FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF HINDU NATIONALISM: 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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
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CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the dissertation entitled **"Feminist Critique of Hindu Nationalism: 19th and early 20th Century"** submitted by Miss Shruti Joshi is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation is original and has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Contents

Introduction

Nationalism has been and still continues to be influential in various aspects of the working of the nation and as such has affected the lives of both men and women associated with it. However here it may be asked: what is the nation? Whom does it constitute, not just physically but also substantially? And keeping the above questions mind; what is the nature of the nation-state? Is it patriarchal? What factors contribute in the overall working of the nation? To what extent does culture and religion affect the working of the nation? Where do women stand in this context of a nation as being not just a male dominated entity but a religious one at that? Religious practices just as the nation are oppressive of women and the powerless. Keeping these question in mind one can also ask how the upper caste Hindu nationalism affected the lives of the Hindu woman in the 19th and early 20th century. Thus what becomes clear here is the patriarchal nature of the family, religion, culture and the nation at large.

Nationalism has and still is a concept of continuous importance. Even today with talks of the world being described as a "global village" nationalism has still held its ground in what is supposedly an even shrinking world. What one may ask here is the reason for the continuous importance of nationalism even in the midst of globalisation. A common but relevant cliché would be that even as the world is getting smaller (in terms of nation-states and their supposedly disappearing boundaries) it is also becoming more and more intolerant towards people within those boundaries. In the case of India these include women, religious minorities, and the Dalits.

However even as this world is becoming smaller the importance of territorial boundaries can not be underestimated. As Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostow[1] write women serve as 'territorial markers'[2] and the boundaries they represent are not neutral. There is a clear gendering of boundaries and spaces (landscapes, farmlands, and battlefields. "Border fantasies"[3] develop with this gendering of boundaries and spaces and with the

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[1] Rada Ivekovic and JulieMostov in From Gender to Nation, ed., New Delhi, Zubaan, 2002, p.10.
[2] Ibid., p. 10.
[3] Ibid., p. 10.

collectivising of "our women" and "their women". The danger of invasion of national space by the enemy, the stealing of identity and the dilution of culture (since each culture has a particular notion of its culture as pure and therefore undiluted) all signify the threat to a particular community. Where then one may ask is the space for women in this community? Do they share the same space as men? The women it maybe said belong to a particular community without constituting the community as autonomous subjects or an essential part of it. Masculine actors invade feminine spaces. The feminine is passive, and the masculine is active. The nation as mother produces an image of the allegorical mother whose offspring are the country's guardians, heroes and martyrs.[4]

In much of the academic discourse on nationalism, women remain invisible, subsumed under the "fraternity" of nation; constitute another "variable to be studied, like ethnicity, or get ghettoised under cultural nationalism. Gender is too often absent from discussions of political or economic nationalism, although there are recent feminist attempts to remedy this exclusion.[5]

The study of Hindu nationalism from a woman's standpoint has to begin with an understanding of the construction of nationalism as an inherently "gendered" phenomenon. The constructions of nation and state have centred on struggles over power between men, such as in wars. These struggles are gendered in a particular way only. The construction of male hierarchies, male bonding etc have to be studied with respect to how they are gendered. Nationalism and feminism get constructed in the process of daily social interactions between men and women. They are not necessarily fixed, given, immutable, or binary. They are created and re-created in daily interactions between the genders. Therefore for this reason the study of nationalism remains as relevant today as it was in the 19th century. Although nationalism now affects women's life differently, certain factors remain the same. Nationalism and its dynamics are being constantly re-

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[4] Ibid., 10.
[5] Lois A. West,'Introduction: Feminism Constructs Nationalism' in Feminist Nationalism, ed. by Lois A. West, Routledge, 1997, p. XIV.

created, and so is the phenomenon of interaction between and within genders. Struggles over views of nationalism are inherently gendered. Whether nationalism is constructed as a public or domestic phenomenon, the women are limited to the context of the family. Partha Chatterjee argues in this context that in the specific conditions of colonial society women's place in the history of nationalism is found less in the external domain of political conflict and more in the "inner" space of the middle-class home. That woman's associations with the home came to represent the very essence of Indian nationalism.[6]

Partha Chatterjee uses archival work in the form of autobiographies to emphasise his point.[7] However, others like Charu Gupta[8] and Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert[9] also look into vernacular magazines and the role of the Hindu publishers in containing the everyday activities of women. The importance of studying how the everyday life of women was affected in various regions of India is specially important in the context of Hindu nationalism. Firstly, because a study of nationalism cannot be restricted to only those events that are part of mainstream Indian history. How women handled situations in the family when nationalism entered their households through the Hindu men, was very much a part of everyday activity. Secondly, regional differentiations need to be kept in mind, as the Indian society with its heterogeneous nature had different events to narrate. And within these regions how nationalism shaped the lives of the Hindu woman was yet another question that a feminist critique would also need to consider.

What does a feminist encounter with nationalism imply? Since Hindu nationalism has always excluded women, the non-Brahmin caste, non-Hindus and other minorities. As Shiv Visvanathan argues the encounter between feminism and the nation- state as a patriarchal system is doubly subversive. The dialogue shows that the myths of masculinity have impoverished nationhood. The passive idea of the nation as Motherland also hides and conceals the real voices of pain. Feminism can restore creative ideas of

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[6] Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 137.

[7] Ibid., 137

[8] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community – Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001.

[9] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement, Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices - 1930-42, New Delhi, Sage, 2006.

unity and identity to the nation. And yet feminism can guard against feminism becoming like nationalism.[10] The danger of feminism falling into the nationalist trap has been highlighted in Chapter Two through the 'The Nationalist Agenda and the Politics of Social Reforms' that the Hindu nationalist undertook. It had been further elaborated in Chapter Three through the 'Politics of Communal Mobilisation of the Hindu Woman' and how feminism can criticise the politics of reforms and communal mobilisation and avoid the hegemonic and homogeneous tendencies of the very concept it sets to criticise.

In the light of the above we may ask: What then is the task of a feminist critique of nationalism? Why the need for a feminist critique of nationalism (Hindu). Nationalism it maybe said is coming in for criticism from all quarters. With its emphasis confined to a particular dominant majority that constitutes the nation, nationalism tends to ignore the multiple intersections of race, class and gender.

What does the term nationalism mean in the Western world and the non-Western world? How differently is it understood in both these societies? As Koenraad Elst puts it in India, "nationalism" doesn't have the negative connotations which it has in Western intellectual circles.[11] On the contrary the term is 'hallowed' by its associations with the freedom movement. Applied in different contexts the meaning of nationalism changes accordingly.

While a nation in some contexts is Fatherland, in others it is Motherland. Russians, for example, speak of "Mother Russia". Chinese speak of the "Chinese socialist motherland." Lois A. West argues that conceptions of nature as female make it easy to conceive of nation as "the Motherland as spatial embodied femaleness: The land's fecundity, upon which the people depend, must be protected by defending the body/nation's boundaries against invasion and violation by foreign males". The construction of both nation and

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[10] Shiv Visvanathan, Economic and Political Weekly, June 2003, p. 2302.
[11] Koenraad Elst, Decolonising the Hindu Mind – Ideological Development of Hindu Revivalism, New Delhi, Delhi, p.21.

state is a gendered phenomenon and needs to be analysed. Women too often continue to be invisible in definitions of nationalism.[12]

It is hard to miss the social force of both religion and nationalism in many contemporary movements of the world. When dealing with religion and nationalism, it is necessary to offer an analysis of their social force that cuts across conventional dichotomies. As the argument goes, nationalism belongs to the realm of legitimate modern politics. Nationalism is assumed to be "secular", since it is thought to develop in a process of secularisation and modernisation. Religion, in this view, assumes political significance only in the underdeveloped parts of the world- much as it did in the past of the West. When religion manifests itself politically in the contemporary world, it is conceptualised as *fundamentalism.*[13] However keeping current trends in mind and how religion has manifested itself uniformly in all societies the secular assumptions of nationalism have to be further problematised in all parts of the world. (Chapter Three will look into this dimension).

Writing on the role of modernity and how it has covered the globe differently, Nivedita Menon writes: 'it is true that modernity has covered the globe, but modernity has not simply been replicated uniformly from seventeenth-century Europe and nor has its spread been free of coercion. It has...been transformed by specific socio-political, cultural and economic conditions.'[14] Thus nationalism has cultural connotations attached to it, which cannot be ignored easily. A critique of nationalism therefore will also have to be a critique of the dominant culture that it claims to represent. Keeping this point in mind this dissertation will try to study the dominant Hindu (male) nationalist trend in 19th and early 20th century India. It will also study the dominant Hindu culture with emphasis on the space it offered to the Hindu woman in everyday activities and regarding her role in the nationalist movement.

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[12]Lois A. West, 'Introduction', p. xviii.

[13] Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, ed., 'Introduction', Nation and Religion – Perspectives on Europe and Asia, New Jersey, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1999, p. 3.

[14] Nivedita Menon, Recovering Subversion, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004, p. 226.

However, the understanding of nationalism devoid of its negative connotation has led to nationalism in India being interpreted and understood in a very naïve fashion. What is required is an understanding of nationalism of whom, nationalism for whom, keeping in mind the vast diversity of India in terms of its various religious communities, its caste hierarchies, regional diversities and finally nationalism and the role played by women in the formation of nationalism. It is these dominant construction of nationalism based on a particular gender, class, caste and regional affiliations that need to be questioned. The questioning of nationalism and its hegemony is as relevant now as in the 19th and early part of the 20th century.

One can question to what extent culture defines nationalism? Or to what extent does nationalism define the culture of a nation? Which of these plays a role in the construction of the other and to what extent? As Gyenendra Pandey writes, nations everywhere are claimed to be defined by well-marked cultural-political boundaries.[15] Yet such boundaries are never easily drawn. Nationalist thought, therefore commonly proceeds to carve 'out' a core or 'mainstream' identity –the unhyphenated national, the real obvious, 'natural citizen'. Alongside this core identity, there emerges a notion of the hyphenated national: minorities and marginal groups that might be part of the nation, but 'never quite'. For the nationalist there always exists the concept of "sacred space of the nation".[16]

This sacred space already has within it the majoritarian identity and the minorities therefore are automatically classified as the 'impure' population. The question therefore becomes: How are impure elements to be dealt with? How do we contain, or 'discipline difference'. The word discipline becomes important here as this disciplining is done according to the way the majority perceives the minority and wants it to be. The question was posed sharply in the case of the Muslim 'minority' in India, a well in that of the 'abducted persons' at the time of partition. The disciplining was the same for women. In the context of Hindu nationalism, it was the disciplining of the Hindu woman by the

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[15] Gyanendra Pandey, "Disciplining Difference" in Remembering Partition – Violence, Nationalism and History in India, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.154.
[16] Ibid.

Hindu man. What does this discipline mean? To what extent did it curtail the everyday lives of the Hindu woman? To what extent was this discipline internalised by the Hindu woman?

This idea is discussed in great detail in Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish, where Foucault analyses not only surveillance but other techniques by which the subject is constituted - e.g., "normalisation" and "examination". The power of normalisation determines the "acceptable" limits of behaviour by demarcating the normal and "respectable".[17] To put it into perspective the Hindu nationalists had imposed certain acceptable limits of behaviour on the Hindu woman. She was to perform her duty as a Hindu wife and mother within acceptable limits imposed on her. For Foucault even when the subject has gained agency, it is always situated within a web of constraints and therefore cannot be conceived as an entity autonomous of power relations and background practices. There were various power relations within which the Hindu woman was operating: her relation with her husband, in the society and with the nation at large. All these aspects of her daily life were not autonomous of power relations and background practices.

Nationalism necessarily raises the question of who belongs and by what criterion? This as Gyanendra Pandey writes can take various forms and include various people under it – Muslims, women. Can a Muslim be an Indian? How much and to what extent does a woman contribute to the nation? If her contribution is less than the man, is she then less national? And most importantly what does being national imply at all?[18]

Keeping all this in mind, what does the term 'Hindu nationalist signify? According to Gyanendra Pandey it does not refer simply to nationalists who happen to be Hindus. It is rather an indication of their brand of nationalism. It is a nationalism in which Hindu

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[17] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978. p.95-97.
[18] As summarized from Gyanendra Pandey, in Remembering Partition – Violence, Nationalism and History in India, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

culture, Hindu traditions and the Hindu community are given pride of place. [19] The Hindus were nationalists first and foremost. Whether they were Hindu nationalists or secular nationalists was a subsidiary question. All Muslims were, however, Muslims. Some Muslims were advocates of Indian nationalism and hence 'nationalist Muslims'. The remainder of that community, however in town and country, north and south, were not likely to be supporters of Indian nationalism on account of them being Muslim.

For Koenraad Elst Hindu revivalism is a broad trend in the nineteenth and twentieth century India which seeks to revitalise Hinduism after a millennium of political, ideological and psychological subjection to Islamic and Western hegemony.[20] He has put under the category of Hindu revivalism, Hindu nationalism which he writes is the numerically most important tendency within this broad movement.[21] He also prefers to separate the category of Hindu revivalism from the "fundamentalist" movements. Although he argues that most Hindu revivalists agree with the perception of the intrinsically Hindu character of India, pointing to the fact that that the common Hindu cultural background is the only conceivable reason for bringing so many racially and linguistically diverse communities together in one state. As he puts it in their view, declaring India a Hindu state is merely a confirmation of a well-established historical fact. History and religious customs are brought in to deepen this insight: the Hindu pilgrimage cycles and other pan-Indian institutions have contributed mightily to a sense of Indianess, of Indian "nationhood" in modern terms, firmly rooted in Hindu civilisation. To this extent the unity and integrity of India is one point on which all tendencies of Hindu revivalism agree.

This brings one to launch a criticism on not just nationalism and its exclusive and alienating tendencies but on the concept of nationalism itself. If nationalism always excludes all those who do not come under its narrow vision then is there any place for women, Dalits, the poor and the marginalised within the supposedly inclusive concept of nationalism? Where did the Hindu woman stand in this regard in the 19th and early 20th

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[19] Ibid., 154.
[20] Koenraad Elst, op. cit., p. 584.
[21] Ibid., 20.

century? What did nationalism as propagated by the Hindu nationalist mean for the Hindu woman?

Women as well as men have been involved in the rise and upheavals of the nationalist movements in many ways. It therefore becomes necessary to examine the relationship between the images of nation and gender, as well as between *reason* (masculine) and gender, which has been a central concern of feminist critics of philosophy and social science.

There is a substantial agreement among many feminists that reason is masculine. Foucault, following Nietzsche believes that any notion of reason which pretends to be unconnected with power is hopelessly misconceived. We must come to terms with the fact that reason is intrinsically connected with power. However, Hegel's account of reason confines women to the private sphere of the family. For Hegel reason is a matter of achieving self-consciousness. This can be accomplished only in the public sphere where consciousness confronts other consciousness. Women are thus excluded from the process of becoming a subject which requires the development of self-consciousness. [22] Hegel's account of reason as self-consciousness does not just exclude women from achieving the status of the subject, it also implies that the process of becoming self-conscious requires transcending the private sphere of nature and of the family, symbolised by women. In the context of nationalism the Hindu woman then remained subjects of the Hindu nationalist men. And since reason remained confined to the public sphere, it was not a part of the domestic sphere, also the domain of the woman.

Unity and Nationalism: Two parallel processes?

To what extent did nationalism succeed in unifying the nation and its people? Why did the Hindu nationalists resort to the rhetoric of unity? The Hindu nationalists realised that unity was required to carry out their nationalist agenda. This 'extraordinary inclusion'

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[22] As summarised from Alessandra Tanesini, ed., from "Reason and Unreason" in Feminism- An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies, USA, Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

was achieved by the inclusion of various communities and by the 'gerrymandering of the boundaries'[23] so that more communities could be included for the larger cause of the nation. This inclusion however, remained an 'elusive principle'.

The 'we' in Hindu nationalism was a questionable 'we', by its virtue of excluding various sections inspite of including them within its over-all structure. Although many such sections were treated as periphery this dissertation will primarily focus on the Hindu woman. The Hindu woman always carries her marginality with her –national cultures and values give her a space in society, but always remind her of the potential risk of her situation, and the precariousness of playing improper roles. Do women then have a country? Women are included in the nation as subaltern. "Belonging" for women is also –and uniquely –linked to sexuality, honour, chastity; family, community and country must agree on both their acceptability and legitimacy, and their membership within the fold.[24]

The 'picture' of India or 'the Orient' [25] that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which came to fatefully affect Indian social discourse and the social images lying at their base, was not a simple image produced by a single, unproblematic ally homogeneous movement.[26] Sudipta Kaviraj writes that such an impression is correct on specified and limited logical circumstances only. In fact he writes that it was European writers who constructed the image of India as Indians looking for an identity. He in fact dismisses the innocent assumption of the 'mythology of nationalism' that India was suppressed and managed to come out of this suppression and finally free itself of colonial domination. This historical process was according to Kaviraj 'less linear and a far more 'tentative' affair.[27] Thus one has to keep in mind the regional diversities of India and how these were suppressed by the Hindu nationalists in order to pursue the hegemonising act of nationalism and nation-making.

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[23] Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed., Subaltern Studies, Vol. vii, p. 16.

[24] Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostov, ed., op. cit. pp. 9- 24.

[25] Edward Said, Orientalism, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

[26] Sudipta Kaviraj, The Imaginary Institution of India, Occasional Papers on History and Society, Second Series, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1991, p.41.

[27] Sudipta Kaviraj, op. cit. p. 14.

Identities – A 'bound relationship'

Our identities are not a condition but an action, a sort of action that contains unsolved and unsolvable tension and possible disparity between self-identification and recognition of others. The complexity of the theory of identities is pointed out by arguing that we view ourselves as similar to others, but at the same time, we affirm our being different as individuals. Tea Skokic applies this hypothesis both to personal and group identity, as personal identity always contains part of that of the group. This 'bound relationship' between personal and group identity is explained by the phrase 'identity field', which suggests a dynamic relationship of a number of sub-identities that exists at he same time, although they may not be articulate at the same time.[28]

As Stuart Hall writes, identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, 'we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices by specific enunciative strategies.'[29]

Thus, for example, nationalism gave various identities to the Hindu woman. To begin with she was a house-wife, a mother, a Hindu woman and finally as the idea of a nation developed she was expected to fight on behalf of the nation, of which she could be a part or not be a part according to the situation. However, at times the Hindu woman was expected to extend or carry her personal identity to the group identity and at other times she was asked not to extend her personal identity to the nationalist arena. Thus all the sub-identities of the Hindu woman were not articulated always at the same time. The nationalist strategy managed her sub-identities according to the circumstances.

This expectation of the Hindu woman however, changed when it came to Gandhi and other strands of nationalism. Gandhi for example asked the women to enter the nationalist arena and bring with them their personal identity and attributes. This meant that women were asked to enter the nationalist arena with their 'feminine' attributes (although there is a different and larger debate regarding Gandhi's emphasis on only the 'feminine

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[28] Tea Skokic, 'Must We Know Who We Are?' in Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostow, ed., From Gender to Nation, New Delhi, Zubaan, 2002, pp. 201-211.
[29] Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay eds., 'Introduction' in Questions of Cultural Identity, London, 1997, p.4

attributes of women in the nationalist arena), for example in the Non-cooperation movement. During the non-cooperation movement that began in 1920, the first organised mass campaign against the British Raj, Gandhi sought to mobilise a large number of women in the movement. However, as Uma Rao writes Gandhi was also aware of the social status of women and even while implementing the nationalist strategy he always kept the traditional status of women in the Hindu society in mind.[30]

It was expected that when women stepped out into the streets, they brought the values of the domestic with them. They were expected to adapt to changes in the public domain without compromising their feminine qualities within the domestic sphere. Their involvement in the public sphere stretched from the non-cooperation movement of the 1920s to the civil disobedience movement of the 1930s and the Quit India movement of the 1940s. In the 1920s women's public participation was limited, but the participation increased in the following years. Thus, despite increased participation by women in the nationalist activities there was still a 'bound relationship'[31] for women. Whereby her role in the public and domestic arena was very much in the hands of the nationalists.

Unlike Gandhi, the Hindu communalists at times expected women to shed their personal/feminine identities/attributes and replace them with masculine attributes. Although in their overall scheme, women were expected to go back to the 'domestic' arena once the nationalist agenda was achieved.

Writing in the context of the war in Croatia from 1990 to 1996, Tea Skokic writes, at first there was a kind of solidarity among Croatian citizens, although many were not Crotian nationals, but soon the State became ethnically defined and nationalism became a constant substitute for integrating factors in a disintegrating society. However this integration also carries with it a kind of forced integrating element. As moments that require the special engagement of members, such migrations, demographic changes,

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[30] Rao, Uma, 'Women in the Frontline: The Case of UP' in Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar eds., Women and India Nationalism, New Delhi, Vikas, 1994.

[31] Tea Skokic, op. cit.

integration, and war transparently demonstrates that a very small number of personal attributes are compatible with that of the group. At the same time it is at these moments that the group is tightest. Personal identities are suppressed and society becomes dominated by one identity that distinguishes one group of people form another and at the same time is a symbol of recognition.[32]

In the context of Hindu nationalism one can say the identity of women (Hindu), Muslims, Dalit etc was suppressed and the one identity that dominated all the other identities was the identity of the Hindu upper-caste male. Hindu nationalism although it claimed (even in its most liberal form) to be an all inclusive entity was both exclusive and inclusive. Even while claiming to be inclusive the identity of the Hindu upper-caste male dominated and suppressed all other identities.

According to Benedict Anderson[33], nationalism offers a salvation religion that turns faith into continuity through an imagined picture of the holy connection between the part and the whole for a member of the nation who wants to live his personal life story determined by this faith in this connection as something special and irreplaceable. But only after careful analysis of gender roles linked to nationalism does it become possible to see whether men and women are equally able to make this holy connection with the nation, who imagined the community, and what kind of faith is required.[34]

To examine gender roles that label women in nationalism provides interesting points for the deconstruction of power, structures and knowledge. Women are viewed and often treated as "almost Us". A woman has attributes normally given to a stranger, enemy, and the Other. Women are the Other in their own culture. Nationalist rhetoric is built on a strongly dichotomous construction of sex and gender within a patriarchal politics of identity.[35] This dichotomy can be traced back to the beginning of the Hindu nationalism to present day politics. Throughout history the image of a Mother as the most desirable

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[32] Tea Skokic, op. cit. pp. 202.

[33] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, London, Verso, 1983.

[34] Tea Skokic, op. cit. p. 202.

[35] Ibid., 202.

role for a woman in society has been adapted to the social and political moment, but it has remained linked to the roles of bearer of the nation, mother of future soldiers, and keeper of traditional values and the home. And as Tea Skokic emphasises situations of war and colonial invasion (in the context of understanding Hindu Nationalism) merely reinforce these stereotypical gender roles, calling on women to become "Us" by playing to their biological potential as child bearers. Motherhood occupies the first role for women: the heroic Mother is compassionate and patient as well as courageous and strong. Nationalism forms a collective memory of common experiences.[36] This 'shared ideological framework' subsume women's identity in the nationalist framework and all their experiences are subsumed within the nationalist experience, leaving no space for any other experience.

This situation can be compared to the present day scenario of caste situation in India. After targeting the Dalits and women in the reservation front, the Hindutva forces also rely on the same 'targeted' section to mobilise various sections of Hindu society (including OBCs, Dalits and women). For example the Ramjanambhoomi movement mobilised Hindus across the spectrum, including the Hindu women. Although the same Hindutva lobby also opposes the women's reservation in the Parliament it very readily relies on the Hindu woman's mobilisation for the larger Hindu cause. The women's reservation issue is thus subsumed under the bigger banner of a larger Hindutva agenda which demands greater attention than women' reservation. What we see here is that nationalism through its policy of 'shared ideological framework' manages to subsume women's identity leaving no space for any other experience. Going back to nationalism in the 19th and early 20th century the politics of Hindu nationalism managed to do exactly this by pushing back women's causes time and again. It is in this context that we can also place Partha Chatterjee's question regarding the women's question being replaced by issues which were considered more important in the interest of the nation.[37](This will be discussed later in chap 1).

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[36] Ibid., 201-211.
[37] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1989.

Nationalist History: Whose history?

Sudipta Kaviraj writes that to understand nationalism as an historical reality it is essential to 'step outside the history that nationalism gives to itself'.[38] That despite all the different narratives there is what can be called 'a nationalist history of nationalism'.[39] He writes that history writing about Indian nationalism was earlier restricted to writing only about 'political events', which were described in a very 'linear fashion'. The emphasis on a particular account of nationalism which was able to separate all other accounts of nationalism was important. By its nature, the conception of nationalism had to be homogenising. Though he goes on to write that in recent years historical thinking has become less "holistic" and moved away form a "totalised history of nationalism". Historical attention has shifted from "political history to cultural history, from events to discourse, and even inside the history of ideas from the content of nationalistic thought to a more sensitive understanding of its form."[40]

Nationalism has within it a number of 'discursive formations' and it becomes necessary to find out these smaller formations as nationalism as a whole is made up of these smaller formations. And to an extent one can say that to imagine nationalism as a united whole would not be an entirely correct reading of nationalism. The idea of nationalism brings together, without any serious and minute analysis, social groups or communities of people. Formerly these groups and individuals (for example Hindus and Muslims coming together at the later stages of nationalism or the dissolution of caste differences) would not have considered themselves as one single people, having a single political identity. However, as Kaviraj emphasises after the emergence of nationalism they 'somehow do'. It is because of this homogenisation or imposed unity that nationalism tries to attain that it becomes important to 'break down the abstraction of the national movement itself, and of a large formation like the Congress, in order to see the politicians that are constantly at play inside historical accounts.'[41] The homogeneity of a particular society, culture, community can not be taken for granted. Even in a 'seemingly homogeneous history, it

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[38] Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India', in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed., Subaltern Studies, vii, New Delhi, Oxford, 1993, p. 1.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 2.
[41] Ibid.,4

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becomes important to ask whose history this is, in the sense of history *for* whom rather than history *of* whom, because there are changes in the telling.' The problem with seemingly homogeneous history is that there still exists constant conflicts between the 'axis and the periphery the mainstream and the embarrassing fringe, the self and the other.'[42] Thus the homogeneity of a society needs to be questioned and problematised further, as more often than not it may be imposed on its people by the dominant section. This argument can be extended to understand the role and the effect Hindu nationalism (mainstream/axis) had on for e.g. other nationalisms, women, Dalits, Muslims (the relation between Muslim men and Hindu woman as perceived by the communalists has been explained in Chapter Three). This according to Kaviraj would therefore be defined as the 'embarrassing fringe'.

As Partha Chatterjee shows, the Indian nationalist imagination could produce rhetoric of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood as easily as one of Hindu resistance against Muslim tyranny. Islam became the history of foreign conquest and its history external to Indian history. Nationalism as an ideology, as distinct from the anti-imperialist programme, also has a tendency to become deeply inward-looking, as it searches for those traits among the people which can be cited as not just unique but also superior.[43] (For example the Hindu nationalists superiority of the Hindu culture as compared to other cultures and religion). In a culturally relatively homogeneous population it leads to the privileging of the nation. But if, as in India, there are pronounced cultural differences and also a large degree of overlap with religious difference, such a search also develops a propensity to exclude some people with marked differences, for the traits which are valorised are not be found across all 'cultural' differences.

'Indian' Nationalism and its secular claims

How genuine were the secular claims of 'Indian' nationalism? Was it as secular as it claimed to be? Can nationalism with its cultural and religious association's claim to be secular? Keeping this in mind how secular was 'Indian' nationalism? To an extent

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Partha Chatterjee, 'National History and its Exclusions, in Nationalism, J. Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, New York, Oxford university Press, 1994, pp. 210-211.

nationalism tends to have proximity with either a dominant culture or religion which gives it its distinct identity.

According to William Gould, interpretations of Hinduism in India have been fluid and open. Since Hinduism did not represent an identifiable religious community, the terms 'Hindu nationalism', Hindu, or Hinduism are highly, problematic.[44] As David Ludden and other historians have observed, 'the conventional intellectual identification of "India" with the terms "Hindu" or "Hinduism" is deeply mistaken' since there is no original collective classification as such.[45] Nevertheless, a set of discourses about a Hindu political community, however mistaken in its sociological premises, did evolve in the late colonial period, through both colonial period, through both colonial agency and Indian debate. Institutions developed with the project of discussing the idea of the 'Hindu' – described as 'revivalist' because of their selection and rejuvenation of collective traditions. In some cases this revivalism involved a celebration of 'Hindu-ness' or the Hindu community. At other times it was a space for religious or social reform.[46] It is here that we also see a constantly shifting discourse within Hindu nationalism. This discourse ranged from a celebration of Hindu religion and social reforms. How and where did women figure in this discourse of Hindu nationalism?

Although William Gould's book studies how an organisation (Congress) that aimed to adopt secularism came to be permeated with languages of Hindu nationalism yet it offers an insight into the overall ideology of the various forms of Hindu nationalism; which had adopted various versions of nationalism but shared certain common features as well. Ideology is contained in all matters of language, but is dependent upon the level of articulation. And to an extent this articulation would sometimes be the same for the nationalists, whether secularists or communalists. The symbolism for the nation which appeared in speeches and other forms of political imagery drew upon religious themes.

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[44]William Gould, Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 3.

[45] David Ludden, ed., Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India Philadelphia, 1996, p.6.

[46] Op. cit. William Gould, p. 3.

And this resort to religion for the cause of nationalism was often the same for all forms of Hindu nationalism. [47] For the secular nationalists religion could be articulated subtly while for the communalists religious expression found a more overt expression.

Nationalists used religious rhetoric and activity to create popular representations of the nation, which contained a mixture of ideas and languages engaging with a range of social groups. In the building of mass movement, religion helped to provide the necessary framework, space, discipline and mobilisation (this concept is discussed later in the Chapter Three, with respect to the communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman), and in the process the political meaning of 'Hinduism' was redefined as an idea. In varied contexts the Hindu people were represented as being conterminous with the Indian nation. The techniques used to describe Hinduism and the nation was partly inherited from late nineteenth-century Hindu revivalism. Hinduism was considered to be a culture as well as a religion. Its philosophy and history, as discussions of the late nineteenth century had claimed, were presented and reconfigured in terms of an 'original' national community. In this building of a Hindu nation, religious diversity was sacrificed for a rhetoric that emphasised the essentially homogenous and 'pure' elements of a cultural tradition. However, this was done by instilling the Hindu nation with essential values and characteristics that included toleration and absorbency – values more closely associated with diversity and difference. Consequently the Hindu nation could be all things to all manner of nationalists, but it also provided a set of social and moral traditions by which outsiders were demonised. Thus the nationalists provided a means of national consolidation, a national history and mythology, and a sense of cultural purity.

William Gould has differentiated between the Hindu nationalism of the Congress from the Hindu nationalism of Savarkar and other Hindu ideologues, despite sharing some important basic premises. He writes that the looser forms of Hindu nationalism, which were more evident in Congress activity, are more problematic to define but more significant. Here there was little advocacy of nationhood being the exclusive preserve of Hindus, as compared to the thinking of the 'harder' version of nationalism. Yet religious

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[47] Ibid. 10.

symbolism entered and was accommodated in the understandings of the softer version of Hindu nationalism as well. And there was 'deliberate and public uses of religious symbolism' in the so called 'secular' version of Hindu nationalism as well.[48] Religion was used to mobilise and legitimise the masses. Although religion did not figure in official discussions in the national level it did find a place in the provincial level. The use of rhetoric to adapt to local religious and folk traditions all helped to theorise Hinduism as a universal system.[49]

Thus there is a very fine line when it comes to separating nationalism's of various kinds. Nationalism with its affinity to a dominant ideology may gain proximity to secular, religious or cultural nationalism according to changing contexts. Similarly these may exist together with the dominant form of nationalism. Where does this very fine line that separates nationalisms of various kinds leave women? If nationalism as a phenomenon always clings to a dominant identity, it also reduces other identities and women's identity to the margins.

Historical Roots of Hindu Nationalism

As Achin Vanaik notes, nationalism and bourgeois democracy emerged in India in two different circumstances. Nationalism as political movement, national identity, and nationalist ideology did not develop in the wake of religious decline. A Hindu religious 'renaissance' was central to the emergence of all three. To illuminate this argument further he starts with pre-British India. He attributes the high level of religious tolerance in Mughal India (and before) to the 'careful insulation of religious communities and the absence of integration'.[50]

However, colonial control built upon these boundaries and in fact carried them further because of the emergence of new forms of trade. As Vanaik notes the British conquest undermined the power and wealth of the Muslim upper classes who had administrative

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[48] Ibid.

[49] S. Radhakrishnan, Eastern religious and Western Thought ,Oxford, 1939, p.313.

[50] Achin Vanaik, India, The Painful Transition —Bourgeois Democracy in India, New Delhi, Verso,19 , pp, 141-143.

but not hereditary control over territories; in contrast, the Hindu business and commercial elite prospered through this separation of political power and economic wealth, giving rise overtime to significant economic and social disparity between the upper and middle classes of the two communities.[51]

Cultural colonialism and modernisation created an identity crisis for the Hindu elite and middle classes, pushing them to search for new forms of self-definition. It was in this process of re-defining/self-defining his own identity that the Hindu nationalist also came to redefine the Hindu woman according to the 'colonial encounter', his relationship with men of other communities etc. The Hindu woman was always being redefined within this larger definition of a Hindu nation and Hindu man. As Vanaik puts it 'When the material foundations for the easy coexistence of plural identities and of different communities are weakened, then the individual search for more clearly defined boundaries to the self becomes more urgent....A loose agglomeration of caste and religious identities gives way to greater self-assertion and competitiveness'.[52] The two results were a sharpening of the Hindu-Muslim distinctions and the elite-led search for an 'essential' Hinduism to replace the earlier mingling of flexible religious sects.

Gandhiism both legitimised the thrust of cultural-religious nationalism thrust and ensured that it would not take the extreme form of a political demand for a Hindu state. But in fact, as Vanaik writes, Gandhi made the national movement a mass movement by substantially Hinduising it. Thus, the first stage of the national movement was an appeal to specific religious loyalties of the masses. While the second stage of common mass struggle would strip away the inessentials of religiosity, its artificial barriers, and consolidate an overarching national identity. [53]However by imposing a non-religious definition on the people, the community identities also strengthened.

Describing Nehru as the chief unofficial, and later as the official spokesman of the later versions of nationalism, Gyanendra Pandey focuses on Nehru's differentiation of

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 141.
[53] Ibid., 142.

nationalism and communalism.[54] 'Hindu nationalism', wrote Nehru, 'was a natural growth from the soil of India, but inevitably it comes in the way of the larger nationalism which rises above differences of religion or creed'. *Real* or *India*n nationalism was something quite apart from these two religious and communal varieties of nationalism [Hindu and Muslim] and strictly speaking, is the only form which can be called nationalism in the modern sense of the word.' The basis of this 'real' Indian nationalism was the common economic interests of the mass of the people.[55]

However what was this common economic interest? Since it was in the hands of the bourgeoisie to give it the name of common economic interests is contradictory by itself. The feminist and the subaltern school make it clear that this 'common economic interests of the mass of the people' was not the 'real' Indian nationalism. The fact that it is considered so, speaks further of the inconsistencies of the very concept of not just Indian or Hindu nationalism but of nationalism in general. Thus whether it is Nehru's basis of Indian or 'real' nationalism as common economic interest or Gandhi's stripping away of religion from nationalism, the task of a feminist understanding of nationalism remains to critique those aspects which take nationalism for granted. Although the economy brings the various sections of the society together it also leaves those who do not have a stake in it. And often women along with the other marginalised section are excluded from this for of nationalism. This exclusion only tends to increase with time. Thus nationalism as an entity becomes more of a male domain. And as in the case of Hindu nationalism an upper-caste Hindu male dominated domain.

Nationalism and Caste

Writing in the context of caste and its exclusion from mainstream politics G. Aloysius in his much acclaimed *Nationalism Without a Nation in India*, writes that there has been a particular way of seeing the history of the 19th and the 20th century.[56] Many of these struggles were aimed at not just the creation of the nation- but included various other

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[54] Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in North India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 240- 245.
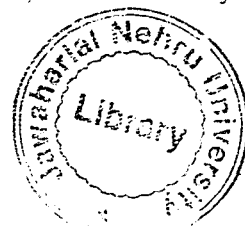
[55] J. Nehru, Discovery of India, Bombay, 1961, p.286.

[56] C. Alousius, Nationalism Without a Nation in India, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997.

dynamics at work. The national movement did not take into account these various other movements. In the view of the lower caste groups, tribal and Muslim masses in general the 'nationalist were Brahminic and their impatience for power was aimed at excluding the traditionally excluded masses. The nationalists' ideological response was to delegitimise lower caste tribals by describing them as job-hunting, communalist and pro-imperialist'.[57]

Sujata Patel writes that Pre-Gandhian nationalism was a coalition of interests of different regions. In contrast to this, Gandhian leadership was a truly nationalist one, in the sense that Gandhi was the first leader of all-India stature having a direct relation with different regions.[58] Thus the debate between integration and difference was a constant one as far as nationalism was concerned. Where does nationalism stand in this regard? Does imposing a false uniformity ensure integration in a heterogeneous society? Or is nationalism best when it is allowed to grow with all its differences? Yet again one can question how different are these differences in the society? Where and how equally do the different sections of the society stand even with their differences? In the case of Hindu nationalism in the 19th and early 20th century the difference between the Hindu women and Hindu men were immense. The women could not identify with the limited language of nationalism being spoken to them by the Hindu nationalist.

Nationalist and anti-colonialism: How important was anti–colonialism in building a nationalist fervour? Would Hindu nationalism have been the same nationalism without an anti-colonial consciousness? According to Sudipta Kaviraj, a nationalist consciousness can be anti-colonialist (in terms of its opposition to colonial domination) without necessarily having nationalist leanings. The 'discovery of a national community' which would take the responsibility of opposing colonialism, shows according to Sudipta Kaviraj the importance of colonialism for nationalism.[59] However the dynamics of what this community will be are all together different. The form that nationalism then acquires

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[57] Ibid., 172.

[58] Ibid., 160.

[59] Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India', in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed., Subaltern Studies, vii, New Delhi, Oxford, 1993, p. 10.

is the result of many factors. However the importance of women in the formation of this nationalism remains the task of feminist to uncover. Or to put it in another way the task of a feminist critique of nationalism remains to find how nationalism builds up its agenda by sidelining its women.

The dissertation seeks to cover the various debates on nationalism and through that study the impact of reforms on the Hindu woman how she was used in the politics of communal mobilisation. Thus most of the arguments revolve around nationalism and seek to study and critique Hindu nationalism through the lens of feminism. The period of study remains roughly the 19th century India and the early part of the 20th century. The main sources of the research work include secondary sources.

Chapter One

Literature and Debates on Hindu Nationalism

The discourse on nation and nationalism needs an analysis from the way it is viewed currently, the way it was viewed in the past and the way it will be understood in the future. A discourse on nation and nationalism offers a necessary balance to the rhetoric of nationalism which readily appeals to popular imagination. Nationalism as understood in common parlance fits within a 'grand narrative of nation'. This nation as I would argue is a nation which subsumes gender issues. Gender and nation are social and historical constructions and both participate in the formation of one another. Nations are gendered and also mapped in gendered terms. National myths and histories draw on gender roles and nationalist narratives is filled with images of the nation as mother, wife, and maiden. Nation-building involves a feminine and masculine division of labour, in which women reproduce the nation physically and symbolically and men protect, defend, and avenge the nation. The position of women in the nation/home involves certain 'precariousness'. This at the same time is her designated place in society and it within this place that she also faces the dangers of exclusion and the pressure to conform by a certain set of rules and regulations.[1]

Nationalism has been studied by various schools of thought in India. The different critiques on nationalism include the Marxist, Subaltern, Muslim, Dalit-Bahujan and the Feminist. All these schools have studied and brought out various aspects of Hindu nationalism. Mainstream writings on nationalism in India have tended to ignore various aspects of caste, gender, class and community in India. They have concentrated there writings on a particular section of the Hindu society, ignoring thereby the categories of caste, class, gender and community. Although these schools have criticised the mainstream study of nationalism, yet the importance of a feminist critique of nationalism remains as relevant in studying nationalism. Literature on nations and nationalism rarely addresses the question of gender, despite an interest in the differential participation of various social groups in nationalist projects.

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[1] Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostow, From Gender to Nation, New Delhi, Zubaan, 2004, p. 14.

As, McClintock[2] observes, theories of nationalism have tended to ignore gender as a category constitutive of nationalism itself. This important gap (in Western studies) was filled by scholars like Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, Sylvia Walby and Cynthia Enloe, among others, who explored the gendered character of membership in the nation.[3] As Yuval-Davis writes a fundamental characteristic of mainstream writings on nationalism is their Eurocentric or 'Westocentric' outlook. Obviously the study of nationalism in India needs to be studied differently.[4]

The process of 're-reading' of nationalism was initiated by scholars from outside Europe, notably by the Subaltern Studies Group coming out of Indian school of Marxism. In India Subaltern Studies have undertaken a review of official, nationalist history of decolonisation from the point of view of subaltern social forces- the term subaltern is a reference to Antonio Gramsci's terminology for popular strata. Scholars like Partha Chatterjee and Ranjit Guha have tried to reinterpret the history of South Asia from the vantage point of the subordinated. Their aim was to reveal how the hegemonic discourse of the West served to suppress the voices of the 'subalterns'. The most important Western instrument in this process was 'knowledge': thus, the various ways in which knowledge was used to dominate the world had to be unveiled.

According to Chatterjee, Western ideas of rationality relegated non-Western cultures into 'unscientific traditionalism'. The relativist approach, on the other hand, which holds that every culture was unique, was based on an essentialist conception of culture that precludes understanding from outside. Both views, Chatterjee maintains, were reflections of power relations. For him, anti/postcolonial nationalism, although a 'derivative discourse', was never totally dominated by Western models of nationhood. It could not imitate the West in every aspect of life.[5] The greatest contribution of scholars like

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[2]Anne Mc Clinctock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest, London. Routledge, 1995.

[3] Umut Ozkirimli, Theories of Natinalism – A Critical Introduction, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000, p. 192.

[4] As cited from Umut Ozkirimli, op. cit., p. 193.

[5] Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse? Delhi, Oxford, 1986.

Chatterjee and Guha was to offer a 'non-Westocentric' interpretation of anti/post colonial nationalisms.[6]

Subaltern studies have tried a method of studying the structure of domination and subordination in society. They have critically examined their potential for shaping a method for understanding the conflictual relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, and for the formulation of a theory of domination and subordination in society. The limited focus, on a particular section of society, led to the consideration of a particular kind of society.

Ambedkar, on the other hand, constructed a distinct mode of nationalism in opposition to the other nationalistic schools. For him, the contradiction between Dalitbahujans (in his words depressed classes) and the Brahminical (exploitative) was the principle contradiction. He saw anti-caste struggles as fundamental, within the context of which the anti-colonial struggle to overthrow the British had to be addressed, his agenda of anti-colonialism was therefore intertwined with the agenda of annihilation of caste.[7] In other words, there were already different imaginations of the nations of which only one became hegemonic and through the complex negotiations in the Constituent Assembly, became the basis of the independent nation-state. The hegemonic 'secular –nationalism' that thus came to be the dominant mode of nationhood, actually reinforced brahminical hegemony in a modernist, secular language, thanks to its blindness to other oppression and the struggle against them.

G. Aloysius in his book titled *Nationalism Without a Nation in India*, points out that there has been a particular way of seeing the history of the 19th and 20th century. Many of these struggles were aimed at not just the creation of the nation- but included various other dynamics at work. The national movement did not take into account these various other movements. In the view of the lower caste groups, tribals and Muslim masses in

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[6] Ozkirimli Umut, Theories of Nationalism - A Critical Introduction, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000, p. 194.

[7] Kancha Illaiah, 'Towards the Dalitisation of the Nation' in Partha Chatterjee, ed. Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp,269.

general the nationalist were brahminic and their impatience for power was aimed at excluding the traditionally excluded masses.[8]

Pre-Gandhian nationalism, according to Aloysius, was a coalition of interests of different regions. In contrast to this, Gandhian leadership was a truly nationalist one, in the sense that Gandhi was the first leader of all-India stature having a direct relation with different regions. However as Aloysius points out he was also completely insensitive to the cultural differentiation, and even historical and social development of the different communities within the sub-continent. In Aloysius's words for Gandhi India represented a religio-cultural community having the same cultural and social characteristics everywhere. All these aspects led to a concept of nationalism that was at once rarefied and both ideological and symbolic.[9]

Although during the second phase of the nationalist movement, Gandhi did attempt to bring together the nation and nationalism, yet this was brought about not in terms of modern political economy or the politics of equality, but by going back to the very elements of the old social order religion and traditions. Thus nationalism (forces of domination) triumphed, not nation. (masses)

Thus unity in diversity in the concrete context of the socio-cultural development of the subcontinent are not two value neutral aspects of what constitutes pan-Indian society; they are not apolitical terms. Unity represents the dominant and uniformising brahminic factors and is thus oppressive. Diversity on the other hand, stands for the movement away from these uniformising factors.[10]

In his book, Writing Social History, Sumit Sarkar devotes an entire chapter, "Identity and Difference: Caste in the Formation of the Ideologies of a Nationalism and Hindutva" to the question of caste.[11] He confronts the problem of what he calls the "historiographical silencing" and "elisions of the category of caste" and the "very obvious links between

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[8] G. Aloysius, Nationalism Without a Nation in India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 172.
[9] Ibid., 210, 212.
[10] Ibid., 186.
[11] Sumit Sarkar, 'Identity and Difference: Caste in the Formation of the Ideologies of a Nationalism and Hindutva', in Writing Social History, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 358-390.

such silencing and the priorities of mainstream nationalist history writing".[12] In other words Sarkar suggests that the elision of the category of caste in historiography, is not nearly an oversight. It is, or has been, illegitimate to talk of caste as a category in the writing of nationalist history precisely because in it the only legitimate actors were the forces of imperialism and nationalism.

Another aspect of the various schools of nationalism that deviate from the mainstream nationalist framework is that they are often looked upon as divisionary and dividing. And often the causes they espouse are looked upon as mundane and irrelevant when put within the nationalist framework. E.M.S Namboodripad in his *History of the Indian Freedom Struggle* comments on the Poona Pact and the great clash of the titans, Gandhi and Ambedkar by writing that the clash was a great blow to the freedom movement. For this led to the diversion of the people's attention from the objective of full independence to the mundane cause of the upliftment of Harijans.

The point being stressed here is that nationalism and its affinity with unity and all unifying factors aims to bring together people irrespective of their caste, class, community and gender. In one way it claims to bring together the disintegrated factors in a society together while paradoxically also imposing its hegemonic designs on them. Thus nationalism also makes a case of 'unity in diversity'. Though one has to look deeper at the innocence of this slogan. What is the unity and diversity being spoken about here really imply? How centralising a narrative is it?

Another question that arises according to Mushirul Hasan is that of Muslim nationalism. To what extent did the Indian Muslims have a political concept of their own sufficiently different from mainstream nationalism to merit a special distinction? The expression of Muslim identity has been widely in vogue in the Indian subcontinent for over a century. It was used by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Muslim University at Aligarh, to lend weight to his educational and reformist mission. Several reformers, publicists, writers and poets devised communal strategies, advance religious rights and political

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[12] Ibid.

representations and nurture the vision of a unified, pan Indian Muslim community.[13] Authors such as Bipin Chandra,[14] Gyanendra Pandey,[15] and Peter van der Veer locate the roots of current Indian religious conflict in the colonial or pre-colonial past. Some like Sudhir Chandra[16] and Gyanendra Pandey,[17] consider communalism to be the direct result of British policies and ideologies applied to South Asia. Others such as Freitag and Peter van der Veer, see religious conflict as a continuation, albeit transformed by the colonial encounter. Sudhir Chandra argues that, as a result of the erosion of the village and the extended family and the impact of capitalist development and communalism became "an alternative focus of unity and solidarity".[18] Nationalism also became this source of unity and solidarity for the Hindu nationalists. Thus concepts like nationalism and communalism rely on a notion of 'unity', even though falsely constructed.

Nationalism at various junctures of history negotiates with identities of all kinds. And these as we can see are women, Dalits and the underprivileged. Thus the project of nationalism (for example in India) is capable of subsuming all other identities within its umbrella. How the logic of caste was pushed aside by the nationalists to face the Muslim invader. Caste became irrelevant then; similarly women's question was taken up at a certain point of time in the 19th century and as Partha Chatterjee shows became irrelevant later.[19] The feminist critique of nationalism then in a way criticises not only the nationalist politics of 'using' the women and women's issues at various point of time, but the nationalist and their wider agenda of using other minorities as tools for their agenda.

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[13] Mushirul Hasan, 'Introduction' in Islam- Communities and the Nation –Muslim Identities in South Asia and Beyond, ed. by Mushirul Hasan, Delhi, Manohar 1998.

[14] Communalism in Modern India, New Delhi: Vikas, 1984.
[15] Gyandendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990.
[16] Sudhir Chandra, The Oppressive Present – Literature and Social Consciousness, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992.
[17] Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in North India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990.
[18] Sudhir Chandra, op. cit 116-154.
[19] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1989.

The criticism against the nationalist would then not only include issues concerning women but all issues including Dalit, peasants etc who have been used as 'tools' at the hands of nationalism.

Roger Friedland[20] argues that religion and nationalism partake of a common symbolic order and that religious nationalism is therefore not an oxymoron. Religion is not just a doctrine, a set of myths: it is an institutional space according to whose logic religious nationalists wish to remake the world. Religious nationalists locate the 'ground plan' of their work in a constitution derived not from consent but from a divinely revealed text that they interpret together. Although one can always question the legitimacy of this text and the way it defines the world and society at large.

Nation and the question of belonging: Associated with this was a way of defining those who belonged to the country, of those who constituted the nation, as distinct from those who did not. Implicit in such historical construction was a narrowing of the conception of the Hindu nation. However as Sudhir Chandra points out this conception of a nation in India operated along with a larger notion of the nation that rose above divisions of religion, region and language. Muslims were also defined, in this conception, as part of the Indian nation. The term 'Hindu' was used, however, to include Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and tribals only. Thus the attempts to include non-Hindus referred primarily to the Muslims. Hindus unlike Muslims, were constructed as a category that 'always' belonged to the country. The Muslim community was viewed as the 'other'. [21] The religious connotation of nationalism and its obvious links with Hindu nationalism (and thereby excluding other communities) emphasises the point about why nationalism in India has always been associated with Hindu nationalism. Although there have been nationalisms of all kinds yet the common point that emerges out of all these nationalisms has been their association with religion at large.

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[20] Roger Friedland, Money, Sex and God: The Erotic of Religious Nationalism, University of California, Sociological Theory, Vol. 20, No. 3, Nov. 2002, pp. 381-425.
[21] Sudhir Chandra, The Oppressive Present, Literature and Social Consciousness, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 116.

Thus, because of these socio-religious divisions, nationalism was conceived as 'the highest point within a constellation of loyalties'. However it must also be pointed out that the Hindu ambivalences vis-à-vis Muslims was not wholly influenced by the Hindi response to colonialism. There were other logics at work between Hindu/Muslim relations than merely the logic of colonialism. Nationalism was fed not only by a growing realization of the basic dichotomy of interests between itself and colonialism, but it was also nurtured by strong cultural factors that were mixed up with religion. Thus, nationalism, colonialism, cultural factors and religion operated at various levels.[22]. Thus nationalism as a phenomenon was simultaneously economic, political, cultural and gendered.

The ideology of nationalism has been defined in many ways. Although many of these definitions overlap and reveal common themes, yet the main theme is an overriding concern with the nation. Nationalism is an ideology that places the nation at the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being. However, it is important to separate the main goals under whose heading nationalism seeks to promote the nation's well-being. Anthony D. Smith defines these three generic goals as "national autonomy, national unity and national identity, and, for nationalists, a nation cannot survive without a sufficient degree of all three." [23]

However, these goals may not, necessarily be in the above order. In the Indian context, one can roughly say that the goal for a national identity was dominated by the 'Hindu' identity. Considering the diverse nature of the Hindu community across the length and breadth of the country, this led to the need to unite Hindus from the different regions of the country. This also meant the nationalism had its regional variations. However, this regional fragmentation was again brought together by the common goal of national autonomy. However again, it is in this common goal of national autonomy that we see the

[22] Sudhir Chandra, The Oppressive Present, pp, 159.
[23] Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism, Theory, Ideology and History, Polity, 2001, pp. 5-10.

construction of a 'standard nationalist history', which began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress.[24]

This association of nationalism with the Indian National Congress is only one aspect of its complexity. It is complex because nationalism's association with a particular organisation tends to overlook the working of other smaller organisations. Organisations which bring forward different issues and matters of concerns but are often discounted because their objectives are not the same as the more hegemonic organisation.

Secondly, it is also problematic because it restricts and historicises nationalism to a particular time period and space. To trace the growth of growth of Indian/Hindu nationalism to a particular organisation and time period would mean to overlook other forms of resistance. The aggregate and cumulative effect of which may not be necessarily trivial. The emphasis here is on everyday forms of subaltern protest. Subaltern historiography is important to understand both oppression and exclusion of specific social groups. Although Ranajit Guha has very clearly brought out the dangers of rigid categorisation of elite and subaltern which often overlook the oppression within the subaltern classes.[25]

However, subaltern historiography has helped in a better understanding of studying women from the lower social classes or women as colonised subjects. Third, the history of Indian nationalism is not grounded on neutral territories as far as it derives its basic ideology from a particular religion. Although the history of Indian nationalism changed from the early part of nineteenth century to the twentieth century, religion was always an important factor in its evolution. The impact of religion on nationalism and vice versa had (and still continues to have) important consequences on both. But more importantly the impact of nationalism and religion on women is vital. Since both functioned in

[24] Partha Chatterjee, Nationalism – Critical Concepts in Political Science, Part3, in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. ed.. Routledge. 2001. pp. 940.

[25] Ranajit Guha. 'Dominance Without Hegemony and Its Historiography', in Ranjit Guha, eds. Subaltern Studies vi, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989.

tandem to exercise control over the Hindu woman, in ways, that facilitated the nationalist project. This nationalist project was primarily driven by the Hindu upper caste male.

This leads to the fourth point about the nature of Indian nationalism. Who represents the nation and the society/community at large? If it is the upper caste Hindu male then what space does it leave for the woman at all, irrespective of her caste and religion?

Here it is important to keep in mind the distinction between community and society. According to Rada Ivekovic a community is a vertical patriarchal construction claiming a self-referential genealogy in identity and re-configurating one whenever needed. It is hierarchical and non-democratic, and does not recognise time. The community consists of a higher principle (hegemonic idea) with which the hegemonic group can identify directly, but to which the others can only be subjected.[26]

Society, on the other hand, is made up of individuals, (who can also, but need not, be members of various communities) who are not in direct contact with each other and who recognise and accept each other's differences. It is society, not community that can open a public and political space.[27] The gender and patriarchal hierarchies within the community facilitate the reshuffling of the social structure, communal order and the state. Thus to an extent whatever changes are effected by the men (social/political "reconstruction") always happen within the patriarchal order of the community. This pattern of community is different for both men and women as there is already an established gender hierarchy within the community.

The paradox lies in the fact that women are asked to enter this community with the already established male hierarchy. For the men who accept the hierarchy, it is easy to adhere to it because they can identify with it; they find themselves naturally resembling their ideal. For women, this identification is both necessary and impossible. Women do not resemble the ideal. For women it's always a choice between being true to the nation

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[26] Rada Ivekovic and Julie Mostov, op. cit., 12-14.
[27] Ibid.

(which amounts to being true to their father-figure) and being true to their own sex/gender. This double-blind situation makes one necessarily a traitor to one half of her double identity, and thus untrue to the common and "universal" ideal within the established hegemony. Men can never find themselves in this double-blind situation (in their capacity as men; though they can as members of a minority group); for men the national and the sexual/gender identities coincide, and never appear as split. It is the masculine (patriarchal) "same" which is being, reproduced. In this sense, man is "complete" and identical to himself only in his unity with the maternal body of the nation. Women can not participate in this reproduction of this (patriarchal) sameness, unless they erase their own presence and role as individual, sex and gender, they will therefore be treated as matter, sheer body, or instrument. Woman's attachment to this national mythology is therefore a denial of their sexuality and alienation of pleasure (imagining herself as male).[28] In the words of Nivedita Menon 'community' too, often denies women and other marginalised groups within it, the right to claim vis-à-vis the nation-state –autonomy, selfhood, access to resources.[29]

According to Sumit Sarkar the 'standard' history of nationalism focuses primarily on the political movement and its contest with the political power in the domain of the 'outside' (i.e., the 'material' domain of the state). Within modern historiographical trends the nationalist school has been criticised for uncritically emphasising and glorifying the role of a 'few great leaders' in the movement.[30] In its pursuit of projecting the movement as homogeneous, some forms of social divisions within Indian society were overlooked. The 'unified and collective opposition of the Indian nation against a common enemy' was always emphasised by the nationalist school. It is thus not surprising that gender relationships, specifically women's participation in the movement, were not addressed.[31]

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Nivedita Menon, Recovering Subversion, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004, p. 228.
[30]Sumit Sarkar, "Popular Movements" and "Middle Class" Leadership in Late Colonial India: Perspectives and Problems of a "History form Below", Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1983.
[31] Leela Kasturi and Veena Mazumdar ,eds, Women and Indian Nationalism , New Delhi, Vikas, 1994, p. 1-6.

Social scientists have engaged with varied methodological and theoretical approaches and perspectives in trying to understand the Indian nationalist movement. In particular, these debates have emphasised the importance of understanding the ways in which women were positioned in relation to colonialism and nationalism as well as their involvement in the nationalist movement. Though women's relationship with nationalism and colonialism was ambiguous and problematic, historical accounts unanimously agree that the nationalist struggle in India against British colonial rule brought about the mobilisation of both men and women. The very emergence of women in the public domain was as sign of mobilisation of women.[32]

Partha Chattejee on the 'paradox of the women's question'

Anti-colonial history in India created its "own domain of sovereignty" within the colonial society before the political battle with the imperial power. It did so by dividing the social institutions and practices into two domains: the material and the spiritual. The material was the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology – a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain Western superiority was an acknowledged fact and had to be replicated. The 'spiritual' domain was to be an 'inner' domain. It was here that cultural identity of the colonized was recognised. The 'spiritual' domain became all the more important because of the invasion of the colonised in all other aspects of life. This Chatterjee describes as the 'fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.[33]

The 'spiritual' domain becomes important from a feminist point of view because it was here that women were expected to play an important role within the nationalist agenda. It was the 'inner' domain of the Hindu culture and therefore the domain which had to be

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[32] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement, New Delhi, Sage, 2006, p.41.
[33] Partha Chatterjee, Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories, New Delhi. Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 119-121.

protected by the women as the guardians of the cultural and spiritual domain. [34]The link here between women as being guardians of a particular culture (also the dominant culture) and therefore the need to extend this dominant culture from the domestic to the nationalist arena (also the 'outer' domain) through the men (which implicitly implies Hindu men), establishes the fact that nationalism was not treading on neutrally religious grounds.

The dynamics of the 'spiritual' or 'inner' domain is not a part of conventional histories, in which nationalism comprises of an essential political component. However, as Partha Chatterjee has shown it, it is here that nationalism launched its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to adopt a national culture which is 'modern' but not Western'.[35]

Thus to this effect, the nationalists adopted a particular language, education and the family for their 'spiritual transformation'. Language became part of the cultural identity which had to be transformed and made part of the modern world. It became a 'zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty". [36] Thus one can ask what language/ idiom does nationalism adopt to discriminate women? Does this language democratise the feminist universe? Language uses the argument of reason (masculine) and is found to be intrinsically connected with power.[37] Thus the language used by the Hindu nationalists excluded women from achieving the status of a subject. Since reason is also confined to the public domain. This also marked the entry of print culture and literary societies. Language, literature and print have been viewed as significant means for contests over power, the propagation of dominant ideas, and the fashioning of national, regional and communal identities in modern Europe, Asia and Africa.[38]. The 'Hindu publicists' used

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Partha Chatterjee, 'Whose Imagined Community?' in Nationalism- Critical Concepts in Political Science-iii, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, ed., Routledge, 2001, pp. 940-944.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Alessandra Tanesini, 'Reason and Unreason' in Feminism- An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies, Blackwell Punlishers, USA, 1999.

[38] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity, Community – Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001,p. 10.; Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. Alan Sheridan, London, 1972.

the public media consciously or unconsciously to promulgate a particular 'Hindu' point of view and through their activities and writings, asserted community differences and communal antagonisms, though from different perspectives and standpoints.[39]

'Print capitalism' and the institutions of secondary education in Bengal provided the space for a new language, and literature was both 'generalised and normalised'- outside the domain of the state. Thus literature in various forms acquired a new language, which could be used accordingly by the Hindu nationalists.

The third domain was the domain of the family. It is here, that the assertion of autonomy and difference was the most dramatic. The domain of family and the position of women underwent considerable change in the world of the nationalist middle class. The 'new woman' was to be modern but a symbol of national tradition and therefore had to be different from the 'Western' woman Similarly, the "new patriarchy" which came into existence, was different from the traditional order, but one which was explicitly claimed to be different from the 'western family'.[40]

The period of 'social reform' is divided into two very distinct phases by Chatterjee. In the earlier phase, Indian reformers looked to the colonial authorities to bring on change. This change was thus, brought about by state action.[41] The second phase is what Partha Chatterjee describes as the beginning of the period of nationalism. Reforms still remain important in this phase but without the intervention of the colonial state. It is also the beginning of the cultural phase of nationalism.[42]

Prominent sections of the bourgeoisie were keen on reforming what the colonialists described as 'barbaric' aspects of the Hindu society. The revivalists challenged this intervention into 'Indian tradition'. Although reformists and revivalists had different views with regard to tradition and modernity they did share some common aspects. For

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[39] Charu Gupta, Ibid. 30-84.
[40] Partha Chatterjee, Nations and Its Fragments, pp. 126-132.
[41] Details of the various reforms like Age of Consent Bill etc. have been explained later.
[42] Partha Chatterjee, Nationalism-Critical Concepts in Political Science, op. cit. 941-942.

example, the anti-imperialists hero was 'manly', the pre-colonial and pre-Muslim past was referred to as the "glorious past" where women were worshipped and both used nationalist arguments.[43]

However Sumit Sarkar has criticised Partha Chatterjee for remaining 'silent' about the active role of women in every other kind of politics, as well as in specific women's associations. He has criticised Chatterjee for confining women's initiative or autonomy in the nationalist era only inside the home or in autobiographies. "Within the home, Chatterjee focuses much more closely on how women preserved pre-colonial modes of being and resistance, echoing standard nationalist concerns." He has pointed out Chatterjee's lack of interest in studying how women struggled with a patriarchal domination that was overwhelmingly indigenous in its structure. Chatterjee studies women's status only on the basis of pre and post-colonial structure. A study of women independently with reference to the highly indigenised patriarchy and patriarchal structures is overlooked by Partha Chatterjee. He has been criticised for studying only how women responded to changes brought about by colonialism within the overall framework of nationalism. But patriarchy as such was dominant beyond nationalism and the same goes for caste. [44]

Therefore Sarkar emphasises on an independent study of patriarchy even beyond nationalistic concerns, as nationalism is already hegemonic in its concerns. Its discourse appropriates marginal and critical voices.[45] Patriarchy has to be criticised for critiquing nationalism. And women's issues need to be studied beyond the limited fold of nationalism. Therefore a feminist critique of nationalism would argue that the very problem with nationalism and its goal of emancipation of women is itself contradictory. Under nationalism women- their issues, their concerns were all viewed through a nationalist prism. "Nationalism located its own subjectivity in the spiritual domain of

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[43] Nivedita Menon, ed., Gender and Politics in India, Oxford, New Delhi, p. 4.

[44] Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.96.

[45] Ibid., 96-101.

culture where it considered itself superior to the West and sovereign".[46] It is within this domain of culture that reforms for the Hindu women were also formulated. The Hindu culture and reforms came under the overall nationalist framework. Women's issues are always discussed within bigger 'horizons'- a 'horizon' that engulfs everything within it. With reference to time and space this may change from nation, religion, caste etc. or may include all of the above at one time. In the 19th century women's issues were never looked at beyond the national "imaginary".

According to Sumit Sarkar, Chatterjee remains vague about 'the new idea of womanhood in the era of nationalism' the 'battle' for which, he suggests, 'unlike the women's movement in nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe and America', 'was waged in the home...outside the arena of political agitation.'[47] Who was this 'new woman' in the domestic sphere? How was she different from the woman before the era of nationalism? It is also important to look at the idea of "new woman" in the 'Hindi belt', a geographical region which, unlike other regions such as Maharashtra and Bengal, was (and still) is burdened with constraining social norms and practices and a high rate of female illiteracy.[48] Every discourse operates through powers of selective inclusion and exclusion; nationalist discourse is no exception. The Hindu nationalist adopted various strategies for containing women's agency. The containment by the nationalist of women's agency can be most clearly identified with the process of domesticisation and to confine/impute its effects to domestic influence.

Sumit Sarkar also launches a critique of nationalism from the vantage point of the lower-caste women. According to Sarkar Indian and Hindu nationalism have had significantly varying meanings over time, and it is legitimate to expect questions of caste (in this case gender) to have entered into the formations of both also in highly differentiated ways. According to Sarkar the more 'modern' conceptions of Indian unity, were confined in the nineteenth century to elite-intellectual, Western-educated circles. They remained for long,

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[46] Parth Chatterjee, Nation and Its Fragments, p132.
[47] Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History, p.95-97.
[48] Zoya Hasan, 'Foreword', to Women in the Indian National Movement- Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42, in Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Sage, 2006, p. 12.

mild 'liberal' demands apart, largely disassociated from anti-colonial attitudes.[49] Caste along with gender oppression, in the later nineteenth century became relegated as an issue of 'social' reform less immediately relevant than 'basic' questions of political independence or class struggle. It was assumed that caste along with gender issues could be postponed, would be more or less automatically resolved with changes in political and economic structures, and might be 'divisive' from the point of view of anti-British struggle.[50]

One of the shortcomings of projecting a correct picture of the nationalist activities of the middle-class women was that women were projected as a 'homogenous and uniform category'. Women harboured different opinions with respect to their religion, age, caste and class. With the overlooking of caste and religious differences amongst women the national movement became more and more homogenised.

Uma Chakravarty through her essay has shown that the 'Aryan woman was the only object of historical concern'[51] and that the 'Vedic dasi (woman in servitude).......disappeared without showing any trace of herself in nineteenth century history.'[52] Uma Chakravarty reminds us, 'vast sections of women did not exist for the 19th century nationalists'. She poses this question in her essay titled. 'What ever happened to the Vedic Dasi?'[53]. There was a deliberate selection of middle-class and elite women as nationalist actors. Colonial ideology felt the need to assert their moral superiority in the area of gender relations. The 'higher' morality of the imperial masters could be effectively established by highlighting the low status of women among the subject population as it was an issue by which the moral 'inferiority' of the subject position could simultaneously be demonstrated.

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[49] Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History, p.367.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi Kali for Women, 1989, p. 28.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 79.

The women's question thus became a crucial tool in the colonial ideology. The bulk of colonial writing in India focussed on demonstrating the peculiarities of Hindu civilisation, and the barbaric practices pertaining to women. The Hindu nationalists responded by elevating[54] their women in the face of British criticism and argued about the 'high' status of women in ancient India. Vedic women such as Gargi and Maitreyi were epitomised and they became the stock favourites of the nationalist writers.[55]

As Meredith Borthwick, Gulam Murshid, and other scholars have shown, the eighteenth century European idea of "civilisation" culminated, in early nineteenth century India, in an imperialist critique of Indian/Hindu domestic life, which was now held to be inferior to what became mid-Victorian ideals of bourgeois domesticity.[56] The "condition of women" question in nineteenth century India was part of that critique, as were the ideas of "modern" individual, "freedom", "equality" and "rights". In passages that reflect a combination of egalitarianism and Orientalism, James Mill's The History of British India (1817) joined together the thematic of the family/nation and a teleology of "freedom":

The condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nations....The history of uncultivated nations uniformly represents the women as in a state of abject slavery, from which they slowly emerge as civilisation advances....A state of dependence more strict and humiliating than that which is ordained for the weaker sex among the Hindus cannot easily be conceived.[57]

Nationalism and its Myths

Nivedita Menon writes that the belief that the status of women was very high in the Vedic Age was a product of the nineteenth century interaction between colonialism and nationalism. A significant tool used by the colonial ideology to prove the inferiority of the subject population was the question of the status of women. The barbaric practices

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[54] The politics of elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman has been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

[55] Uma Chaktavarty, op. cit. 27-79.

[56] Meredith Borthwick, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984); Gulam Murshid, Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernisation, 1849-1905, Rajshahi, 1983

[57] James Mill, The History of British India, vol. 1, ed. H.H. Wilson, London, 1840, p. 309-10.

against women according to the colonialists showed the moral inferiority of the Indians. The reaction to this kind of characterization of Indian/Hindu society took the form of glorification of the Indian past in the form of a 'Golden Vedic Age' by the Hindu nationalists.[58] Historians like Uma Chakravarty and Kumkum Sangari question this construction of the past at several levels. First they point out that the evidence used by the Hindu nationalists was exclusively drawn from Brahminical sources, and was therefore, a partial history at best.[59]

Second, as Nivedita Menon points out, Vedic texts focused on specific geographical areas, which focused on some regions only. Whereas the concept of 'India' as an entity came into being only in the nineteenth century through the encounter with colonialism. Thus, defining the past in terms of a 'Vedic India' presented a falsely homogeneous picture.[60]

Third, even the brahminical sources show sufficient evidence that the subordination of women was complete long before Muslims as a religious community had even come into being.[61] The tendency of the Hindu nationalists to show that the Hindu woman enjoyed a 'high' status before the arrival of the Muslims in India is false and infact as Charu Gupta has shown gender was infact central to the creation of a sexualised and communalised Hindu identity in colonial UP.[62] However contemporary feminist historians of ancient India explode the myth of the superior position of women in the Vedic period. The golden age of Indian womanhood was a selective picture of the past created in the context of the politics of the nineteenth century. Infact the Hindu man used the Hindu woman as a weapon of communal mobilisation against the Muslims. Therefore communalism was built-up by men of both communities.

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[58] Nivedita Menon, ed., Gender and Politics in India, New Delhi, Oxford, p. 2.

[59] Uma Chakravarty in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History; Kumkum Sangari, 1995

[60] Nivedita Menon, op. cit. 3.

[61] Nivedita Menon, op. cit.

[62] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001, p. 321.

As Uma chakravarti shows, cultural nationalism emerged in India in the 1830's in response to attacks on Hindu civilisation made by Christian missionaries and colonial administrators. When the colonial state abolished sati, Hindu nationalists perceived this as an intrusion into the most sacred sphere on Hindu society – the Hindu family.[63] Constructing Hindus as morally inferior by selectively highlighting the ways in which Hinduism oppressed women, colonialists prompted a nationalist response that celebrated Hinduism. This celebration was more a response to the colonial attack on Hinduism and brought them closer as a community. A well-known example of this form of nationalism is the use of Hindu symbols and the construction of the past as 'The Golden Vedic Age'.

Under colonial rule, the reconstitution of tradition was largely carried out through debating the status of women. It has been argued by historians like Lata Mani that the struggle over the abolition of Sati by the British became less about women and their status and more about what constituted 'authentic' cultural tradition. Thus, we must understand the practice of Sati as well as the campaign against and for it, not simply in attitudes towards women, but in the larger, more complex context of the encounter between colonialism and the Indian elites.[64]

Thus the functional aspects of reforms need to be understood in the overall context of Hindu nationalism and its fight against colonialism. The 'linear connection' between the reform movements and gender equality ignores several critical issues and contradictions within the reform movements. It prevents an analysis of the politically critical role of gender equality within Indian nationalism. And finally, it ignores women's own views, aspirations and needs that provided many additional dimensions to the multiple struggles that contributed to the anti-imperialist movement.[65]

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[63] Uma Chakravarty in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History; Kumkum Sangari, 1995, p. 27-87.

[64] Lata Mani, 'Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India', in Kumkum Cangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1989; Nivedita Menon, op. cit., p.6.

[65] Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, from the 'Introduction' to Women and Indian Nationalism, Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, ed., New Delhi, Vikas,1994, p. 5

On the need to define Hindus

Bhikhu Parekh gives reasons and the need for both the British and the Hindus to define Hindus. Definition of a particular community in terms of religion, caste etc brings them closer. The British could not govern India without defining the Hindus and reducing them to manageable categories derived from their own ways of thought. However the Hindus did not like their essentialist and biased definition, and as Parekh puts it had 'no other way to counter it save by providing an alternative self-definition. The Hindus in order to define themselves needed to conceptualise themselves into a single, distinct and homogeneous community. This rather vague Hindu self-consciousness now began to acquire, for the first time in its history, a 'corporate articulation during British rule'.[66]

In his study of 'colonialism, tradition and reform' during the pre-Gandhi era, Bhikhu Parekh perceptively distinguishes four main types of Indian attitudes –although he is himself quick to warn against a rigidly schematic use of typology. The four perspectives are: traditionalism, modernism, critical modernism, and critical traditionalism. While the distinction between the first two is relatively straightforward, the difference between the last two is more complex and nuanced.

The nineteenth century conferred on to the later independence movement a 'complex set of interpretative approaches and perspectives, together with a number of alternative blueprints or guideposts for the future course of India'. Indian reactions to the West cannot neatly be separated by the 'clock of centuries'.[67]

In Parekh's account, traditionalists 'saw little wrong with their society, and consequently either took no interest in British rule or dismissed it as inconsequential'. By contrasts, modernists were 'convinced that modernity was incompatible with India's traditional way of life and thought, and felt that these must be rejected'. However, more difficult to sort

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[66] Bhikhu Parekh, Colonialism, Tradition and Reform- An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse, New Delhi, Sage, p. 41.

[67] Fred Dallmayr and G.N. Devy, Between Tradition and Modernity: India's Search for a Identity New Delhi, Sage, p. 19.

out is the relation between critical modernism and critical traditionalism. In Parekh's portrayal, critical modernists —whose spokesmen included Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), among others —basically agreed with modernists that Indian society needed to be thoroughly revamped and transformed; yet they also believed that India's time-honoured traditions —especially when fused or synthesised with novel Western ideas —provided at least some resources for modernisation and national resurgence. This reliance on cultural synthesis was not acceptable in this form to critical traditionalists who regarded cultural traditions as organic wholes and hence preferred to stress the potential of critical self-renewal of Indian cultures from within. Representatives of this outlook included Saraswati, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), and Vivekananda. Despite their oppositions to status-quo politics, the disagreements between the two critical camps were subtle and by no means marginal. [68]

Gandhi and Indian Nationalism

Any study of Indian and Hindu nationalism will be incomplete without mentioning Mahatma Gandhi and his role in the formation of Indian nationalism. Gandhi's role becomes important in many contexts. He was responsible for women stepping out of the domestic domain to the domain of the public in large-scale. He also worked towards the upliftment of the untouchables. Although some of Gandhi's motives can't be doubted yet there was also a lot of contradiction in his thought.

In his overall lifework, Gandhi reflects, more than anyone else, the complexity and tensional ambivalence of pre-independence India wedged 'between tradition and modernity'. He was a deeply religious person, but he was also a relentless critic of religious abuses, including those afflicting the caste system. Although clearly, the most well-known and influential figure in the nationalist movement, Gandhi never accepted any official position in that movement. While seeking Indian self-rule and national independence from the British, he was deeply suspicious of the hegemonic bent of the modern nation, favouring instead a decentralised web of village governments.

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[68] Bhikhi Parekh, op. cit. 42- 75.

Gandhi's symbolising and mythologizing of female sexuality was in line with his assertion of an essentialised "national identity" based on symbols such as the "charkha" (spinning-wheel) and "khadi" (home-spun cloth). These national symbols were also strategically gendered through his evocation of mythological figures like Sita, Draupadi, and Savitri which embodied roles for women in the nationalist struggle. His representation of these figures deliberately dehistoricised women. The identification of Sita with Swadeshi demonstrates how the female body and what it is clothed in can become a symbol for national liberation.[69]

The arena of female sexuality – fertility/infertility; motherhood; the sexual division of labour – is the site of certain "traditions" most oppressive for women. The key issue of the control of female sexuality was legitimised under the name of "tradition". Gandhi evoked tradition by ahistorisizing its tenets and mythological figures. The belief that women even more then men were the guardians of tradition, particularly against a foreign enemy, was used to reinforce the most regressive aspects of tradition. Particularly during nationalist movements, slogans such as "mother land" are glorified to counteract colonialist attitudes. Female sexuality was essentialised through Gandhi's appeal to the "female" virtues: chastity, purity, self-sacrifice, and suffering. Ketu K. Katrak points out the dangers of reifying "traditions", of treating them as the "transcendent emblems of a culture", which are felt most negatively by women particularly after independence when the rationale of justifying traditions against the enemy is no longer needed.[70]

The revolutionary movement and ideology challenged the hegemony of the 'feminised' Gandhian-Congress movement as the only legitimate movement for the political liberation of the country. There was discontentment with the Gandhian strategies of passive non-violence led by agrarian and industrial masses. It is in this context that we can place the revolutionary woman who challenged the effectiveness of non-violence as

[69] "Indian Nationalism, Gandhian "Satyagraha", and Representations of Female Sexuality" by Ketu H.Katrak in Nationalisms and Sexualities, ed., Andrew Parker, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger, Routledge, New York, 1992, p. 397.

[70] Ibid., 396-403.

an efficient strategy for political liberation. She stood in opposition to the construct of the nationalist woman and all the qualities she embodied. These constructs were both fragile and always exposed to re-construction.[71] Thus a woman/man did not always have to abide by the construct, yet the ability of the construct to re-envelope women/men within its fold cannot be underestimated. These constructs of violence/non-violence were formed by political exigencies and changing political convictions of the Hindu nationalists. These nationalist constructs can be different for women at various times yet their ability to re-construct women can not be underestimated.

Suruchi Thapar-Bkorkert points out the difference between the two constructs of violence and non-violence. The first was on the symbolic imagery. Like the *satyagrahis*, revolutionaries used religious imagery to rationalise and explain their activities. Religious imagery was given political significance across the national spectrum, irrespective of political divisions. These were seen as symbols of the motherland and the nationalist spirit.[72] The image of Kali could be seen to represent both a woman who had abandoned her shame and feminity and a woman who destroyed evil. The representations of Kali depict an 'inner tension within nationalism about the principles of female strength and about the violence and destructiveness latent in it'.[73]

Thus as Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert writes, revolutionaries activities were undertaken by women within and outside the domestic sphere, and unlike the experience of the non-violent satyagrahis, women who took the revolutionary path were exposed to various degrees of violence. Several reasons are associated with women becoming revolutionaries.[74] In relation to Bengal, it is argued that 'if the Gandhian movement encouraged women to become mass participants in the freedom struggle, the revolutionaries made them equal participants'.[75]

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[71] Suruchi 128

[72] Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement- Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42, New Delhi, Sage, 2006, pp. 71-72.

[73] Tanika Sarkar, 'Nationalist Iconography: Image of Women in 19th Century Bengali Literature', Economic and Political Weekly, 1987, 22 (47).

[74] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, op. cit. 128.

[75] (Manini Chatterjee, '1930: Turning Point in the Participation of Women in the Freedom Struggle', Social Scientist, 2001, 7-8: 39-47.

However inherent in this equality is the fact that even while resorting to violent activities as men, women were only working for a nationalist cause and its exigencies and were not assigned a particular place as far as nationalism was concerned. And so at times women fought alongside men and other times both the elite and middle-class women fought alongside. Nationalist symbols associated with women as nurturers and defenders of civilisation elevated women's existing roles in both public and domestic domains, and this was facilitated by the nationalist atmosphere of segregation and respectability. The latter aspect was necessary for both elite and middle-class women. Once women came out of the domestic sphere in to the public sphere and negotiated their movements within both they had the choice of adopting the different political ideologies of either non-violent Gandhism or revolutionary strategies which often resorted to violence.

However, in many ways Gandhi worked against a predominantly Brahminical patriarchal order, the feminine nature of his protest touching the sphere of domesticity, an environment where women did not have the formal power of taking positions. In emphasising the virtues of non-violence, Gandhi gave the protest a moral quality and emphasised woman's strength. It has been argues that Gandhi referred to self-sacrifice and non-violence as 'manly virtues'.[76]

However, the contradiction in Gandhi's thoughts lay in the fact that while emphasising equality and dignity for women in the households and seeking their participation in the movement, he argued that it would be difficult for women to participate in politics if this came in conflict with their family responsibilities, including their duty to look after children and aged parents in the household.[77] Though Gandhi's ideas called for no reorganisation of the family or of the role of men within it, women by being granted the privilege as guardians of the house could now use that constructed 'sacred' space for their

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[76] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, op. cit.,77; Rumina Sethi, 'Contesting Identities: Involvement and Resistance of Women in the Indian National Movement', Journal of Women's Studies, 5 (3): 305-13), 1996.
[77] K.C.Ahmad, 'Gandhi, Women's Roles and the Freedom Movement', Occasional Papers on History and Society, 1984, 19: 1-24; Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Ibid. 76-77.

own nationalist activities. Gandhi fully articulated the centrality of religion in India life and that together with caste and gender it was inseparable from nation-building.[78]

Gandhi tried to use women's traditional qualities and extend their traditional roles into the political sphere. Gandhi was basically a traditionalist as is evident from the fact that he did not question the caste system while attacking untouchability. Similarly, even when he advocated that the evil social practices affecting women should be done away with he did so without conceiving of changes in their traditional roles.

One can ask the question whether Gandhi was successful in the political mobilisation of women as a group, could he raise their consciousness to a level that there was a radical change in their way of thinking and thirdly, did he set out clear objectives for them? There is sufficient proof that he was successful in mobilising women (non-Cooperation and Quit India Movement) who came out in groups and participated in the national movement. However, there is very little to show that he succeeded in changing or tried to change the thinking or level of consciousness of women. Gandhi did not envisage a radical change in the traditional framework of ideas. However, inspite of all this Gandhi's greatest contribution lies in mobilising women even though it was done within the traditional familial context.

Indian Nationalism, Gandhi, and Representation of Female Sexuality

Gandhi enjoined Indian men and women to engage in acts of passive resistance which feminised the usually masculinist struggle against the coloniser. Women could offer better models of passive resistance than men. Yet Gandhi's involvement of women in his "satyagraha" movement – of his national strategy for national liberation –did not intend to confuse men' and women's role; in particular, Gandhi did not challenge patriarchal traditions that·oppressed women within the house. His specific representations of women and female sexuality, and his symbolising from Hindu mythology of selected female figures that embodied a nationalist spirit promoted a "traditional" ideology wherein

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[78] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, ibid. 78.

female sexuality was legitimately embodied only in marriage, wifehood, motherhood, domesticity – all forms of controlling women's bodies.[79]

Ketu H. Katrak notes that female sexuality was "highly problematic"[80] for Gandhi. Ganghi's legacy for women's movement in India is a complex and debatable area. Certain feminist gains are specifically attributable to Gandhi in his success at involving vast numbers of women in the satyagraha movement. His contribution in mobilising the Hindu women. But we need to acknowledge and problematise the gains and losses of Gandhi's strategies carefully. Gandhi while reversing the "personal is the political", brought the political struggle for freedom right into women's personal lives, extending women's role from service in the home to service for the nation.

However, one critique of a non-violent ideology is that it can effectively mask the violence in certain religious and cultural traditions (for instance, Hindu-Muslim conflicts). In fact as Ketu H. Katrak points out, in India, the dominance of Hindu religion and ideology was not dealt with, as it needed to be, within Gandhi's mass-based movement.[81] There could be various reasons for this: as a mass-based movement required first and foremost service for the nation, other issues, such as, religious and women's issues were considered less important. Although participation in the satyagraha movement gave women a sense of power, but it was localised power –for a particular historic struggle for independence. Gandhi went as far as "extending "women's roles as wives and mothers, but not in making interventions in patriarchal order or political power. If social customs were challenged at all, they were "in the cause of Swaraj"; and after Swaraj, the gains could easily be repealed. The contradictions in Gandhi's strategies of mobilising women, the points of convergence and divergence between national liberation and sexual liberation were mystified through typically nationalist appeals – colonialism as the common enemy, and women's "personal" issues as secondary to the

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[79] "Indian Nationalism, Gandhian "Satyagraha", and Representations of Female Sexuality" by Ketu H.Katrak in Nationalisms and Sexualities, ed., Andrew Parker, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger, Routledge, New York, 1992, pp. 395-404.
[80] Ibid., 396
[81] Ibid., 404.

national cause.[82]Women were lauded as good satyagrahis (non-violent activists), but the real issues that concerned them as women, remarks Kumari Jayawardena, were regarded by the men as of secondary importance."[83]

Nationalism - A hegemonic construct: According to Sumit Sarkar, late-colonial Indian history 'is still in large part grounded on the assumption that the entire meaningful world of political action and discourse can be comprehended through the categories of imperialism, nationalism, and communalism, the interaction among which eventually produced the end result of the coming of a freedom that was also the partitioning of the subcontinent. Such an assumption involves an uncritical acceptance of the holistic ideological claims of 'Indian' nationalism and 'Hindu and 'Muslim' communalism-claims that have sought to homogenize a multitude of differences of regions, class, caste, and gender."[84]

The fact remains that nationalism while being examined as a hegemonic construct tends to disregard all the differences inherent in it. Differences of regions, class, caste and gender are often overlooked thus making nationalism a hegemonic construct. Nationalism's association with a single cause, a single people or group of people, a single community, a single religion and finally a particular gender has been found to overwhelm all other identities and diversities. The breaking down of all these identities also implies that nationalism then would not remain a hegemonic construct; rather one can ask what nationalism would then remain?

In a similar vein Kamala Visweshwaran points out that the nationalist resolution of the women's question, must be seen not only as a strategy for contesting colonial hegemony, but as a strategy for the containment of women's agency, carrying within it the seeds of

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[82]"Indian Nationalism, Gandhian "Satyagraha", and Representations of Female Sexuality" by Ketu H.Katrak.
[83] Kumari Jayawardena, Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World, Zed Press, London, 1986.
[84] Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History, pp 358.

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colonial assumptions about gender.[85] The reverse is also true: for women become women not only in relation to men, but also in opposition to other women. Thus the subject position of the middle-class or elite nationalist 'women' must be counter posed to that of subaltern women. The question of subaltern women, however, requires that we understand how such subjects are rendered dependent by the gendering of nationalist ideology and its (counter) historiography.

According to Kamala Visveshwaran they (subaltern women) usually appear only at the margins of bureaucratic accounts and are often coded as observers rather than participants. "Unlike the effects which middle-class women's speech produces lower class women are described as insignificant and illiterate streetwalkers' whose acts of resistance are scorned as 'making' small speeches".[86] Such women were not considered appropriate representatives of the nationalist movement, either by the British or Indian nationalist. However it may be said that it is at the 'point of erasure that the emergence of the subaltern is possible'. Paradoxically, it is in this tension that we recognize the effect where the gendered 'subaltern' is felt.

Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert writes about the danger of overlooking the levels of oppression within the subaltern class. Historiography is important to understand both oppression and exclusion of specific groups and the activities of the masses as arise independently of the influence of the elite. However, the rigid categories of the elite and subaltern often overlook the varying levels of oppression within the subaltern classes.[87] The subaltern school has come under scrutiny from scholars who argue that the historiography does not explicitly discuss the role of women, particularly in relation to 'subaltern' men. However, she goes on to argue that despite these criticisms, subaltern historiography has enabled us to use the category 'subaltern' to express varied forms of exclusion and oppression: women as a marginalised group, women from the lower social classes or women as colonised subjects. For to confine all women in one group will again lead to the

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[85] Kamala Visweshwaran, 'Small Speeches, Subaltern Gender: Nationalist Ideology and Its Historiography', in Subaltern Studies, Vol. ix, Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakravarty, ed., New Delhi, Oxford, 1996, p. 86.
[86] Ibid., 121-122.
[87] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, 2005-06, p. 43- 44.

hegemony of a few at the expense of all other identities of women in terms of caste and class in society.

Conclusion

For the Hindu men the Hindu nationalists thought ensured respectability and a 'civilised' national identity for the Hindus. These two aspects become important as the colonialists attacked the Indian civilisation as uncivilised. Thus, reconstituted sexual moralities and respectability for the Hindu women went hand in hand with the nationalist agenda of the Hindu men. For in order to ensure and restore respectability for Hindu religion, its women, first and foremost, had to ensure respectability for themselves. This in turn had to fit the wider agenda of Hindu nationalist. Hindu patriarchy was refurbished with new qualities at this time, reforming the social and domestic arena of women while regulating their sexuality. Women found themselves as devices for the nationalist agenda.

However, to leave it at this would not be right. For women also found devices for negotiation and assertion, eventhough in a very limited way. The social reforms implemented by the Hindu and Indian nationalists helped in a very limited way for women to gain agency. However such women comprised of only a certain class and caste.

Challenged by the colonialists assertion that Hindus were unfit to rule themselves because of the abject status of Indian women, some nationalists emphasized reforming Hinduism to improve the condition of women. The emphasis was on reforming Hinduism to improve the status of women. Thus religion and nation remained ahead of the Hindu woman even while implementing social reforms. This in a way was the essence of Hindu nationalism. Although many of these reforms were meant to reform the domestic arena yet the paradox lies in the fact that the Hindu men were responsible for these reforms and therefore all these reforms functioned within the overall nationalist framework of patriarchy. Chapter Two will look further into the politics of Hindu social reforms and how it affected the life of the Hindu women.

To conclude while the liberals and radicals or cultural nationalists differed in their views regarding the place of women in the freedom movement and the importance of tradition in their lives, they seemed to agree in so far as they viewed the Hindu woman's role within the familial context. According to both, their primary role lay in the domestic or private realm. Political participation by women was seen only as an extension of their familial role. Active political participation by women was not envisaged by either the liberals or cultural nationalists.

Various schools such as the Subaltern and Dalit/Bahujan and the Marxist have engaged themselves in critiquing various aspects of the nationalist thought. These include the task of critiquing the politics of Hindu social reforms, problematising the politics of communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman as implemented by the Hindu nationalists, the task of unwinding the 'real' agenda of not just the cultural but also the liberal nationalist, yet the task of a feminist critique still remains important. It remains important in further highlighting the way the nationalism affected the lives of women across classes, castes and religion.

Chapter Two

The Nationalist Agenda and the Politics of Social Reforms

This chapter studies the social reforms and their impact on the 'emancipation' (and to what extent) of women. Various sections of the nationalists were involved in the social reforms. Their reasons included emancipation of the Hindu woman and thereby the Hindu society. Many of the nationalists felt that with the colonial invasion the Hindu religion needed to be reinforced by its women. This however could happen only by improving the status of the Hindu woman. It is here that we can also trace the beginning of reforms. The Hindu man's own anxiety at the loss of his national space also meant that this space had to be guarded more than ever before. According to some it was a reaction to colonial modernity. The Indian and Hindu nationalists did share a certain commonality in terms of why reforms needed to be implemented. One of them was by linking the question of social reforms to the independence of the country. A major step in the popularisation of Hindu reformist ideas was made by linking it to emergent nationalism.

According to Peter van der Veer, Hindu spirituality had to be defended against the onslaught of colonial modernity. The theme of Hindu spirituality in opposition to Hindu materialism became the principle theme in Hindu nationalist discourse. A major step in the popularisation of Hindu reformist ideas was made by linking it to emergent nationalism. The most important expounder of the doctrine of Hindu spirituality was the founder of the Ramakrishna mission, Vivekananda (1863-1902) [1] Although one needs to delve deeper into the reasons and causes of spirituality versus materialism in the Hindu nationalist discourse. What was the significance of spirituality as far as Hindu reforms were concerned? As Van der Veer writes, while gender was the dominant issue in the prohibition of sati and crucial to the definition of Hindu spirituality with its emphasis on feminine devotion and self-sacrifice, race formed the dominant issue in the formation of Hindi Aryanism. [2] How Western a concept was materialism? Did it fit within the nationalist scheme of things? In the light of reforms and its link to nationalism one can

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[1] Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, ed., Nation and Religion, Perspectives on Europe and Asia, New Jersey,Princeton University Press,Princeton, 1999, p. 32.
[2] Ibid. 34.

ask: what was the exact purpose of reforms? How (if at all) did they benefit women? Who was responsible for carrying out these reforms? Were reforms restricted to a certain caste/class of the Hindu society? These questions throw further light on the fact that like the nationalist agenda the 19th century social reforms for women were dominated by the upper-caste Hindu male.

Historiography of the social reforms movement has tended to concentrate attention on upper caste male reformers who were working broadly within tradition by redefining it and 'recasting' women rather than contesting Brahminical patriarchy, the dominant model of gender relations extant at that time. This historiographical lacuna has caused a certain ambiguity of the forms of patriarchy in existence in the 18th and 19th centuries, its relationship to particular castes/classes, and therefore to social and economic structures, making it look as if gender codes were merely a matter of cultural practice rather than built into particular forms of social organisation and crucial to their reproduction.[3]

Uma Chakravarty has pointed out the 'intimate connection between caste and gender codes'.[4] She writes that the Brahmin reformers in Maharashtra did not wish to break with Brahminical traditions and worked within the broad structures of Brahminical patriarchy and the observance of caste norms. The limited nature of their agenda was evident in their handling of history and their focus on a selective picture of the past or the 'golden age, which was the real tradition, rather than critiquing the structure of caste, or patriarchy. The essential contradiction in 19th century Maharashtrian society was between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans and not between the liberal reformers and the militant nationalists as has been represented in most historical writing.[5] However the establishment of British control was also perceived as an opening for the non-Brahmins and later by a section of women. The attack on Brahminism and the contestation of Brahminical patriarchy thus became possible in 19th century western India.[6] However the Brahminical hegemony still remained a deciding factor as far as social reforms were

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[3] Uma Chakravarty, 'Reconceptualising Gender: Phule, Brahminism and Brahminical Patriarchy' in Gender and Nation, New Delhi Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2001, p. 278.
[4] Ibid. 275.
[5] Ibid., 278.
[6] Ibid., 275.

concerned. It remained important to the extent that the reforms were taken up by the upper-caste men for the upper-caste women for a very specific cause, that of Indian nationalism. However, the task of a feminist critique remains to find out the politics of reforms within the broader framework of nationalism and how and who exactly benefited from it? And for that matter to question the very politics of reforms, considering the fact that its initiators were the Hindu upper-caste men.

The 19th century was in many ways the beginning of reforms, for the 'emancipation' of women. However, as Partha Chatterjee writes, according to the nationalists this emancipation had two inter-related concepts: self emancipation and national emancipation.[7] For instance, education would facilitate '*swaraj* at home and *swaraj* for India'.[8] For an effective nationalist contribution, women were expected give up their laziness and a comfortable domestic existence. In other words, it was argued that women could help to promote their own progress and enlightenment by contributing towards the movement. However, as Kumari Jayawardena writes self-emancipation was projected as non-antagonistic and women in the National Movement were hesitant to come across as anti-male.[9] It was one of the main reasons why they hesitated to use the word 'feminist', because of the words association with the West. [10]

Thus, women's reforms had a broader nationalist agenda for the nationalists. For the nationalists the Hindu women were to extend the benefits they received from education etc to not just the domestic but also to the public or the nationalist arena. This however was to be carried out within the overall framework of patriarchy. This meant that this would lead to the two inter-related phenomena's of the 'domestication of the public sphere' – how women participated in the streets without comprising on their domestic values; and the 'politicisation of the domestic sphere' – the effect nationalism had on the

[7] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1989, p. 246.
[8] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42, New Delhi, Sage, 2006, p. 233.
[9] Kumari Jayawardena, Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World, London, Zed Press, 1986.
[10] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert. op. cit. 83.

everyday lives of women.[11] The reforms were carried out for many reasons within the overall framework of patriarchy and nationalism. The purpose of the reforms can be viewed therefore, from the angle of the colonialists and the nationalists both. The colonialists used reforms for women as a 'tool' against the natives and also to prove their own superiority in terms of questions relating to women. Therefore the illiteracy of Indian women became a 'tool' in their hands to interfere in what nationalists considered to be the 'inner domain' or the domestic domain.

However, at various junctures the views and objectives of the colonialists and the nationalists often collided with respect to reforms. However, this collision of interest happened mainly with respect to women. Although, both the colonialists and the nationalists pressed for reforms for women (say in the field of education) the similarities also end here.

The main reasons for women's present position was perceived to be lack of education and enthusiasm, especially in the case of mothers, as well as the apathy and physical weakness of women in general. The uneducated and ignorant status of women was one of the main causes why 'our nation is under the control of foreign powers'. Also, lack of enthusiasm, apathy and timidity of women would not enable them to 'liberate your (their) country from dasta (slavery)'. Education of women was expressed as the sole remedy to help them achieve a status similar to that of women in ancient times, for women to contribute to the nationalist movement and for their own upliftment.[12]

However, for the nationalists, education for women meant 'national development', having good mothers and wives and to produce and educate 'healthy progeny'. This as Suruchi Thapar points out would align their domestic responsibilities more closely with political demands of the nationalist movement. The nationalists emphasised on the need to 'awaken women from their slumber'. This comparison was very similar to the one provided by the colonialists of the Indian woman as 'passive, ignorant, weak and needing

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[11] Ibid., 85.
[12] Ibid., 226.

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to be enlightened'.[13] The uneducated and ignorant status of women was one of the main causes why the nationalists considered 'our nation is under the control of foreign powers'.[14]

However, modernisation of the Indian women did not amount to Westernisation. She was supposed to 'align' herself to the nationalist agenda through reforms (modern) but this did not in any way imply aping the Western woman. For the nationalist the 'progress' of the Western woman was different from the 'character' of the Western woman.[15] The Hindu nationalists were drawing a clear line here between the public life (in terms of participation) of the Western woman as different from her private/ moral life. The Hindu woman was expected to ape only the public or participatory aspect of the Western woman and not what they considered her private/immoral life. The logic of a sacred 'inner domain' was to be extended to all nationalist debates.[16] It must be noted that there was great concern amongst the Hindu men that education should not 'denationalise' the women.[17] Thus her education was to be different from the Western woman and fully devoted to the nationalist cause.

The development of the nation, education and successful motherhood emerged as three interdependent issues. In the context of Bengal, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that 'the public sphere could not be erected without reconstructing the private'.[18] Superiority of gender relations was closely linked to cultural superiority. An idea that was repeatedly emphasised was the importance of women's education for national development. Education was important for producing good mothers and wives and it would enable women to bring about reforms within their homes. 'Nationalism was at work in re-defining childhood'.[19] For the Hindu nationalists, mothers had to be educated so that she could also educate her children. Though education may have enabled a few to articulate

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[13] Ibid., 225.
[14] Ibid., 226.
[15] Ibid., 234.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Tanika Sarkar, 'The Woman as Communal Subject', Economic and Political Weekly, 31 August, 1991.
[18] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal', History Workshop Journal, 1993, 36: 7.
[19] Ibid: 6.

feminist issues, it did not enable them to act on them.[20] As Kumari Jayawardena writes the policies of promoting women's education were not intended to promote women's participation or independence, but to reinforce patriarchy and the class system.[21]

Dipesh Chakravarty sums up the argument well by writing that much of the discourse on women's education was emancipationist as it spoke the language of "freedom", "equality" and "awakening" and was strongly influenced by Ruskinian ideals and idealisation of bourgeois domesticity.[22] An important point in this literature on women's education was that some terms were more vigorously discussed than the others. For example all aspects of modernity were not discussed equally. Although there was a degree of consensus over the desirability of domestic "discipline" and "hygiene", but their freedom, yet another term in the rhetoric of the modern, was never a part of this social consensus. It was a 'disputed' word. The word was assimilated to the nationalist need to construct cultural boundaries that supposedly separated the "European" from the "Indian". Thus the word was used to construct gender divisions and more importantly to construct cultural boundaries. However, it may be added that modernity was used differently by the nationalists to fulfil their agenda according to the changing situation.

Reforms and Bankim Chandra: Religion and Reforms

As Tanika Sarkar writes until the end of the 1870s, Bankim had very boldly and thoroughly probed the specific forms of caste, class, and gender oppression in pre-colonial Indian traditions. [23] However, as Sarkar points out historical developments as well as earlier political choices, meant that Bankim refused to consider liberal reformers as a vehicle for Hindu self-improvement. Thereafter caste, class, and gender as central concerns abruptly disappeared from his work.

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[20] Suruchi Thapra-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement.

[21] Kumari Jayawardena, Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World, Delhi, Kali for Women, 1996, p. 89.

[22] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Difference-Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal', History Workshop Journal, 36: 7, 1993; M. Borthwick, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1804- 1905, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

[23] Tanika Sarkar, 'Imagining Hindutva' in Making India Hindu, Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India, Ed. David Ludden, Delhi OUP, 1996, p. 169.

However, even in the various stages of Bankim's writings, virtue, activism, and heroism remain as constant qualities of the Hindu woman. Even in the later phases, the woman remained the locus of the nation in a more activist way more than the passive, iconic role ascribed to her by the revivalist nationalists. However this activism was contained within his fictional works. The importance still lay in the imagination of a 'new Hindu man'. This 'new Hindu' was supposed to be male and upper-caste and his opposite the upper-caste Hindu woman. Bankim's changing stance proves that religious reformism developed in tandem with political nationalism. Although Bankim began with a critique of the colonial rule yet implicit in it were reforms with a religious face. This combination of religious reformism and political nationalism also contributed to the larger picture of Hindu nationalism.[24]

According to Partha Chatterjee and Sumit Sarkar by associating the reform question with religious issues the Hindu nationalists made the issue out of reach of the masses. Religious sanction to the question of reforms meant that many of the reforms were not questioned because of religious reasons. Although the reforms were critiqued by many, yet religion remained the most important factor and not the lives of the women whose life were touched in many ways by these reforms. And religion was connected with national identity, i.e. a Hindu identity.[25] The proximity of the reforms with religious nationalism meant that the former was often over-powered by the rhetoric of the nation and religion. Modernity was only resorted to a limit and a line was drawn if it happened to threaten the power of the Hindu man and his household. This modernity was not equivalent of Western modernity. For example for the middle-class Hindu male, the wife had to be educated enough to accompany him in public meetings. The growing discrepancy between the modern education acquired by the Hindu male meant that his wife had to be 'educated enough' to be her companion. She was supposed to her 'source of strength and

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993 and Tanika Sarkar, Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Commnity, Religion and Cultural Nationalism, London, Hurst and Company, 2001 amongst other scholars have very clearly brought out this point.

support' and for this she had to have a certain amount of common understanding with her husband. This association also helped in bringing nationalism to the household.[26]

Thus the Hindu nationalist take on education and modernity was a rather ambiguous one. Did they advocate modernity? One can say, that they advocated modernity only to a point. Among these reasons was the question of national liberation, their own anxieties regarding the loss of their public space to the colonialists and how women could be used to regain this lost space. Modernity was to be accepted only for these reasons beyond which it was objectionable to Hindu nationalists.

As Milind Walankar puts it corresponding to the "ideal woman" stood an "ideal man". If one was to protect and build up an "ideal home" then the latter was to help in building an "ideal society" and protect the society against all *its enemies*. What this "institution of cathected opposites" succeeded was in the instalment of the "family" as the "indispensable trope for a Hindu nation" reinforced by the coming together of an ideal Hindu woman on one side, and the ideal Hindu man on the other side.[27] The "ideal Hindu woman" was subordinated to the "ideal Hindu man" despite her minimal authority within the household, an authority tolerated to the extent that it confined itself to the upkeep and nurture of the "household" and its regeneration. This implied other subordinations as well.[28] "Within this hierarchy constituting the basis of the "nation", the "ideal Hindu male" could offer his "protection" to those who served him i.e. his wife, children, family and country.[29]

Reformers versus Revivalists

According to Vasudha Dalmia, it is meaningful to retain the terms 'revivalist' and 'reformist' to distinguish between the two. Although 'revivalism' has in the past often been seen in opposition to modernisation, the nineteenth century social and religious

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[26] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, p197.

[27] Milind Wakankar, 'Body, Crowd, Identity: Genealogy of a Hindu Nationalist Ascetics, Social Text, No. 45, Duke university Press, 1995, pp. 45-73.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Anne Mc Clinctock, "No Longer in Future Heaven: Nationalism and Gender", in Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest, New York: Routlegde, 1995, 467.

leadership, developed its own vocabulary to designate its priorities and preferences. [30] The traditional/modern polarity, used to establish the distinction between the indigenous and the alien, was a part of the self-representation of those who sought to depict their tradition as standing firm against the pressure of change. Yet as she says, that to accept these poles as contrary to each other would be misleading. 'Revival' is misleading since it disallows the possibility of change, it has the added disadvantage of having been used pejoratively all too often. The reforms however had a fair share of opposition from the revivalists. The revivalists were opposed to any move which challenged the 'domestic domain'. For them the main issue was a revival of 'Indian tradition and values' in the face of a colonial invasion over the innermost sanctum of the Hindu household. Therefore any move to reform the status of 'Indian women' by the colonisers was looked upon as a part of this overall colonial invasion: economically, socially and morally. This set them in opposition with the reformers and colonialists alike. However as Nivedita Menon points out although reformists and revivalists defined themselves in opposition to one another, they also shared a lot in common. [31] The commonality was with respect to the way they saw the Hindu woman. As we see in all these debates between the reformers and the revivalists, and also between them and the British, the real question of women's reforms did not really emerge. And even when it did emerge it was mainly addressed as the problem of upper caste-middle class Hindu women. [32]

The social reformers had started to agitate on two issues -- the practice of Sati and the ban on widow remarriage. These could safely be tackled because they had not existed in very early times, were confined to the upper castes and classes and, if remedied, would give India the appearance of being 'civilised' without endangering the traditional family structures. [33] But the most notable aspect of the relationship between the 'orthodox' and the 'reformist' caste/class factions was their inextricable link with each other through their common social location when it came to their position vis-à-vis the challenge from the non-Brahmana movement. The caste/class division within the reform movement can

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[30] The Nationalisation of Hindu traditions, Bharatendu Harishchandra Nineteenth Century Benaras, Delhi, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p. 5-6.
[31] Nivedita Menon, Gender and Nation, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.4.
[32] Charles H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms, Princeton, NJ, 1964.
[33] Kumari Jayawardena, Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World, Delhi, Kali for Woman, 1986,p.80.

not be overlooked.[34] The same logic applied to the politics of communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman against the Muslim man.[35] Although in this case the Hindu upper-caste men sought to unite with the non-Brahmana men against the Muslim men. Thus there was a constantly shifting equation as far as - caste, religion, women and nationalism were concerned.

Reforms and their gradual 'disappearance'

Javeed Alam looks at the politics of reform initiated at the turn of the century by Ram Mohan Roy. He question as to why when cultural assertions became prominent, the politics of reorms became suspect and receded into the background? By the 1880s, the reform agenda initiated by Ram Mohan Roy, which got institutionalised in the activities of the Brahmo Samaj to begin with, had lost its momentum without necessarily having exhausted its potential.[36] He gives three reasons as to why this may have happened.

First of all, the reforms and their entire agenda were too state centred and the society did not have much of a role to play in the reforms as such. The section of society that did participate in the reforms was an elite section which led some of the campaigns for the abolition of Sati; and a little later for widow remarriage by Vidyasagar. All of this was opposed by an equally thin stratum of elite led by Radhakanta Deb. However, the society was a 'silence presence' in the entire debate; and was not in a position to voice its own concerns. It therefore took no sides. In the aftermath of the suppression of the 1857 rebellion the State was becoming a suspect colonial institution. The State was getting to be distrusted by the elite about the same time as the beginning of awakening among the ordinary people was taking place.[37]

Secondly, the entire concentration of the reform movement was on the (Hindu) woman and family. And almost all of it required legislative action and also interference into the internal or private life of the people. Abolition of sati, widow remarriage, prohibition of

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[34] Uma Chakravarty, Ibid. 277.
[35] Chapter 3 is based on 'The Politics of Communal Mobilisation of the Hindu Woman'.
[36] Javeed Alam, India, Living With Modernity, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 135.
[37] Ibid.

child marriage, discussion on child polygamy started by Vidyasagar, all fall into this category of the 'invasion of the private' by the state. Javed Alam points out that two things are worthy of note here; one, matters concerning internal affairs of the family were the ones which required legislative interventions whereas many other matters like the introduction of English education for women could be started by simple administrative actions; two, that this difference was of some consequence can be seen on the relatively easy receptivity of English education as against the strong resistance put up, for instance, in the case of enabling laws for widow remarriage.[38] Thus one can question the extent that reforms were helpful in improving the lives of the Hindu woman. Thus, the Hindu nationalist agenda in women's reforms was more or less limited. It was limited because prohibitive laws, e.g. the abolition of Sati and allowing widow remarriage found very few takers. Thus once again tradition could not be altered; rather it was to go hand in hand with nationalism. Another significant point that Alam brings out is this: as the legitimacy of the colonial State began to go down, the strength of traditional moorings of society started to show.[39] This strength as he puts it is simultaneously the strength of the communities which make up society.

In his study of 'colonialism, tradition and reform' during the pre-Gandhi era, Bhikhu Parekh perceptively distinguishes four main types of Indian attitudes towards the social reforms –although he is himself quick to warn against a rigidly schematic use of typology. The four perspectives are: traditionalism, modernism, critical modernism, and critical traditionalism. While the distinction between the first two is relatively straightforward, the difference between the last two is more complex and nuanced.[40] The common point, however, in all these debates on social reforms was that each emphasized the importance of tradition.

The nineteenth century reformers were not unanimous or homogeneous in their objectives. The common element was their preoccupation with problems that primarily

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[38] Ibid., 136.

[39] Ibid., 136-137.

[40] Bhikhu Parekh, Colonialism. Tradition and Reform- An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse, New Delhi, Sage. p. 41.

affected women in their own social class and milieu, and made them vulnerable to humiliation. Changing socio-economic relations, the growth of urban living, new modes of communication and education, as well as the pressure to acknowledge the scientific, technological and political dominance of Europe over the inherited cultural identities unleashed several tendencies that brought about the many contradictions within the reform movements.

Most of the reform movements, as Vina Mazumdar writes, combined some elements of revivalism, to assert or reinforce a particular cultural identity, which was distinct from that of the rulers.[41] Intellectual acceptance of the need for modernisation and progress, for national resurgence, and eventual overthrow of imperialism became increasingly marked, including a transformed social construction of gender.

Veena Mazumdar has divided the reformers into the two categories of modernist and revivalist.[42]The earlier reformers criticized particularly inhuman practices like widow immolation (sati), marriage of child brides to much older men, ban on remarriage of widows and sought to promote some form of education for women. The changes that they sought to promote reflected, fairly crudely, the social, especially family ideology of the nineteenth century British middle-class. They did so without examining its possible long-term impact on the gender role prescriptions – within the indigenous cultures of the highly diverse Indian society.

The second group of social reformers focused on the same issue but were more outspoken in their rejection of western values. They projected their attempts as those of 'revival' of pristine traditions of 'Indian' culture, to rescue women from the cultural degeneration of which they had become victims. Education of a controlled kind for women was argued as important as women were the 'custodians of traditional cultural values', against the onslaught of Westernisation. Barring a few exceptions, the 'modernists' or the 'revivalists' were not really concerned with gender equality. Issues such as the radical

[41] Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, ed., From the'Introduction' to Women and Indian Nationalism, New Delhi, Vikas, 1994, p. 5.
[42] Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, op. cit. 7.

restructuring of the social order or of bridging the social gap between different castes/classes/communities were not included in the agenda of the reformers. However there were a few exceptions like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai, Jyotiba Phule.[43]

The assumption of a basic 'structural dichotomy' in Indian society is not uniformly shared by Indian historians, and has even been questioned in recent 'subaltern' writings. In his widely acclaimed *The Oppressive Present*, historian Sudhir Chandra launches a critical attack on historian accounts operating within simple dichotomies or 'binary pairs', especially accounts that categorise groups or movements as either 'progressive or revivalist, reformist or reactionary, secular or communal, nationalist or communal and so on'.[44] As he puts it, accounts operating within these schemes are far from neutral, since the first categories of binary pairs are usually invested with positive meaning while the counter-categories are negatively devalued. In Chandra's view, the historical situation is much more complex and nuanced, since the dimensions of tradition and modernity, continuity and change, are not closely entwined.

Women as the site on which tradition was debated:

Thus, we can see a direct relation between colonial rulers, Hindu nationalists and the role that women were expected to play in the context of the above. As Lata Mani has pointed out, the debates over social issues constructed women as victims or heroines, denying them complex personalities and agency. Women in fact, according to her, became the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated, with an exclusion of the voices of women themselves.[45] Lata Mani makes the point that we must understand the practice of Sati as well as the campaign for and against it, not simply in terms of attitudes towards woman, but in larger, more complex context of the encounter between colonialism and the Indian elites. Thus what we see here is not a debate on the Hindu woman and her emancipation but rather 'women as a site on which tradition was debated'.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Sudhir Chandra, The Oppressive Present, Literature and Social Consciousness, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992.

[45] Lata Mani, Contentious Traditions: The debate on Sati in Colonial India, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998.

Women were either compared to Rani Lakshmi Bai and elevated to the status of 'heroines' or reduced to victims.[46] Agency is never to be found in some pure state of volition or action, but is complexly imbricated in the contradictory structures of patriarchy.[47] Kumkum Sangari observes that we must be alert to the implications of 'who or what is women's agency on behalf of', and ask whether 'all modes of empowerment for women are equally desirable'.[48] For example, empowerment for women can also be related to violence. For example, the elevation of women to the status of 'warriors' was linked by the Hindu nationalists to empowerment of the Hindu woman. Agency is thus not necessarily empowering and this needs to be understood with respect to the elevated and reduced status of the Hindu woman by the nationalists.[49]

There are several points of view that explain the impact of the growth of nationalism in the later part of the nineteenth century on the situation of women and the debates on women's status. Sumit Sarkar has argued that substantial change was not the hallmark of the reforms of early and mid-nineteenth century. According to Sarkar, these early attempts at reform were not so much the outcome of Western liberal values, but more an expression of some "acute problems of interpersonal adjustments within the family among western-educated men." The social ostracism and isolation they had to face forced them to "a limited and controlled emancipation of wives as a personal necessity for survival in a hostile social world."[50]

In his essay entitled "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question", Partha Chatterjee elaborates the complex relationship between women's politics and the politics

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[46] The elevation of the Hindu woman and her simultaneous reduction are discussed in greater in Chapter 3.

[47] Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, "Is the Hindu Goddess a Feminist", Gender and Nation, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2001,p.11.

[48] Kumkum Sangari, 'Consent, Agency and the Rhetoric of Incitement', Economic and Political Weekly, May 1, 1993,pp.867-82).

[49] The membership of women in large numbers in the Sangh parivar, the promotion of 'feminist' as well as 'traditional' roles for women by the RSS organisation, the xenophobic rhetoric of Hindutva, and women's participation in the Bombay and Surat riots further elucidate this point.

[50] Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997.

of Indian nationalism. [51]His point is that while the women's question "was a central issue in some of the most controversial debates over social reform in early and mid-nineteenth century Bengal" this very issue disappeared from the public agenda by the end of the century. "From then onwards," Chatterjee observes, "questions regarding the position of women in society do not arouse the same degree of passion as they did only a few decades before. The over whelming issues now are directly political ones- concerning the polities of nationalism."[52] Why is it that the advent of the politics of nationalism signals the subordination if not the demise of women's politics? Why does the politics of "one" typically overwhelm the politics of the "other"? Why could the two not be coordinated within an equal and dialogic relationship of mutual accountability? Why is it that nationalism achieves the ideological effect of an inclusive discourse, whereas the women's- unable to achieve its own autonomous macro political identity – remains ghettoized within its specific and regional space? In other words, how does the politics of nationalism become the binding and overarching umbrella that subsumes other and different political temporalities? Is it then possible for these 'subsidiary' questions and issues to work and think outside the nationalist framework?

Faced with its own repression, the women's question seems either forced to seek its own separatist political autonomy or to envision other ways of constituting a relational – integrative politics. The question for feminists would then be how to juggle with the two, without at the same time resorting to a totalizing umbrella of nationalism. How is a genuinely representative national consciousness (if at all) to be spoken for by feminism and vice versa? Is it inevitable that one of these politics must form the horizon for the other, or is it possible that the very notion of a containing horizon is quite beside the point?[53]

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[51] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women in Colonial History, New Delhi, Kali for Women , 1989, pp. 232-252.
'Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity' by R. Radhakrishnan in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, and Patricia Yaeger, eds., Nationalsm and Sexualities, New York, Routledge 1992, Chap. 4.
[52] Partha Chatterjee, op. cit. 232-241.
[53] R. Radhakrishanan, 'Nationalism, Gender and the Narrative of Identity', in Nationaisms and Sexualities, Andrew Parker, Mary Russo and Patricia Yaeger, eds., New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 80-92.

Can any horizon be "pregiven" in such an absolute and transcendent way? In other words, isn't the so called horizon itself the shifting expression of equilibrium. We have seen in the context of nationalism, it is precisely because the women's questions was kept from achieving its own form of politicization that it was so easily and coercively spoken for by the discourse of nationalism and the politics of reforms.

Partha Chatterjee has made a crucial contribution to the debates on Indian nationalist ideology by revealing its gendered inception, he begins with the question of why the 'women's question ceases to become an issue for nationalist discourse by the end of the nineteenth century and argues that it is in fact resolved by a necessary kind of silence: a nationalist refusal to make the issue of women an item of negotiation with the colonial state.

It maybe as Judith Walsh writes and (as Chatterjee has suggested) that in the discursive field of anticolonial nationalism, "new patriarchy" resolved the women's question so completely that it removed social reform as an issue from the discourse of nationalism in the early twentieth century.[54] The 'home' then, became the discursive site of nationalist victory when the 'world' has been ceded to the colonial state. The male nationalist turns inward, reifying the home, and women's place within it, as a spiritualized 'inner space' that contests colonial hegemony. Thus if the family is the site of nationalist silence, and women's subjectivities are located in the home, women's agency is itself subject to a kind of silence. Such logic forecloses upon the question of women's agency, excluding it from nationalist discourse.[55] However it has to be kept in mind that this 'silence' in the family was not always the case. Women were asked to step out of their domestic boundaries too, but without comprising on the restrictions imposed on them by the Hindu men and to confine their activities to nationalist duties only.

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[54] 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 233-253; Judith E. Walsh, Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Then Advice, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 64.

[55] Judith E. Walsh, p. 64.

Thus, the nationalist resolution of the women's question of reforms must be seen not only as a strategy for contesting colonial hegemony, but as a strategy for the containment of women's agency, carrying within it the seeds of colonial assumptions about gender. Colonial attitude towards nationalist women depicted them as beings dependent upon their husband's agency, and this idea of the 'dependent subject' was replicated in the way nationalist ideology rendered women as domestic(cated), and not political subjects. According to Partha Chatterjee, a re-articulation of Indian womanhood was crucial in the resolution of the 'constitutive contradiction' in the formation of an Indian identity.[56]

Accepting much of Sumit Sarkar's critique of the liberal content of the early reformers' ideology, Partha Chatrerjee argues that "the relative unimportance of the women's question in the last decades of the nineteenth century is not to be explained by the fact that that it had been censored out of the reform agenda or overtaken by the more pressing and emotive issues of political struggle." In this view, nationalism "resolved the women's question in terms of its own historical project (or preferred goals)."[57]

What were these 'preferred goals', and how was the 'resolution' achieved? According to Chatterjee, nationalism was not simply a political struggle for power. On the other hand, it related the issues of independence to every aspect of the material and spiritual life of the people. Nationalists, in fact, had to decide what to select from the West and what to avoid or reject – because they were equally selective about their own 'self-identity'. This dilemma was finally resolved by accepting a dichotomous framework between the 'material' and the 'spiritual world', between the 'outer' and 'inner' life. Applied to day-to-day living, this dichotomy separated social space into the home and the world.[58]

The world is the external or material domain; the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests

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[56] Partha Chatterjee, The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid eds., Recasting Women, 233-53.
[57] Sumit Sarkar's criticism of Partha Chatterjee in 'The Many Worlds of Indian History' in Writing Social History, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 1-49; Partha Chatterjee, The National and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonbial Histories, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 126.
[58] Partha Chatterjee, Ibid., 119-121.

where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representations. Through, education, travel in public conveyances, watching public entertainment programmes, "in time even employment outside the home", could be permitted. "In addition, by associating the task of 'female emancipation' with the goal of 'sovereign nationhood', nationalism "bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate subordination". The women's question always remained secondary to the nationalist question.[59]

However as Vina Mazumdar points out these analysis of nationalist ideology vis-à-vis the women's question suffer from the basic problem of looking for a 'linear connection' between the nineteenth century reform movement, the growth of nationalism on to the twentieth century and the roles prescribed for or played by women in Indian nationalism. Chatterjee's efforts to distinguish women's familial role ideology from their social responsibility ignore several aspects of history. One important area totally ignored in this analysis as Mazumdar points out is the way women themselves responded to the challenges of colonial rule. [60]

The politicisation of women in the newly extended female space was also facilitated by the mediating role played by members of the female intelligentsia who had more time to absorb nationalist literature, as most of them were not involved in working for a living. Many became leaders both in the women's and national movement. Pandita Ramabai was a delegate to the Indian National Congress in 1889 along with nine other eminent women.[61] However the task of a feminist critique of nationalism remains to critique nationalism and its policy of 'silencing' women and the marginalized. Although Ramabai was a delegate of the Indian National Congress yet it has to be kept in mind that she was the exception rather than the norm around that time.

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[59] Ibid.,
[60] Leela Kasturi and Vina Mazumdar, Women and Indian Nationalism, New Delhi, Vikas, 1994, p. 13.
[61] Ibid..

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Judith Walsh gives another reason why the "woman's question", with its focus on social reform and the reformulation of women's family relationships, was no longer the driving issue by the 1900.[62] According to her it was because by 1900 many of the changes debated in the advice literatures of the earlier century had become accepted practice within urban, educated, Hindu middle-class homes – not just in Bengal but also across much of British India. Where urban Hindu families of the 1860s had been reluctant to allow unmarried daughters out of the home for education, by the twentieth century, school education for girls and, on occasion, even higher education, were increasingly the norm. She writes that this demonstrates that by the twentieth century, colonial modernity – and the changed practices of daily and domestic life it represented – had made considerable inroads into indigenous, urban Hindu life. The practices of home and family life that the nineteenth-century Indian advice literature and Bengali manuals had so intensely debated had significantly altered for twentieth-century, middle-class Indian families.[63] Thus the politics of reforms gave certain benefits to the Hindu woman (in terms of reforms), which was enough to mobilise her for the nationalist agenda. This was the politics of reforms.

Comparing the reform scenario in UP and Bengal

Nivedita Menon writes there was no one uniform movement for social reform, but different campaigns on locally specific issues which were taken up at different times. The reforms were 'shaped' to a large extent by the 'colonial encounter'.[64]

Charu Gupta points out the example of U.P where in fact the reform question was not 'abandoned' as in Bengal.[65] While examining the interrelationship between gender and social reforms through localised evidence from U.P., she questions the assumption that what was true of Bengal could be applied to the whole of India. She writes that in U.P., for example the reformist endeavour and the 'woman's question' did not fade away with emergence of the nationalist movement.

[62] Judith Walsh, op. cit. 8

[63] Judith Walsh, Ibid. 47-48.

[64] Nivedita Menon, Gender and Nation, New Delhi, Oxford, p.4.

[65] Charu Gupta, Exploring Gender Equations: Colonial and Post Colonial India, in Shakti Kak and Biswamoy Pati, eds., Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2005, p. 32.

The nationalist movement was not successful in situating the women's question' in an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state. In fact, the 1920s and 1930s in U.P. were marked by most extensive and intense public deliberations and reformist debates on women, in constant dialogue with the colonial state. However, she does not dismiss the existence of certain gender stereotypes in various debates around women and reforms. In fact, as she goes on to say many reforms for women benefited men more than the women.

Charu Gupta study on U.P. brings out many facts which are in opposition with the reforms in Bengal. Firstly, women's question continued to be important in many other ways even during the national movement.[66] Unlike, Partha Chatterjee's argument on the 'abandonment' of women's question in Bengal, the language of reforms in UP for example worked differently. This also points to the regional variations within nationalism and therefore the need to study women and the reforms question keeping in mind the regional variations. Nationalism with its tendency to reduce differences and variations within the nation and therefore homogenise all differences has often tended to reduce regional differences and give them a uniform order. And a study of reform devoid of its regional variations would mean falling into the nationalist trap yet again. Indian nationalism comprised of various such nationalisms, although Hindu nationalism was its most dominant form. Studies on nationalism will be further enriched if regional variations regarding the impact of reforms are kept in mind. Although nationalism with its homogenising tendencies looks over and above regional differentiations yet a feminist critique of nationalism could avoid both the trends of nationalism and regionalism. By offering a critique which concentrates on women's role and limitations and their silencing by the nationalists through the politics of reforms the real intentions of the Hindu nationalists in implementing the social reforms would be further exposed.

For the nationalists, women were to be the 'carriers' of cultural authencity and integrity of the Hindu nation. They were to safeguard the 'true' Hindu values in the face of

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[66] Ibid.

increasing Westernisation of the nation and its values. The integrity of the Hindu nation rested on a virtuous womanhood. In was in this context that the issues of social control became a matter of serious concern and the Hindu reformers had to enforce standards for gender behaviour.

Thus, reforms can be looked at from two different but interrelated angles. Nationalist felt the need for women to behave in a certain way—morally, socially and the need to discipline female bodies. This was done because of various anxieties that were faced by the Hindu male at that time. One of them was to do with the threat to the 'inner sanctum' of the Hindu household because of increasing Westernisation and the other was to prevent further moral erosion of the Hindu household specially with respect to the moral erosion of the Hindu woman.

The anxiety faced by the Hindu male was also with respect to the Muslim male. There were 'constructed fears of increasing Muslim numbers and the sexuality of the Muslim male'. Therefore, this forces us once again to question the emancipatory objectives of the reforms initiated by the Hindu nationalists. Reforms were not carried out for themselves but related to them were various other issues of a larger Hindu male identity and a Hindu nation. Reforms and there impact on women has therefore to be looked at from all these angles. Reforms had a religious connotation attached to them. The 'Hindu woman was invested with new values, which were at once nationalist and Hindu. On this rested the identity of the middle class and the exclusiveness of nationalist culture'. An image of 'lustful Muslim male, victimised and heroic Hindu women'[67] was built up to this regard.[68]

Charu Gupta points out the 'language in which education for women was camouflaged'. The main aim of education was to help build better wives and mothers. Therefore, education had a religious and moral overtone.[69] This aim of this education was to build

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[67] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India, New Delhi, Permanent Black, p. 243.
[68] Further explanation of Hindu/Muslim male and the Hindu woman in Chapter 3.
[69] Charu Gupta, p. 161- 171.

ideal 'Hindu Wife for the Hindu Nation'. Here too the kind of education imparted depended on those who controlled it – who happened to be the upper-caste Hindu men. Which brings one to the question - were reforms imparted in the name of education really substantial? Was education meant to 'discipline' women in a certain way? Foucault's comment on modern forms of power is telling. In Foucault's understanding, modern forms of power do not simply oppress, they produce and regulate identity.[67] Applied to the nationalist logic, 'respectability could only be achieved by disciplining, regulating and cleansing this cultural world of women'. Hindu reformers felt the need to move away not only from the obscene and the sexual, but also from the popular and the frivolous. They sought to modify not only the leisure activities and social behaviour of women, but even the institutions that gave expression to that behaviour.[68]

And thereby education became a tool in the hands of the nationalist reformers to further their agenda. This education was imparted with obvious aims and objectives in mind and the relationship between education and reforms was not a simple one or one that always had the emancipation of women as its main objective. It may be said that it is behind these scene of reforms that nationalism was carrying out its hidden agenda.

Social Reforms and their Unintended Consequences

Many reformers clearly saw the possibility that their reforms could have unanticipated and unintended consequences, that women's literacy and education could destroy domestic life as they had known it. This fear finds expression in domestic literature along the lines of a question reported in the 1890 Burdhan press: "Will the woman who has obtained the B.A. degree cook or scour plates?"[69] No subject provokes more hysteria in reformist writings of the period than the idea that, once educated, women might cease to do house-work – and no literature explicates these fears and fantasies more than that of

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[67] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, 1978.
[68] Charu Gupta, p. 161-171.
[69] As cited from M. Borthwick, Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1804-1905, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 104.

Bengali domestic manuals. Manuals were universal in their assertions that in some homes educated women were already (or would soon be) refusing to cook and feed their families, to sweep and clean the house.

Charu Gupta admits of the unintended consequences of reforms for the Hindu woman.[73] Reforms, the national movement, education and women's presence in the public arena signalled new opportunities for women, however limited they proved to be. Sexuality, pleasure and love were expressed in diverse ways. She has also studied the role of cheaply produced popular literature in providing mass entertainment. Women (only in limited way) defied the standard norms of respectability and morality. The disorder that crept into the supposedly "pure" Hindu world meant that the Hindu man had to control women through other ways. Linked to this is also the question of mobilisation of the Hindu woman. This led to the unintended consequence of Hindu woman attending Muslim religious festivals and pirs or saints. The cult of Ghazi Mian also developed around this time in UP.[74] Ghazi Mian became a symbol of the transcending of sectarian boundaries. But this was not how the Hindu nationalists looked at it. For them Ghazi Mian became an 'evil character'- a threat to the 'pure' Hindu woman.[75]

Yet in the recurrent fear in these manuals that educated women would cease to cook and do housework, there is evidence that nineteenth-century Indian men knew the project on which they had embarked had moved them into unknown territory. If their reformulations of domestic life had the power to transform Indian women, then the reformists believed that in that very transformation, the domestic world they were attempting to reconfigure would be utterly destroyed. [76]However this only led the Hindu nationalists into furthering tightening their control over reforms and the domestic space. What we also see here then is the paradox of increased control over the Hindu women by the Hindu men along with social reforms. Their fear and anxiety also led them to simultaneously control women more than ever before.

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[73] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, p. 12.
[74] Ibid., 281.
[75] Charu Gupta has written extensively on the cult of Ghazi Mian in her book Sexuality, Obscenity and Community,
[76] Judith Walsh, What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice, p. 81.

Thus Judith Walsh clearly brings out a picture that expresses the male anxiety regarding reforms and the long and short term impact they had on women. The anxiety of men as to whether reforms would alter the 'central concepts and practices of the indigenous domestic world' always remained with them. Since women used the discourse of the 'familial' to carve out a political niche inside the domestic domain. The unintended consequence of reforms in terms of its Westernising effects on the Hindu woman was clear for the nationalists. This helps us to put the purpose and the politics of reforms into perspective.

Similarly, the caste reforms had a logic of their own. The efforts by the Hindu reformers, to uplift and cleanse the cultural practices of the lower caste women were more an effort to maintain upper-caste hegemony. The lower caste woman was expected to adopt the high moral standards of the upper caste woman. The impact of reforms and the way reforms were looked upon by the men of their respective caste and communities was different for both. Many lower caste women were contributing significantly to the household. The argument of women as preservers of the household alone did not fit into this picture. Therefore, they were given more social room but this greater mobility did not necessarily translate into equality for these women. Women of the lower castes faced a 'layered level of oppression'. They were given greater mobility outside the home but their oppression continued outside the arena of the home too. Thus, the impact of reforms has to be understood with regard to caste, religion alongside the colonial rhetoric. All of these were enmeshed and the impact of reforms on women has to be understood keeping all these factors in mind.

It is necessary to recognise that that all oppressive discourses participate in one another; this means that a feminist approach must take into account not only the gender oppression that women experience, but all forms of oppression that all human beings experience. Since caste, class and religion form an intrinsic part of this society a feminist approach would then have to look at society as a network of all these identities. To discount one would only be at the cost of the other components.

At the same time, it is also necessary to take account of the specific nature of patriarchy as an oppressive structure. The constraints of women as subalterns are peculiar in that the chief instrument of patriarchal oppression is the 'family' –the 'oppressors' are usually their men folk. The ties women share with their oppressors is too personal for a one-sided strategy of emancipation to be practicable. In this respect gender structures are unlike any other. No emancipatory project for women can afford to ignore the men with whom they share their lives. Therefore one of the tasks of a feminist critique of nationalism would be to take into consideration all forms of exploitation i.e. patriarchy and nationalism.[77] The relationship between knowledge and power cannot be overlooked as far as reforms in the educational fields were concerned. Who controls the source of power is as important as the consequences of the decision that are arrived at from it.[78]

Reforms and Regulations - A Paradox

Thus in a way one of the paradox of women being 'allowed' greater mobility outside their homes was that it also led to greater regulations and control of the Hindu woman. Reformist endeavours were not only liberating but also efforts to control the sexuality of women. This brings us to the question as to why and how control over a woman's sexuality was crucial for Hindu patriarchy. How was control exercised in the everyday life of woman?[79] Not through direct repression but through 'more invisible strategies of 'normalisation'; in accordance with Foucault's argument that individuals regulate themselves through an inner search for their hidden 'truth' which lies in their innermost identity. Thus to the extent that individuals fail to recognize the constructed nature of their sexuality, they are unable to see the possibilities for change.[80] The Hindu nationalists succeeded in carrying this agenda with regard to the Indian woman. Notions of sexuality and chastity were imposed on the Hindu woman and appropriated by her to an extent she was not even aware of.

[77] Fernando Franco, Jyotsana Macwan, Saguna Ramanathan, ed., The Silken Swing, The Cultural Universe of Dalit Women Stree, Calcutta, 2000, p. 5.
[78] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, New York, Vantage Books, 1977.
[79] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, p.66.
[80] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978, p. 89.

The management of female sexuality becomes important since 'unruly' female sexuality could discredit the nation.[81] Uncontrolled sexuality as exhibited by the prostitute was a sensitive issue with the Indian nationalists. Paradoxically, it was the 'untamed' and 'uncontrolled' sexuality of Bengali men that was debated by British colonial administrators in the 19th century. The prostitute as an oppositional representation to the nationalist woman also challenged the untouched, pure, uncolonised 'domestic space' of which the nationalist woman was a representative. This represented the core of Indian ethos.[82] However, the unrespectable and impure could become 'pure' and 'respectable' if their work was regarded as a nationalist sacrifice. The sexuality of the Hindu woman was constantly 'reconstituted', 'reconstructed' and negotiated according to the nationalist aims. In the light of the changing stance one can question the significance of sexuality and nationality. As to how the two functioned together and at various points of time led to a re-creation of the other. Changing notions of sexuality led to changing notions of nationalism and vice versa.

Reforms and change (if any)

Reforms and their benefits to the Hindu woman have to be looked at from a multi-dimensional view. Just as the study of reforms demands that we view it from all dimensions. From the angle of the upper-caste woman, from the angle of the lower-caste woman, from the angle of religion i.e., Hindu woman and Muslim woman, and from the angle of everyday domestic life to its impact on woman in the public realm. One has to ask did reforms benefit women of all strata and to what extent?

Oppression is multi-layered and therefore demands a study that looks at oppression from the point of view of all these layers. Reforms for instance had a different impact on the Hindu lower and upper-caste woman. Central to this problematising of social reform is exploring the early initiatives on the women's question which had been taken largely by men; that the reformers mostly belonged to the upper-castes; and the specific problems

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[81] Tamar Mayer ed., Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation, London, Routledge, 2000.
[82] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, op. cit., p 99.

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addressed and the mode of addressing were very often restricted by region and caste location.

Maitrayee Chaudhari gives the example of the Widow Remarriage Act which legally allowed the upper-caste widows to remarry, but simultaneously through codifications of laws eliminated the rights lower caste widows had traditionally availed of under their customary laws.[83] This move towards increased homogenisation and construction of a monolithic image and practice of Indian womanhood persists to this day.[84] Thus reforms can be uniformising and arbitrary. They are imposed uniformly on people without much consideration of their differences. The effect of reforms which were carried out by the Hindu upper-caste male was therefore felt differently by women of the upper and lower caste. Because of this difference the way the women of both the upper and lower caste reacted to these reforms imposed on them was also different.

However, as Charu Gupta points out although reforms in India signalled the ideological reworking of the *pativrata* and the ideal woman yet there were a series of devices and techniques within the domestic field, which helped women in negotiating within their respective space.[85] Despite being severely monitored, 'the domain of reforms remained imbued with unpredictable potential, offering tantalising possibilities and frightening instabilities'. The identity of the Hindu woman was not fixed, but was diverse and open to constant negotiation. These were arenas of enjoyment, flirtation and sexual messages. Reforms also created certain fluid spaces, in which there were subversions through recasting of certain idioms.[86]

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[83]Chaudhari Maitrayee, 'Gender in the Making of the Indian Nation-State', in S.L. Sharma and T.K. Oommen, eds, Nation and the National Identity in South Asia, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2000.

[84] S. L Sharma and T. K Oommen, ed., Nation and National Identity in South Asia, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2000.

[85] Charu Sharma, op. cit., 194-195.

[86] Charu Gupta, 'Mapping the Domestic Domain' in Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, 2002, p. 122-195.

Charu Gupta writes that it would therefore be wrong to view reforms simply in terms of gains for women and losses for them. Rather, they had spaces for a variety of penetrations and negotiations. But what exactly were these penetrations, if any? To what extent did the Hindu woman negotiate within the space given to her by the reforms? A linear explanation to the benefits of reforms on women is difficult as reforms benefited different women at different times. Just as nationalism selected reforms according to its priorities and not according to the benefits it would have on women.

In spite of all the contradictions regarding the role women should play in the nationalist arena the nationalist came to a unanimous conclusion that women were the hallmark of national progress and moral regeneration. It was also clear that women's education had to be beneficial for the nation and serve the immediate purposes of the nationalist movement. Education through reforms did not lead to extreme radicalism of ideas. As such the debates mostly remained, confined within the nationalist field. Thus, to an extent, one can say that arguments that went beyond the nationalist cause or arguments that emphasised the role of the individual (in this case that of the woman) were often termed as anti-nationalist or non-nationalist. We can stretch this argument to the present scenario also. Where any cause that goes against the interest of the state or deviates from the state defined line is often termed as anti-nationalist. Where there is a general tendency to term causes like that of the women, Dalit, tribal and that of the under-privileged as issues that come outside the mainstream interest of the state.

However a feminist critique of nationalism and the politics of social reforms would still have to problematise this politics of reforms and not reforms by themselves. As reforms if implemented, keeping in mind the interest of all the groups in the society and the individuals in it can lead to the emancipation of women and the marginalised section of the society. However keeping in mind the social diversities and interests of its people it also becomes important as to who formulates these reforms. In the context of 19th century reforms it is evident that the reforms were implemented by a certain section only, i.e. the upper-caste Hindu male.

Chapter Three
Politics of Communal Mobilisation of the Hindu Woman

The question of reforms as we have seen in Chapter Two was an important instrument of negotiation for the Hindu men. The response of the Hindu nationalists to the social reforms was varied. The Hindu nationalists criticised the British and their policy of 'modernising' the uneducated Hindu woman. They equally criticised the liberal Hindu reformers and their attempts to reform the Hindu woman. One can say that the reasons for the British and the liberal Hindu reformers for the emancipation of women were not as naïve as they seem to be. The paradox of reforms was that women were to be reformed by the reformers in a certain way only. The reforms had a means and an end to be achieved. The means to achieve these reforms it can be said were religiously motivated and the ends were to be determined by the Hindu nationalists according to the demands of the 'Hindu' nation. And emancipation of women as an end also had various contradictions in terms of how the reforms could have been really emancipatory, if at all?

The question of reforms and the communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman can be linked up as follows: Reforms had some inevitable consequences for the Hindu woman (although limited), it brought the women out of the domestic arena to the public sphere, in what Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert expresses as the 'domesticisation of the public sphere' and also the reverse phenomenon of 'politicisation of the domestic sphere'.[1] Besides the limited emancipatory effect that this increased mobilisation had on the Hindu woman she was also used by the Hindu men for their own purposes. The communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman against the Muslim men was one of them. What was this mobilisation? And why and how was it communal in nature? To what extent did the Hindu men succeed in trapping the Hindu woman?

This chapter seeks to examine gender relations in their entirety. The entirety here seeks to take into account relations not just between the Hindu man and the Hindu woman with

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[1] Suruchi-Thapar-Bjorkert,Women in the Indian National Movement, Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices,1930-42, New, Delhi, Sage, 2006, p. 85.

respect to nationalism; but it also seeks to examine how their relation affected gender relations at large i.e. between the Hindu man and Muslim man and the Hindu woman and the Muslim man. Studying the growth of Hindu religion with respect to gender helps to further clarify how religion shaped the Hindu woman's everyday life in the domestic arena and also in the nationalist arena.

This chapter also examines the question as to how economic and social reasons were introduced to freeze interaction between the Hindu woman and the Muslim man. An economic and social boycott was intended to facilitate the isolation of Hindu women from Muslims, and to reduce the anxieties of the Hindu men. The Hindu woman had to lead an instructive life as far as the Muslims men were concerned. Instructive because she was supposed to behave and act in a certain way only. Deviation from the standard behaviour meant laxity in moral discipline and an insult to Hindu religion as a whole. This new language that was introduced by Hindu men was instructive in nature and introduced new standards by which the Hindu woman had to abide. The politics of communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman studies the period towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

The use of economics, religion and culture to further heighten this rift between Hindus and Muslims is particularly important. Nationalism had given a religious colour to every aspect of life. From the domestic space to the public space, women's practices were attacked in the name of religion. Although this chapter is limited to studying the effects of an instructive life on the Hindu woman yet one can ask what was happening to the Muslim women in this regard. How were her movements restricted in this regard by the Muslim men? In fact a feminist critique of nationalism can give an explanation for the way nationalists across all spectrums sought the communal mobilisation of its women via the women of its community. A common point to note here is nationalism and the way it terms the 'Other' as the outsider at various junctures. So for the Hindu man the 'Other' could be the Hindu woman or the Muslim man depending on the context. Similarly, for the Muslim man the 'Other' could be the Muslim woman or the Hindu man. Although

what can not be disregarded is the fact that Hindu religion had already established its hegemony in the nationalist arena more so than the Muslim man.

With the onset of communal mobilisation, questions of reforms took a back seat and the same were then used to construct a case against the Muslim man. The issue of equality and dignity of women which held sway in the social reforms were now used as a double edged weapon by the Hindu men both against the Hindu women and Muslim men. The Muslim question became important in national politics; one of the reasons was the need to produce a clear-cut definition of a Hindu identity. This definition relied heavily on the construct of the "Other". Stereotypes of Muslims were built up by the Hindu men. These stereotypes helped further to create the image of an oppositional other. Cultural and moral construction of Muslims as barbarians and lecherous became sharper as everyday interaction between the Hindus and Muslims increased.[2]

However, Fatima Sadiqi writes (in the contexts of Moroccan feminists in the 1960s who took care to frame their demands in ways that provided a measure of Islamic identity. They recognised the importance of Islam throughout the Moroccan society.) that the Moroccan feminists were guided by a key insight: the interaction of men and women were not dictated by religion, but by social practices that had often used religion as a means of reinforcement.[3] For example, women and their sexual purity were linked with the honour of men and their families. This logic was further reinforced by religion. One can go a step further in the case of Indian nationalism and say that the Hindu women's sexual purity was linked with the honour of men, their families, religion and the nation (also considered Hindu). Women's chastity became the chastity of the nation. This sexual purity was to be maintained by limiting interaction with the Muslim men.

This notion of chastity and virtuosity of the Hindu woman can be looked at as a derivative value as against an intrinsic value. Virtuosity is derived from somewhere and is not inherently built. The question to ask would be: what makes chastity a derivative

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[2] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity, Community, Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001, 269-271.
[3] Fatima Sadiqi Times of India, June 28, 2006.

value? Is virtuosity derived from elsewhere? If yes, then what is its source? In the case of Hindu nationalism one can say that the purity, chastity of the Hindu woman became important in the context of the Muslim man. Interaction with them had to be limited to maintain the purity of the Hindu religion and Hindu nation at large. Chastity here becomes important because of the presence of an oppositional 'Other'. It would hold no meaning without the presence of the 'Other'. In the context of Hindu nationalism it then becomes a derivative value.

Commenting on Partha Chatterjee's nationalism's "moment of departure" Milind Wakankar writes that, the Muslim was an element inside the body social, but one whose agency, whose very presence had been obliterated.[4] As he writes, 'Nationalistic discourse asserted notion of difference through the recovery of the "national" which itself was modulated by conceptions of the modern'. This program for a "national religion", as he writes, failed to incorporate the national popular, remained confined to an elite Hindu male ascetics. As the symbolic material for a national "self-purification" were already in place, what was really needed was a further widening of its social base and greater proximity to the national popular for nationalism to generate notions of Muslim as alien, other, aggressive and so on.[5]

The Hindu nationalists wanted to replace the colonial stereotype of the "effete Babu" with the constitution of a (Hindu) nationalist (male) subject on the site of a "rational" revision of Hinduism on the one hand, and an acknowledgement of the colonising West's hegemonic discourse of progress on the other.

Another question to look at then would be the modernity argument'. Was modernity used as a plank to demobilise the Hindu woman? Did the Hindu men use modernity for this demobilisation? Modernity here becomes important because it runs into contradiction with the ideology of the Hindu nationalist. How did (that is if they did) the Hindu nationalist combine modernity in their ideology? Was it really contradictory? In Sudhir

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[4] Milind Wakankar, Body, Crowd, Identity: Genealogy of a Hindu Nationalist Ascetics, Social Text, No. 45, Duke University Press, Winter, 1995, p. 47.
[5] Ibid. 56.

Chandra's view in his widely acclaimed *The Oppressive Present*, the historical situation is much more complex and nuanced, since the dimensions of tradition and modernity, continuity and change, are closely entwined and mutually contaminated. For example, the term 'change' in not simply synonymous with modernity and modernisation; if seen as not external to tradition, change may also be grasped as inhabiting the latter.[6] How blurred were the boundaries between tradition and modernity for the Hindu nationalists?

As Partha Chatterjee writes modernisation began in the first half of the nineteenth century because of the penetrations of Western ideas. After some limited success there was a decline in the reform movements as popular attitudes towards them hardened. The movement towards modernisation was stalled by nationalist policies.[7] As Partha Chatterjee writes the degree of Westernisation of men and women was markedly different. Nationalism adopted several elements from tradition as marks of its native cultural identity, but this was now a "classicised " tradition – reformed, reconstructed, fortified against charges of barbarism and irrationality. 'The "new" woman under the "new patriarchy" was the reverse of the "common woman", who was coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous...'[8]

It was then, one can say, this "new woman" who was to be demobilised from her interaction with the Muslim men. The services of the Muslim men in various crafts were popular amongst the Hindu woman. Hindu women were more specifically instructed to avoid Muslim religious festivals and pirs or saints. In UP vast numbers of lower-caste Hindus, women and children had participated in popular cults and visits to pirs. There was a strong element of contempt, of ridiculing the audacity of women for participating in such cultural and religious practices that had been identified with Muslims.[9] Was the cultural modernity of Hindus used as an argument against the 'immoral, corrupt, unrefined, vulgar' Muslim man?

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[6] Sudhir Chandra, The Opressive Present, Literature and Social Consciousness, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992.

[7] Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 117.

[8] Ibid., 127.

[9] Charu Gupta, Ibid., 281-302.

Thus the Muslim man was eliminated by the Hindu man by painting an image of the former as 'immoral, barbarian and lecherous'. This elimination of the Muslim man from the dominant cultural pattern was done with the primary object of creating a Hindu majority and Hindu nation. What is significant here is how this elimination happened through the politics of communal (de)mobilisation of the Hindu woman. Secondly, what was the nature of this mobilisation? Was it a silent or a high profile mobilisation? Did it include everyday activities or was it a spectacular event?

Relevance of Everyday form of Interaction

As Charu Gupta puts it the word communal has usually been linked to violence. However, an explanation of how communalism developed because of the increasing interaction between Hindu women and Muslim men demand that we look beyond the obvious link between communalism and violence. As 'spectacular moments of strife, be they riots over cow protection, or at festivals, or over music near mosques, do not tell us the full story of communal antagonisms.[10]

Conflicts are generated because of the friction of everyday life. Everyday life and practices –reading, talking, walking and cooking –should not be treated merely as obscure background.[11] Everyday life reproduces social currents; it reflects the socialisation of nature and the degree and the manner of its humanisation.[12] Larger public arenas (where communal riots were taking place) tend to be impersonal; the everyday is more personal and interactive and therefore more pervasive. The realm of the everyday is even more crucial from a gender perspective, for women usually play a more central role in this arena. Although the resistance offered by the Hindu woman was limited yet it cannot be underestimated.

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[10] Ibid., 262.

[11] Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven F. Rendall, Berkeley, 1984, pp. xi-xxiv; Charu Gupta, Ibid., 268.

[12] Agnes Heller, Everyday Life, trans. G.L. Campbell, London, 1984, p.4.

This unnoticed and silent warfare (in the context of growing communalism) has to be examined more thoroughly as it is here that the Hindu woman and Muslim man contributed to this silent warfare in the communal battle. Hindu nationalism used this silent warfare in its religious agenda and aggravated relations with the Muslims by using the Hindu woman as an instrument was one of them. Secondly, it is also in this arena that the Hindu man was constantly reinforcing his control over the Hindu woman. It was power which subjugated the Hindu woman and made her a further subject in the hands of the Hindu man.

In a way the bringing home of the communal tensions between the Hindu and Muslim community also brought with it further complication as the Hindu communalists had now to work out how to make women consenting constituents of a communalised community? Consenting because they feared women would assume an activist role in this communal rhetoric. However activism had to go along with consent within a communalised community. So the Hindu woman had to join hands with her men in the communal battle and step back again when asked to do so. Thus, even the activist role assumed by the Hindu woman was determined by men.

'Weapons' of Communal Mobilisation used by the Hindu men

Here again, by mobilizing the inner/outer distinction against the "outerness" of the west, nationalist rhetoric made "woman" the pure and ahistorical signifier of "interiority". In the fight against the enemy from the outside, woman becomes the mute but necessary allegorical ground for the transactions of nationalist history. Partha Chatterjee observes that Indian nationalism could neither ignore the west completely nor capitulate to it entirely: the west and its ideal of material progress had to be assimilated selectively, without any fundamental damage to the native and "inner" Indian self. No encroachments by the coloniser would be allowed in the inner sanctum[13]

That the Hindu woman was used as a bulwark against the Muslim man has been shown by various scholars. Why and how exactly the Hindu man sought to fortify the Hindu

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[13] Partha Chatterjee, op. cit. 121

community and specially its women against the Muslim men? To what extent did Hindu men succeed in trapping the Hindu woman and use her for the purpose of the overall mobilisation of the Hindu community? One might ask as to why specifically the study of the mobilisation of the Hindu woman and not the Hindu man against the Muslim community. The Hindu man was responsible for the overall mobilisation of his community but the mobilisation of women becomes important because it has two angles associated with it: that of gender subordination and religion both. Women were mobilised by the men of their community against the men of another community. Some of the 'weapons' used by the Hindu nationalists included: (a) the negative portrayal of Muslims as barbaric, lecherous etc.[14] (b) the imposition of a false unity amongst the different Hindu castes. This false unity amongst the Hindus was to be used against the Muslims. Even in this case the image of the Hindu woman as Mother was used as a bulwark against the Muslims. (c) The simultaneous elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman was yet another agenda used by the nationalist for the communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman. This however was conditional and also dependent on the image of the 'Other'. (d) The use of myths to reinvent and renegotiate the identities of Hindu women and the Muslim men was yet another instrument in the hands of the Hindu man. All of these were used to trap the Hindu woman for the purpose of politics of communal mobilisation.

Religion became a priority for the Hindu nationalists. This concept had a close link with the concept of the 'Other', which in this case was the Muslim man. Issues of caste, gender were reformulated as religion acquired priority. Caste and women often became a uniting factor against the Muslims in the 'Politics of Communal Mobilisation of the Hindu Woman'. Caste differences were momentarily set aside and women's issues directed towards the communal mobilisation against the Muslims.[15]

This act of communal mobilisation however did not include the physical mobilisation of the Hindu woman. What was more important here was the mobilisation of the Hindu male against the Muslim male. The real problem or issue was the Muslim man. One can

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[14] Charu Gupta, op. cit. 310.
[15] Charu Gupta refers to this as the camouflaging of caste differences in Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, pp. 20, 276.

say that the mobilisation of the Hindu woman was based on an outward critique, i.e. via a critique of the Muslim man and by using religion as an instrument. What got concealed through this outward critique was the nature of Hindu patriarchy and its intricate working against the Hindu woman. The critique of Hindu patriarchy was overshadowed by more important issues concerning the Muslim man.

The abduction of women provided arguments in favour of Hindu homogeneity and patriarchy. The so called 'abduction' of the Hindu woman by the Muslims was given complete religious overtones where 'our women' had to be protected against 'the other'.[16] This only further increased the control of the Hindu men over their women. Any deviation from her community line/boundary only increased the instructions and regulations for women. Thus the everyday interaction between the Muslim man and the Hindu woman soon started having cultural and political connotations. The full circle was completed with this. First the communal tensions found its way into the domestic arena and later the same aggravated communal tensions found their way from the domestic back to the public arena. Its connotations for the Hindu woman were that she was more than ever being used as a tool in the hands of the Hindu men. In a way communalism functioned both ways: from the public to the domestic arena and vice versa.

The issue of the Hindu woman's respectability and segregation also become important here.[17] In 1925 the Hindu Sabha was trying to organise a volunteer corps in Banaras to prevent women and children at railway stations from falling into the hands of Muslims. Subscriptions were collected for this purpose. There were repeated calls for Hindus to come forward and protect their women. The Arya Samaj had an important role to play here in asking the Hindu men to fight against the Muslim men. The central argument being used by Hindu communal organisations was that to protect 'our' women, all steps were justified.[18] This was the self-image of a community at war against another community. It can be asked whether it was the men of the two communities at war with each other or whether women were used as instruments by the men for fulfilling their

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[16] Ibid., 243-258.
[17] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, p. 98.
[18] Charu Sharma, op. cit. p. 257.

religious agenda. The attack on Muslims was linked to the phenomenon of enemy as neighbour; earlier attacks on Christian missionaries on similar grounds now shifted to Muslim abductors. The presence of Muslims in neighbourhoods meant divided sphere where allegiance to community became more important than to locality. This was crucial for the development of the Hindu identity.

The Hindu identity was thereby developed through everyday activities which were in contradiction with the Muslims. The building up of a Hindu identity which ran in opposition to the Muslim neighbour meant that the division between the two communities was becoming sharper through everyday activities. This meant that the cultural difference between the communities was highlighted even more so now. Culture, as Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan argues in her work, is therefore powerfully coercive in shaping the subject; but since it is also heterogeneous, changing and open to interpretation, it is also a site of contestation and consequently of the reinscription of subjectivities. [19]

The body is not a simple physical object but rather, is constructed by and takes its meaning from its positioning within specific social, cultural and economic practices. The Hindu woman was culturally defined in opposition to the Muslim woman and her identity constructed in contradiction to the 'Other'. The everyday activities of the two communities (which were now being constructed in opposition to each other) meant that identities were now being constructed more within the domestic space. The "every dayness,"[20] which is neither mundane nor immemorial brings us closer to the domestic domain, also the domain of the woman. It is to this link between everyday life and its relation to women that we can also trace the link between Hindu woman, Muslim men and the Hindu man's efforts in keeping the two apart. Because it was through their everyday interaction with the Muslim men that the Hindu woman to an extent broke the barrier of limited community interaction.[21]

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[19] Rajeshwaari Sunder Rajan, 'Is the Hindu Goddess a Feminist in Gender and Nation, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2001; Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Post-Colonialism, London and New York, Routledge, 1993.

[20] Concept borrowed from Harry Harootunian, History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life.

[21] Charu Gupta, p. 268.

The way national identity was framed left the Hindu woman's emerging national identity as 'not always a freely chosen option'.[22] If applied to the Hindu woman in the 19th century one can safely ask if the Hindu woman's identity was 'not a freely chosen option', there was no question of agency either. Which brings us to the next question – How then was national identity framed? National identity was framed with and by a dominant Hindu ideology. The agents of which were the upper-caste Hindu male. Community identity was forced upon the Hindu women leaving her with an identity within which they had no space to negotiate. The only space to negotiate was offered by the Hindu men as per their objectives and intentions.[23]

It is here that a feminist critique of Hindu nationalism becomes important to understand how the members (male) of religious community enforce the community identity on their women. To what extent do men succeed in trapping women in their community identity? What are the factors that are deployed by men to push women into the community identity? This could be due to various reasons: religious identity became important in the context of UP so that the Hindu male could have greater control over their women and further the religious differences. The situation in the 1920s was marked by communal upsurge and therefore religion became an important marker for women. Religion was used to prevent the Hindu woman from interacting with men of any other community. At such moments the religious identity became an essential form of demarcating various communities.

Nationalism versus Communalism[24]

The 1920's witnessed the phenomenon of the emergence of 'Indian' nationalism. The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in the political scene also brought with the emergence of a nationalism which was more united than any other form of nationalism. In fact Gyanendra Pandey writes that from the 1920s there arose a new contest between two

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[22] Zoya Hasan, , 'Minority Identity,Muslim Women Bill Campaign and the Political Process', Economic and Political Weekly, 1989, 24 (1).

[23] Charu Gupta, op. cit. 222.

[24] Gyanendra Pandey 'Nationalism versus Communalism', in, The Construction of Communalism in North India, Oxford University Press, 1990.

different conceptions of nationalism –one which recognised the existence of 'pre-existing' communities and the other view which challenged this view of history, And alongside this these there developed yet another kind of 'nationalism'- 'communalism' that sought to establish hierarchy of cultures in India and establish the superiority of a particular culture in India.[25]

However, standard histories of nationalist movement have not given due attention to the fears of the Muslim minority of being dominated by an unsympathetic if not hostile Hindu majority. For the Hindu communalists whipping up anxiety about Muslims would be one way to weld together hugely diverse, and often antagonistic, castes into one community, erasing structural divisions in caste society. Hindu communalists believed and continue to believe that India is defined culturally as a Hindu nation. They assumed that the unity and integration of the nation was essentially based on the notion of an upper-caste, North Indian Hindu male.

For that matter standard histories of the nationalist movement have also not given due attention to the way Hindu nationalists used caste as a negotiable instrument. It is here that we see the paradox of caste. Caste was often used by the communalists in two different ways. All caste distinctions could be dissolved when it came to fighting against the British as a nation. In which case there would be an 'artificial unanimity' among the Hindus and Muslims against the British. '..when it came to questions of the Hindu woman's chastity and honour, or constructions of Muslim lustfulness, a superficial unanimity was swiftly established'.[26] Similarly when it came to communal politics against the Muslims the diverse caste system would often merge against the Muslims. Speech and writing in the name of the Congress in UP regularly employed comparisons between the British colonial state and the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.[27]

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[25] Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in North India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 260.
[26] Charu Gupta, 'Gains, Losses and/or Potential Possibilities: Gender and Social Reforms in the United Provinces in Exploring Gender Equations: Colonial and Postcolonial India, in Shakti Kak and Biswamoy Pati, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2005, p. 229.
[27] William Gould, Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India, New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 12.

Koenraad Elst describes Hindu revivalism as a broad trend in nineteenth and twentieth-century India which seeks to revive Hinduism after a benumbing near-millennium of political, ideological and psychological subjection to Islamic and Western hegemony.[28] The process of revivalism according to Elst, itself carried with it many agendas and one of these ran in opposition to the Muslim community.

Charu Gupta has tried to show through her book, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community – Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India,* how gender was central to the creation of a sexualised and communalised Hindu identity in colonial U.P.[29] Even if gender and communalism were not directly related, communalism and nationalism often used gender in their fight. She has studied the role of the often 'didactic literature' in the 'realignment of gender roles'.[30] The Hindu publicists exercised covert coercion and were able to negotiate with the identities of women.

Emphasising on the importance of 'words' Sudipta Kaviraj writes that due to the overwhelming nature of colonial control, intellectuals of the early phase of nationalism had to know extremely well how to think with words: indeed words were 'the terrain on which most politics were done'. He also throws light on the 'political nature' of the intellectual's in spite of their 'subliminal character'.[31] Similarly the Hindu publicists in UP were on a 'moral' mission to prevent the already 'corroded' society and the agenda was not an entirely literary one. Thus what one witnesses in colonial UP is a constantly 'shifting narrative' regarding women and their activities, both public and private. 'Words'[32] as Kaviraj puts it or the works of the Hindu publicists as Charu Gupta puts it were very important in the context of furthering the nationalist agenda.

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[28]Koenraad Elst, Decolonising the Hindu Mind, Ideological Development of Hindu Revivalism, New Delhi, Rupa, 2001, p.9.

[29]Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001.

[30] Ibid., p.. 321.

[31] S.Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India' in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed., New Delhi, Oxford, 1993, p. 10.

[32] Ibid., 10

Charu Gupta comments on the identity politics and the making of the 'Other'[33] i.e. the relationship between Hindu identity, gender, and construction of the Muslim male in the context of the *shuddhi* and *sangathan* movements of the 1920s in UP.[34] With increasing assertions of religious community identity, gender became an important means of defining and contributing to sharper divisions between Hindus and Muslims. There were attempts to construct a full-bodied masculine Hindu male through these movements, one who could at once strengthen community identity and undertake a militant nationalist struggle. The Hindu woman became a resource for this aggressive Hindu chauvinism. At times she was expected to participate in the communal conflict and take on a masculine image in defence of community honour. Hindu men and women were defended first and foremost as members of their community and then invested with 'masculine' ideals to uphold their community honour. Hindu women were not just victims or objects. They were portrayed as sister –in-arms and given an agency in the Hindu rhetoric of the period. [35]Thus at certain moments, images of masculinity were extended to her and she was 'empowered' as an agent of violence.[36]

Thus what we see here is yet another paradox in negotiating the identity of the Hindu woman, who was time and again used as an instrument in the hands of the Hindu nationalists and communalists alike. Depending on the context, she was invested with 'masculine' and 'feminine' ideals. This context however, was constantly changing. In the domestic domain women were expected to adopt 'feminine' ideals and virtues, however when it came to extending her role to the public domain she would often be expected to adopt 'masculine' ideals for the sake of the community and the nation at large.

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[33] Charu Gupta, op. cit. p. 239.
[34] Ibid., 223-224.
[35] Ibid.,235.
[36] Ibid., 235.

Nationalism and Communalism Debate

There are various debates on Nationalism and how it gradually acquired communal overtones. Various scholars have written in this regard. What was the relationship between communalism and nationalism? What was the purpose of the Hindu nationalist to use women for communal mobilisation? Considering that the Hindu men used the Hindu women for the purpose of communal mobilisation, how did nationalism then acquire communal overtone in this regard.

There has been a debate between nationalism and communalism. As to whether nationalism and communalism worked on two very different scales, or whether the objectives of the two collided. Thus were they two sides of the same coin? And if not what was it that differentiated the two from each other?

Christopher Jaffrelot has stressed that Hindu nationalism was constructed as an ideology between the 1870s and the 1920s, and in the 1920s the doctrine was crystallised. The growth of nationalism both inside and outside the Congress went hand in hand with the 'rediscovery' of Hindu (and Muslims) cultural and religious values.[37]

Gyanendra Pandey in his much acclaimed *The Construction of Communalism in North India* writes that communalism was defined in opposition to what after the 1920s came to be considered new nationalism.[38] Communalism came to be considered as part of a 'pre-modern' world that came into existence because of the colonial strategy to keep the Hindus and Muslims from coming together. Nationalism was forward-looking, progressive, and 'modern' in Indian politics. Communalism was all that was backward looking, reactionary. This difference between the two however, came to be established only toward the beginning of the 20th century.

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[37] Christophe Jaffrelot, The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s, Delhi, 1996.

[38] Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in North India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990.

Sumit Sarkar instead divides communalism into two phases and tries to trace the growth of communalism to the very beginning. As has been mentioned earlier there is an enormous lap in personnel, assumptions, and symbols between mainstream Indian nationalism and Hindu communalism. He traces the genealogy of Hindu communalism in terms of two historical transitions.[39]

The first is a transition from a relatively inchoate Hindu world, without firmly defined boundaries, to the late-nineteenth century construction of ideologies of unified Hinduism, in the context of integrative colonial communication, administrative, and economic structures. He traces the second transition to roughly the mid-1920s. This was a move in some quarters towards an aggressive Hindutva postulated usually upon an enemy image of a similarly conceived Islam. Sumit Sarkar distinguishes between Indian, Hindu, and Muslim nationalisms – rather than simply between nationalism and communalism. Indian nationalism had to seek a fundamentally territorial focus, attempting to unite everyone living in the territory of British-dominated India, irrespective of religious or other differences. Ways of building or maintaining that unity included efforts to create public spaces where religious difference would not be allowed entrance. [40] This argument shows that the nationalists created an artificial unity, a 'space' where religious difference would not be allowed to enter. This however does not take away the fact that religious differences existed.

Communalism was perceived to be primarily located in the divisive doctrine espoused by imperialism; it followed therefore that nationalism (which struggled against imperialism) was free from communalism. Nationalism and communalism were terms in direct contradiction with each other. But as Sujata Patel poses the question, was nationalism constructed in meanings that were anti-communal and was secularism also so constructed?[41]

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[39]Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva", Making India Hindu, Religion,Community and the Politics of Democracy in India, David Ludden, ed., Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 273.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Sujata Patel 'Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India', Ed., by T. V. Sathyamurthy, Vol. 3, OUP, Delhi, 1996, p. 147.

Gyanendra Pandey had made the point that if the colonial power and communalist politicians accepted a primarily religious orientation of communities, so too did the nationalist politicians and historiographers. Pandey has explored the origin of 'nationalism as subsuming communal categories'. In fact he goes on to say that 'secularism is nationalism in a new garb'.[42]

According to Gyanendra Paney the 'politics of the religious communities – also called communalism – encircled the nationalist dream like the coils of a snake'.[43] One can ask as to what extent communalism encircled the nationalist dreams? And to what extent did it overtake nationalism not just in the public arena but also in the domestic arena. To what extent did communalism enter the everyday nationalist arena and affect the gender relations between the Hindu and Muslim community? A dominant current of the movement was the political advance of the Hindu body-politic. Conversion began to be considered an act of nationalism. For the communalists religious boundaries sharpened when compared to the Muslims and it is from here that one can also trace the idea of the communalist's version of a "Hindu nation".

The binary opposition between nationalism and communalism that was set up in the 1920s entailed, for the nationalists, a careful re-examination and presentation of the Indian past. [44]A past minus the 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' 'excesses', this reconstructed history was to emphasize the 'tolerance' and the inclusiveness of the Indian past. Thus if the nationalists found it difficult to unify the idea of one India, they found themselves resorting to the idea of a 'unified Indian' past. For that could be constructed more easily than dealing with the divisions that already existed in the Indian society.

What we witness here are the nationalists in opposition to the communalists and the colonialist for attaining the idea of a 'united India'. However, one needs to ask the

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[42] Gyanendra Pandey, 'Questions of Nationalism and Communalism', Economic and Political Weekly 22 (20 June): 25, pp. 983-4.
[43] Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and Colonial World, p. 110; Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in North India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p. 243.
[44] Gyanendra Pandey, op. cit. 247.

question whether all nationalisms reconstruct their past in exactly the same way. In common with nationalism elsewhere, nationalist discourse in India summoned to its side the Spirit of the Nation and its ancient character. Thus, nationalist thought, whether in its earlier phase or in its later phase remained 'full of contradictions, inconsistencies, ambiguities'. Issues like gender, communalism continued to be treated ambiguously by the Hindu nationalists. Although there were differences in the way the Hindu nationalists treated women in the earlier and later phases of the movement, yet there were certain similarities too. Women continued to remain a tool in the hand of the Hindu nationalists, with nationalism as a bigger and worthier cause than any other. Their identities continued to be constructed and reconstructed by the nationalists throughout all the stages of nationalism.

Sudipta Kaviraj makes an interesting point regarding an operation the size of the Indian/Hindu nationalism and the importance of an 'axis' around which 'others' have to therefore fit.[45] For example by the latter stages of the Indian nationalism, all earlier figures were measured according to the Nehruvian model of being nationalist. This large scale exercise of a certain standard and notion of nationalism (this however kept changing from the early 19th century to the 1940s) by which others had to abide, led to a phenomenon through which people with all kinds of 'mental world' such as the a communal mental world, were also admitted into the nationalist fold.[46] This possibly explains the confusion regarding nationalism and communalism and whether there were similarities between the two and to what extent the two can be put together.

Sudipta Kaviraj quotes Antonio Gramsci in this context, "a unilinear national hagiography is impossible: any attempt of this sort appears immediately sectarian, false, utopian, anti-national, because one is forced to cut out or undervalue unforgettable pages of national history.....History was political propaganda, it aimed to create national unity –that is, the nation –from the outside....by basing itself on literature."[47]

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[45] Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution on India' in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed., New Delhi, Oxford, 1993, p4.

[46] Ibid. 4.

[47] Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Cultural Writings, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985, p.253.

Writing in the context of the Indian National Congress, Sucheta Mazumdar writes that a vast majority of the founders of the Indian Nationalist Movement were comfortable with upper caste Hindu identities and 'each took pride in his culture as faith' [48] Alliances soon emerged between members of this group and the contemporary popular mobilisation in North India under the auspices of the 'cow protection league'. This movement was explicitly anti-Muslim. The cow protection league made meat-eating into an anti-Hindu position.[49] The rallies of the cow protection league provided ready audiences for the fledging nationalists. She gives examples of Maharashtra where Brahminical revivalism provided support for other explicitly anti-Muslim activities. Religious festivals were promoted by Hindu landlords and converted into sited for mass political rallies; religion, nationalism and anti-Muslim activism became one and the same.

Since the vast majority of the leadership came from upper-caste Hindu back-grounds, Hindu religious culture was effortlessly equated with Indian culture. In a process of 'resacralisation', modernity, instead of separating the secular from the sacred, drew the two together into a new synthesis.[50] Women from the two communities came to symbolise two distinct faces of the nation: the bold Hindu woman with her face uncovered, and the burqa clad Muslim woman excluded from public space by her community.[51]

The Other

Stereotypes are beyond reason. They are reductive and create 'us' and 'them' cognitive states. Sweeping statements affect individuals, both men and women, as well as larger

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[48] Sucheta Mazumdar, 'Women on the March: Right-Wing Mobilisation in Contemporary India', Feminist Review, No. 49, Feminist Politics: Colonial/ Post-colonial Worlds, Spring 1995, p. 3; John McLane, 'The early Congress Hindu Populism and the Wider Society in Sisson and Wolpert, 1988, p. 54.

[49] John McLane, Ibid., 55-57, S. Mazumdar, Ibid., 3.

[50] Patricia Uberoi, 'Feminine Identity and National Ethos in Indian Calendar Art, Economic and Political Weekly, April1990; As cited from Sucheta Majumdar, Ibid. 5.

[51] Sucheta Mazumdar, Women, Culture and Politics: engendering the nation' South Asia Bulletin Vol. 12, No. 2, 1992.

events.[52] This stereotyping of the Muslims by the Hindu nationalists by the end of the 19th century aggravated tensions between the two communities. In countries like India, high culture provides symbolic references or resources and also tangible, concrete blueprints from the intelligentsia for the revival of some or other aspect of a collective past. Culture can also therefore be the source of revivalism, fundamentalism, and national chauvinism. The notions of self may generate conceptions of the superiority or inferiority of cultures and induce fears of the 'Other' as posing a constant threat to the self.[53]

In the context of late 19th and early 20th century India the Hindu woman's slow and gradual interaction with the men of the Muslim community, induced fears of the Hindu man's ever shrinking space in the society. The Hindu man found his space invaded by the British and felt the loss further with respect to the Muslim man. Fears of his masculine self being threatened by men of other communities constantly weighed on his mind. With this also arose the fear of the Hindu man losing his space not only at home and in the family, but in the outside public world and eventually over the larger national space, conceived in terms of the Hindu space.

Milind Wakankar asks the question, how as the Indian nationalist movement gained momentum against the British and how this movement came to define the "Muslim Other" as its object? He writes that the male body can be reconstituted as the shifting node between the past, the present, and the future, as the locus of continuity and discontinuity, degeneration and regeneration. It can both serve as a threshold to return to the once glorious past, as well as the point of departure from the tyranny of an unchanging future.[54] This tendency to return to the past in the context of Hindu nationalism was the glorious Vedic past for the Hindu nationalists.

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[52] Namita Devidayal, 'The Significant Other', The Times of India, July 25, 2006, p. 26. The article was written after the Bombay local train bomb blast. The incident has led to an increasing stereotyping of the Muslims in Bombay city and in other parts of India.

[53] Javeed Alam, India Living With Modernity, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 130.

[54] Milind Wakankar, Body, Crowd, Identity: Genealogy of a Hindu Nationalist Ascetics, Social Text, No. 45, Duke University Press, Winter, 1995, pp.51-52.

This tendency to return to a once so called glorious past as Marx wrote in the opening lines of the Eighteenth Brumaire, when he remarked that "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living". Just when men "seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed... they conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes.[55]

Thus the retreat to culture made it possible for the intelligentsia to go back in history to fill the resistance against colonial rule with themes and inspirations from the past. However, this as we know was a 'selective past' and was one derived from a Hindu understanding of the past. This past glorified women and drew immediate comparisons with the decline in moral standards of the women in the 19th century. This past moreover, selective as it was, excluded the Muslims. The Muslims came to be recognised as the 'Other': one who was a constant threat to the Hindu community, particularly its women. In the culturally oriented nationalist thought it did happen that the effort at proving the cultural or spiritual superiority of India turned out to be more of an extended and elaborate exercise about proving the worth and superiority of the Hindu culture.

As Sucheta Mazumdar writes the 'infatuation' with the Hindu past was a means of disparaging Muslims through a blend of racism and supposed concern for Hindu woman. For the convenient chronology is that 'Women lost all their glory and liberty in the dark period of history when India was invaded by barbarians'.[56]

And as Javeed Alam points out it was Bankim Chandra who first felt most acutely the threat to Hinduism and the Hindu way of life as the basis of the nation he wished to see fashioned. This came out before an anti-colonial organisation or party had taken shape but analytical and literary criticism of the colonial rule was rapidly growing. Bankim Chandra coined the distinction between 'inner and outer life' and asked questions about

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[55] Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, New York: International publishers, 1990, p. 15; As cited from Milind Wakankar, Ibid. 52.

[56] Ammu Joseph and KalpanaSharma, Between the lines: Women's issues in English language newspapers, EPW, 26 Oct. 1981, p. 80.

the place of 'external life'. The inner life for Bankim had to have precedence and claim over the outer; it represented the spiritual nature of man and that of the domestic or feminine gender. It is in these debates that Bankim laid down the criteria of exclusion and that which enfeebled or was not good for the nation. For Bankim that which made one effeminate had to be shunned.[57]

Writing in the context of anticolonialism becoming modern nationalism, Sudipta Kaviraj writes on the move from a "fuzzy" to a "clear enumerated community".[58] According to Sudipta Kaviraj enumeration of a community becomes significant for two reasons: first, it is a source of psychological strength to restate the tremendous number of people in a community. Secondly, it a matter of great political significance to know this collective subject. For the nationalists the national community had to be enumerated to know the 'strength' of their community. It is therefore important to note that in the discourse of Indian nationalism in the narrow sense the question of numbers figures so strongly. The Muslim man as the 'Other' became important in this context. This importance of this project of enumeration remains as significant today as in the 19th century. For Kaviraj the nation-states today pursue an "endless counting of its citizens, territories, resources, majorities, minorities, institututions, activities, import, export, incomes, projects, births, deaths, diseases".[59]

The female body, as Foucault, would say is the 'docile body' to the extent that it may be 'subjected, used, transformed and improved'[60] and is used completely by its dominant other which however it has internalised as its own. Thus, for Pierre Bourdieu 'the main mechanism of domination operates through the unconscious manipulation of the body'. And 'this imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes is experienced as legitimate'. The legitimacy hides the power relations between

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[57]Javeed Alam, 'Hindu and Others in the Making of the Nation', in India Living With Modernity, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 141.

[58] Sudipta Kaviraj in, "The Imaginary Institution of India" ,Occasional Papers On History and Society, Second Series, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, Aug. 1991; Sudipta Kaviraj in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, Subaltern Studies, Vol. 7, Delhi, Oxford, 1993, p. 20.

[59]Ibid., p31.

[60] MichelFoucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, New York, Vantage Books, 1977, p. 136.

the two genders. Symbolic domination is 'something you absorb like air, something you don't feel pressurised by, it is everywhere and nowhere and to escape from that is very difficult'.[61]

Shifting Identities: Hindu woman, Caste and Religion

Identities are not fixed or singular. The projection of a cohesive Hindu community identity had to constantly negotiate with other collective identities, such as caste and class, for in social ways Hindus are vertically and horizontally divided. However, when it came to a question of protecting the Hindu religion and its women against the Muslims the projection of a Hindu homogeneity could at times overpower the reality of caste hierarchies. As the question of Hindu woman vis-à-vis the 'other' (Muslim man) gained primary importance for the Hindu man, caste differences were replaced for the time being.[62]

However, caste being a fundamental aspect of Hindu society was replaced only for the time being. The Hindu middle classes, who included a large number of intermediate castes, found through the Hindu woman certain bonds of common interests and values, which to an extent transcended the divisions centred on caste and occupation. All these helped in further demarcating the Muslims.[63] The Hindu community identity was mobilised against the Muslim community. The assembling of all the Hindu castes irrespective of their hierarchies was however a short- term move. Caste and women were made to play an important role by the Hindu nationalists, in this scheme of false unification of the heterogeneous Hindu community. Thus caste and women were mobilised for the sake of Hindu nationalism and the nation at large. The Hindu woman was made to play an important role in this agenda both in the domestic and the public

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[61] Pierre Bourdeau, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, Cambridge, 1991.

[62] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, p. 276.

[63] Charu Gupta Paper for CWDS Seminar on identity formation, Nationhood and Women, Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi. "Historical Antecedents of Politicised Hindu Religion in UP and its Implications for Women", p. 6.

realm. At home she played this role by strengthening the Hindu home and its values and in the public realm by upholding the Hindu values in a particular fashion only. [64]

Sumit Sarkar comments that the ideology of nationalism has something about it that is 'fraudulent'. Groups merge and nationalism 'inevitably homogenises and represses internal differences' [65] But what is the reason for these groups to merge at certain times and disintegrate later? Are these pre-existing identities or do they construct and unite themselves for reasons such as the one required for the purpose of nation and nationalism?

This only further proves the point that Nivedita Menon makes in *Recovering Subversion-Feminist Politics Beyond the Law* that there are no pre-existing 'women', 'dalits', 'sexual minorities' out there, these identities are precariously constituted by the political act of hegemonising meaning.[66] We constitute identities – including our own – in and through political practice. This can be made clearer through Antonio Gramsci's argument about "what north- south or east- west would mean without man? They are real relationships yet they could not exist without man and without the development of civilisation. East and west are arbitrary and conventional, that is, historical constructions, since outside of real history every point on the earth is east and west at the same time.[67] Reflected in these statements are power relations –'the world-wide hegemony' of 'the European cultured classes' whose point of view was naturalised across the globe.[68]

She makes this argument clearer by extending the force of Antonio Gramsci's argument to, values like equality, justice and emancipation, none of which she writes, can be grasped outside ways of thinking and organising of thought. Modern identities she says are put in place by law.[69] Similarly the place of the Hindu woman has to be understood

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[64] Chatu Gupta, op. cit. 222-248.
[65] Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History. New Delhi, Oxford, 1997, p. 388.
[66] Nivedita Menon, Recovering Subversion: Feminist Politics Beyond Law, New Delhi , Permanent Black, 2004, p. 233.
[67] Antonio Gramsci's Selections from the Prison's Notebooks, New York, International Publisher's, 1987; As cited from Nivedita Menon, op. cit.
[68] Nivedita Menon, Ibid., p. 236.
[69] Ibid.

within the framework of not just Hindu nationalism but a larger framework of nationalism. To what extent does nationalism marginalise its people and to what extent it includes and excludes people of various caste, class, community and gender?[70]

With all caste, community constantly shifting identities, what did this mean for the society? Language, literature, religion, territorial allegiance all became aspects of being Hindu. The most important aspects of being Hindu became the 'establishment and maintenance of an indigenous cultural identity, whether in matters of food, clothing or language. The Hindu community and tradition were being reconstituted once again in relation to other communities, especially the Muslim community. The communities far from being homogeneous were involved in an effort to present a united front to the others. Though it must be added that 'Hindu' in its various connotations was beginning to dominate and appropriate political and cultural space, it was being used in several senses. As Vasudha Dalmia puts it, the term Hindu was used to describe followers of non-Islamic religions.[71] What this meant in effect was that society was conceived as a Hindu society and the Other always happened to be the Muslim. And the Other happened to be the Hindu woman when the Hindu community had to be mobilised against the Muslims.

Language also became gendered in this regard. Language made one a Hindu. Languages associated with the two communities, i.e. Hindi and Urdu were gendered. Thus Hindi was shown as a 'patient and respectable Hindu wife or a Brahmin nurturing matron; while Urdu was nothing less than a heartless aristocratic strumpet or a wanton Muslim prostitute.'[72] The implication of this was that the Muslim man through differences in language and other forms of culture was being demarcated form the dominant Hindu society.

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[70] I'd like to thank Nivedita Menon for making this point clear in our Political Theory classes.
[71] Vasudha Dalmia, The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions, Bharatendu Harishchandra, Nineteenth century Banaras, OUP, Delhi, 1997, pp. 32-33.
[72] Charu Gupta, 'Historical Antecedents of Politicised Hindu Religion In Uttar Pradesh and Its Implications for Women, Paper for CWDS Seminar, New Delhi, 2005, p.10.

The majority of the Hindu literary writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century cannot be easily classified as communal or nationalist, pro or anti-Muslim.[73] According to Charu Gupta even a writer like Premchand struggled in this regard. [74]Most of them subscribed to the belief that Hindu and Indian were synonymous terms. A clear-cut classification was difficult to arrive at as everything was subsumed under the nationalist umbrella. Even a writer whose work had communal overtones could be considered a nationalist writer without much hesitancy. This belief itself helped in the creation of a new national consciousness. Infact Charu Gupta shows how prominent members of the Arya Samaj, who controlled many of the important publishing houses and newspapers being published from UP in the early twentieth century, carried a massive campaign against Muslims and Islam in print. Print became an important tool in their hands to create further religious differences. 'The print explosion facilitated the production of discourse as a commodity'[75]

Tradition and Modernity

Colonial modernity had many meanings within the late nineteenth-century India. Its relationship to the nationalist discourse has been well explored. However the intersection of modernity with the daily, the domestic, the familial, and the personal are important from a feminist perspective. Home, family, and daily life in the colonial period were worlds where every element had moved into conscious negotiation and debate. Moreover the Hindu nationalists specially used the argument of women and domesticity in the context of the relationship between the Hindu woman and Muslim man. It is important to keep in mind that debates on domesticity figured for a particular reason.

As Judith E. Walsh puts it men (and eventually women) must choose what to keep and what to leave behind from the indigenous past, what to ignore and what to practice in the colonial present. European ideas on home and family life became naturalised in this period as a transitional, hegemonic discourse on domestic life. She refers to this phenomenon as "global domesticity" which reshaped gender relations throughout the

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[73] Charu Gupta , Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001, p. 243.
[74] Ibid. 246.
[75] Ibid., 11.

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world, but more specifically in India. She has focussed on the origin of the interconnection between home, family and nation and the politicisation of daily and domestic life.[76]

The final aim of these cross-cultural references, such as comparing the educational status of the Indian middle-class woman to her Western counterpart was to encourage Indian women to contribute to national life as participants or supporters of anti-colonial movement i.e. to mobilise the Hindu woman. Paradoxically, here the Western woman was not portrayed as over-educated and hence a danger to her society. On the other hand, Western woman was projected both as sources of encouragement to their men folk in their war efforts, and as 'protectors of their nation's freedom'.[77] This led to tradition being redefined to work out a new modernity. There was a deliberate distancing from the 'uncomfortable' traditions of the past. The Hindu woman was now viewed as morally virtuous minus the sexuality.[78]

Thus the Hindu nationalists redefined tradition according to their nationalist agenda which was not necessarily emancipatory. If education for the Hindu woman was looked at as modern and hence beneficial to the nationalist cause then it did not come into conflict with the idea of modernity. On the other hand sexuality was not dealt with similarly. Thus the 'new modernity' it can be said was tradition redefined and therefore, one can say the Hindu nationalists were not comfortable with issues and questions of modernity and used modernity as a tool of convenience.

Domestic versus Public: The question to ask would be that under these changed circumstances, to what extent did domestic acquire a different meaning with the clash of tradition and modernity? What exactly was this distinction between the domestic and the public domain? Or to put it in other words, was there a distinction or was it fallacious? Domestic becomes domestic only in relation to the public realm. In the case of Hindu

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[76] Domesticity in Colonial India, What Women Learned When Men gave Them Advice, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 2.
[77] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement, p. 245.
[78] Charu Gupta, Ibid., p. 40.

nationalism the domestic was expected to be at the service of the national space. This was done through various means. The elevation of woman as Mother of the nation was one way to do this. Similarly when it came to the Muslim man and the Hindu woman the Hindu nationalists first constructed a particular image of the Muslim man. This image was then contrasted against the image of the Hindu man. Having done that the Muslim man was very subtly driven outside the nationalist image.

The domestic is problematised here because the Hindu woman interacted with the Muslims in many ways. (as has been mentioned above). This increasing interaction led to a tightening of domestic boundaries within the Hindu household. It was under these changing circumstances, one can say, that the domestic acquired a different meaning. The Hindu man sought to confine the Hindu woman in the domestic domain. This argument was however possible only in relation to an outer world which the Hindu man was finding difficult to control because of the increasing mobilisation and interaction of the Hindu woman. The domestic space was in a state of flux in relation to a changing public realm. In contrast to this tightening of the domestic domain was the paradoxical phenomenon of mobilisation of the Hindu woman against the Muslim man. The Hindu nationalists were the active agents and initiators of both communal mobilisation and domestic de-mobilisation of the Hindu woman.[79]

As Partha Chatterjee and Tanika Sarkar have both suggested, in different contexts, that it was precisely because Westernised Bengali men had already yielded so much of their cultural autonomy to the structures and demands of life in British India that they were so desperate to preserve the integrity of indigenous home and family life. Women would maintain, Chatterjee argues, their Hindu identity in matters of religion and dress precisely because men had been unable to do so. Thus women were made to preserve what had they had already ceded.[80] Judith E. Walsh continues this argument further by asking to

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[79] This argument is a summarisation with slight modification from 'Hindu Women, Muslim Men' inCharu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001, p. 268- 320.

[80] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1989; Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Communtiy , Religion and Cultural Nationalism, London, Hurst and Company, 2001.

what degree habits and customs must be moved out of their comfortable unconscious place in our understanding of the world to become items of explicit cultural negotiation.[81] To an extent the onus of preserving the integrity of indigenous home and family life rested on the woman to such an extent that it also led to a tightening of domestic boundaries of the Hindu household. The domestic became solely the woman's domain as against the public or the male domain.

Bengal and Punjab- A comparison

Hindu nationalism and its studies have to a large extent been confined to Bengal. However, a study of regional comparison will further help to enrich our understanding of Hindu nationalism in various other parts of India. Charu Gupta has written in a similar vein about UP where in fact the reform question was not 'abandoned' as in Bengal.[82] While examining the interrelationship between gender and social reforms through localised evidence from UP, she questions the assumption that what was true of Bengal could be applied to the whole of India. She writes that in UP, for example the reformist endeavour and the 'woman's question' did not fade away with emergence of the nationalist movement.[83]

Prabha Dixit for example shows how the ideology of the Hindu nation, as conceived by the Punjabi Hindus, was fundamentally different from the one developed by their co-religionists in Bengal.[84] The Bengali Hindus did not regard Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism as two distinct entities. They treated both Hindu and Indian nationalism as identical phenomena. Owing to their greater social advancement and numerical strength, the Hindus in Bengal absorbed or assimilated the non-Hindu elements and direct the national movement mainly on Hindu lines. Muslim separatism did not generate in nationalists like Sri Aurobindo or Bipin Chandra Pal any feeling of insecurity because of the numerical majority of the Hindus. Thus the Hindu majority was secure because of

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[81] Judith E. Walsh, Domesticity in Colonial India, What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 1.
[82] Charu Gupta, Exploring Gender Equations: Colonial and Post Colonial India, in Shakti Kak and Biswamoy Pati, eds., New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2005, p. 32.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Prabha Dixit, Communalism: A Struggle for Power, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1974.

their large numbers and the social backwardness of the Muslims. The Hindus of Bengal and UP were under no urgent compulsion to organise themselves into a community as in Punjab.[85] Insecurity is created by an equal competitor and in the case of Bengal this was not the case. As Charu Gupta has also shown in her study of UP, the Hindu men felt threatened and insecure vis-à-vis the Muslim men with increasing interaction between the Hindu woman and the Muslim man. This insecurity was borne out of a direct threat to the 'masculinity' of the Hindu male in what was supposedly his 'Motherland'.[86]

According to Prabha Dixit this was not the case with the Punjabi Hindus. They were outnumbered by their Muslim rivals. It was, therefore, not possible for the Punjabi Hindus to assimilate or absorb the non-Hindus or of equating Indian nationalism with Hindu nationalism. The Punjabi Hindu culture was not a true variation of the all- India Brahmanic culture; it was vaguely Hindu but mainly Islamic in content. The problem before the Punjabi Hindus, therefore, was how to de-Islamise themselves and evolve a distinct Hindu cultural identity. The question before them was not that of devising ways and means of integrating the non-Hindu elements within the framework of the Hindu nation, but Hinduising themselves to fit into the larger national picture. Here the regional identity had to assimilate with the larger Hindu identity of the nation, which was pre-dominantly Hindu.[87] The process of communalism of social and cultural life was initiated deliberately in the case of Punjabi Hindus.[88]

Another usage and meaning of 'Hindu' was the nationalist usage. To begin with it was economic nationalism and racial and cultural humiliation, suffered at the hands of the colonisers that led to this concept of nationalism. The nationalist connotation, invoked the common and historical heritage of the subject population. However this 'nationalist' meaning of Hindu 'could never be entirely rid of its religious connotations'. And this reference of Hindu as a religious community remained the most dominant reference point

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[85] Ibid., 140.
[86] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Gender, pp. 268-320.
[87] Prabha Dixit, Ibid. 126-127.
[88] Ibid., 149.

for the Hindu nationalist. This to some extent explains why despite the regional variations the Hindu nationalists tried to assimilate Hindus across India.

While studying the Hindu-Muslim divide and the colonial question it has to be kept in mind that this divide appeared greater at some times as compared to other times. For example the Hindu-Muslim divide became greater when it came to the Hindu woman. And the same divide lessened when it came to putting a common front against the British. Although the stand of the communalist might seem contradictory at times yet the fact remains that, there had occurred by the 18th century a divide between the Hindu and the Muslim community. And the Hindu communalist worked on deepening this divide, according to changing contexts and changing reference. (i.e. Hindu woman vis-à-vis Muslim men or the nation as a whole vis-à-vis the colonisers). However, the debate regarding the term Hindu as always being communal in its origin remains. There was a close link between communalism and nationalism and communalism was the result of a variety of nationalism that preferred to remain exclusive or one can say was exclusive form the very start.[89]

Simultaneous elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman
Another technique of communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman by the Muslim man was the simultaneous elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman. The simultaneous elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman was a result of the nationalist agenda which saw the Hindu woman being used as tools at various points in the nationalist history. However, again this elevation of the Hindu woman was conditional in nature. It was dependent on the image of the 'Other', the Muslim man. Similarly, the reduction was also conditional. It was conditional because both elevation/reduction of the Hindu woman were not possible without a contrasting image of the Muslim man.

The use of gender icons and symbols in language revealed an ambiguity and a paradox. While Hindi was identified as a Mother or a wife –and in that sense such language itself

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[89] Vasudha Dalmia, The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions, p.48.

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was female —the spoken and written language had to be masculine. The gendering of language thus used multiple arguments in different contexts, using the female both to endorse and condemn, to appropriate and reject.[90] Language, literature and print have been viewed as significant means for contests over power[91] and the fashioning of national,[92] regional and community identities. [93]

One can go back to Nietzsche here: for Nietzsche language serves a double function. On the one hand it is the means by which we construct the world. For, if there was no language, then one really wouldn't know what to say about the world. The second function of language for Nietzsche complements the first i.e. language makes the world present, and in doing so it also provides men with the tools by which they must deal with the world. [94]

This if language makes the world present and provides men with the tools by which they must deal with the world, then the Hindu nationalists used this language as tools to further their agenda —both against the British and the Muslims. Irrespective of the order of enumeration, women, religion and wealth defined deprivation, as this was perceived in Hindu minds. What was there now that could still be taken away? The stress in this rhetorical question embodied a subtle shift from Muslim rulers of the past to the Muslim community of the past. The lines of identification, Hindus vis-à-vis the Muslims, were deepened, and the notion of Muslims as 'alien' was shaped.

The Hindu woman was depicted as a victim of Muslim aggression. However, at certain points images of masculinity took her over too and she was 'empowered' as an agent of violence. Hindu woman was constructed as a victim to 'empower' her. The portrayal of the Hindu woman as victims and agents was linked to her chastity and community

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[90] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, p. 213.
[91] Pierre Bourdeau, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Mathew Adamson, Cambridge, 1991
[92] Benedict Anderson Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalisms, London, 1983.
[93] As cited from Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, Ibid., 10.
[94] Language and Nihilism: Nietzsche's critique of Epistemology" in Michael Shapiro ed. Language and Politics. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984.

honour.[95] Thus here too we witness her elevation in the form of her empowerment as an agent of violence especially against the Muslims. And her reduction as a victim of Muslim aggression also happened simultaneously. The simultaneous elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman gave reasons for the Hindu men to intervene on her behalf for the sake of the larger Hindu community. The onus of 'community honour' rested on the women. The Hindu woman was responsible for the moral decline of the Hindu community by her constant interaction with the Muslim men, and was also expected to bring back the lost honour. Similarly the construction of the Muslim male as 'lustful' etc was done by the Hindu communalists. Seen from a larger picture the reduction by the Hindu male of the Hindu woman and the Muslim men was the result of their own anxiety. Hindu masculinity had to be built in opposition to the 'other'.[96] This 'other' could be the Muslim male, or the Hindu woman according to changing contexts.

The negative, immoral image of Muslim rulers was further highlighted by the nationalists by attributing all evil practices in Hindu society, especially in relation to women, to the Muslim men. Thus for example purdah system, child marriage and all other social evils were attributed to the 'lecherous character' of Muslims.

The assumption that Hindu and Indian were synonymous terms implicitly excluded the Muslims from the 'idea of the nation' and the community at large. Moreover in order to control the unrestricted movements of the Hindu woman, she was depicted as a victim in the hands of the 'lustful' Muslim male. The image of the Muslim became more menacing, and far more dangerous than that of the British.[97] One reason for this could be that the interaction of the Hindu woman and the Muslim man was more frequent in common public places. This frequent interaction increased the threat that the Hindu man felt from the Muslim man. Therefore public places were declared unsafe for the Hindu woman in order to save her form the Muslim male.[98] It is very clear that the Hindu male's own anxiety and insecurity (in dealing with the colonialists and Muslim alike) led him to

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[95] Charu Gupta, Ibid., 238-239.
[96] Ibid., 239.
[97] Ibid. 279.
[98] Ibid. 251

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control the movements of the Hindu woman, the only 'sacred space' which was still 'unconquered and 'unviolated' as far as the Hindu male was concerned.

Role of myths and history in nationalism

The role of myths and history in nationalism in this regard becomes important. It was yet another technique in the hands of the Hindu nationalists to mobilise the Hindu woman against the Muslims. Myths were reinvented and reinterpreted to aide Hindu nationalist aspirations. 'Today our mother cow is being slain by the infidels in innumerable numbers....Our helplessness, mental weakness and physical impotence is explicitly telling us that among the many reasons for such changes, the main one is the decline of cow wealth'.[99]

The cow was frequently personified and her condition lamented; the Aryan race was called to come to her protection, as sons must arise in defence of their mother.[100] Cow's images were important because of the cow's association with domesticity. She was seen as a foster-mother, as an integral part of India's family. The British and the Muslims, it was said, had not only increased the suffering of the Hindu people, and invaded their private space, but had even dispossessed them of their chief wealth, the cow. The cow-protection movement thrived on this crisis –in family and domestic space, in the health and the well -being of the nation. Mother cow symbolised their sorrows and hopes and gave a sanctity to family, community and, nation. [101]

Sexuality and spirituality were confounded through powerful mythological tales of Rama, of Krishna, where God and lover are merged and where woman's fear is both feared and revered. But in this very mythologizing of female sexual power lay a 'deeply oppressive paradox'. Male power and male sexuality are legitimate; female sexuality, understood as female power, must be controlled and bounded through social custom, primarily within marriage. Even goddesses were tamed, their power restrained when they were married to

[99] 'Manohar', Kriparam Mishra, Gauraksha Prakash [Light on Cow-Protection], Moradabad, 1925. As cited from Charu Gupta.
[100] Charu Gupta, Ibid., 212-221.
[101] Charu Gupta, Ibid.

strong male gods. A useful analysis of how female power, beneficent and malevolent, has been portrayed is in the figure of Kali. [102] The myth provides a rationale for the control of female sexuality through men and through marriage.

Thus what we see here is the inherent contradiction in the qualities of the representations of female sexuality. However the Hindu nationalists resolved these paradoxes for the cause of the nation. The justification of these paradoxes with the nation in mind went down very well with the people. What was more important was the nation and its space and all the paradoxes could be set aside for that purpose. Thus what we see here is that the issue of the moral decline of the Hindu woman was often linked up with the Muslim man.

According to Jasbir Jain,[103] myths and history both are equally problematic terms. They are oppositional to each other. Myth by accounting for origins and practices feed into the present, history by searching for cause's moves towards the past. Myth is imagined, imprecise and unformulated. History on the other hand, brings out the actual happenings and therefore more or less precise. (Even though its interpretation is subject to the interpreter). Myth is an embodiment of an understanding of a people, an understanding often intuitive and therefore not based on facts. But despite these differences as Jain points out, myth and history flow into each other especially in India where myth finds continuity in history while history constantly intervenes with myth. Myth, history and gender dimensions: myth and history are not neutral. They are hegemonic structures and have gender dimensions. 'Myth marginalises women, history excludes them'.[104]

This brings us to the question as to why women are treated as ahistoric? Who controls the writing and interpretation of history at a given point? And how this interpretation is given to an agenda which has political overtones? Who therefore politicizes history and why? As far as the role of nationalism in referring to myths is concerned, all these myths

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[102] Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, eds., Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India London: Zed Press, 1986, pp. 54-55.
[103] Jasbir Jain, Writing Women Across Cultures, Rawat Publications, N. Delhi, 2002, pp. 11-12.
[104] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

privileged fatherhood: where women were looked upon as, either sources of temptation or as agents of procreation. [105]

Women are deprived of the central role in the creation myths, for creation is perceived as an act of willpower. Myths have been interpreted in Hindu society to suit and support male authority. Through a form of symbolic domination women clearly often collude both willingly and unwittingly in their construction of feminine beings. Myths lay a great deal of emphasis on chastity, sexual abstinence and sexual fidelity. Female sexuality is seen as a threat to social structures thus bringing about a separation between domesticity and sexual pleasure, between wifehood and public women.[106] Thus what we see again is the simultaneous elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman by invoking the role of myths.

The 1920s witnessed a gradual build up of tensions (through rumours) between the Hindu and Muslim community and the supposed atrocities committed by Muslim men on Hindus. The launch of Swami Shraddhanand's shuddhi (purification) programme in western UP was significant in creating this environment. The shuddhi and sangathan organisations of the Hindus were 'matched' by organisations of the Muslims such as tabligh (propagation) and tanzim (organisation).[107] However as Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert finds through her survey of Hindu women, the latter did not mention taking any part in these communal situation and most of them did not comment on their feelings towards Muslims or their communal identities in any way. Their silence could be interpreted as their acceptance of a communal identity that was not freely chosen, or it could be that they did not want to disclose their feelings.[108]

The argument regarding agency not always being empowering meant that community identity was more or less forced upon women. The question of choice and agency is not always as free for women as men. The Hindu woman in the 19th century faced similar

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[105] Ibid. 12-13.
[106] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, pp. 256.
[107] Ibid. 230-239.
[108] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement, New Delhi, Sage, 2005

problems. The question of 'free choice' hardly existed for her. And it was on this basis that one can safely deduce that the communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman was something that was imposed on her and not 'freely chosen' by her.

Where exactly can we then place the Hindu woman in the conflict between the Hindu and Muslim man? Was the Hindu woman a silent spectator? If not then what role did she play? And was this an independent role or was she being manipulated in the bigger communal battle. Do women at large have a say in the larger religious debate? What say do they have in the reformulation and negotiation of their identity? Hindu nationalism which was a preserve of the upper caste Hindu male did not leave much space for women to negotiate their own identity. In the overall patriarchal context women more often than not were silent spectators, who were given agency at times, but again agency is not always empowering.

One of the core elements in the development of Hindu nationalism has been the conflation of religion and culture and between religion and the nation. However, while dealing with the question of religion in politics, particularly about the pre-independence period, communalism has not been merged into nationalism. Communalism and nationalism have always been constructed as opposite binaries. This has led to the exclusion of the religious overtones within nationalism. The question that needs to be examined is: What were the religious agenda within nationalism? Politicisation of religion, particularly the growth of Hindu communalism, has played a complex role in identity formations, social relations and power structures. Women have been a major site of contest and differentiation in the assertions of these religious identities. And this makes the study of Hindu nationalism and its often close links with communalism important from a feminist perspective.

Put in the present day situation in India we can say that religion is taken of its private domain and made public in case of exigencies such as a threat to the national/religious identity, which again is a Hindu identity. This enforcement of the religious identity on women becomes important as it is exercised both covertly and overtly. In a covert way

once a religious identity is imposed on woman she becomes aware of her religious boundaries and participates in constructing her own inferior identity. Once the awareness is created from 'outside' the woman might begin to internalise her religious identity and thereby abide by the rules imposed on her by her community. In an overt manner, the use of symbols, myths help further in the creation of the religious identity. These symbols belong exclusively to the particular community and therefore also become markers of that community. This strategy was used to separate the Hindu woman from any other form of identity. This identity of the Hindu woman also became the dominant identity for women of other communities.

Conclusion

The communal mobilisation and demobilisation of the Hindu woman was carried out both overtly and covertly by the Hindu men against the Muslim men. Fear and insecurities regarding his space in the society were on the rise by the end of the 19th century. And the insecurities increased further with the interaction between the Muslim man and Hindu woman? Notions of chastity were used in the politics of communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman. The chaste Hindu woman was being 'polluted' by the 'lustful' Muslim man. These daily interaction caused further friction between the two communities.

Although studies of nationalism and communalism etc. study the reasons for the flux in their societies yet they often tend to overlook the politics of daily interaction between members of the two opposing communities. As to how these daily interactions have the potential to generate intense tension between the two communities over the long run. Infact a sudden outbreak of communal tension may be spontaneous in its eruption and may settle down as easily. But the communal tension that builds up on a daily basis with the added gender dimension is more difficult to contain. Stereotypes build up slowly and are hard to suppress. This is what happened towards the end of 19th century India. And one can safely say that the some of the stereotypes have been carried to this day. The role of the Hindu woman, Hindu man and the Muslim man in the politics of communal mobilisation through everyday interaction in 19th and early 20th century cannot be ignored

for a thorough understanding of Hindu nationalism even to this day. These everyday interaction and the insecurities of the Hindu man in the 19th and early 20th century set the foundation for the present day communal politics in India. The presence and absence of women in this politics of communal mobilisation is an important feature of this politics. What remained essentially important for the Hindu man throughout the course of this politics was his own identity which was to be further reinforced by religion and the nation at large.

Conclusion

Like all complex historical movements, nationalism is not a monolithic phenomenon to be deemed entirely perfect or entirely deficient, or for that matter entirely good or entirely bad. It can be argued that nationalism can be a problematic discourse giving different meaning to different groups. Hence it may involve multiple contradictions originating from different view-points that have rendered nationalism as a contestable phenomenon at the first instance. In today's time when nationalism has found extreme expressions all over the world nationalism needs to be unpacked, delineating different contradictory relationships that different social groups have formed vis-à-vis nationalism. Questions such as what makes a particular nation and community come under one common banner and how in doing so aggravate the patriarchal tendencies within the society need to asked. Where do women then stand (if they do at all) with respect to the nation, community and the men in the society?

What does it mean for a woman to belong to a nation? For that matter, who belongs to a nation and who doesn't? What ensure belonging to a nation and what doesn't? One can safely say that even centuries after the idea of nation and nationalism came into being; it is still very much an embattled concept. World over one of the main reason for tension within and between nation is the idea of nation, the territorial boundaries associated with them and the idea of nationalism that goes with all this. At the level of definition, in terms of defining a nation in terms of a common history, territory and people, it is easy to define a nation but it is problematic at the level of its actual realisation. This process of imposing a common definition on a heterogeneous society has led to nationalism also becoming an exclusionary process. Nationalism becomes problematic because it tends to exclude certain social groups which resist its homogenisation

The question to be asked is has nationalism acquired an exclusive character or is it inclusive in character. In the case of India one can safely ask does it entail as Nehru thought modern education, urbanisation, social mobility and economic development. To an extent increasing communication and mobility has led to an 'idea of belonging' of *the*

nation. However in terms of nationalism and its demands of a homogenous national community within a given territory, India with its diversity of regions and places, makes one sceptical about the idea of a nation.

The Indian nation-state manages its vast diversity by coercion or consent. This is clear by the role that the Indian State has played in Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and the rest of the North East states of India. Going by the unrest and violence in these regions, the nation only exists in the fabricated images. The nation suggests the strength of a community, the sense of Us, of togetherness etc. It provides a sense of sense of identity, of who we are or should be. Nationalism as such has a close affinity with the dominant patterns in a society. Or rather one can say the dominant patterns in a society are responsible for a particular kind of nationalism. It is here that we can trace the dominant pattern in the Indian society since the 19th century. This is not to deny the existence of other nationalisms more secular and inclusive than Hindu nationalism but to emphasise the existence of a dominant form of nationalism in the form of Hindu nationalism.

Although some analysts of nationalism ignore women, theories of gender place relations between women and men at the centre of analysis. Feminists seek to understand the public-private dichotomies that undermine women, to end inequalities between people. Feminist theory is necessary to understand the construction of gender, nations, and states by placing women at the centre.[1]

Nationalism disregards and excludes the 'entire' imagined community. Thus, as Benedict Anderson argues 'it (nation) is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.'[2] But it may be argued, as various critics have suggested that Imagined Communities pays so much attention to who is included in the communities that it fails to consider those who are excluded and marginalized, such as

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[1] Lois A. West, 'Introduction: Feminism Constructs Nationalism in Feminist Nationalism, ed. by Lois A. West, Routledge, 1997, p.xiii- xvi.
[2] Benedict Anderson- Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London, New York, Verso, 1991, p. 7.

women, or lower classes, races, or castes. The fraternity which represents the nation does not explicitly include them as equals; however, it always implicitly claims to represent them. These exclusions are sometimes enforced, but often won by the 'consent' of the people. The power of nationalism, its continuing appeal, lies one can say, in its ability to successfully speak on behalf of all the people. Women's movements, peasant struggles or caste and class-based dissent allow us to explore the distance between the rhetoric and reality of the nation-state. This claim (false) of the nation to speak on behalf of its entire people, raises the question of, who are these people that the nation claims to represent? A nation with all its heterogeneity cannot always represent its entire people.

Thus, nations are communities created not simply by forging certain bonds but by fracturing or disallowing others; it invokes certain visions of the past, but makes sure that others are forgotten or repressed. What is forgotten is as necessary to the nationalist imagining, to the fabrication of a modern India and its stories of the anti-colonial struggle as what is remembered.

What then differentiates Hindu nationalism from say, other forms of secular nationalism like Nehruvian nationalism? Since both seek to create a nation. Hindu nationalism deviates from Nehruvian nationalism because of its imposition of a common culture in the forms of myths, rituals and religion. It is also at this point of deviation that this dissertation begins. It is the point at which nationalism affiliates itself with religion or becomes religious nationalism and in this case in the form of Hindu nationalism.

What does a feminist encounter with nationalism imply? Since Hindu nationalism has always excluded women, the non-Brahmin caste, non-Hindus and other minorities. As Shiv Visvanathan argues the encounter between feminism and the nation- state as a patriarchal system is doubly subversive. The dialogue shows that the myths of masculinity have impoverished nationhood. The passive idea of the nation as Motherland also hides and conceals the real voices of pain. Feminism can restore creative ideas of

unity and identity to the nation. And yet feminism can guard against feminism becoming like nationalism.[3]

Thus feminism has to look at nationalism beyond a nationalist prism. Therefore one needs to critique nationalism not just within but without. Feminist critique becomes important in this regard as it critiques nationalism not just from within but nationalism as an often exclusionary phenomenon. As we have seen in the context of Hindu nationalism, nationalism has been found to exclude the non-Brahmins, women and the marginalised. For example the upper-caste women and the non upper-caste women by themselves suffer from marginalisation of different degrees. The marginalisation suffered by the Dalit women is doubly oppressive as compared to the upper caste women. Hindu nationalism in the 19th century was (and still is) a product of upper-caste Hindu men.

Reforms were formulated keeping in mind the Brahmin women. As such it impacted their lives more than the non-Brahmin women. However while studying the impact of social reforms one can not afford to ignore how the social reforms of the 19th century also marginalised and overlooked the non-Brahmin women. Infact the language of reforms managed to co-opt them. Thus it made their oppression and exploitation invisible. A feminist critique of nationalism would then need to look at exploitation of all kinds-visible as well as invisible. A critique which unearths all forms of marginalisation –both visible and invisible. As Michel Foucault has written in his understanding of power and its tendency to spread like 'capillaries'. This power is everywhere and one cannot escape it. Similarly, oppression exists in all societies, but what needs to be looked at is the kind of oppression that exists at a particular time.

The place of the Hindu woman has to be understood within the framework of not just Hindu nationalism but a larger framework of nationalism. To what extent does nationalism marginalise its people and to what extent it includes people of various caste, class, community and gender? A feminist critique of Hindu nationalism can be put into perspective by understanding the working of nationalism in its various forms, whether it

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[3] Shiv Visvanathan, Economic and Political Weekly, June 2003, p. 2302.

is secular nationalism or nationalism which has an association with religion, caste as in the case of India. Thus, identities are 'constructed' and therefore change according to the context and situation. A study of nationalism during 19th century India and the status of the Hindu woman in that period demands that one takes into consideration the dominant religion, community, caste and gender (even though it goes unsaid as to which of the two was dominant) during that time. It would also then look into how the colonial ideology further influenced, both covertly and overtly, the working of this diverse society.

Chapter 2 has highlighted the importance of regional variations while studying reforms. One reason why regional variations and differences in terms of reforms needs to be studied is because nationalism with its homogenising mission aims at the creation of an awareness among all the people classified as Hindus of their Hindu identity irrespective of their internal social, cultural and regional distinctions. For example the impact of social reforms as formulated by the Hindu nationalists in the later 19th century was different in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh (then known a United Provinces).

Taking cue from Charu Gupta we have observed in Chapter that in the case of UP the reform question was not 'abandoned' as in Bengal.[4] While examining the interrelationship between gender and social reforms through localised evidence from UP., she questions the assumption that what was true of Bengal could be applied to the whole of India. She writes that in UP., for example the reformist endeavour and the 'woman's question' did not fade away with emergence of the nationalist movement. Since the main aim of the Hindu nationalists was to mobilise the Hindu population in the largest numbers by invoking commonness of history, culture and territory the logic of different reforms and reforms as per regional variations did not arise for the Hindu nationalists. Reforms were uniformised for all regions but the impact of all these reforms was different. Women and their conditions were different and varied according to the regions. Thus a feminist critique of the Hindu social reforms has to avoid falling into the nationalist trap

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[4] Charu Gupta ,'Gains, Losses and/or Political reforms in the United Provinces' in Exploring Gender Equations:Colonial and Post-Colonial India,.eds Kak, Shakti, Pati, Biswas, Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2005.

of homogenising differences by concentrating on the Hindu social reforms and keeping in mind the regional differences.

It is hoped that the dissertation has managed to highlight the importance of cultural and community differences besides caste and regional differences. Although this dissertation has not covered Muslim women or the Dalit women (the position of both was marginal) yet it is hoped that this critique of Hindu nationalism has managed to bring into light exploitation suffered by women as a whole under the banner of nationalism with special attention to Hindu nationalism. A feminist critique of Hindu nationalism can provide a starting point for a critique of not just Hindu nationalism but all other forms of nationalism which exclude women. It can provide answers to questions such as why nationalism excludes women. Answers to questions such as do women have a nation? If they do then why do they not share an equal space with the men?

Chapter 3 takes a closer look into questions such as nationalism and communalism? It has tried to explore how fine a line there exists between the two? Nationalism has a tendency to take extreme religious forms and the example of UP in the early part of the 20th century through everyday mundane activities acquiring communal overtones highlights this point further. Such extreme situations affect the lives of women doubly. Often women find themselves used as tools in extreme situations. The importance of mobilisation of the weaker sections during communal differences can not be disregarded. Why and how do women figure in this politics of communal mobilisation while being excluded at other times? Does this mobilisation in any way mean agency for women. In the context of the Hindu woman towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century did this mobilisation mean agency in any form?

Thus agency as a concept needs to be problematised further. Complex situations demand that we do not take agency granted to women as always empowering. The source of this agency is the patriarchal society and therefore agency for women needs to be understood considering the patriarchal society with all its limitations and the way it marginalises women. Thus chapter 3 studies the politics of communal mobilisation of women keeping

in mind that agency is not always empowering. In fact it can be used against women. Charu Gupta has called this 'the ambiguity of female agency'.[5] Also the unintended consequences of reforms and education provided opportunities for women. Women could step out into the public arena and this also meant new opportunities for them.[6]

As Nivedita Menon writes in Recovering Subversion, the '..feminist subject is yet to be made an autonomous agent. The objective of this kind of politics (feminist) is to uncover the ways in which agency is both constituted and subverted by existing structures of power... The feminist subject is affected by various oppressive practices in such a way that when she acts, she does not in fact, exercise her autonomy or free will. The woman is both free and unfree simultaneously.'[7]

The elevation and reduction of the Hindu woman (as explained in Chapter 3) with regard to nationalist policies and agenda is another concept which needs to be analysed and problematised further. Elevation is not simply empowering. The two concepts need to be understood within the limitations of patriarchy and Hindu nationalism. Are the two really opposite concepts and to what extent? How much do the two deviate from the other? Or are they the same aspects of a patriarchal society in which the decision-making always remains with the men? Is elevation then a different form of reduction of women? Or is elevation of the Hindu woman temporary in nature, which goes back to its reductionist framework once the task and objectives of the nationalist are complete. At the logical level elevation contains within itself, its opposite, i.e. reduction. Therefore one cannot exist without the other. Besides the question of elevation and its limitation, is also the issue of who was elevated even within this limited concept of elevation? Uma Chakravarty through her essay has shown that the 'Aryan woman was the only object of

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[5] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity, Community, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001, p. 9.
[6] Ibid., 10.
[7] Recovering Subversion. Feminist Politics Beyond the Law, New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 209-210.

historical concern'[8] and that the 'Vedic dasi (woman in servitude).......disappeared without showing any trace of herself in nineteenth century history.'[9]

Another issue to be raised in this regard is to what extent did nationalism make it easier for the Hindu nationalists to pursue their objective? What was the importance of nationalism in the struggle against colonialism? And where did women stand in this nationalist scheme? To what extent did the success of the national movement depend on the strength of its nationalism? The success of the nationalist movement was not only due to women's public activities, but also because of the politicisation of the domestic sphere.[10] During the anti-colonial movement the home was not only a site of nationalist reform[11] but also a site of political resistance. Thus to the extent that nationalism reached the Hindu households with the Hindu women as it chief promoters and guardians, domestic nationalism became important for the Hindu nationalists to pursue their objectives. To that extent women became an important part of the national movement. The politics of reforms and the politics of communal mobilisation of the Hindu woman all became part of this bigger national struggle. However, any deviation from the standard nationalist objectives was looked at by suspiciously by the Hindu nationalists. There was no distinction among Hindus –women, men, low caste and upper caste when it came mobilising the Hindu community against the Muslims community.[12]

Contemporary Hindu nationalism has shown similarities with the Hindu nationalism of the late 19th and early 20th century. The political mobilisation of women and the weaker sections against the Muslims that happened in the case of the Babri Masjid demolition is one very relevant example in this regard. Women and the marginalised section of the Hindu society were made to mobilise against the Muslims. What became important here was that the Hindus were 'suffering' in their own land. Therefore the emphasis was on

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[8] Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi Kali for Women, 1989, p. 28.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement, 1930-42, p. 263.

[11] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Difference –Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal', History Workshop Journal, 1993, 36: 1-34. Partha Chatterjee, 1989.

[12] Op. cit., Charu Gupta, p.281.

uniting the Hindu population across India irrespective of caste, class and gender. The rise of leaders like Uma Bharati was a part of this politics of communal mobilisation. The question of agency is further problematised and complicated here. Common sense would tell us that women acquired positions of power but a deeper look into the manipulative politics of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva as it is currently known) tells us that, here again the elevation of the Hindu woman is part of the reduction too. The Hindu right has acquired an economic and a political face and even a global face (keeping up with the pace of globalisation). Alongside this there also exists a world of Rath Yatra's. The contradiction can be ascribed to the Hindu ideology that looks to the past for inspiration with an eye on vote-bank politics. Similarly the 'numbers game' remains as important now as in the early part of the century. As Charu Gupta writes the concern with an alleged decrease in the number of Hindus grew rapidly following the introduction of an all-India census in 1871.[13] The communalisation of the issue of abduction of the Hindu woman in the Gujarat riots can also be compared to the 19th century scenario. In UP cultural stereotypes of Muslims were created towards the end of the 19th century, with the abduction of woman in mind.[14] The abducted 'Hindu woman was metamorphosed into a sacred symbol violated.'[15] This only reflects the embedding of patriarchy, nationhood and violence against women alongside the discourses on numbers, politics of abduction and the politics of genocide.

Thus alongside issues like globalisation and talks of the world becoming a 'global village' why does half its population still remain a part of a system, whose language it doesn't understand – leave alone a language which is not accessible to them even in its most basic form. Their struggles remain unsighted and so does their history. The feminist critique of nationalism looks into these issues and hopes to go further.

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[13] Charu Gupta, Sexuality, Obscenity and Community, 2001, p. 307.
[14] Ibid. 243.
[15] Ibid. 251.

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