different spheres of activities between man and woman. He accepted man as active and woman as passive. Even though he accepts man and woman as essentially same, their form is different. Man, he says is supreme in the outward activities of a married couple and therefore it is in the fitness of things that he would have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand; he says, home life is entirely the sphere of woman and therefore in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, woman ought to have more knowledge. He feels that fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed if this distinction is not appreciated. He further says in 1932, "I do not envisage the wife as a rule, following an avocation independently of her husband. The care of the children and the upkeep of the household are quite enough to fully engage all her energy. In a well ordered society the additional burden of maintaining

the family ought not to fall on her. The man should look to the maintenance of family, the women to household management, the two thus supplementing and complementing each other's labours".[13]

Gandhi wanted to make arrangements for the woman so that they can contribute to the public life from home. Spinning and weaving of *khadi* was therefore emphasized. Gandhi advocated Sarojini Naidu becoming the Congress President as early as in 1925. But as Madhu Kishwar points out active involvement in the congress activities was confined to a few outstanding women such as Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi and Hansa Mehta.[14] The vast mass of rural women were left out because Gandhi continued to emphasize the subordinate and supportive role of women. For most of the middle class women, participation was confined to few select activities such as picketing during certain phases, distributing nationalist literature, attending meetings and occasionally joining demonstrations. Thus, their role remained auxiliary and supportive in the national movement. Even in the Salt Satyagraha, Gandhi did not invite women to participate though many women following Kasturba Gandhi's call joined him. He asked women to donate their jewellery for the cause of the national movement so that they can get a feeling of being a participant by donating something which belonged to them. This he thought would also help them in de-sexualising themselves. He was very anxious about protecting the chastity and honour of women which they might loose in the cities therefore he suggested women to go back to the villages where they would be relatively safe.

He passionately wrote about the discrimination meted out to women by man and advocated abolition of many practices which were discriminatory. Thus he wanted the abolition of child marriages and advocated that they should not get married before 18 years of age. Looking at the large number of virgin child widows, he asked the parent to get them remarried at a proper age with a proper match. He warned educated men against taking dowries. He regarded prostitutes as the victim of man's lust.

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[13]M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan, 12-10-1934,* in *Woman and Social Justice,* Ahemadabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1942 p 17.

[14] Madhu, Kishwar 'Gandhi on Women' in *EPW*, No. 40, Oct. 5, 1985, pp.1691-1702

But while Gandhi advocated the marriage of child widows, he was not in favour of widow remarriage. In fact he regarded a widow to be the greatest gift of Hinduism to the world. He said that they get happiness in self-denial. This seems to be a prescription from a patriarch rather than a result of objective empirical evaluation. Though he regarded prostitutes as a victim of man's lust and sympathized with their condition, he did not want them to be congress members. The elevation of their status, he thought, would have disastrous moral impact on the society. He regarded them as worse than thieves as thieves steal only material possession, prostitutes steal virtue. Thus he grants prostitutes an active agency in demoralizing the society. As Madhu Kishwar points out this was in sharp contrast to the fact that Gandhi did not deny admission to congress to the better known exploiters of the society like the landlords or the money lenders.[15] Some prostitutes gave up their profession and taken to Charkha as a means of livelihood. But beyond Charkha Gandhi hardly had any concrete programme for their rehabilitation. He did not even want to take any donation from the prostitutes. Thus he looked at the problem of prostitution as a degeneration of morality of man and women. The economic conditions of the women were not emphasized. Thus he burdens the women with the responsibility of maintaining the much needed purity of the society. Therefore he advises women to die in their effort to maintain their chastity rather than succumbing to man's lust. Likewise he burdens the man with the duty to protect her honour. Like the Hindu nationalists or the 19th century reformers, Gandhi regarded the nation as Bharatmata.

He looks at women as asexual being and blames her for projecting themselves as objects of man's desire. A modern girl, he says likes to play Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. But he feels being essentially pure it would be easier for her to conquer the sexual desire. He said, "I do not believe that women is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint".[16] Thus denial of sexuality becomes a pre-condition for establishing equality or superiority of the feminine over the masculine.

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[15] Ibid,pp.1693-1694.

[16] Sudhir Kakar, *Intimate Relations:Exploring Indian Sexuality,* India: Penguin Books,1990,p125.

Thus some major differences arise between the construction of masculinity and femininity between the Hindu nationalists and Gandhi. Yet we cannot accept the alternative concept of masculinity offered by Gandhi uncritically. While the Hindu nationalists try to pose masculinity as opposed to femininity and grant it superior position in the hierarchy, Gandhi constructs his notion of masculinity and femininity against a notion of cowardice and pollution. But having constructed thus, he accords superior position to each in their respective spheres. He hoped that superiority at the domestic sphere would result in an overall superiority of femininity and he did not adequately try to antagonize the superiority of masculinity at the material level.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

This dissertation is an effort to explore the notion of masculinity in the Hindutva discourse. We have limited our studies mainly to the development and sustenance of the ideology by R.S.S. and its women's wing Rashtra Sevika Samiti. We can understand the Hindutva movement only in a larger context. It emerged during the colonial encounter when there was a sense of loss of power among the dominant section of the society. Thus, it is a project of recapturing power. Power, it is thought can only be captured by the masculine ideology. The Hindutva movement started with on objective of hegemonizing the cultural spheres and also the state. While the RSS was founded mainly as a cultural organization, the Hindu Mahasabha was political during the colonial rule. Later on in 1951 the Bharatiya Jana Sangh became the political front of the Sangh and from 1980 BJP is the new political front of the Sangh Parivar. Though some autonomy is granted to different organizations, they are guided by the ideology of Hindutva and they are marked by inter-personal relationship. R.S.S. has floated a number of other organizations to penetrate in to the space which it has hitherto failed to control. Formation of organizations like-*VHP, Vanvashi kalyan Ashram, Samajik Samrasta Manch* (i.e. Social Assimilation Platform),are meant to mobilize that section of the population who do not generally feel attracted to its ideology like the tribals and dalits. Most of its affiliated organizations also have their women's wing. Thus the Hindutva forces are vast network of organizations with the aim of hegemonising the cultural and the political space of the country. But power as Hansen says, needs to be reproduced and reasserted constantly, through sustained production of subjects, that is, sustained imposition of authorized symbolic configurations of language, images, monuments, tangible benefits security and so on.[1] A study of the Hindutva discourse reveals that the project of Hindutva is to create masculine Hindu subject through its use of specific narratives, language and symbols.

Masculinity is the ideology which sustains a patriarchal society. As R.W. Connell says that though there are many local exceptions there is a Patriarchal dividend

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[1] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India,* Princeton NJ: University of Princeton Press 1999,pp.60-89

for man collectively arising from higher incomes, higher labour force participation, unequal property ownership, greater access to institutional power as well as cultural and sexual privilege.[2] But of late studies on Gender has expanded to include man as a gendered subject. Studies on Man and Masculinity have not been a coherent body of work having a single objective. Some scholars have tried to bring out the disadvantages of being a man. They argue that men are also oppressed in a system of patriarchy. Stanly Aronwitz in his essay 'My Masculinity' confirms and asserts this view and adds that male power come at the cost of emotional isolation.[3]

But much of the disadvantages that man face which are often pointed out as emotional isolation, lower age at the lime of death, over representation in prisons, targets of military violence, criminal assault, predominance in dangerous and highly toxic occupation can be seen as a condition of advantage. In other words the disadvantages of man are in a way condition of advantage in relation to women. Therefore it can be argued that men are not oppressed simply by being man rather the oppression of man depends upon their defferential position in caste and class hierarchy. So, patriarchy operates at multiple levels and privileging one category of analysis over others may result in partial representation of reality.

But given the limited scope in this Dissertation, we have tried to explore the inter-linkage of the Masculine and Communal ideologies.

In the first chapter, we have limited our study mainly to RSS and its ideology in order to understand the masculine aspect of the Hindutva Movement. The ideology of Hindutva was clearly articulated by V.D. Savarkar which identifies a Hindu as one whose homeland (birth place) and holy land (place of the origin of religion) is Bharat. Thus it was a move to assign the Hindus a concrete identity essentially contrasting with the other. Thus he universalizes the Hindutva identity as the Indian and on the other hand excludes other Indians like Muslims or Christians whose religion happened to origin is a foreign

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[2] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities,* Cambragde: Polity, 2005, pp 244-266.
[3] Stanly Aronwitz -'My Masculinity' in Maurice Berger Brian Wallis & Simon Watson eds. *Constructing Masculinity* New York & London, Routledge, 1995. pp.307-320.

land from the national identity. The RSS apart from providing the affiliated organs an ideology, it also ensures electoral success to the sympathetic political parties through its vast organizing network. RSS was formed as a cultural organization categorically stating its intention of imbibing masculine values to the cadres having a clear political objective of establishing a Hindu Rashtra. It not only emphasizes on building Mascular bodies to manifest outward masculinity but the ideology is also based upon domination of the feminine.

The Hindu self or Hindutva is primarily constructed against the Muslims other who are projected as strong and threatening. Luchereous behavior, a high sexual appetite, a life of luxury and religious fanaticism are inscribed as the dominant traits of Muslim character. To, counter the projected other effectively the Hindutva discourse requires to be embedded in the masculine ideology. This ideology is also given historical legitimacy by emphasizing and reconstructing a violent tradition. Thus, the Hindutva discourse is both a revivalism and reconstruction. The emphasis on the ancient Vedic cultural tradition inevitably gives it the Brahminical character. Thus the cultural space that it seeks to hegemonise, gets a masculine and the caste character. Therefore in the Hindutva discourse the non-violent tradition of Buddha and *Sufi –Bhakti* are projected as degeneration and impractical. The ideology of domination and subordination is thus given legitimacy. Worship of valour and courage is accompanied by simultaneous domination and humiliation of the weak. Thus in the first chapter we have explored the masculine ideology embodied in the Hindutva discourse by looking at its emergence narratives, and symbols.

The ideology of masculinity is being used to make women complicit subjects of the Hindutva discourse. In the second chapter we have studied some of the front organizations which mobilize women for the Hidutva movement. The study of Rashtra Sevika Samiti, Durga Vahini and Matri Shakti reveals that women are entrusted with multiple tasks in the Hindu Nationalist movement. While on the one hand, they do not discourage women to perform the traditional forms of labours based on gender hierarchy, they also assign women the task of instigating men and women to participate in its

organizational actions. The increasing participation of women themselves in the communal violence has contributed to the normalization of communal riot. In the Hindutva movement, as we have noted, women's role is not limited to distribution of bangles to men, but it also includes active participation in the later. The Hindutva discourse is openly antagonistic to feminism. Though there are different branches of feminism following different strategies, they are primarily concerned about mobilizing men and women for changes which would make a gender just society. But the women's organization of the Hindutva movement seeks to mobilize women as members of a religious community. Women's interest is therefore projected as narrow. Therefore it can be said that empowerment of women in the Hindutva discourse is only symbolic.

In the second chapter,we also find that in a nationalist construction women generally play or endowed with three important roles. First, as social reproducer of cultural from. They are supposed to acquaint their children with the myths and stories of the nationalist project. Therefore, women become the chief target of imbibing the values and tradition which the nationalist project tries to project as authentic. They are the agents of the social reproduction which would guarantee the sustenance. Second, women become the bearer of the collective honour. As embodiment of collective honour their status in the society are thought to be protected by the male members of the community. Therefore when interest clash among different communities their bodies become the sight of violence and torture. Thirdly, they are also bearer of future citizen. As population of the community plays a very important role in the nationalist project, reproductive rights of women is transmuted to national duty.

As the dissertation shows, the participation of women in communal violence inspired by the affiliated organizations of the Sangh Parivar defies any strict segregation of gender roles as far as women are concerned. As we have already pointed out they are not encouraged to abandon their traditional feminine roles but instigated to perform the Masculine roles during communal riots. This is not to suggest that the Hindutva discourse has any emancipatory potential for women. Exercise of feminist agency is not possible if women's interests are subverted in the maintenance of the patriarchal character of the

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community. Thus, the Hindutva project is mainly an effort to make women complicit subjects to its masculine norms by not only training them physically but also making them active participant in violence against the 'other'.

This leads us to ask the question –why does the ideology of masculinity become attractive as a measure of mass mobilization? It appears attractive because other contending alternatives are deficient. Therefore in the third chapter we sought to explore an alternative.

During the freedom struggle M.K.Gandhi interrogated the colonial ideology and led a non violent struggle against the Britishers. His technique of satyagraha is interpretated as an alternative to the masculine path of capturing power.[4] In the Hindutva discourse, as we have noted, demonstration of violence becomes a strategic means for regaining masculinity and it is also a proof of manliness. And therefore the Hindutva ideology which emphasizes on regaining masculinity seeks to make its notion of masculinity hegemonic. But Gandhi's notion of manliness is infused with morality. While the Hindu nationalists try to pose masculinity as opposed to femininity and grant it superior position in hierarchy, Gandhi constructs his notion of masculinity as opposed to his notion of cowardice and pollution. We can't take Gandhi's alternative uncritically as he does not antagonize masculine hegemony at the material level and on the other hand seeks to undermine it. He does not want to seriously undermine the superior position of man in the public sphere though under his leadership some women came up from the clutches of the four walls and participated in the freedom struggle. They primarily belong to urban middle class families. In the Salt Satyagraha of 6th April 1930 he did not invite women to participate and instead said,-"just as Hindus do not harm a cow, British do not attack women as far as possible. For Hindus it would be cowardice to take a cow to the battle field. In the same way it would be cowardice for us to have women accompany us."[5]

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[4] Ashish Nandi in his *Intimate Enemy; Loss and recovery of self under colonialism* Delhi; OUP 1983, confirms this view.
[5] Cited in Suruchi Thapar- 'Woman As Activist; Womaen As Symbols; A Study of the Indian Nationalist Movement' Feminist Review (44) summer, 1993 P-87.

Thus we find that while Gandhi emphasized on essential oneness of the feminine and masculine, he does not delineate any strategy to counter the masculine hegemony in the public sphere. While important difference arises between Hindu nationalist and the Gandhi's notion of masculinity so far as the element of violence and outward manifestation of mascular bodies and language are concerned, Gandhi's suggestion of withdrawing the feminine from the public sphere can not be regarded as an adequate measure of subverting masculine hegemony.

In Gandhi's thought only desexulisation and voluntary withdrawal from the material sphere can ensure equality between man and woman. During the freedom struggle participation of women was limited and many women even committed suicide during communal riots in order to protect their 'honor' following Gandhi's advice.[6] Thus while replacing one form of hegemonic masculinity by another is not a guarantee for establishing gender equality, Gandhian alternative do not seem feasible if we look at the growing market economy and the process of modernization.

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[6] Urvashi Butalia ' Community State and Gender: On Women's Agency During Partition' *EPW* April 24 1993p. WS 12-24

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