

**MAKING THE PITRUBHUMI:
MASCULINE HEGEMONY AND THE
FORMATION OF THE HINDU NATION**

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MAKING THE PITRUBHUMI: MASCULINE HEGEMONY AND THE FORMATION OF THE HINDU NATION

DE VORMING VAN HET *PITRUBHUMI* (VADERLAND):
MASCULIENE HEGEMONIE EN DE
VORMING VAN DE HINDOE-STAAT

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This thesis has had a precarious existence: it has suffered from severe neglect, malnutrition, lack of direction, illusions of progress, scientific, technical and technological backwardness, misplaced ambition, rampant internal conflict (often of faith), innumerable distractions and occasionally, complete lack of interest – in short, it has been, in its making, the very embodiment of the condition of underdevelopment. If it has nevertheless survived to show some sort of development, it is due as much to the contribution of others, as to my own (needless to add, I have full and sole copyrights on its shortcomings).

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This thesis is dedicated to my children, Suyash and Samara: if there is any light it throws on our complex world, it has its source in them.



Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | <i>v</i> |
| <i>Abstract</i> | <i>xii</i> |
| <i>Samenvatting</i> | <i>xvi</i> |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Background | 1 |
| 1.2 The Object of this Study | 3 |
| 1.3 Theoretical Aspects of the Research | 4 |
| Nationalism | 4 |
| Religion and religious politics: | 5 |
| Caste and caste politics | 8 |
| Gender relations and masculinity | 8 |
| 1.4 Discursive Location of the Thesis | 9 |
| 1.5 Objectives and Relevance of Research | 12 |
| 1.6 Research Questions | 13 |
| 1.7 Methodological and Analytical Issues | 15 |
| 1.8 Epistemological/Ethical Issues | 20 |
| 1.9 Chapter Outline | 22 |
| Notes | 23 |
| 2 TOWARDS A THEORY OF MASCULINE HEGEMONY | 25 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 25 |
| 2.2 Objectives | 25 |
| 2.3 Preliminary Propositions on ‘Patriarchy’ | 26 |
| 2.4 On Masculinity Studies | 28 |
| Sources of Masculine Trouble | 35 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 2.5 | Examining Patriarchy and Masculinities | 38 |
| 2.6 | Hegemonic Masculinity and Masculine Hegemony | 42 |
| 2.7 | Intersectionalities and Masculine Hegemony | 49 |
| 2.8 | Hindutva Masculinities | 55 |
| 2.9 | Conclusion | 59 |
| | Notes | 60 |
| 3 | THE EMERGENCE OF THE HINDU RIGHT - I | 65 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 65 |
| 3.2 | Objectives | 65 |
| 3.3 | Conceptual Issues | 66 |
| 3.4 | The History of 'Hindu' | 67 |
| | The Pre-Christian Era to the Tenth Century AD | 67 |
| | Unity and Heterogeneity | 70 |
| | The Assertion of Brahmanical Dominance | 72 |
| 3.5 | Islamic Rule and the 'Hindu' Identity | 74 |
| 3.6 | 'Hindu' Identity and the European Impact | 77 |
| | The Emergence of 'Hinduism' | 78 |
| | Colonial British Perceptions and the Construction of 'Hinduism' | 80 |
| | The Impact of 1857 | 83 |
| 3.7 | Heterogeneity, 'Hinduism' and the 'Hindu' Identity | 85 |
| 3.8 | The Emergence of Hindutva | 87 |
| | The New Politics of Representation | 87 |
| | Reform, Revival and Hindutva | 90 |
| 3.9 | Conclusion | 91 |
| | Notes | 92 |
| 4 | THE EMERGENCE OF THE HINDU RIGHT - II | 97 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 97 |
| 4.2 | Objectives | 97 |
| 4.3 | The 'Public' and 'Personal' Space in the Nineteenth Century | 98 |
| | Religion and Community Formation | 99 |
| | Caste, Gender and Community Formation | 101 |
| | The 'New' Patriarchy | 103 |
| 4.4 | Emulation or Imitation? | 104 |
| | The Problem of Poverty | 104 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Problematising Imitation: Gendering the Economic | 106 |
| 4.5 The Consolidation of the ‘New’ Patriarchy and the National Community | 110 |
| 4.6 Political Dynamics of the ‘New’ Patriarchy | 113 |
| 4.7 A Brief Recap | 117 |
| 4.8 Problematising Violence | 118 |
| Order and ‘Danda’ | 119 |
| Gender, Community, Violence | 121 |
| Violence and Politics | 122 |
| 4.9 Hindu Nationalism and Violence | 125 |
| 4.10 Gandhi and his Ideas | 127 |
| Gandhi, Violence and Hindu Nationalism | 133 |
| 4.11 Conclusion | 136 |
| Notes | 137 |
| 5 FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE EMERGENCY | 144 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 144 |
| 5.2 Objectives | 145 |
| 5.3 From Colonial ‘Modernity’ to Post-Independence ‘Development’ | 145 |
| 5.4 The Politics of Development: Nationalism-Development-Modernity | 148 |
| Gender and Development, Post-Independence | 151 |
| 5.5 The Early Directions of Hindu Nationalism | 156 |
| 5.6 Fault Lines of the Present | 159 |
| ‘Order’ and ‘Danda’, Post Independence | 166 |
| 5.8 The Curious Case of Indira Gandhi | 168 |
| 5.9 Conclusion | 171 |
| Notes | 172 |
| 6 THE PRESENT | 178 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 178 |
| 6.2 Objectives | 179 |
| 6.3 New Social Configurations and Hindu Nationalism | 179 |
| 6.4 The Tensions in Brahmanical Masculine Hegemony | 183 |
| 6.5 Muslim Communities and Hindutva | 189 |

Contents

xi

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6.6 Women's Movement and Brahmanical Masculine Hegemony | 191 |
| 6.7 'Terrorism' and Hindutva | 198 |
| 6.8 Hindutva and Christian Communities | 204 |
| 6.9 Conclusion | 206 |
| Notes | 207 |
| 7 CONCLUSION | 213 |
| 7.1 Review of Arguments and Findings | 213 |
| 7.2 Main Contributions | 216 |
| 7.3 Limitations of the Thesis | 217 |
| 7.4 Concluding Remarks: Of Endings and Beginnings | 219 |
| <i>References</i> | 222 |



Abstract

Hindu nationalism has seen a dramatic growth in India and abroad from the nineteen eighties. This growth has coincided with – and relates in complex ways to – several other highly significant developments, including (in no particular order) the instituting of liberalization in the economy; the legislation on reservations for ‘Other Backward Castes’ and its implementation; the intensification of the integration of the middle classes into the global economy; and the intensifying pauperization of the rural poor. These developments as well as Hindu nationalism’s links with them have been the subject of scholarly attention from a variety of perspectives and disciplines.

Apart from these however, one may also note the unfolding of less obvious, but equally significant and related developments in this period: the growth and intensification of female feticide and infanticide; the increase in dowry related violence and deaths; the targeting of women as objects of sexual violence, especially during communal riots, but also routinely; the increasing presence of women in rightwing organizations and mobilizations; an intensification in the policing of sexual discourses and sexuality; conversely and paradoxically, there has also been an increase in the visibility of women in the public sphere (through for instance, the widening of options for employment for women). Feminist scholarship has addressed several of these issues, independently and in their intersections; it has also addressed the rise of Hindu nationalism. However, there is little work on the relations that obtain between these issues and the more obvious ones set out above. Specifically, there was and remains a serious deficiency of attention to the relations between masculinity and Hindu nationalism.

This study hopes to contribute towards addressing this deficiency in several ways. Firstly, it seeks to locate itself in the theoretical and analytical spaces between gender studies and political economy. It attempts to do so by reviewing and then parting from, the dominant trends in the theoretical and analytical debates on men and masculinity. In my thesis I have therefore focused, not on kinds and forms of masculinity – which remains the dominant approach in masculinity studies – but on the ways in which institutions, organizations and structures come to be gendered, and consequently, on the processes of gendering that are invoked in the articulation and elaboration of power within specific structural, institutional and/or organizational relations. I have sought to develop this argument specifically with regard to masculinity/ies by proposing the idea of ‘masculine hegemony’. Briefly, through this term I wish to suggest that uneven power distribution may be understood in Gramscian hegemonic terms, and that this hegemony is usually gendered as masculine. Any given society is organised along multiple and intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination that determine the access to and exercise of power – the distribution and possession of its resources and rights – within it, as well as the terms within which that power is (to be) exercised. Further, the organisation of these hierarchies may be discerned as hegemonic formations that favour specific social groups and/or alignments. Any given hegemonic condition is thus layered by multiple and intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination that extend far beyond conventionally recognised macro manifestations – race, nation, region, religion, community, class – to its manifestations at the fundamental ‘cellular’ (or in Gramsci’s terms, ‘molecular’) level of the family and the organisation of sexuality. Thus, while the multi-layered hegemonic formations that constitute the given hegemonic condition are all diversely marked by other signs – of race, class, age, region, religion, etc – they are all inflected by the foundational discourse of gender. This is the broad theoretical perspective within which the thesis is elaborated, because it provides for the multiple articulation of complex phenomena with each other, across history as well as across regions.

Based on this, and secondly, it seeks to approach the issue of Hindu nationalism from a historical perspective. The study therefore begins by chronologically examining the term ‘Hindu’ and the various semantic and social transformations in its history, beginning with its early derivation from ‘Indus’, through the medieval period when it gradually but

nebulously came to identify a community, to its coalescence into the more concrete religio-social entity that emerged through the colonial encounter and the caste and other reform movements of the nineteenth century, to its politicization under B G Tilak and V D Savarkar (among others) into a religio-cultural nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century. Crucial to understanding this evolution, the study argues, is the pan-Indian spread of the Brahmin castes (as opposed to the localized presence of the lower-castes), and the consequent identification of 'Hindu' territory with the presence of the Brahmins. In mapping this process, I emphasize the gender and caste dynamics inherent to the construction of this identity, especially in the concretizing of communal lines around the issue of personal laws, and elaborate on the economic, communal and political determinants of this gendered dynamic in the construction of the identity 'Hindu'. It thus argues that the strongly Brahmanical caste-profile of the anti-colonial nationalist movement indicates the extent to which Brahmanical patriarchy (or masculine hegemony) and its practices came to define the hegemonic understanding of the identity 'Hindu' as well as 'India' – and continued to do so even after independence. The argument of the thesis is that, unless one takes account of these processes, it is difficult to fully comprehend the depth, scale and reach of Hindu nationalism – as a latent and as an active ideology.

Thirdly, I argue the need to factor in another process in the understanding of Hindu nationalism, which also has its roots in the colonial encounter but which gains a different dynamic after independence: the idea and practice of 'development'. The study proceeds to briefly historicize the idea of development and then to chart the trajectories of its implementation through the Nehruvian emphasis on Planning and state driven social change, and the consequent impact on the changing social, economic and political theatre of the country after independence. It analyses this impact specifically on the gender and caste dynamics of this period, arguing that the Brahmanical hegemony of the pre-independence period begins to transform in the seventies, as it negotiates with and then accommodates the increasing visibility and volubility of lower caste presence in the political domain. Similarly, even as women's movements successfully moved the state to implement policies that actually empowered women and made possible their greater participation in the public sphere, the gradual and ongoing process of shifting control of the economy from the state to the private sector has ensured that safeguards for

women, labor, lower castes and other marginal groups are almost non-existent, or at best, remain arbitrary and at the mercy of the private sector. The study proposes that the processes of liberalization and privatization were thus crucial to the transformation of Brahmanical masculine hegemony, in its strategies to retain hegemonic power. In other words, the study argues that the developmentalist agenda of the post-independence Indian state contributed, in no small measure, to the resurgence of Hindu nationalism on the political stage, from the late seventies and particularly in the eighties, into the present.

Finally, the study explores the tensions and relations that obtain between the multiple dichotomies generated in the thesis – the personal and the political, the hegemonic and the hegemonised, upper caste and lower caste, Hindu and non-Hindu, masculine and feminine, modern and traditional, etc. I argue that Hindu nationalist positions should not be understood as manifest only in its organizational and/or institutional manifestations, but in and through this field of beliefs, actions and relations that constitute the masculine hegemony of Brahmanical patriarchy, within and from which Hindu nationalism finds its visceral roots. I close by proposing that unless we take cognizance of this, and look beyond the electoral performances of the Bharatiya Janata Party to the ways in which hegemonies are maintained using the very tools and structures intended to dismantle them we will not truly be able to counter the Hindu right or its masculinist violences.

*De vorming van het pitrubhumi (vaderland):
Masculiene hegemonie en de vorming van de hindoe-staat*



Samenvatting

Sinds 1980 is het hindoe-nationalisme in India en in het buitenland sterk toegenomen. Deze toename is gepaard gegaan en hangt op een complexe manier samen met enkele andere zeer belangrijke ontwikkelingen, waaronder (in willekeurige volgorde) de liberalisering van de economie; de wetgeving over en implementatie van quota voor ‘Other Backward Classes’ (een door de overheid vastgestelde categorie achterstandsgroepen) op de arbeidsmarkt en in het hoger onderwijs; de sterkere integratie van de middenklasse in de wereldeconomie en de toenemende verpaupering van de arme plattelandsbevolking. Deze ontwikkelingen worden op zich en in verband met hindoe-nationalisme vanuit verschillende perspectieven en disciplines bestudeerd.

In deze periode waren er echter ook verwante ontwikkelingen die minder zichtbaar, maar even belangrijk waren: de toename van het aantal gedode vrouwelijke foetussen en pasgeborenen; meer geweld en dodelijke slachtoffers in verband met bruidschatten; seksueel geweld tegen vrouwen, vooral tijdens ongeregelde heden, maar ook stelselmatig; de toename van vrouwen in conservatieve organisaties en bewegingen; een intensivering van het toezicht op (het debat over) seksualiteit. In tegenstelling hiermee en paradoxaal genoeg is de zichtbaarheid van vrouwen in het publieke domein toegenomen (bijvoorbeeld door de verruimde arbeidsmogelijkheden voor vrouwen). Feministische wetenschappers hebben zich beziggehouden met een aantal van deze onderwerpen en de verbanden ertussen en hebben ook aandacht besteed aan de toename van het hindoe-nationalisme. Er is echter weinig onderzoek gedaan naar het verband tussen deze onderwerpen en de meer in het oog springende ontwikkelingen die hierboven beschreven zijn. Er is in het bijzonder een

gebrek aan aandacht voor het verband tussen masculiniteit en hindoenationalisme.

Dit onderzoek voorziet op een aantal manieren in deze leemte. Ten eerste neemt het op theoretisch en analytisch gebied een plaats in tussen genderstudies en politieke economie, door een overzicht te geven van de dominante trends in het theoretische en analytische debat over mannen en mannelijkheid en hier vervolgens afstand van te nemen. Dit proefschrift richt zich dus niet op soorten en vormen van mannelijkheid, wat nog steeds de heersende trend is in onderzoek naar masculiniteit. In plaats daarvan gaat het in dit onderzoek om de wijze waarop gender doordringt in instellingen, organisaties en structuren, en daarmee om de gender-gerelateerde processen die worden opgeroepen bij de formulering en uitwerking van macht in specifieke structurele en institutionele relaties en/of relaties binnen organisaties.

Dit thema wordt specifiek met betrekking tot masculiniteit(en) uitgewerkt door het idee van de ‘masculiene hegemonie’. Deze term geeft aan dat een ongelijke machtsverdeling opgevat kan worden in termen van hegemonie zoals Gramsci die definieert, en dat deze hegemonie gewoonlijk mannelijk is. Elk samenleving is georganiseerd volgens verschillende, elkaar overlappende hiërarchieën van overheersing en ondergeschiktheid die de toegang tot en uitoefening van macht in die samenleving bepalen (de verdeling en het bezit van machtsbronnen en het recht op macht), evenals de voorwaarden waaronder deze macht wordt uitgeoefend. Verder zijn deze hiërarchieën geordend als structuren van hegemonie die bepaalde sociale groepen en/of verbanden bevoordelen. Elke toestand van hegemonie is dus opgebouwd uit verschillende, elkaar overlappende hiërarchieën van overheersing en ondergeschiktheid die veel veler reiken dan algemeen erkende verschijningsvormen op macroniveau, zoals ras, land, regio, godsdienst, lokale gemeenschap of klasse; en doordringen tot het basale, ‘cellulaire’ (of ‘moleculaire’, zoals Gramsci het uitdrukt) niveau van het gezin en de organisatie van seksualiteit. Hoewel de gelaagde structuren van hegemonie waaruit een bepaalde toestand van hegemonie bestaat ook nog andere kenmerken hebben, zoals ras, klasse, leeftijd, regio of godsdienst, speelt in al deze structuren dus het fundamentele discours van gender mee. Dit is het brede theoretisch perspectief van dit proefschrift, omdat het de meervoudige formulering van complexe verschijnselen en hun onderlinge verbanden toelaat, en ruimte biedt voor zowel historische als regionale vergelijking.

De tweede bijdrage die dit onderzoek levert is gebaseerd op het voorgaande: dit onderzoek benadert hindoe-nationalisme vanuit historisch perspectief. In het onderzoek wordt de term 'hindoe' met de verschillende semantische en sociale transformaties die deze term in de loop van de tijd heeft ondergaan chronologisch onderzocht. Na de vroege afleiding van 'Indus' trad er in de middeleeuwen een geleidelijke maar vage betekenisverschuiving op naar 'gemeenschap'. In de negentiende eeuw kreeg de term onder invloed van de koloniale verhoudingen en de kasten- en andere hervormingsbewegingen de betekenis van een concretere religieus-sociale entiteit, en begin twintigste eeuw werd de term onder B. G. Tilak en V. D. Savarkar (onder anderen) gepolitiseerd tot een religieus-cultureel nationalisme. Volgens dit onderzoek is voor een goed begrip van deze evolutie de verspreiding van de kaste van de brahmanen over heel India (in tegenstelling tot de meer plaatsgebonden aanwezigheid van de lagere kasten), en de consequente koppeling tussen 'hindoe'-gebied en de aanwezigheid van de brahmanen essentieel. Bij het in kaart brengen van dit proces wordt in dit onderzoek de dynamiek van gender en kaste die inherent is aan de constructie van deze identiteit benadrukt, vooral bij het concretiseren van gemeenschappelijke elementen bij het onderwerp persoonlijke wetten, en worden de economische, gemeenschaps- en politieke determinanten van deze gender-gerelateerde dynamiek bij de constructie van de hindoe-identiteit verder uitgewerkt. In het onderzoek wordt aldus betoogd dat het sterk brahmaanse kasteprofiel van de anti-koloniale nationalistische beweging aangeeft in welke mate het brahmaanse patriarchaat (of de masculiene hegemonie) en de bijbehorende gebruiken zowel de hindoe-identiteit als de Indiase identiteit hebben gedefinieerd in termen van hegemonie. Dit bleef zelfs zo na de onafhankelijkheid. In dit proefschrift wordt betoogd dat het moeilijk is om de diepgang, omvang en reikwijdte van het hindoe-nationalisme als latente en als actieve ideologie volledig te begrijpen zonder rekening te houden met deze processen.

In de derde plaats wijst dit onderzoek op nog een factor die nodig is om hindoe-nationalisme te begrijpen: het idee en de praktijk van 'ontwikkeling'. Deze factor heeft ook zijn wortels in de koloniale tijd, maar heeft een andere dynamiek gekregen na de onafhankelijkheid. Het onderzoek geeft een kort historisch overzicht van het begrip ontwikkeling en beschrijft vervolgens het implementatieproces met de Nehruviaanse nadruk op planning en door de staat geleide sociale verandering, en de

invloed hiervan op de sociale, economische en politieke veranderingen in het land na de onafhankelijkheid. De analyse richt zich specifiek op wat dit betekende voor de gender- en kastendynamiek in deze periode, waarbij betoogd wordt dat de hegemonie die de brahmanen voor de onafhankelijkheid hadden verandert in de jaren zeventig wanneer de lagere kasten steeds zichtbaarder worden en meer van zich laten horen in het politieke domein. Tegelijkertijd heeft de geleidelijke en voortschrijdende verschuiving van een door de staat geleide economie naar een marktconomie ervoor gezorgd dat maatregelen ter bescherming van vrouwen, arbeiders, lagere kasten en andere marginale groepen vrijwel ontbreken of hoogstens willekeurig en bij de gratie van de private sector genomen worden, ondanks het feit dat de vrouwenbeweging erin geslaagd is om de staat ertoe te bewegen een beleid te voeren dat vrouwen meer macht gaf en de deelname van vrouwen aan het maatschappelijk leven bevorderde. In het onderzoek wordt dus gesteld dat de processen van liberalisering en privatisering van essentieel belang waren voor de transformatie van de masculiene hegemonie van de brahmanen in hun streven om de macht te behouden. Met andere woorden, volgens dit onderzoek heeft de ontwikkelingsagenda van de staat India na de onafhankelijkheid in hoge mate bijgedragen aan de opleving van hindoe-nationalisme op het politieke toneel vanaf eind jaren zeventig en vooral de jaren tachtig tot op heden.

Ten slotte verkent dit onderzoek het spanningsveld en de relatie tussen de diverse dichotomieën die in dit proefschrift onderscheiden worden: het persoonlijke en het politieke, heersers en degenen die overheerst worden, hogere en lagere kasten, hindoes en niet-hindoes, masculien en feminien, modern en traditioneel, etc. Er wordt betoogd dat hindoe-nationalistische houdingen niet alleen tot uitdrukking komen in een organisatie- en/of institutionele context, maar ook in en door dit brede gebied van overtuigingen, handelingen en relaties waaruit de masculiene hegemonie van het brahmaanse patriarchaat bestaat, waarin en vanwaar het hindoe-nationalisme geworteld is. Het proefschrift sluit af met de stelling dat hindoe-rechts en het daaruit voortkomende masculinistische geweld alleen bestreden kunnen worden door deze realiteit te onderkennen en verder te kijken dan de electorale prestaties van de Bharatiya Janata partij door zich te richten op de wijze waarop hegemonieën worden gehandhaafd met de instrumenten en structuren die nu juist bedoeld waren om er een einde aan te maken.

1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Hindu nationalism has seen a dramatic growth in India and abroad from the nineteen eighties onward. This growth has coincided with – and relates in complex ways to – several other highly significant developments, including (in no particular order) the instituting of liberalization in the economy; the legislation on reservations for ‘Other Backward Castes’ and its implementation (also sometimes referred to as the ‘Mandalisation’ of India, following the Mandal Commission that recommended these reservations); the increasing tendency towards coalition-based governments, not just at the centre but in the states as well, indicating a deepening of divides in the socio-polity; the opening out of the media, and the consequent burgeoning of private producers, broadcasters and channels; the boom in the information and communications technology sector, the growth of the service sector and the consequent intensification of the integration of the middle classes into the global economy; the intensifying pauperization of the rural poor; and the steady but consistent withdrawal of the state from welfare programs, the growth of financial institutions, and of their role in shaping the economy, politics and public policy.

These developments as well as Hindu nationalism’s links with them have been the subject of scholarly attention from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Apart from these however, one may also note the unfolding of less obvious, but equally significant and related developments in this period: the growth and intensification of female feticide and infanticide; the increase in dowry related violence and deaths; the targeting of women as objects of sexual violence, especially during communal riots, but also routinely; the increasing presence of women in

rightwing organizations and mobilizations; an intensification in the policing of sexual discourses and sexuality; conversely and paradoxically, an increase in the visibility of women in the public sphere (through for instance, the widening of options for employment). Feminist scholarship has addressed several of these issues, independently and in their intersections; it has also addressed the rise of Hindu nationalism. However, there is little work on the relations that obtain between these issues and the more obvious ones set out above, and especially not through the dual framework of gender and Hindu nationalism. Specifically, although various scholars have observed and commented on the highly masculinized discourses and practices of Hindu communalism as well as of Hindu nationalism, there was and remains a serious deficiency of attention to the relations between masculinity and Hindu nationalism. This study aims to fill that lacuna.

The project is an exploration of the relations of gender – specifically of masculinity – with nationalism, as these take shape within vocabularies and practices of purported (but essentially political) religiosity. Specifically, the project is focusing – as is evident from the above – on the contemporary phenomenon of ‘Hindutva’, or Hindu nationalism, terms that will be elaborated shortly. Close examination would reveal firstly, that this is not just a political phenomenon – in the sense of party programme or agenda at the level of electoral politics – but is an active process of creating *cultural* uniformity, i.e. it is informed with the objective of creating a mass base of people with identical *cultural* practices, who may be identified then as a single nation.¹ Secondly, ‘culture’ is understood to have essentially *religious* roots – so that the diverse and very heterogeneous variety of practices that have specificities of a regional or linguistic or tribal or caste character – each further diversified by differential gender conceptions and practices – come to be subsumed under the general rubric of religious affinity, with whatever differences or even contradictions that might exist being elided or erased as inconsequential to the ‘larger’ identity of being, nevertheless, ‘Hindu’. However, ‘culture’ does not exist independent of the social, the political and the economic: the multiplicity of practices and discourses that constitute a given culture are inevitably shaped and moulded by the pressures of the social, the economic and the political – just as these are in turn constituted by the cultural (Williams 1977). In other words, even as the organisation known as the mother-organisation of Hindu nationalism, the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its Hindu nationalist affiliates seek to understand and establish 'Hindutva' as a 'purely' cultural phenomenon, it is clear that such an understanding would be far from complete or satisfactory. To understand 'Hindutva' then, it is necessary to examine it not just as a 'cultural' phenomenon, but as a social, economic and political phenomenon.² Therefore, the emphasis on gender in much Hindu nationalist articulation of identity will also be examined well outside the sphere of the cultural, in this study. The focus will be primarily on the factors that shape its forms and understandings of masculinities; this is, at the first instance, because of Hindutva's own well-known tendencies to represent itself in highly masculinised terms; but also, from a more theoretical perspective, because, as Joane Nagel (1998) points out, the role and meanings of women and of femininities in constructions of nationalism have been studied with accelerated intensity in recent years; but there has been less analogous attention paid to the highly significant relations that obtain between masculinities and nationalisms.

1.2 The Object of this Study

The object of this study is an ill-defined, enormous and still unfolding phenomenon in the processes of, in fact, also continuously defining itself. Hence, a central focus of this study will be to actually identify and define its object/subjects of study – not just because of the amorphous, multi-dimensional and somewhat evasive nature of the phenomenon referred to as 'Hindutva', but also because it is a phenomenon that affects so many other processes and currents that may be linked to it but are distinct from it (e.g. caste politics or urbanisation or even, to some extent, the women's movement).. Precisely because the object of study is (a particular form of) nationalism, this thesis has followed the model of a meta-narrative that has tried to trace the unfolding of that nationalism and of its processes of gendering and sexualisation, in the dynamics of its historical growth. In doing so, it has had to construct a conceptual frame that can accommodate such a narrative, which in turn has entailed the reconstruction of several conceptual and analytical terms available for the study of gender and nationalism. While the reconstruction will be undertaken in detail in the course of the narrative, it would be useful, at this point, to make a preliminary identification of some of the key areas, terms and issues involved in the constitution of this meta-narrative. In what follows therefore, I will set out some of these.

1.3 Theoretical Aspects of the Research

These can be identified as located around four conceptual clusters: i) nationalism and nationalist discourses; ii) hegemonic masculinity and masculine hegemony; iii) religion and religious politics; and iv) caste and caste-politics. These are distinctions that are not theoretically separable even in principle, and are drawn partly for convenience of analysis and partly for their usefulness in structuring the narrative of this thesis: while the first of these clusters – nationalism – is pervasively present throughout, the thesis pays attention to each of the others in an accreting, sequential order that demonstrates the relations between these distinct theoretical clusters. Here, I will briefly outline some of the key features of each of these clusters, as these pertain to the thesis.

Nationalism

The literature on and around nationalism is too vast and diverse to be adequately covered here; indeed, there is a veritable nationalism industry in the academe. From journals like *Nations and Nationalism* to digital, internet-based enterprises like *The Nationalism Project*, and apart from the many volumes of individual theoretical, sociological and ethnographic work on the topic,³ there are now entire encyclopaedias available on it (Leoussi and Smith, 2000). However, it is possible – and necessary – to identify some of the generic and generally accepted conceptual relations at work within this concept. These include:

(a) The distinctions of the idea of the ‘nation’ from related concepts like ‘community’, ‘country’ and ‘state’. While ‘nation’ usually incorporates understandings of ‘community’ and ‘country’, it is distinct from the idea of the ‘state’, even if it is invariably related to it.

(b) Consequently, the relations of ‘nation’ to the idea of the ‘nation-state’. While the nation-state as a political model has varied across histories and regional locations – depending on current conceptions of nation and of state that are applicable – nations have not always generated, established or entered into harmonious relations with state-formations (which explains the need for the hyphen in ‘nation-state’). Hindu nationalism is a peculiar instance of this relation: while its relations with the Indian state have been generally harmonious, it remains nevertheless (as yet) unable to actually establish its own version of the state in India. These issues will be addressed in greater detail in the course of the thesis.

(c) The significance of geographical space – territorial size – and population strengths – majoritarianism – in the determination of these understandings, in particular instances. With many instances of nationalism, particularly of the religious variety, there are strong relations between ideas of sacred space – or holy land – and the space of the nation. Conversely, the rituals and symbolisms inherent to most nationalistic discourses – even of the avowedly secular variety – inevitably construct the physical-territorial space of the nation as a sacrosanct one. An important aspect of this relation between sacred and profane spaces is the strong community importance given to the places of worship that are scattered throughout the country: they, defined as pilgrimage spots, *realise* in a concrete way the presences of the sacred *in* the profane (van der Veer, 1994).

(d) The differences and connections with related concepts like patriotism, citizenship and nationality – as state promoted ideologies – on the one hand, and on the other, with ideas like sovereignty or independence (economic, cultural, political). While these are necessary parts of any nationalist arsenal, they relate in different ways to it, serve different purposes and mediate the relations between the nation and the state. For instance, citizenship is at once a statutory and legal status (entailing rights and responsibilities) and an identity status (invoking a sense of belonging). Nationality on the other hand indexes identity, but does not always index a statutory-legal status – witness the nationality movements in Kashmir or in the North-Eastern states of India.

(e) The relation to issues of development: to what extent does nationalism function as a substitute for development, and/or serving to draw attention away from the difficulties of crucial development agendas? One of the key arguments of the thesis is in fact that, in the Indian case, the discourses of nationalism and of modernisation-development are inextricably interlinked, and that they are deeply gendered.

Religion and religious politics:

There are several issues:

(a) understandings of religion, perhaps as conditioned by the dominance of understanding religion through the Semitic religions – meaning that it is necessary to clarify the structure of relations between politics and religion – or the political role of religions – *through* the definitions of

religious structures themselves: the Semitic possibly being the dominant epistemic frame for this analysis till now. Which is why the question, *Is Hindutva a process of the semiticisation of Hinduism?*⁴ is a structural-political question. (It is necessary to maintain a caution here: though a political question, the process of semiticisation is to be understood analytically, in terms of analogies and differences in strategies of dissemination, popularisation and consolidation, and not as a comparison in values or power, between the Semitic and non-Semitic religions). There is a special significance here to the word *dharm*, or *dharma*, for this process: precisely because it has the twofold connotations of 'religion' as well as of 'natural order'⁵ (also understood often as 'way of life') there is an easy and noticeable slippage between religion and culture. Further, it inhabits the many systems that constitute and articulate the permeable spaces referred to as 'public' and 'private'. These factors render this phenomenon highly exploitable towards political ends. These issues will be of concern throughout the thesis, but will be examined in detail in the concluding chapter.

(b) The relation between religion and communal identity: its historical development, in the emergence of the specificity of the term 'communalism' to the Indian context. One of the most significant issues here will be the relation of communalism to communal violence, on the one hand, and to discourses of Hindu nationalism on the other. These questions will be addressed throughout the thesis.

(c) In the Indian case, the difficulty of separating caste from religion, even conceptually – not just in relation to Hinduism but also in relation to the choice of conversion by lower castes (as for instance, in the Meenakshipuram case of 1981).⁶ Thus, the need to examine the formation of contemporary Hinduism as much as a product of transformations in caste dynamics, especially during and after the colonial period, as of its engagements with other religious formations like Islam and Christianity.

(d) The related issue of conversion itself: prior to the arrival of Christianity and Islam in India, the only clear instance of what might be considered conversion is from Hinduism to Buddhism.⁷ This however, must be qualified by the following considerations: firstly, conversion to Buddhism did not necessarily imply a rejection of 'Hinduism', but of the Brahmanical system (which I will later elaborate on) because the idea of a 'Hindu' religion and its concomitant identity is a much later develop-

ment; secondly, from a purely chronological and territorial perspective, Christianity was in India fairly early, with conversions happening in the same way as with Buddhism, or later with Islam, but regional differences in the growth and trajectories of individual religions tend to be clouded by the current imagination of a unified India with a unified historical territory; thirdly, that conversion may have meant the acceptance of a new system of religiosity – of new deities, beliefs and rituals – but not necessarily a rejection of the social ordering of caste that has come to be understood as one of the defining characteristics of Hinduism. Bearing these in mind, one must yet ask, In what more recent history is the term conversion understood? That is, it is in the specificity of the redrawn alignment of the populace with the state, with the coming of the British – the state as now empowered to intervene in the determination of previously non-state terrains of authority: marriage, divorce, transmission of property – that issues of and over conversion become visible as issues of material and political interest, and not just religious ones. Significant here is also who has the right to claim membership of the national community, and through that membership, rights to the resources of the state. I.e., it is no longer a context in which conversion simply meant acceptance of a new faith (if indeed it was ever only that), but one in which conversion means an almost entirely different set of rights and privileges.

(e) To examine ‘Hinduism’ (but also Christianity and Islam, and in this sense, religion, more generally) specifically in terms of the ‘ability’ (not just the capacity) to aggressively – even violently – assert identity. That is, to understand the phenomenon of religious violence as a means to asserting communal identity. In this, the thesis will focus specifically on the emergence in the nineteenth century of the binary ‘Order/*Danda*’ identified by Ranajit Guha (1997; pp. 24ff) as a means to enter into the analysis of violence in its relations to communal identity.

(f) The importance, in this context, of the tension between, on the one hand, conceptual and ritual-oriented fissures within Hinduism, that resist its homogenisation, and on the other, the centripetal forces seeking to homogenise Hinduism into a nationalism.

(g) The relation of religion to the official versions and practices of secularism, specifically the understanding of secularism as the tolerance of all religions by the state.

Caste and caste politics

There are divergent theories of caste – as *jati*, as *varna* and even as race – and it is necessary to examine the importance of this for the development of caste-based politics. Related issues here will be regional differences in caste denominations and local caste systems, and the questionability of the term ‘Hinduism’ in describing Dalit and/or tribal religious beliefs and practices. Further, it has been observed that the pervasiveness of caste extends to its practice amongst other religious communities like the Muslim and Christian communities. The thesis will take into account the historical trajectories by which what I have termed ‘Brahmanical masculine hegemony’ has negotiated the issue of caste, as well as its pervasive impact on the shaping of caste relations, within the ‘Hindu’ and within other communities. It will also factor in the inclusive but excluding perception of Dalits by Brahmanical Hinduism, as compared to the purely excluded perception of Brahmanical Hinduism among Dalits. The religiosity of the principle of exclusion is accepted, in other words, only by one of the two sets of people relating through this system; the other recognises it as a simple relation of power. The thesis examines the political impact of this dynamic, as it unfolds after the 1960s in particular, and its consequences for the shaping of Hindutva.

Gender relations and masculinity

The arguments around these themes examine the possible sources of Hindutva violence – in particular, and its growing power in general – as not, as is often alleged, a ‘real’ historical grievance of ‘de-masculinisation’ and shame, but in Brahmanical masculine hegemony itself. This hegemony is understood as defined, among other things, through violence, and therefore as sustaining among other things, on a rhetoric of shamed pride: violence is represented within this rhetoric as a retributive resuscitation of Hindu masculinity. The thesis therefore explores: (a) the need to understand patriarchy as masculine hegemony (which will be elaborated in the following chapter). (b) The relation between masculine hegemony and hegemonic forms of masculinity that are defined by violence: violent masculinity is examined as the hegemonic perception of masculinity here, and the thesis explores the historical dynamics by which this comes to be so, and sustains as such. It examines the forms and conceptions of masculinities that such a masculine hegemony suppresses, or

negotiates into marginality, as well as the enthusiasm to resuscitate the community specifically as ‘masculine’. (c) Conversely, the thesis also explores other, non-gender specific sources to Hindutva violence – caste or class tensions, for instance – and analyses the articulation of these diverse hegemonic forms in relation to each other. It examines the processes by which they become gendered, hegemonic and the dominant way of understanding and acting on these otherwise non-gender specified sources of violence. The focus of the argument is that, while Hindutva violence is and has been noticeably on the rise, along with its increasingly strident masculinist posturing, little concern has been shown for the connections this might have with its commensurate and simultaneous political growth: these issues thus indicate the conceptual and theoretical orientations of this specific study.

1.4 Discursive Location of the Thesis

The body of scholarship on Hindu nationalism that has emerged over the last three decades is now enormous. Ranging from the anthropological (Peter van der Veer), through the sociological (Thomas Blom Hansen), the discursive (Jyotirmay Sharma, Chetan Bhatt), the political (Christophe Jaffrelot, Achin Vanaik), the historical (Gyan Pandey, John Zavos, Romila Thapar), to media studies (Arvind Rajagopal) and cinema (Karen Gabriel), there has also been an active examination of its gender aspects by feminist writers (Ratna Kapur, Tanika Sarkar, Zoya Hasan, Paola Bacchetta, Karen Gabriel, Sikata Banerjee). These classifications often overlap and intersect – partly because of the strongly interdisciplinary nature of much of the work, and partly because of the pervasiveness of Hindu nationalist ideas and practices. The debates are focused on a wide range and variety of aspects of Hindu nationalism – from its historical emergence, to its relations to the larger political economy, to the ideological and conceptual apparatus that it propagates, to its organisational and structural arrangements, through to the prescriptions and proscriptions of its gender relations. One dominant school of thought on the emergence of Hindu nationalism proposes that it evolved as a consequence of, or response to, colonial administrative mechanisms and policies, especially those of census enumeration and the codification of identities (Cohn, 1996; Kaviraj, 1992; Hansen, 1999; Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). Another tends to locate it as the meta-discourse of communalism, emerging out of institutionalised communal and caste violence, often

understood as manipulated to serve the political interests of specific interest-groups and/or political parties (Brass 2003; Jaffrelot 1996, Hansen 1999; Varshney 2002). Social scientists of various disciplinary and political hues have also keenly debated on whether or not Hindu nationalism is a form of fascism: political economist Prabhat Patnaik (1993) and historian Sumit Sarkar unhesitatingly label the Hindutva phenomenon 'fascist', in its promotion of 'cultural' homogenisation in the name of cultural nationalism, in its promotion of violent and authoritarian forms of masculinity as a means to achieve this, and more specifically in the organisational structures of its constituent bodies. Others like Chetan Bhatt (2001) and Achin Vanaik have critiqued this as being inaccurate and excessively polemical, because of the absence of many features that characterise fascism, and have preferred to consider it a form of 'cultural exclusivism' (Vanaik 1997: 275).

Further, a large number of commentators have emphasised the fact that Hindu nationalism has generally preferred to work from within – rather than against and from outside – the constraints of the political framework of constitutionalism (see for instance Jaffrelot 1996; Hansen 1999). Equally, others have pointed to the tendencies within Hindutva towards extra-constitutional practices, essentially in the form of fostering communal tension and violence, but also in terms of proposing that the constitution itself be replaced by a new one more appropriate to the 'Indian' cultural context (Sachar 2001). Other commentators argue that there is in fact no liberal democratic tradition of political discourse in India, within which Hindu nationalism is articulated, but rather only a superficial imposition of it on a cultural terrain that is hostile to it (Nandy 1987; Madan 1997). This argument also proposes that Hindu nationalism specifically, and communalisms more generally, are in fact products of the attempt to impose a 'western' style secularism in the Indian polity (Nandy and Madan; P Chatterjee 1997). These arguments have been critiqued by scholars like Peter van der Veer (2006) and Achin Vanaik (1997), for assuming that secularism and modernity are finished products of the 'west', inalienable from that context. Jaffrelot among others has been particularly influential in arguing that Hindu nationalism is a form of 'ethnic nationalism' (1998; but especially his 'Introduction', 2006) that in fact has complex relations with modernity. Countering Jaffrelot's thesis, Corbridge and Harris (2000), have argued that Hindu nationalism's relations to modernity are precisely what prevent it from be-

ing considered an ethnic nationalism, but must itself be considered a product of that very modernity.

In the above, I have tried to offer a brief sketch of a very large set of debates around Hindu nationalism; in what follows, I will briefly profile another set of related but distinct debates around the same issue – specifically the feminist interventions in and extrapolations of this debate. Feminist interventions in this debate have tended to centre on a few key issues that remain generally unconsidered or merely touched upon in this debate. First of these is the issue of personal laws and the way in which Hindu nationalism has been constructed around the gender logic that is foundational to these laws. While Partha Chatterjee (1986) was probably the earliest to draw attention to this, subsequent work by feminist scholars like Kumkum Sangari (1993; 1995), Tanika Sarkar (1993), Brenda Cossman and Ratna Kapur (1996) and Zoya Hasan (2009) have elaborated substantially on the relationship of personal laws to community formation on religious lines, on the one hand, and to the status of women, on the other. This work has been particularly significant in establishing the centrality of gender issues to the evolution and the directions of growth of Hindu nationalism. Feminist critiques of Hindu nationalism – and even of the often gender-blind discourses that also proffer critiques of it – have drawn on this work to explore the position of women, in discursive and practical terms, within this nationalism. Scholars such as those named above, along with others like Sikata Banerjee (2005), Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (1995), Tanika Sarkar (1998, 1999), Zoya Hasan (1994), Flavia Agnes (1994), Amrita Basu (1999), Amrita Basu and Rekha Basu (1999), Hansen (1996), Paola Bacchetta (2004) and Runa Das (2004), have produced important work on a variety of aspects of gender in relation to Hindu nationalism, including the organisational (Bacchetta, Sarkar, Hansen, Banerjee), the issue of violence against women (Sarkar, Basu, Hasan), the issue of nuclearisation (Basu and Basu), the nature and orientation of women's participation in the Hindutva programme (Bacchetta, Agnes), the intersections of law and gender in relation to Hindutva (Cossman and Kapur, Agnes) and the intersections of gender and caste in relation to Hindutva (Sangari, Das, Agnes).

However, it is only recently that some work has emerged specifically engaging with the issue of masculinity in relation to Hindu nationalism (Sarkar, Hansen, Banerjee, Basu and Basu). This work has tended to fo-

cus either on the emphasis within Hindutva discourses of explicitly masculinised actions and rhetoric; or has focused on the shaping of conceptions of masculinity in the organisational and discursive arrangements of Hindu nationalism; or has examined the close relations of violence to understandings of masculinity in Hindu nationalist actions, programmes and organisations. There is no study that seeks to explore the relations between the organisational, ideological, programmatic dimensions of Hindu nationalism, and its engagements with the larger political economy (or economies) that it is situated in, specifically with regard to its productions and deployments of masculinities. Further, while there have been studies of men and masculinity in relation to (contexts of) development (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994; Greig, Kimmel and Lang, 2000; Chopra, Ossella and Ossella, 2004), these have been more descriptive than analytical, serving the essential purpose of drawing attention to some of the relations and conjunctions that avail between masculinity and development, but either avoiding theorization or failing to theorize these adequately. These are the lacuna that this particular study seeks to fill. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to a larger theoretical and analytical discussion on masculinity and men's studies – which will be located and discussed in detail in the following chapter – as well as to argue that gender – specifically certain ways of thinking about men and masculinity that I adopt in the thesis – may prove unarguably central to understanding the phenomenon of Hindu nationalism. The significance of such a study lies not only in contributing to the academic debates in these areas, but to make considered and calibrated political interventions possible in these fields.

1.5 Objectives and Relevance of Research

The objectives of the proposed research may be condensed as broadly addressing the following sets of questions, which also indicate the scope and range of its relevance:

1. To dislocate the idea of hegemony from its hegemonic understandings, as a totalitarian system of coercive and yet consensual dominance. This theoretical divergence will help formulate the understanding of patriarchy as masculine hegemony – a formulation that is essential to understanding Hindutva as founded on the dynamics of Brahmanical masculine hegemony.

2. To examine the relation between contemporary Hindu nationalism, its own historical past, and the 'historical' pasts that it seeks legitimacy in. What are the gender forms and configurations being effected by – and influencing – this relation, and to what extent is the power of these forms dependent on their historicities (real or mythified)? The thesis will attempt to show that nationalism in India emerged through an engagement with the past that sought to reconfigure the gendered power relations established under colonialism, and that the emergence of Hindu nationalism is inextricably entwined with this nationalist history. In particular, the thesis will focus on attitudes towards violence and its role in inscribing identity as well as conduct (at the personal and political levels), in the consolidation of Hindu nationalism.
3. To examine the sites of such gendering. Specifically, the thesis will argue that Hindu nationalism has evolved in a history of modernisation – beginning in the nineteenth century, and evolving through the dynamics of colonial rule – and developmentalism that has served to accentuate its agendas. It will attempt to show in particular that the transformations in caste dynamics that were catalysed by these processes, also forced Hindu nationalism to redefine itself and its agendas.
4. To analytically outline the conjunction of gender and nationalism – specifically, of masculinity and Hindu nationalism – as it obtains in contemporary India. The thesis will explore some of the major fronts on which the battle to transform India into a Hindu nation is being carried out, and the inextricable immanence of gender in this battle.

1.6 Research Questions

The following broad research questions guide the analytical orientation of this thesis:

1. In studying the Hindutva, how important is masculinity as an analytically incisive category? How explanatory is it of the phenomenon – or at least, of the ground realities that it thrives on? Or – in what terms can we configure masculinity to produce it as an enabling analytical tool to understand Hindutva?

2. What is the position of gender identities in situations and conditions where significantly contested political identities are not gender-based, but based on other issues: caste, religion, class, political ideology? What are the terms of relations in which gender intersects and/or integrates with these other issues?
3. What are the relations that obtain between:
 - (a) masculinity and violence;
 - (b) violence and nationalism, particularly religious nationalism, particularly Hindutva;
 - (c) state and non-state forms of violence, specifically in relation to the construction of the nation-state; and
 - (d) how do these three sets of relations get articulated?
4. Does the concept of 'hegemony' work as a useful paradigm for understanding the operations of Hindutva? Can patriarchy be understood as a form of hegemony? In what ways must the latter term be re-conceptualised to factor in gender and gendered relations?
5. An analytical question of definition: is the Hindutva a community? Or is it the label for an ideological and political force that is attempting to create a community? Does the label identify a set of organisations and institutions or a sentiment/culture?
6. What are the relations that obtain between the history of Hindu nationalism and the histories of modernisation and developmentalism? How have these affected its modes of organisation, its agendas, the constitution of its identities, its relations to caste and to caste politics? How have these processes affected its constructions and practices of gender, and how have they in turn been determined by its gendered politics?
7. One significant question is the relation of this set of relations, in turn, to the transformations in the economy that have been officially underway since 1990, but whose inceptions may be traced to the early '80s. How does one understand liberalisation, and the increased role of the market, in relation to Hindutva? Have caste or creed affiliations been affected by it? Has it led to a crisis in upper-caste hegemony and this in turn to social violence? And has this violence

been directed at lower-castes, or at other 'privileged' communities, or both?

1.7 Methodological and Analytical Issues

An important issue here is the scope, or level, of the study: a peculiar problem of concepts like nationalism – particularly when complicated as religious nationalism – is that as an object of study it escapes boundedness, even if, as Geschiere and Meyer note, 'classification and marking boundaries seem to be basic to scientific research.' (1998: 603) I will examine the phenomenon of Hindu nationalist – Hindutva – masculinity not as it *manifests* itself across the country – in that sense, not confined to an analysis of specific instances of communal violence, or of Hindutva mobilisation – but as at least a 'sensitising concept' (ibid., p. 601) if not an analytical one. This means attempting to understand all that comes under the rubric of Hindutva – both, as acknowledged by its propagators and as ascribable to it from outside, for various socio-historical and theoretical reasons – through the lens of gender, specifically masculinity. Broadly, Hindutva is a conglomerate of three conceptual packages: nationalism, religion and the caste-class configuration (the processes of modernisation are important factors here). The study is an attempt to 'read' masculinity as it is announced and encoded in the relational play of these packages, using the analytical framework of masculine hegemony. The thesis therefore examines these packages as constituting the terms by which masculine hegemony is constructed and structured, and thus examines the dynamic of their relations to each other *as constituents of a hegemony*.

This study therefore seeks its groundings in the very object of its quest – in the multiple realities that that object occupies. The procedure involved is substantially interpretational; but precisely because all interpretation needs an object of interpretation, the first procedural step is to identify this object – Brahmanical masculine hegemony – and the Hindutva masculinity (or masculinities) that it generates. However, this object, it must be noted, is of ambiguous ontological status itself, in that, being conceptual, it possesses a cognitive and even imaginative being; but it also operates at the level of the practical – as the practices of everyday life, in the multiple dimensions of everyday life: from the familial, the communal, the national; to its economic, institutional and political

aspects. And it is these multiple dimensions of its existence that together constitute the object of this study.

However, given that the study has to first constitute its object of study – there is no prior literature that specifically refers to it, especially in relation to Hindu nationalism, and in the context of contemporary India – the first task was to ‘materialize’, so to speak, the object itself. The study is therefore organised predominantly through the analysis of discourse around the object of study, from which its existence and operations can be gleaned. Jacob Torfing, discussing the relation between hegemony and discourse, notes that, ‘Hegemony and discourse are mutually conditioned in the sense that hegemonic practice shapes and reshapes discourse, which in turn provides the conditions of possibility for hegemonic articulation.’ (Torfing 1999: 43) This is a succinct account of the dynamic that we seek to uncover, as well as the method that will be adopted. It involves on the one hand, a documentation of the trajectories followed by the term ‘Hindu’ and its evolution in the nineteenth century into a clearly identifiable community, as well as the multiple processes of gendering that were fundamental to this evolution; and on the other, the maintaining of a careful distinction between ‘literal’ deployments of this category – as indexing a religious conception of the self as well as an enumerated community in census records – and metaphorical deployments that register power-relations between social groups at various levels (caste, religion, community, nation). The analysis will continuously explore the relations between these conceptions of ‘Hindu’ and the broader field of Brahmanical masculine hegemony that they draw from and, in turn, feed. Or, to put it differently, the thesis will analyse the multiple discourses that go into constituting the meanings of the terms ‘Hindu’ and ‘masculine’ in particular, as these discourses intersect and integrate, as well as in their (joint and separate) relations to the wider discursive and non-discursive field that constitutes – and is in turn constituted meaningfully by – them. Needless to say, this dynamic is a continuously contested one – albeit in multiple contests, at multiple sites and levels, of varying intensities and extents, undertaken by diverse (groups of) actors – and therefore yielding varying degrees of fixity of meaning.

The term ‘discourse’ then, is used in this thesis as constituted of the articulations of discrete signifying elements – ‘the relational ensemble of signifying sequences’ (Torfing, 1999: 91) – in a larger field of discursivity, as well as in non-discursive environments of varying stability. Michel

Foucault, in his pioneering work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1985), maintained a distinction between the discursive and non-discursive realms, which, according to Torfing, he subsequently abandoned for a more fluid perception of the separation between them (Torfing 1995: 90-91). I am aware that this is also in consonance with dominant understandings within discourse theories, which tend to see the discursive realm as, not so much denying the objective world, as insisting that that world is only available in and through the discursive. I have chosen to maintain the distinction nevertheless, for two reasons: firstly, because, while the non-discursive realm may be available only in and through discourse, it possesses a dynamic of operations – its own logics and mechanics that are as complexly constituted as the world itself – that is not dependent on the discursive – that, in fact, necessarily shapes the material conditions of discourse, even as specific discourses may in turn constitute that world in specific ways. Secondly, it is not possible to discuss or analyze hegemonies as ‘purely’ discursive, because any hegemony, by definition, is constituted of a combination of coercion and consent. While the second may obtain discursively, the first is a physical operation that can be reduced to the discursive only at the cost of extreme trivialisation.⁸ Thus, the research undertaken here has necessarily employed discourse analysis as a primary methodological approach; but it has also acknowledged the need to address the question of hegemony as also constituted non-discursively. The methodology involved establishing the presence of a hegemony through analysing the relations between discourses, events, processes and practices – and in this sense, the methodology is more than just discourse analysis, it is hegemony analysis.

Initially, this second aspect of the thesis was to have been dealt with through a year’s fieldwork – in Delhi in the north, which in general is dominantly Hindi-speaking, Hindu, upper-caste, and middle-class, with fairly strong support for Hindutva across the board; and in Kochi in the south, which is Malayalam-speaking, less dominantly Hindu upper-caste, and with a much stronger left-democratic political profile, but with roughly the same economic constitution, and an increasing groundswell of support for the Hindutva. Accordingly, fieldwork was carried out in both places. But it became clear fairly early on, both from the engagements with respondents as well as from the survey of primary and secondary literature undertaken, that the forms and practices of masculinity that were being examined as (in one way or another) self-evidently asso-

ciated with Hindu nationalism in the existing literature, in actual fact emerged and drew sustenance from a wider base of gender practices, that I subsequently theorized as constituting Brahmanical masculine hegemony in the thesis. It became clear that these forms and practices of masculinity were not just localised gender regimes, confined to Hindu nationalist organisations or precepts, but fundamentally embedded in more pervasive and historically long-term formations of patriarchy in India, within (and outside) Hinduism in general. It further became clear to me that the relations between men, masculinity and Hindu nationalism extended into a web of relations outside the institutional and political forms of Hindu nationalism – including caste, class, sect and region – and that it was important to draw attention to these relays. Hindu nationalism, in this understanding, moved beyond its doctrinal pronouncements and practices at the level of parties and organizations, to its traces in and linkages with processes like development, liberalization and globalization.

This meant that any engagement with the relations between men, masculinity and Hindu nationalism could not be confined to the present but had to explore the evolution of these relations, historically, in order to arrive at a conceptual framework that could tackle the ways in which the masculinities of Hindu nationalism evolved out of a more prevalent and pervasive dynamic of social, political and economic forces.

This realization necessitated, firstly, a theoretical approach to men and masculinities that could accommodate such a task – which led to the conceptual innovation of the idea of masculine hegemony as a more nuanced approach to understanding patriarchal formations. Secondly, it required that prevalent understandings of Hindu nationalism themselves be re-examined from this perspective, which in turn required an excursus into the historical evolution of Hindu nationalism in gendered terms. And finally, it required that this excursus be extended into a perspective on the recent resurgence of Hindu nationalism from the same theoretical and analytical perspective. The thesis thus evolved into a historical-theoretical analysis of Hindu nationalism through the conceptual framework of masculine hegemony, rather than a detailed ethnographic study of men and masculinities within Hindu nationalism. In this sense, it may be understood as an extended but necessarily preliminary stage, that lays the theoretical, analytical and methodological ground for a second stage of a longer study, which will involve fieldwork at multiple levels and lo-

cations, to elaborate the operations of this masculine hegemony at the molecular level. That, however, for reasons of space and time, would have to be another project altogether. The fieldwork that was undertaken for this project, therefore certainly influenced the character and approach of the analysis and findings; it has been used directly to some small extent in the body of the thesis itself – but it did not, in itself, become the focus of analysis.

Discourse analysis, as understood in the context of the thesis, then involved the analysis of specific primary texts relating directly to the object of study, Brahmanical masculine hegemony – as for instance, with the analysis of Gandhi's writings in Chapter IV – but also of a large body of secondary literature that dealt separately with – and constituted the discourse on – Hindu nationalism, on the one hand; and another much smaller corpus of writing – also constituting a discourse – on men and masculinity on the other. In both cases, the focus of the analysis was less on language and its uses – as with most contemporary discourse analysis – and more on mapping the terrain of discursivity around caste, gender, nation and other terms of significance for understanding Brahmanical masculine hegemony. This was the process by which the object of study was itself gleaned out of the discourses on and around it, and constituted as an object of study. But the secondary literature was also significant for its registering the multiple perspectives through which this object has been studied, and consequently for *its* mapping of the *multiple processes* – social, cultural, political economic – through which Brahmanical masculine hegemony has been constituted. It could be said that the analysis at this level was therefore a 'meta-discourse analysis'. Some additional sources of commentary and information have also been used to fill in the picture that emerged – such as newspaper reports – but the foundation of the research – since the focus was the identification and 'materialization' of Brahmanical masculine hegemony – was the secondary literature that constituted the bulk of the discourses around it.

The Hindu nation, as of today, is an unrealised myth: whether as masculine or otherwise, it remains an 'ideal' to aspire for and work toward, rather than an already existing state. As idea, therefore, it has a strong discursive component which is ceaselessly being projected and 'sold'; and since the current research is focused on the nature of the solicitation and projection of this aspiration, and the work involved in it, it is of necessity – at the risk of repetition – an analysis of the discourses involved in this

process. To this extent, the method of analysis is deliberately not the method of postulating a hypothesis and testing it in its ‘real’ reference frames, but that of proposing a series of questions for research, that are all fundamentally oriented around the conglomerate of concepts within which I propose to identify Hindutva masculinity. *If there is nevertheless a fundamental theoretical proposition underlying these questions, it is that (Brahmanical) masculine hegemony is a useful analytical device for examining the structures of power that may be seen to operate in the relations of these concepts with and in each other.* It is this case that may be said to be on test; but whether or not the postulation – that it is the most useful analytical device – is ‘proved’ or ‘disproved’ (in the sense of being irrelevant or relevant to those structures), the study will have established the relations of Brahmanical masculine hegemony to those structures – and this, in itself, is a sufficient end.

1.8 Epistemological/Ethical Issues

In the course of this study, I have had to confront several problems, some of an essentially methodological nature. One was the mixed subjectivities I carried to the field of study, in my roles as interlocutor, as analyst as well as ‘heretic’. The last is not an unconsidered epithet: I am categorized as a Hindu by religious persuasion, officially. At the time of conducting the fieldwork, I was also a (relatively) young, upper-caste, upper middle-class, highly educated male – all of which make me an ideal candidate for the Hindu Right, as sympathiser if not activist. However, my obvious status as outsider – not just to Hindutva, but to Kerala, where I conducted my fieldwork – was compounded by the fact of my actually being a native of Kerala. (Note however that non-resident Hindus are frequently known to be Hindutva sympathisers). Fieldwork in Delhi was no less complicated: although Delhi is a more cosmopolitan space, and therefore in many ways more accommodating of ‘outsiders’, there was and still is, explicit hostility to ‘outsiders’ to the faith of Hindu nationalism. In my interactions with my respondents in both places – especially with members or sympathisers of Hindutva – I was therefore frequently called upon to declare my own convictions – religious and political, and on several occasions asked for financial contributions. Being male, my questioning of issues that should have been taken for granted or tacitly understood, raised surprise if not irritation and suspicion – questions of male parental responsibilities, of the gendering of

social and public spaces, of the intensity of women's participation in the movement, for instance, among others. Finally, the one issue that was discussed with extreme reluctance, usually only to deny or underplay it in various ways, was violence, whether communal or otherwise.

In negotiating these problems, my options were to either profess curiosity in order to gain access; or lay my cards on the table and engage in argument and debate. I eventually settled on a mixture of the last two. On issues of violence I was perforce pushed into silence. However, the comparisons of the fieldwork in Kerala and Delhi suggests that there is an increasing sense of anxiety among the members of minority communities, not so much because of local Hindutva activity, as the fact that incidents of violence against minorities have only been increasing. But what was most striking was that there was very little articulation of any sense of unreasonableness or inappropriateness, leave alone injustice, in the Christian perception of the Hindutva demand that Hindu majoritarian India should be a Hindu country. This, for me, was the sharpest indication of the general prevalence of Brahmanical masculine hegemony, the rules of which govern the tensions and violences between the various internal hegemonic formations.

It must be noted finally, that this understanding of the prevalence of Brahmanical masculine hegemony would probably not have been possible without undertaking the fieldwork that I did. If this project eventually evolved almost entirely into a theoretical-historical study, the terms and parameters of its theoretical and historical concerns were nevertheless set by the experience of fieldwork. For instance, on the issue of violence, it became clear that, even as it was a prevalent phenomenon, there was equally a tacit and insistent silence around it. Fieldwork indicated the phenomenon: but understanding and analysing it required a different, more inferential, deductive approach that demanded that an initial conceptual and analytical frame be constructed to accommodate it, precisely because of the silence around it. In both fieldwork locations it was clear that the specific phenomenon (violence in this instance) was invariably an inextricable and pervasive component of larger, more general and interlinked phenomena (gender construction, communalism, nationalism), but without necessarily being revealed as such, and without revealing the complex ways in which the more general phenomena weave together to effect the specific one. This project thus became concerned with tracing the dynamic of this weaving, as the frame within which to locate and un-

derstand its specific effects. Of necessity then, it was guided as much by those effects, as they emerged in fieldwork, as by the lack of sufficiently explanatory theoretical frames and historical perspectives on them.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter I: Introduction

This (the current chapter) will introduce the basic thematic and problematics of Hindu nationalism, and the significance of the analysis of masculinity, for the understanding of this phenomenon.

Chapter II: Theorising Masculinity & Nationalism

This chapter engages with existing literature on theories of patriarchy, gender and masculinity, and examines the relations between masculinity and nationalism. Gramsci's theory of hegemony is drawn upon as the most inclusive theoretical paradigm for such an analysis. I will attempt to construct a theoretical argument for masculine hegemony, as a viable conceptual tool for political analysis. This chapter will be the analytical base of the discussions undertaken in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter III: The Emergence of the Hindu Right - I

This chapter will examine the evolution of the term Hindu historically, from roughly the beginning of the previous millennium to the 19th century. It will examine its relations to formations of identity along (gendered) religious and ethnic lines, and its gradual concretisation into a term denoting a national community. The intention is to address the historicity of Hindu nationalism's claims to being a historically unified community and nation.

Chapter IV: The Emergence of the Hindu Right - II

This chapter will discuss the period from the nineteenth century to the moment of Independence. It will attempt to trace the relations between emergent Hindu nationalism and the mainstream nationalism of the Independence movement, within the gender framework of Brahmanical patriarchy. It will focus specifically on the ways in which the colonial encounter reworked patriarchal formations as well as the masculinities they generated, and on how this has shaped the subsequent directions of nationalism. It will thus lay the ground for an exposition of religious nationalism as having its roots in a much larger public base than can be un-

derstood through its institutional manifestations. This will then be explored and elaborated in the next chapters.

Chapter V: From Independence to the Present

This chapter will explore the themes of masculinity, patriarchy and nationalism in relation to the issue of ‘development’. It will explore the ways in which transformations in caste patriarchies and their political consequences, have demanded adjustments in Brahmanical patriarchy that have had a profound impact on the shaping of contemporary Hindu nationalism, and its dramatic rise in the last two decades.

Chapter VI: The Present

Framed by the discussions of the previous chapters, this chapter will work out the relations that obtain between the discussions of Ch. 2 and Chs. 4 & 5. It will undertake to examine the relations that obtain between local forms of patriarchy, global processes and their effects on these forms, and the articulation of these two within the discourses of Hindu nationalism. It will focus in particular on the relations between Hindu nationalism, Islam, Christianity and the women’s movement in India, as these have played out in contemporary India.

Chapter VII: Conclusion: An ‘Indian’ World-View?

In this last chapter, I will review the findings of the preceding chapters, reflecting simultaneously on my positions in the debate - as male, upper-caste, Hindu - and their possible effects on the nature of my findings and arguments; as well as on my prospective understanding of the future of Indian secularism.

Notes

¹ See for instance, the BJP leader LK Advani’s statement, in elaborating on what is meant by ‘Hindutva’: ‘If a common, unifying sense of “Americanness” can be forged in 400 years, certainly there is a case for insisting that a far more robust and intrinsically more humanistic sense of “Indianness” has unified India’s diverse religious, ethnic, linguistic and caste groups for thousands of years.’ (<http://www.lkadvani.in/eng/content/view/378/344/>, accessed 26 June 2007)

² However, see also the Supreme Court judgment on this matter on 11 December 1995, discussed by Noorani (1995). The judgment essentially upheld the view that ‘Hindutva’ was not a religious concept but a cultural one and could therefore legitimately be used as the basis for election campaigns. It is significant also for

indexing the extent and spread of the ideologies of Hindu nationalism among the elite of the country.

³ See Smith (1998) and Jaffrelot (2003) for useful reviews of this literature.

⁴ A term used by Rajni Kothari (2004, p. 2698)

⁵ For a useful discussion of how this concept figures in Hindu nationalist discourses, see Tamminen (1996).

⁶ This was a highly controversial case of the mass conversion of Hindu lower castes – from the Pillar community – to Islam, in protest against the social and economic discriminations they suffered at the hands of upper castes. See Mumtaz Ali Khan (1985) for a detailed analysis of this controversy.

⁷ Unless one were to acknowledge adoptions or rejections of Shaivism or Vaishnavism, by other sects and cults, as similar cases of conversion.

⁸ It is not possible (for reasons of space and scope) or necessary (for reasons noted below) to engage with the extensive theoretical debates around discourse theory and its methodology, discourse analysis. (For fairly detailed discussions of the former, see Torfing (1995); for the latter, see de Beaugrande (2006)). In many senses, this ongoing debate can be boiled down to that oldest of philosophical questions, ‘Which is more true, Reality or the perception of Reality?’ My concern here is strictly confined to establishing the theoretical basis and analytical methods that I have employed in the course of this research; to this extent, I have engaged with the debate only to indicate my own methodological approach.

2

Towards a Theory of Masculine Hegemony

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will attempt to engage with existing literature on theories of patriarchy, on the one hand, and with those of gender and masculinity, on the other. With regard to the first part, the intention is not to review the voluminous debate around the term, but to identify certain theoretical and ideological positions that have emerged with respect to it, in order to make possible a critical reclamation of the term. I will attempt to show how Gramsci's theory of hegemony can be drawn upon as the most inclusive theoretical paradigm for such an analysis. In other words, I will examine three concepts - hegemony, patriarchy, masculinity - and attempt to construct a theoretical argument for masculine hegemony, as a viable conceptual tool for the political analyses that will be undertaken in the latter parts of this thesis. The latter half of the chapter will be devoted to then examining the theoretical demands of employing and deploying these terms analytically in the study of Hindu nationalism.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are: to

1. Review certain dominant understandings of the term patriarchy, and the debates around them.
2. Elaborate and examine the notion of masculinity as it has developed in masculinity studies, and thereby outline and analyse the problems with the existing conceptions of gender in most masculinity studies.
3. Explore the theoretical and conceptual requirements for a gender analysis of political phenomena like Hindu nationalism.

4. Outline a theory of patriarchy as masculine hegemony, as the most viable conceptual frame within which to undertake an examination of Hindutva masculinities.

2.3 Preliminary Propositions on 'Patriarchy'

I will begin with a set of propositions on the term 'patriarchy' that will serve as the theoretical framework within which this chapter is articulated, and that it is attempting to enunciate. These propositions will be elaborated and substantiated in the course of the chapter:

Patriarchy¹ is a characteristic of most historically dominant forms of social organisation. It is now well accepted that there is no one singular 'Patriarchy', as descriptive of a (universal or even common) form of social organisation, but 'patriarchies' – historically and geographically diverse, varying economically and often with blatantly contradictory characteristics – leading to the charge that the term itself is not analytically useful.² Nevertheless, it is both possible and necessary to maintain the usefulness of the term as indicative of a discernibly specific characteristic of the societies that it is applied to, however diverse they may be. For now, I propose that this characteristic may be located in (among other things) the given society's (gendered) relation to violence – in its practices and their meanings, its roles and utilities in delineating the organisational forms of that society, its ethical and legal status, in the mythologies that engender and are engendered by it. Inevitably then, this characteristic is directly engaged with the production and perpetuation of the specific gender-forms of the given society – with its practices and prescriptions of masculinity and femininity. I argue therefore that patriarchy is an essential analytical tool for grasping the operations, as well as the means of sustenance and reproduction, of the structures and dynamics of dominance and the distribution of power; specifically for our purposes, its analytical potential needs to be sharpened by examining the processes by which it comes to legitimise and institute practices of violence. In other words, it is necessary to explore the function of violence within patriarchal systems, in the maintenance and reproduction of those systems, as well as in their historical transformations and adaptations. If patriarchies have had a near universal dominance, historically, it is because, as this chapter will try to show, violence is an inherent, definitive and structural component of all patriarchies.

Having stated this, and without rehearsing the voluminous and extensive debates on the meanings and utilities of this term, it is possible to posit that using it is both unavoidable and problematic for any feminist gender analyses – perhaps problematic in fact, because it is unavoidable. One of the discomforts with patriarchy owes to the unqualified use of it as a portmanteau term, which, as one argument goes (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989), blunted its analytical edge. On the one hand it appeared to be too generally applied, and on the other, impossible to apply too specifically to any given social situation or formation without dissipating in meaning. There was then a sense in which, like ‘capitalism’, patriarchy appeared to exceed any functionally applicable definition, and yet – like ‘pornography’, in Potter Stewart’s famous pronouncement – can prompt the observation, ‘I know it when I see it’.³ However, the critical movement in feminist thinking away from a ‘classical’ understanding of patriarchy toward one that demonstrably accommodated the specificity of context and location conceptually (Kandiyoti 1997, Sangari and Vaid 1993; Gandhi and Shah 1993; Moghadam 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997) substantially restored the analytic uses of the concept. Nevertheless, precisely because of this swing towards emphasising specificity of context and location, the term began to be considered meaningful only in association with specific instances; it therefore remains a term that is more often used descriptively than analytically.

The contention here is that the term in fact continues to have significant analytical and political utility. Its fundamental utility lies precisely in its generic quality, which permits its persistent identifiability in otherwise dramatically contrasting and diverse cultures and situations. It is of course *politically* vital to cognise this generic quality – which I will elaborate below – because it is only by recognising patriarchy as an extensive and generic system of oppression and exploitation that effective strategies to challenge and dismantle it may be organised: like with all systems of oppression and exploitation, patriarchy inhabits and is bolstered by a host of systems, structures and institutions, accounting for say, the synchronicity between imperial, patriarchal and caste agendas or the gender regimes of labour. Any successful challenging and resisting of even specific instances of it needs to be conceptualised and deployed at the level of systems and structures which, especially in the age of globalisation, have transnational linkages and interests. Retaining patriarchy as a concept facilitates a systemic understanding of gender oppression and en-

courages the understanding that dismantling it would require a large-scale, historicised and sustained resistance at several levels, and across institutions, rather than localised action alone. The locality being referred here is more than geographical; it is systemic and structural, explaining why an analysis and redress of patriarchies in India for instance, would involve looking at (among other things) caste, property relations, labour relations, communalisation and coloniality as well. The centrality of any conceptual frame to the politics of action, to praxis, cannot be emphasised enough not least because it records the close relation that obtains between the theoretical and the political, which are mutually foundational. Just as the theoretical must be grounded in, extrapolated from, built on and must directly address the multiple and diverse political forces and contexts that obtain in any given situation, political action is sharper and more focused when its theoretical and analytical basis is incontestably explicit and clear. Then, in order to activate ‘patriarchy’ and ‘patriarchal’ as substantive terms possessing more than just polemical value, it becomes imperative to theoretically explore and elaborate on what I have referred to above as its generic quality, and what I noted in the introductory propositions as the location of this quality – in any given society’s relation to violence.

In what follows, I will enter into such a theoretical exploration and elaboration by actually digressing a little, into a field of gender research that has contributed substantially to the dilution of the usefulness of the term ‘patriarchy’: the field of ‘masculinity studies’. By doing so, I hope to, on the one hand, locate and elaborate on some of the theoretical and political consequences of abandoning the concept of patriarchy (whether in gender studies or otherwise), and on the other, to elaborate on the intricate and intimate relations that obtain between the concepts of patriarchy and masculinity – to suggest, in other words, that to understand patriarchy (and its relations to violence) it is also imperative to explore and analyse the ways in which ‘masculinity’ is conceived.

2.4 On Masculinity Studies

I will begin this by examining an aspect of masculinity studies that remains relatively taken for granted and unexamined: that masculinity studies is about the study of masculinity (or the plural, masculinities).⁴ At first glance it seems too obvious a question to raise for scrutiny: masculinity

studies must be about masculinity – which is why in the first instance (in a tautological circle) it is referred to as masculinity studies. But the seeming silliness of such speculation diminishes substantially if we ask why it is that there is no corresponding field of femininity studies. While feminisms of various persuasions have been around for a while, and women's studies too, there is as yet no burgeoning field of scholarship called 'femininity studies'. To infer from this that femininity does not either exist or warrant study would be logically possible (and historically much practised even without that inference) but somewhat blind to political and empirical realities. The argument that the feminisms and women's studies fields sufficiently address the question of femininities, while more tenable, then refocuses our attention on the terminological distinction between 'feminisms', 'women's studies' and 'masculinity studies'.

In the case of the first two a difference in agenda is explicit in the labels themselves. Given some flexibility the following generalizations may be offered about them: feminism (of whatever kind), like most isms, is at once a philosophical, ideological and political program, and in association with women's studies, explicitly focuses on the condition and status of women in a dominantly patriarchal⁵ world, and is concerned with critique, correction, amelioration and transformation. While the field of women's studies may be understood to confine itself to the more academic dimensions of feminist concerns, like most feminisms it is concerned with women's roles, economic social and political status, identities, subjectivities, sexualities, gendering, representations and through these with (re)defining women as a political as well as epistemological constituency. If this has increasingly also involved the analyses of masculinities and male sexualities – has expanded to include a concern with and for marginalized sexual identities, and the oppression of weaker men as well within patriarchal systems – it is not at the expense of the primary commitment to the elimination of women's oppression. Understanding patriarchy to extend across and inhabit both genders, most feminist schools today undertake the study of masculinities and men within the continuing larger programme of disbanding patriarchy. Different strands of feminism have at different times emphasised different aspects of social injustice and their causes, but invariably with the focus on how they impact on women in particular. In the study of patriarchies, their constitution and their working for instance, particularly after the intervention of third world scholarship, issues of race, caste and ethnicity and their

interventions into gender and sexuality have become intrinsic to theorising gender (masculinity and femininity) and sexuality if only in the self-reflexivity it demanded of the (white male) speaking subject.

‘Masculinity studies’ however displays neither the philosophico-political tags nor the inclusiveness of feminism and women’s studies. It cannot term itself ‘masculinism’ in a literal counterpart to feminism, for the heavy association of masculinity with privilege and power would render such a term ideologically at least suspect if not debilitating (in an implicit acknowledgement of feminism). It must be noted here that the early years of masculinity studies in the 1980s in the United States (resulting from the Men’s Liberation movement of the 1970s) did see an attempt to register it as a field called ‘the new men’s studies’ – presumably as a male answer to the field of ‘women’s studies’ – under the aegis of Harry Brod (Brod ed. 1987).⁶ It was immediately controversial, under attack as being essentially bourgeois, self-pitying and digressive from the more serious, even arguably more legitimate concerns of women’s studies. Subsequent attempts to carve out a sphere of men’s studies carefully avoided the tag and the preoccupations of this early navel-gazing narcissism, opting instead for a gender-based approach, with wider scope and the evident decision to address the processes of gendering – of the making of men’s masculinity, rather than of male subjects themselves. Hence the more distanced term ‘masculinity studies’, alluding to an apparent disembodiment from the ideological weight of masculinism, through a focus on its displayed attributes, i.e. on masculinity.

But the response of distancing itself is suggestive of the very power and freedom to do so. A ‘femininity studies’ would be inconceivable not because of the absence or irrelevance of femininity to the gendering of women, or to the analyses of women’s social conditions, but because of the inconceivability in feminism and women’s studies of a separation (between femininity, femaleness and women) of the kind that is both possible as well as instituted (between masculinity, maleness and men) in masculinity studies. While obviously the distinction between the categories “femininity” and “female” is maintained, femininity is not reified in feminism or in women’s studies as masculinity is in masculinity (or men’s) studies. This is evident in the treatment of masculinity as a property (or set of properties) that is (or are) worthy of analyses in itself/themselves. (Property here must be understood not just in a ‘neutral scientific’ sense as attribute, but in a more subjective and compromised

sense, as that which is acquired or owned.) Such reification is one symptom of a somewhat embarrassing alignment that much masculinity studies perforce engages with but also wishes to wish away. In short, there is a discursive and practical alignment of masculinity with power that is so pervasive that it extends to and informs even the attempts to disavow that power evident in the apparently neutralising appellation ‘masculinity studies’.

There are at least two immediate consequences to such an attempted neutralisation: one, by implying that the gendering of men is about the construction of masculinities, a fundamental feminist insight is elided – that gendering is not about attributes or properties but is a *process*, and is about the inextricable entanglement of femininity *with* masculinity in that process. The second and further consequence is that, feminist concerns with the structural and organisational processes by which women in general are systemically placed, subjugated, exploited, co-opted and/or violated in patriarchal systems then give way in much of masculinity studies to the examination of the culturally defined attributes of men and practices of maleness, and of the categories and kinds of masculinity. While the analyses of power-relations may enter such explorations, rarely do these extend to the examination (for instance) of concepts of femininity and their role and influence in the shaping of masculinity and patriarchy or of the political, social and economic relations (in a given context) that generate and privilege certain masculinities (or certain attributes of masculinity) over others. It is particularly telling of the uneasy relation of masculinity studies to questions of power that violence, for instance, gets studied almost as a disembodied cultural artefact that somehow attaches to specific moments and events, rather than as systemic, embodied and most importantly, inherent to the structures of patriarchy – as I hope to show.

It is worth looking illustratively at one of the more nuanced definitions of masculinity to have emerged from masculinity studies. RW Connell’s attempt to define masculinity as ‘a configuration of practice around the position of men in the structure of gender relations’ (Connell, 1996: 2), while seeking to retain structural factors in the analysis, nevertheless typically returns to a focus on men as definitive of masculinity. The intent is avowedly to retain ‘the way in which reproductive capacities and sexual differences of human bodies are drawn into social practice’ (Connell, 1996: 3) – i.e. to remember that masculinity has to do with embod-

ied agents, and not abstract disembodied qualities – and the point is well taken. But there is a twofold danger in this: the first is that the focus on men will occlude the presence of women and femininities in the shaping of masculinities, as well as confine the meanings of masculinity to men. Such a sex-based biological criterion for the definition of masculinity can lead to a debilitatingly limited understanding of it as primarily a male concern. The tendency to narcissism then inevitably remains strong. Consequently it is not just distorted structural critiques that are resulted in masculinity studies, but distortions in the understanding of gender itself, producing a rather lopsided emphasis in this field. Connell is himself aware of this when he narrates the transformation of the men's movement of the seventies into the bourgeois, right-wing 'masculinity therapy' politics of the eighties and later.⁷

Michael Flood as late as in 1998 was to note that

Much of the men's movement has had an overriding emphasis on personal growth and healing. It has had an important therapeutic emphasis, while other movements focus—either instead (green, labour), or as well (women's, gay and lesbian)—on social change. I say "has had" because I think that this is shifting, as more and more men realise that personal growth and the reconstruction of individual masculinities are useless without an accompanying shift in the social relations, institutions and ideologies which support or marginalise different ways of being men. Additionally, one wing of the men's movement is engaged in increasingly politicised and often anti-feminist campaigns on such issues as family law and domestic violence. Nevertheless, many participants are politically inexperienced and for many social change is not an important focus. (Flood, 1998: 3)

Despite Flood's suggestion that more men are increasingly thinking in terms of social, institutional, and ideological change, the points to note here are the 'anti-feminist' tendency of at least some strains of the politicising of men's issues,⁸ as well as his closing remark: that 'for many social change is not an important focus'.

The second and related danger is that masculinity studies consequently is frequently dominated by very subjective orientations – how are men constructed, how does one understand men understanding masculinity, how does one understand the male psyche, its productivity and reproductivity, its sexuality, its relations to violence, etc. Beynon for instance identifies an analytical frame entailing a threefold approach: formal or

representational, experiential, and performative (Beynon 2002: 10-16), and in each instance focuses on men as the primary agents determining and being determined by the significations and practices of masculinity. The deployment of the term 'masculinity' in much masculinity studies thus basically disguises a fundamental preoccupation with the male subject, specifically, and if not in isolation, then as the subject of priority. Masculinity studies remains willy-nilly rooted in the subjective preoccupations of the earlier Men's Movement. The point is reinforced by observing that most scholarship in masculinity studies (at least in the Anglo-American context) was and remains male generated. It remains largely a dialogue of men with men, about men.

A typical statement from some of the more established thinkers in masculinity studies will bear out some of the implications of its emphasis on men.

The emphasis on the pressure that masculinity imposes on men to perform and conform to specific masculine roles (emotional and psychological as well as political and social) has highlighted the costs to men of current gender arrangements. (Greig, Kimmel and Lang, 2000: 8)

The phrases 'pressure...to perform and conform' and 'costs to men' indicate a tendency to represent men as victims 'too'. While men are no doubt also victimised under patriarchy in several ways the cause of oppression here is presented as the pressure of modes of masculinity, rather than the uneven structural distribution of power and resources that place certain men at a disadvantage in relation to other men *and* women more privileged in that patriarchal order. Further, there is an implicit equation of the kinds and quality of victim-hood for men and women under patriarchy that is inappropriate at the very least, if not outrightly absurd. The implicit and often explicit argument that follows is for changes at the level of the *kind* of masculinity to adopt in relation to that order, rather than changes in the order itself. To acknowledge that would be to acknowledge a systemic transformation that would entail involving women and femininity – as partner-subjects and -objects of analysis and action – and consequently an acknowledgement of long-held feminist positions and arguments on patriarchy. The evidence available does not suggest that masculinity studies, by and large, is as yet willing to do that.

Yet, evidently, masculinity studies implicitly and explicitly drew and continues to draw on and respond to feminist thought and practice

(Beynon 2002: 3). One easily evident consequence of the focus on masculinity has been the proliferation of masculinities, almost as masculine counterparts to the multiplicity of feminisms: straight, gay, hegemonic, subjugated, camp, hybridized, marginalized, co-opted, black, coloured, post-colonial, Hindu (or Islamic or Christian or Jewish) etc.⁹ While some of these are avowedly programmatic (gay, black, post-colonial) and in that sense corresponding to the ideological diversities in feminism, most remain labels descriptive of specific attributes or traits. The weakness of such multiplicity as a theoretical and political end in itself is best understood through noting the unviability of a hypothetical feminine ‘converse’: the deep-structural associations of femininity with disempowerment and dependency in patriarchal social formations pre-empt any attempt to generate multiple femininities (analogically to the multiplicity of masculinities) as conceptual and analytical figures denoting subject positions, political affiliations, or personal and communal locations and practices. Any such attempt would be compromised by this latent value of the term, referring all femininities to either an implicitly contrasted and empowered masculinity or to individual women denoted thus specifically and only because they are women. While terms like ‘butch femininity’, ‘black femininity’ or ‘brahminical femininity’ may well invoke certain subject positions and/or locations, they offer little by way of analytical input into our understandings of these. Illustratively, ‘brahminical femininity’ says little about its relation to an implicit ‘brahminical masculinity’, to non-brahminical masculinities and femininities, to ethnic (in this instance; racial in other cases), class or regional variations within that femininity – and so on. Without such analytical input the crucial point remains that whatever the term may suggest, it remains identified with a degree of disempowerment and/or dependency and/or an essentialized sex-based gender identity.

Obviously, the point being made here is the extension and applicability of this critique to the usages of ‘masculinity’. It is not that ‘masculinity’ or ‘masculinities’ are completely unproductive analytical terms but that to become fully so, they should be understood in relation firstly to notions of femininity; and secondly to a larger set of structural, institutional and economic factors and forces that allocate masculinities and femininities along scales of distribution of power and agency. As Marj Kibby notes ‘[t]he study of masculinity inevitably leads us back to issues of femininity and sexual orientations and the links between gender, and

race, class and national identity, to the construction of individual subjectivities.’ (Kibby, n.d.) The further point of focussing on femininity here is to demonstrate and emphasise the mutuality of the terms, not as a tightly bound binary opposition but as always invocative of each other. The blindness to this in masculinity studies develops out of the uni-focal gaze on male subjects that is classically patriarchal, precisely because of the link between masculinity and power in patriarchal societies – which today pretty much means all societies and cultures – however patriarchy may vary in its forms and institutions. When control of much public and private space is largely in the hands of men, as in all patriarchal societies, how that control is operationalised, shared, wrested, lost, may come to define the qualities of the men in control and their masculinity. This tends to suggest a possible dissociation from femininity and a definitively sufficient association of masculinity with power – i.e., that we may understand masculinity sufficiently through understanding its relations to power. This reveals another dimension of masculinity studies, viz., that its end seems very often to be less the exposure and explication of patriarchal gender systems in their comprehensiveness and more the ways in which specifically men relate to power *as men*. Which is why ‘masculinity’ has almost come to replace patriarchy as an analytical category in masculinity studies, obscuring the ways in which women and femininity are fundamental to the sustenance of any patriarchy, in their relations to men and masculinity. If the end of masculinity studies is a transformative gender politics then this is not just a lopsided means to achieve it but for strong theoretical reasons *unable* to achieve it – unable to be more than a dialogue of men with men about men and their relations to power.

Sources of Masculine Trouble

This is partly a consequence of the specific trajectory of the development of masculinity studies out of anthropology, feminism and gay and lesbian scholarship. Its origins lie in the confluence of anthropological ‘discoveries’ of ‘other’ constructions of gender, feminist insights into the operations of gender relations, and the political emergence of gay and lesbian work on the formation of sexual identities. Much work in masculinity studies was and remains, again, ethnographic (see for instance Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994), drawing on the tools of ethnography and the conceptual apparatuses offered by feminism to gaze anew at conceptions and practices of masculinity. Anthropology exposed variances in social

practices deriving from variance in gender systems, while feminism and women's studies (of whatever persuasion) argued for the focus on sex and gender systems in the first place, and identified the gendered power-relations at work in the constructions of knowledges, cultures, societies and subjectivities. Equally significant was the contribution to the growth of masculinity studies from the search for alternative theoretical modes for understanding gay sexualities and masculinities in gay and lesbian studies. By redrawing the (heterosexual) norms of appearance, conduct, and terms of (especially sexual) relations, and critically re-examining and interrogating the bases of their normativity, gay and lesbian cultural criticism generated new analytical frames – often derived again from anthropology and feminism but importantly also from psychoanalysis – to locate and understand gender relations in general, and masculinities in particular. Hence the inevitable theoretical and conceptual proliferation of masculinities.

But the focus on masculinities is also substantially a consequence of another set of historical forces, viz. colonial and imperial gender discourses, and post- and neo-colonial responses to them. It is the gendered political gaze of nationalism and the nationalist that has engendered for instance both anti-colonial Indian nationalism and the more recent Hindu nationalism as well as their constructions of 'national' masculinities and femininities. C Enloe (1989: 44) notes that "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope".¹⁰ That is, attention to masculinity and masculinities has originated in postcolonial and developing-world contexts outside of the disciplinary fields of anthropology and feminism, *within* the political discourse of the nation and the state (see specially Nandy 1983 and Chatterjee 1986). The discourses around masculinity and the nation have taken essentially two forms: colonial and anti-colonial perceptions of the relations between coloniser and colonised as gendered (colonial power = masculine, colonised disempowered = feminised), with the discourses of the colonised replete with allusions to a humiliated masculinity and the parallel discourses of the coloniser disparagingly alluding to colonised men as feminised (M Sinha 1995); and more contemporary relays of and reflections on the explicability, justifiability, consequences and/or rectifiability of such gendered discourses (the gender concerns of the Hindu RSS, or the Muslim Taliban, exemplify this well). The latter by and large remain concerned with the macro-political dimensions of the issue, in

terms of the historically gendered identity of the nation as influencing and affecting its postcolonial politics, and less with the (here more pertinent) questions of its impact on specific processes of gendering.

Two directions for analysis of this distinct if not entirely separate evolution of masculinity discourses – importantly, not coinciding with the two kinds of postcolonial discourses but applicable to both – are immediately obvious: one, what is the aetiology of this phenomenon, what are its discursive and derivative coordinates (its frames of reference and allusion), how do issues of gender surface in it to explicitly trope macro-political issues, what are the historical pressures that effect such a troping? And two, what are the effects, consequences and impacts of these discourses of masculinity on the actual, everyday formations and constructions of gender¹¹ at a micro level? How do they relate to conceptions of gender that originate in a different history, the history of western modernity and feminist thought and struggle, debates that form part of the process of modernising the postcolonial nation? Most pertinently, in what ways do the understandings of masculinity that emerge in these discourses relate to the notions of masculinity that are increasingly proliferating in academic men's studies? Are they analysable in terms of these other masculinities – i.e. is masculinity studies sufficiently equipped to handle these postcolonial (to put it broadly) notions of masculinity and femininity? What are the theoretical, analytical and empirical gaps that are made visible in the analysis of masculinity with the introduction of these discourses and their terms of reference, and what discursive armature is required to fill the gaps, if any?

While there is now an emerging body of work in masculinity studies that deals with these aspects, firstly it remains rather thin and secondly, it hardly if ever acknowledges that the production of femininities and masculinities – i.e., of gender – in these contexts might be of a different order, arising out of different historical imperatives, and requiring qualitatively different analytical means and tools; it therefore largely remains within the theoretical frames set by conventional masculinity studies. Perhaps most tellingly, much of this work is located in the field of development studies as part of the larger debate over gender and development or GAD (see for instance Greig, Kimmel and Lang, 2000). The historical coincidence of an efflorescence in masculinity studies with the sudden attention that (the mainly Euro-American) development agencies began to pay to men and masculinity in developing societies, is itself an issue

worthy of study. But for now, it does suggest the urgent need to contextually re-examine both the bases of such attention and the terms on which it plays out. Which is why it is worth stating the obvious here: the stakes in the battle against patriarchies in developing societies, for both men and women but especially for women, are too high to permit laxity.

2.5 Examining Patriarchy and Masculinities

From the above it is clear that the analysis of masculinity, especially in contexts outside the metropolitan locations of the origins of the field, demands that the term itself firstly be released from singular attention and studied in combination with (the production of) femininity; and secondly that it should be opened to a vastly more complex analytical process than the ones outlined above, by locating it in its historical and social contexts of generation and usage. It is also important not to lose the powerful insights of feminist scholarship in the course of attempting to establish masculinity studies as a separate field. One such insight is that neither patriarchy nor masculinity is as self-evident or homogeneous as they may appear to be. Understanding gender-constructions and the placement of women in them therefore requires understanding the operations of masculinity as much as of feminine subjectivity. But conversely then, understanding masculinity and men then demands understanding the operations of and on femininity. It may seem self-evident that masculinities need to be studied because of an apparently equally obvious relation between men and power. The obviousness of the need to study masculinity and of the relation to power should not however blind us to the need for a relational rather than a unifocal analysis. The orientation of masculinity studies should instead be towards the analysis of the *structures of patriarchy* that generate masculinities of different kinds and orders. Such an analysis inevitably must take into account the generation of femininities (and other categories of gendered identities) as well.

The point is important enough to bear some elaboration in the following broad propositions. Firstly, men's relations to power and women's relations to disempowerment, while nowhere absolute or unqualified, remains definitive of masculinities and femininities in patriarchal societies. Secondly, therefore, masculinity and femininity are substantially defined, understood and practised as exclusive identities based on the experience of gendered power or disempowerment in such societies. By

this we mean that there are and will be forms of masculinity and femininity that are effected by belonging to communities of men and communities of women respectively – forms that are the consequence (and at least one basis) of intra-sex relations, forms based in other words on the principles of homosociality prevalent in the (given) community. This does not preclude the theoretical and empirical possibility of the incessantly emergent definitions of masculinity and femininity in such communities being differentiated along lines of physique, sexuality, caste, class, race, ethnicity, religion, region, etc. Rather, it focuses on the ways in which masculinity and femininity, seeking to be stabilised as internalised and practised identities, negotiate these other variables. Thirdly, there is nevertheless a seepage of definitions between such sex-based (albeit nebulous) communities resulting in a further process of intra-sex gendering, whereby feminised masculinities and masculinised femininities may and do result. Consequently, masculinity and femininity while substantially moulded by the experience of being male or female in specific communities of men and women respectively, are not exclusively defined thus, and are as substantially a result of the relay and deployment of their significations between and across communities. That is, they are defined as much by their mutuality as by their separateness. Fourthly, masculinity and femininity are further defined by the terms in which sexual, social and productive and reproductive relations are organised in society.¹² So apart from their being defined and understood in their separateness and in their mutuality, masculinity and femininity are situated terms with functional values and meanings, within a larger economy of practices that are organised along gender ideology lines – practices that would broadly constitute the specific form that patriarchy takes in that society. One could think of such practices – social, sexual, productive, reproductive – as constituting the vehicles in the traffic of functions, values and meanings of gender within a given society.

If these propositions are granted it then becomes important not to see masculinity and femininity as subjective phenomena constructed *sui generis* by individuals or solely in the psychosocial factories of subjectivity (or ideology in Althusser's institutional terms) that are nuclear families, schools, clubs and groups, but as operating in very extensive and ramifying realms. Specifically for us, masculinity as an attribute of identity opens a line of analysis into forms of identity politics; masculinity as a set of practices opens another into the politics of social practices. But al-

ready here it is no longer about masculinity alone but about its links to and relations with other social, political and economic formations, structures and systems which are also fundamental to the forms of identity politics noted above. I.e., it is important to see masculinity as not just an attribute (or a set of attributes) possessed by individuals (or a nation or community), but as part of a set of terms that define social and economic relations, along with femininity, class, caste, race, etc. and that constitute a terrain of ceaseless political negotiation and contestation. Once we acknowledge – as with the above propositions – that gender is an embedded network of values and practices and not just a taxonomical catalogue of kinds of masculinity and femininity, we can identify the ways in which it enters the fields of macro-politics. Unlike class, race and to a lesser extent caste, these gender terms do not necessarily imply or invoke a specific objective grouping beyond the vague portmanteau categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’. That they are nevertheless, in identity politics, frequently forged into such an implication or invocation – alluding to or being claimed by communities or societies – is an indication of the urgent need to unravel the ways in which the languages and practices of gendered intimacy can become vehicles for, if not actively mobilised by, sectarian, exclusive and insular politics that consequently and inevitably monitor and determine these languages and practices.

Because masculinity and femininity as terms with extensive social connotations are nevertheless bound intimately to the sexed body,¹³ and to the related terms of pleasure and reproduction, they have a subjective dimension that may be understood essentially as the personal articulation of the social and therefore of the political too. They not only cut across lines of caste, class, race, etc. but constitute the terms on which these are internalised by the subject, and often reorganised and replayed in the world – establishing a circulation between private and public, personal and political, domestic and worldly. The investment in this circulation is important since it brings the values and terms of interaction of the private back into the public, and vice versa, each thus mutually reinforcing the gendered meanings and interpretations of the other. Indeed, it is now sufficiently established by feminist critics (See for instance the work of Linda Nicholson 1992, Cynthia Cockburn 1992, Elisabeth Fox-Genovese 1991) that these divides are themselves products of the process of gendering, rather than absolute objective realities that are definitive of gender and gender roles. We noted earlier that in patriarchal soci-

eties, negotiations over the control of these realms come to define specifically the relations of masculinity to power, while remarking on the insufficiency of this to a comprehensive understanding of masculinity. We now see that this way of defining masculinity through its relations to power must be supplemented by the examination of other kinds of relations, including but not only its relations to femininity – which is what we meant by the embedded networks of gender values and meanings. In contexts of high-intensity identity politics and conflicts, it is then obvious that the process of gendering – the creation and definitions of masculinity and femininity – will necessarily be moulded by other factors determining those politics and political conflicts, as much as they supply their terms of functioning. When, as in the case of Hindutva, gender values and meanings have roots in the organisation and practices of patriarchy, as much as in a historical trajectory that is bound to the history of colonialism and imperialism, it becomes evident that the existing and conventional modes of analysis of masculinity and femininity would be both insufficient and even possibly misdirected, and demand a more comprehensive framework.

To see gender like this is to see how it works in a moment in history. It is to see that the analysis of masculinity is not to be confined to the analysis of masculinities as formal cultural artefacts of conduct and subjectivity but opened out to the examination of masculinity as embedded in and affected by a multiplicity of historical forces and limits. In the specific context of my arguments, it is to see how masculinity works, is worked out and is working itself out, through analysing the multiple strands of forces underlying the emergence and operations of Hindutva in the current historical moment. I will now dwell briefly on a specific concept within masculinity studies – the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ – that has gained much popularity in recent times, not least because of a theoretical illusion it practices, by employing the idea of hegemony, of linking masculinity to larger social, economic and political processes. The significance of this for our understanding of patriarchy will emerge when I re-deploy the concept of hegemony to expand on patriarchy as ‘masculine hegemony’.

2.6 Hegemonic Masculinity and Masculine Hegemony

'Hegemonic masculinity' was a term initially introduced by Tim Carrigan, R. W. Connell and John Lee, in their now classic 'Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity' (1985), and subsequently popularised by different writers on the issue of masculinity(-ies). 'Hegemonic masculinity' is less an uncomfortable marriage of two different concepts - 'hegemony' and 'masculinity' - than an attempt to signify precisely those crystallisations of the meanings of masculinity that gain authoritative and definitive power within a given society. Yet, Carrigan, et al caution us:

Hegemonic masculinity is far more complex than the accounts of essences... would suggest.... It is, rather, a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance. (1985:592)

In a fairly sophisticated and yet critical development of this idea, Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne further qualify this by noting that

various hegemonic models can coexist. Rarely, if ever, will there be only one hegemonic masculinity operating in any cultural setting. Rather, in different contexts, different hegemonic masculinities are imposed by emphasising certain attributes, such as physical prowess or emotionality, over others. And, of course, different hegemonic masculinities produce different subordinate variants.... (1994: 20)

Where they take Carrigan, et al to task is when the latter argue that 'most men benefit from the subordination of women and hegemonic masculinity is centrally connected with the institutionalisation of men's dominance over women.' (1994: 20) Cornwall and Lindisfarne assert that, while the argument makes 'a contingent connection,...the relation between men and masculinity is made to seem incontrovertible' here; this is because of (a) 'naturalised' associations between men and power; (b) a 'consistent' masculinising of power itself, so that men and women in power are in positions of 'masculinity'; and (c) the converse and 'pervasive' metaphorising of masculinity as powerful. (1994: 20-22) Two features of Cornwall and Lindisfarne's argument are striking, and merit some attention. Firstly, in all three causal factors, they in turn imply an incontrovertible relation between the conceptions of masculinity and power, even if they argue for its 'dislocation', and highlight the contin-

gent rather than necessary nature of the relation between men and masculinity. However, they do not sufficiently distinguish between the relations that obtain between men and masculinity and those that obtain between masculinity and power, resulting in an implicit confusion of the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' with the more controversial proposition (being elucidated here) of a 'masculine hegemony'. While the former refers to the possibility of a specific variant (or of several specific variants) of masculinity gaining dominance *over others*, at specific historical moments, it is the latter that implies a singular dominance of the masculine – however the latter may be conceived or practised – and therefore, within the terms of this hegemony, an incontrovertibly evident link between masculinity and power. The second striking feature of their remarks is the attention that they draw to the external and determining conditions - 'naturalised', 'consistent', 'pervasive' - within which ideas of masculinity are formed. 'External', because what they are clearly arguing against is any notion of innate masculinity, and therefore implicitly for a cultural-constructionist theory of masculinities: i.e., ideas and practices of masculinity that are external to individuals and that influence - if not actually determine - their choices of thought and conduct. While one may separately debate the extent of usefulness of the cultural-construction-of-gender argument,¹⁴ more pertinent here is the implication of a pervasive *hegemony* of specifically masculine ideas: in other words, even as they argue against it, what emerges alongside the conceptualising of *any* specific hegemonic masculinity (or its possibility), is its implicit dependence on an assumed pervasiveness of a 'masculine hegemony'. That is, that the power of any specific hegemonic masculinity is dependent on a more general - 'naturalised', 'consistent', 'pervasive' - hegemony of masculinity, or masculine hegemony.¹⁵

In an interesting analysis of the set of relations that now emerge as obtaining between men, masculinities, power and hegemony, Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherall begin by suggesting that there is increasing consensus - initiated in feminist debates on the issue - amongst social scientists that, 'any adequate theory of men and masculinity has to reflect the fact that masculinities are both "structured" in dominance and, in turn, help maintain or reproduce that dominance.' (1996: 97-8) Like Carrigan, et. al., they too relate this dominance to the practices of men - i.e., the male sex - in particular; but they caution that '[m]en's collective interests and their disproportionate power and influence are not maintained

through active and self-conscious male conspiracies' but in 'much more complex, indirect and subtle' ways (1996: 108) – suggesting, like Cornwall and Lindisfarne, a larger and determinative environment. What is more revealing is their un-theorised - even unargued - labelling of these processes: they argue that the complexity and subtlety of these processes are 'because patriarchy, like any culture, does not declare its own partiality.' (1996: 108) There appears no doubt for them that the processes that construct hegemonic masculinities - what has been repeatedly referred to above as masculine hegemony - constitute 'patriarchy'. However, this 'dependency relation' that is thus seen to obtain between hegemonic masculinities and masculine-hegemony-as-patriarchy, is neither accidental nor arbitrarily posited, even if it is problematic. Sylvia Walby for instance, notes:

One of the major problems with many theories of patriarchy is that they suggest that there is only one base to patriarchal relations, and that this is determinant of other aspects of gender. The base itself varies between different theorists but the base-superstructure model is shared. It is this that makes the analysis of gender relations so static and makes it difficult to analyse changes except by stepping out of the framework. (1996: 243)

This describes well the peculiar problem that emerged in Cornwall and Lindisfarne's critique of Carrigan, et. al., even as they, too, attempt to 'step out of the framework'.

Part of the problem has derived from feminist discomforts with the term patriarchy as an umbrella description for the oppression and exploitation of women, through recognition of its multiple victims - children, the aged, men occupying positions of weakness in the specificities of its distributions of power - and of the complicity of women in its processes; this has led to more nuanced analytical devices, oriented essentially around gender, as an analytical category, but at the expense of relegating 'patriarchy' to the 'base' that Walby identifies.¹⁶ The problem is compounded then by the increasing popularity of studies on the 'cultural constructions of gender', seeing it as essentially a problem of meaning, further consolidating the dichotomy of the base-superstructure model. Without belittling the usefulness of such work, it may be recognised how such comprehensive unwillingness to negotiate with the 'base' that all such work must inevitably refer to - as demonstrated above with Cornwall and Lindisfarne - can lead to the other, more disturbing dimension

to this problem: with specific reference to ‘masculinity studies’, it has led to the (now well-entrenched) argument that men and masculinity - the objects of these studies - are deserving of an exclusive, even isolated examination.¹⁷

I wish to offer here a brief critique of these critiques. Critiques of patriarchy-theories of male dominance, while drawing attention to the inadequacies of its conceptual and analytical power, tend to ignore its primary case, that of a *general* - not *universal*, nor *eternal*, nor *immutable* - condition of oppression and exploitation, of women by men. To acknowledge this is seen as tantamount to accepting a transhistorically essentialist and inexorable reality, and a consequent denial of agency, when in fact, it is no more than an initial insight into the bases - the conditions of possibility, the load of the dice in different situations - of gender and other relations. Ignoring this in favour of the individual analysis of specific hegemonic masculinities results in the peculiarities identified by Cornwall and Lindisfarne - that of assuming an absolute relation between men and masculinity even while arguing against it; and those in Cornwall and Lindisfarne’s own argument, as analysed above - that of assuming a pervasive relation between masculinity and power, even as they attempt to deconstruct it. It is of some significance that several attempts have been made to ‘rethink hegemonic masculinity’ as a concept, to address some of the problems raised. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) for instance, argue that the concept needs to be rendered more complexly - through, for instance, emphasizing the agency of women; recognising the geographies of masculinities; disaggregating analysis into local, regional and global levels; and taking note of its internal contradictions. However, they do not attempt to *theorize* this process; they merely note that these are the analytical dimensions into which ‘hegemonic masculinity’ needs to be integrated. Separately, Connell has argued for the concept of a ‘patriarchal dividend’ - indexing ‘the advantage to men as a group from maintaining an unequal gender order’ (Connell, 2009: 142) - but does not attempt to theoretically integrate it with the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. In both these instances, there is an explicit recognition of structural and hegemonic factors of a more generalised character that impact on gender, but there is no concomitant attempt to theorize those in terms of masculinity/masculinities.

I propose here the renewed deployment of the idea of patriarchy as a *masculine hegemony*.¹⁸ The specifics of this may differ from context to con-

text, and between specific hegemonic forms of masculinity, but it is in all of them indicative of a general condition of the dominance of men – essentially over women, but also over other oppressed men, the old, the very young, the infirm; and through whatever cross-sections of caste, class or race obtained – and consequently of the masculine, in whatever the currently dominant, specific form of hegemonic masculinity. This apparent truism would do well with a brief closer look, if it is to pass theoretical muster. It seems to me what is required is not so much the debunking of the concept of patriarchy, as its qualified understanding, in its relations with the specific dynamics of individual hegemonic masculinities. *That is, the term ought to be understood as an analytical proposition referring to the generally recognisable social, cultural, economic, institutional and political configuration (that may obtain anywhere) of the dominance of men - in other words, as masculine hegemony, or the hegemony that permits the hegemonic power of specific hegemonic masculinities - rather than as is currently understood, as an (inadequate) descriptive proposition with a stultifying universal applicability.* In such a proposition, any given hegemonic condition may be characterised as masculine only in terms of the sustaining investment in it - as routine practice - of discourses of masculinity as a means of protecting its interests, i.e., the extent to which its hegemonic power generates discourses and practices of masculinities as legitimising, sustaining and expanding its hegemonic status. This opens the possibility of reading *the gendering of hegemonies* – economic, political, cultural, social – rather than the hegemony of individual gender-forms. It is in this sense that one may speak of patriarchy - the hegemonic system itself – not merely as if it was an impersonal objective system "out there", but as *a set of hegemonic subjectivities*, themselves inter-locked in relations that are defined economically as much as socially, politically and culturally, lived and practised by individual *selves*, both men and women. Without engaging in two disconnected realms of analysis, the macro and the micro, and without permitting the collapse of 'femininity' to 'women', and 'masculinity' to 'men', per se, it retains the strength of making them generalisable in terms of the *relations that obtain* in the material practices of individual men and women. Such a theoretical position addresses and allays suspicions of the kind raised by Jeff Hearn in his discussion of the analytical usefulness of 'masculinity'; he lists his problems thus:

- the wide variety of uses of the concept
- the imprecision of its uses in many cases

- its use as a shorthand for a very wide range of social phenomena, and in particular those that are connected with men and males but which appear to be located in the individual
- the use of the concept as a primary and underlying cause of other social effects. (1996: 203)

He goes on to note that, ‘with some usages of the concept, the focus on men might be developed to divert attention away from women, rendering them invisible and excluding them as participants in discourse.’ (1996: 203). This, he argues, leads to the focus on the reconstruction of ideas of ‘masculinity’, rather than on the totality of practices that sustain them. Further, he notes that the deployment of the category in loose dichotomies of ‘masculinity’/‘femininity’ only leads to the reification of the categories ‘men’ and ‘women’, into the corresponding terms, ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. With the theoretical grounding of hegemonic masculinities in the concept of a general ‘masculine hegemony’, however, this is conceptually cleared, as referring to practices. That is, one may employ the term as descriptive, in a broad sense, of the general terrain one is referring to, without falling into the shorthand that Hearn rightly deplors, or into essentialisms that distort or render reductive specific analyses, in terms of the specific configurations of local hegemonic masculinities. It follows from this that different masculine hegemonies may obtain in different times and places, themselves constituted by, and constituting, different hegemonic masculinities within them; but that such configurations need not and do not always obtain – or that, even when they do, they may be inflected differently in each case – is no refutation of the primary analytical potential of the proposition, patriarchy as masculine hegemony.¹⁹

The Gramscian understanding of hegemony that I invoke here, as involving both force and consent, needs to be clarified further. Gramsci’s own use of the term is broad but largely as descriptive of the means by which the ruling *classes* in democratic states acquire and maintain what he calls ‘ethical-political’ control – through a combination of force and consent – over the rest of ‘civil society’, and thereby over the means of production. The possible objection that using hegemony in gender definitive terms, as I am, is then tantamount to treating it as a class category, is nevertheless misconceived: Gramsci repeatedly refers to the process of the formation of hegemony, firstly, as a ‘molecular’ one, operating even in the smallest economic units (the individual, the family), irrespective of

class; secondly, as an individual process of internalisation of laws as 'principles of moral conduct', by which 'necessity has already become freedom'; and thirdly, as a general principle evident in any society: 'in any given society, nobody is disorganised and without a party, provided that one takes organisation and party in a broad and not a formal sense'.²⁰ As Raymond Williams notes, the concept of hegemony 'sees the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living – not only of political and economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense.' (1977: 110) Given this, it is clear that what passes for 'consent' in hegemonies is not actually consensual, but rather the outcome of a substantially internalised and encouraged perception of 'compelling' circumstances – ranging from economic dependencies, to institutional positionings, to conventional and customary expectations, to legal prescriptions and proscriptions – within which 'necessity becomes freedom', and the challenging of which implicitly entails (or threatens to entail) a reactive and punitive violence.²¹ It is also clear then that all hegemonies are premised on the possibility – if not the actual practice – of violence.

Given such an understanding, it is possible to see how patriarchal systems generate masculinities. In any given condition of masculine hegemony, it may be argued that hegemonic masculinities are generated – and frequently in opposition to each other – as very much a part of the dynamic of maintaining that pervasive hegemony of gender relations: at no point can this generative process cease, for that would permit other forms of gender relations to gain prominence, if not dominance. As new forms of power emerge, it produces new types of hegemonic masculinities to employ these forms, relegating the existing hegemonic types to subordinate forms of masculinity, and simultaneously producing hegemonic femininities that correspond to, and are compatible with, these different masculinities. It is possible to see how, as new discourses, forms and practices of material power emerge, and are deployed in challenging existing masculine hegemonies, they are accommodated into an already changing *socius*, the hegemonic equations of which are already in transformation, in the generation of new kinds and forms of masculini-

ties to suit the new discourses and practices of power. Certainly this helps explain for instance, the continued masculinisation of political power on the one hand, and of technological power on the other, despite the inroads made into both by women and women's movements internationally.

2.7 Intersectionalities and Masculine Hegemony

Some of the above arguments may be recognised as being 'intersectional', and in the following section, I will engage briefly with this term and the location of 'masculine hegemony' as a concept in relation to the theoretical and analytical discourse around it.

One of the enduring conundrums of gender theorising in general, and of theorising men and masculinity in particular, has been the problem of articulating gender with other categories of social analysis like class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. This has arisen – and continues – primarily because social theorists and analysts have tended to present one or the other of these categories as having primacy. It is important to note that these categories of social analysis are all founded on – or at least cognisant of – the political positions that they signify and/or represent – which is also why there is an almost inexorable impulse towards establishing theoretical primacy, as a means to establishing political primacy, and through that, presumably, primacy of political action/programme. This is complicated by the fact that subject-positions signified and/or invoked, directly or indirectly, by these categories, have, in very many instances, not only found themselves inimical to each other, but have been actively oppositional. Without going into the details of the extensive debates on these issues here, it is possible to note that they have tended to take the following contours. Firstly, radical or extremist positions that either deny or dismiss the relevance of the other categories – thus for instance, certain orthodox schools of Marxist thought that find class to be the sole category of meaningful social analysis; or versions of radical feminism that tend to emphasise the gender/sex distinction as the primary *form* within which oppression and/or exploitation occur; or, in the Indian case, caste-based organisations/parties that dismiss or deny the validity of either class or gender as equally significant forms of political mobilisation. Secondly, versions of 'dual systems' theorisations, that focus primarily on class and gender, and attempt to articu-

late them as addressing two related but distinct forms of oppression and exploitation – capitalism and patriarchy, respectively. These have also subsequently morphed into more complex theorisations that have attempted to articulate these categories – class and gender – with others like race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. They vary in their emphases, however, indicating particular politico-ideological predilections in stressing the primacy of one (or more) of these social categories over others, even as they acknowledge the significance of the latter. Alternative approaches along these lines emphasise the importance of context, rather than politico-ideological predilections, in determining primacy: thus, race may trump gender and class in some situations, while class would be paramount in others – and so on. (It need hardly be pointed out that the latter, in privileging context, already relinquish any claims to generalisation into theory. I will discuss this position in greater detail a little later.) The most recent trend in this direction has been ‘intersectionality’, a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to conceptualise the intersecting power relations between social categories that obtained in ‘concrete’ situations.²² Thirdly, broadly deconstructionist theorisations that (somewhat paradoxically) question the significance of any attempt to generalise into theory, on the basis of social categories that are seen to be inherently unstable to begin with. This group has something in common with the second, insofar as they too return ultimately to a focus on the specific context – with the crucial difference that they do so with the explicit understanding that the context can only serve as the moment of political intervention, not of analysis, nor, consequently, of the particular validity of any one category over another. The particular category that may form the basis for a particular political intervention is seen as merely contingent to the given situation, rather than as the basis of a theory, even if it is only of that particular situation.

None of these approaches to political theorisation is entirely satisfactory, even to those who theorise from within them, if only because they would be aware of other theoretical forms and persuasions outside of their own, that reject – or at least do not claim – their approach. If the aim of theory – especially political theory – is to achieve maximum possible and acceptable generalisation, then all of these approaches have already failed to do so. The one approach that comes closest to being generally acceptable – the alternative in the second approach noted above – does so, paradoxically, precisely because of its unwillingness to general-

ise. This general insufficiency in theorisation is particularly telling in theorising men and masculinity because of the patent dissonance between an empirical observation – that men tend to be more powerful, and consequently more capable of practising oppression and exploitation, than women – and the theoretical paucity to explain it. With specific regard to the ‘intersectionalities’ discourse, the primary problem with the term is in its metaphoric baggage: ‘intersection’ – whether understood mathematically or cartographically – denotes the point or area of contact or overlap between two mutually exclusive entities (for instance, these may be lines or sets in mathematics, roads or geological features in cartography). This metaphoric baggage seeps into social analyses that borrow the term. The term is unable to invoke the more subtle, complex, layered and blurred engagements that obtain between social constituencies, referred to by say, the terms ‘class’ and ‘gender’. To speak of the intersection between class and gender is to treat them as inflexible, impermeable categories, indexing processes that are simultaneous but hermetically isolated from each other – but grapple with each other for analytical/political dominance. The end result is inevitably analysis that becomes descriptive of these processes as discrete phenomena, but that is unable to articulate them into a theoretical coherence with generalisable import – in fact, specifically resisting such import.²³ Thus, while the votaries of ‘intersectionality’ have identified a very genuine problem, they have arguably been unable to address it sufficiently. While theories of hegemonic masculinity and/or the hegemony of men have gone some way towards redressing this dissonance, they tend, as already noted, to focus on men/masculinity as the locus of analysis. This inevitably leads to variations – following available varieties – that in turn lead to unstable analyses and/or insufficient explanatory power.

What I have proposed here is that the concept of masculine hegemony offers a theoretically coherent means to articulate apparently irreconcilable and irreducible social categories, while maintaining their specificities. The contention here is that ‘masculine hegemony’ offers a more integrative approach than the intersectionalities one, precisely because it attempts to retain the specificities of the local/micro levels, while articulating them within the larger theoretical framework of a (gendered) hegemony. To elaborate a little on this: it is arguable that any given society is organised along multiple and intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination that determine the access to and exercise of power –

the distribution and possession of its resources and rights – within it, as well as the terms within which that power is (to be) exercised. Further, the organisation of these hierarchies may be discerned as hegemonic formations that favour specific social groups and/or alignments (for instance: power accruing from being upper-caste/white/property-owning; having affiliation or belonging to specific regions/tribes/clans/religions/sects/institutions/professions; superiority in age/educational level/institutional position/physique/appearance; or diverse combinations of these – etc.). While the organisation of these hierarchies is always, in Williams' terms, represented as 'common sense', and therefore possessing and projecting an air of unchangeability, such hegemonic conditions are never stable because they are essentially constituted through and by a continuous process of contestation between themselves and emergent (and residual) formations striving to become hegemonic. In fact, the reason for the instability of hegemonies is precisely the potential for violence that is structurally inbuilt in this continuous process of contestation. This is not to argue that all violences are the same or even alike, either in form or origins. One can conceive of violences that are not necessarily innate to specific structural formations, but erupt more contingently, as for instance with arbitrary (as opposed to race or caste-driven) mob lynchings. However, violences that erupt in conditions already defined in hegemonic terms may be said to evolve specifically out of the structural imbalances of the hegemonic condition itself. But this perpetual instability is also a *necessary* component of the logic of hegemony: it is vital to the maintenance of a sense of threat to the existing hegemonic order, that in turn serves, on the one hand, to maintain communal unity within the specific social group/alignment benefiting from that order, and on the other, to maintain its exclusivity through the very process of 'othering' instituted by violence. Then, the conception, articulation and deployment of violence, and the possession of the ability to do so, together come to constitute a fundamental organising principle in the emergence and sustenance of any given hegemony. Violence within a given hegemonic condition must therefore be understood as not just an event or occurrence that ruptures that hegemonic condition from without, but as a discursive instrument that is internal and integral to it – that in fact, institutes its notions of internality and externality, of identity and otherness. It is not just a consequence of force or enforcement, but already implicitly in play with the invocation of force. It is in this sense

that violence is always already framed in an ethical discourse, however that is articulated. (In Chapter IV in particular, I will elaborate on the ethical conception of violence in colonial India, through the contesting terms of ‘Order’ and ‘*Danda*’, and their significance for the shaping of Hindu masculine hegemony in India). Our understanding of hegemonies as layered by multiple and intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination must then extend as obtainable far beyond its conventionally recognised macro manifestations – race, nation, region, religion, community, class – to its manifestations at the fundamental ‘cellular’ (or in Gramsci’s terms, ‘molecular’) level of the family and the organisation of sexuality. It is at this level that violence as an organising principle in hegemonies dovetails with another fundamental principle of orientation and organisation: gender.

In a careful analysis of the organisation of sexuality, Karen Gabriel has argued that

The family as a principal ideological apparatus of the state that produces and reproduces gender, is backed by the state, informal power, or force, is often notionally coextensive with the home, is experienced variably as dangerous, reassuring, and imprisoning, is a locus of power and can be deeply disempowering.[...] It is the site where a number of institutions and their effects overlap minutely, where the female subject may be both the site for and the agent of control. (2010: 124)

The family thus functions not in ‘interior’ isolation from the ‘exterior’ organisation of a given hegemonic formation, but as foundational to its dynamics of internality and externality. But the family is also the foundational level of (at least) the sexual reproduction of a given hegemonic formation, and through that, of the significations of gender that accrue to and around sexuality.²⁴ The hierarchies that ‘internally’ constitute the cellular-level hegemonic formation that is understood as the family thus, in specifically gendered terms, reproduce and are reproductions of the dynamic of the hegemony that it is embedded in. This in turn is borne outward, reflexively gendering the distributions and allocations of power and resources that shape and define the eventually constellated hegemonic condition that prevails in the given society. If we now recall that the principle of organisation by which this condition is shaped is, in the final analysis, the control over the conception and deployment of violence, then it is clear that there is an intimate relation between the pro-

cess of gendering – both within and without the family – and the phenomenon of violence, in hegemonic conditions. This relation possesses a two way dynamic. Illustratively, education into gender is almost invariably a process of disciplining – ‘don’t cry like a girl!’ or ‘take it like a man!’ or ‘don’t be a tomboy!’ or ‘sit with your legs together!’ – that prescribes, proscribes, exhorts, threatens, and in general *enforces* specific life-patterns (conduct, dispositions, values, careers, etc) believed to be gender-appropriate. But conversely, and perhaps more significantly, the violence inherent to the process of disciplining is itself gendered, so that control (or the lack of it) over the conception and deployment of violence is marked as either masculine or feminine. Within the multi-layered hegemonic formations that constitute the given hegemonic condition, it is true that these prescriptions and exhortations are also diversely marked by other signs – of race, class, age, region, religion, etc. However, these are *all* inflected by the foundational discourse of gender, and their relations to violence are therefore inevitably also gendered.²⁵ Additionally, it is now clear that, to the extent that – as argued earlier – all violence is framed in an ethical discourse, the gendered hegemonic condition is arguably itself the (implicit or explicit) site of that ethical discourse, which means firstly, that any hegemonic condition necessarily contains an ethical framework that can, whenever necessary, justify violence; and secondly, that such an ethical frame (or frames) is itself coded in gendered terms. (Illustratively, the tacit acceptance of violence against women – whether sexual²⁶ or otherwise, within marriage or outside – is based on ideas of appropriate femininity that are strongly coded in moral terms.) It is through this series of linkages between violence, hegemony and the ethical discourse that sustains it, that nationalism – particularly religious nationalism – is shaped as a gendered hegemonic discourse. This process is what this thesis will attempt to uncover and elaborate on, through the specific case of Hindu nationalism.

It can now be argued, specifically, that the relation of violence to gender – in terms of both, the coercive violence involved in the process of gendering, and in the allocation of the control over violence along the axis of masculinity-femininity – then defines the extent to which a given hegemony is masculine or feminine. However, historically, rarely, if ever, in *any* known hegemonic condition, has the control over the conception and exercise of violence been considered feminine. Even in situations where such control is exercised by women, it is not in itself a definitive

attribute of femininity, and has rarely ever been so.²⁷ In other words, the dominant form of hegemony that has historically and geographically prevailed is masculine hegemony. It is in this sense that patriarchy is to be understood as masculine hegemony. It follows from this that any given condition of masculine hegemony may be composed and constituted of a variety of masculine hegemonies, co-relating in a complex play of alignments and contestations, the conjuncture of which comes to define the characteristics and dispositions of the given masculine hegemony, or patriarchy. Such an understanding of patriarchy would retain the original sense of *systemic* oppression and exploitation – with its attendant justifications of gendered violence(s) – while permitting the unravelling of nuances and characteristics specific to individual patriarchal formations.

2.8 Hindutva Masculinities

In the above discussion I have tried to outline some of the limitations of conventional masculinity studies. I have argued for the need to open out the terrain towards a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of masculinity, by tracing the theoretical bases for the relations between masculinity and its contexts of generation and operation. I have argued that these relations may be best understood through a theoretical and historical understanding of patriarchy as masculine hegemony. Here and in the chapters that follow, I propose that, in the specific historical context of Hindutva, the masculinities generated by Hindutva have their roots in extensive transformations in the political economy of patriarchy in India from pre-independence times to the present. I will attempt to show that, given the different forms that patriarchy takes across caste and regional differences (Sangari, 1995), it is not possible or necessary to define a hegemonic Indian (or Hindu) masculinity. Rather, by focussing on the specific ways in which different masculinities are privileged at different moments in history and in different patriarchies, through the analysis of transformations in the terms of relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, I propose that the rise of Hindutva owes substantially to the consolidations of such privilege and therefore of patriarchy in general; in this sense, Hindutva may be understood as a prime discourse and political practice in the conservation and consolidation of masculine power, albeit articulated differentially (see also Vijayan 2004).

The relation between masculinity and nationalism is then about the politicisation of gender – about the ways in which politics works itself into gender constructions (for instance in the repeated distinctions drawn between a putative homogeneous ‘Hindu masculinity’ and other masculinities) and about the ways in which politics is written and practised in gendered terms (for instance in the understanding of individual communities as more or less masculine and/or feminine). In this sense, to say gender is political is to mean it also quite literally, as not just referring to gender politics (or the politics of the relations between the genders at a given historical moment), but to the meanings of gender in and for a specific political moment – in this case the rise of the Hindu right.

What then are the historical forces and factors specific to the formation of Hindutva masculinities and femininities? Conversely, what forms of masculinity and femininity are drawn upon by the ideological constellation referred to as Hindutva? In posing these questions, we take cognisance of a twofold agenda: one, the consolidation of a pan-Indian Hindu community, transcending the boundaries of caste, class, region, ethnicity, gender and in some versions of Hindutva, religion as well, into a singular nation; two, the translation of this consolidation into a political agenda that means control of the state, and in most versions of Hindutva, transforming the state itself.

The first has defined the nation through the implementation of, or call to implement, Golwalkar’s famous criteria for who is a Hindu: adherence to the *Matrubhumi* (motherland), *Dharmabhumi* (land of one’s faith), *Karmabhumi* (land of one’s dutiful actions), *Punyabhumi* (holy land) and *Mokshabhumi* (land of one’s salvation) (Golwalkar, 1996 [1966]: 81. The translations of the terms are mine.) It has also been influentially rendered as the *Pitrubhumi* (fatherland)²⁸ by V D Savarkar. These may be understood to constitute the ‘ethical’ framework of Hindu nationalism, and may be separated into two sets: terms of origin (Matru- and Pitrubhumi) and terms of attributes, attitudes and actions (Dharma-, Karma-, Punya- and Mokshabhumi). The separability, though not water-tight, suggests that belonging to or claiming the nation is as much a matter of volition as it is of birth. This brings it subtly but tensely into political alignment with the demands of a secular constitution, which upholds the right of the individual to choose his/her national identity (albeit in qualified terms, witness the problem of Kashmir and other secessionist programs). The tension arises when the second set of terms is not either

acknowledged or in consonance with the first set, i.e., when the imperatives of the first are not implicitly or explicitly followed in the forms of the second. The organisation of the spaces of the nation in these terms is then less a matter of the 'secular' distinction of the 'public' and the 'private', than of the distinction between 'sacred' and 'profane' spaces. Specifically, the space of the nation turns profane when the attributes, attitudes and actions encapsulated in the second set of terms imply and reflect secular rather than sacred or originary meanings. The term 'nation' itself then loses its 'sacred' meanings, opening the terrain into a fractious debate (that is fought physically and ideologically) on the criteria (whether of origin or action) for a national identity.

Of immediate significance for us is the employment of certain understandings of masculinity and femininity in the outlining of these criteria, this ideology. The terms of origin are linked specifically to the intimate notions of maternity and paternity; they express a call to draw sustenance from the maternal even as they institute the obligation to submit to her, to preserve and defend her; simultaneously, they invoke the notion of a patrimony with the conception of the *pitrubhumi*, the land of the fathers, and thus issue a right of inheritance that in its essence cannot be volitionally claimed. Who may be excluded and who included in the Hindu community thus remains flexible, yet with the potential to turn rigid. It is on this basis then that individual communities may at different times be either considered part of or outside of the Hindu nation – whether Muslim, Christian or Sikh. The shifting registers at those moments also index shifts in the gendering of the community under consideration: when inimical to the *matrubhumi*, the community is represented as marauding, predatorily and faithlessly masculine – as often the case with Muslim communities. Similarly, when the community is represented as part of the *matrubhumi*, yet alien to the *pitrubhumi*, a condition most often associated with Christians, the community itself is feminised as weak and seeking shelter. Obviously, these are not fixed terms, and shift with the nature of historical events and incidents: missionary Christians may just as easily be imaged as predatorily masculine, in converting lower caste communities to Christianity. The point is that at an ideological and discursive level, the highly gendered nature of the framework permits such shifts in register to occur without much ideological damage to mainframe Hindutva.

This has important consequences for the second agenda, of claiming and transforming state power. While the first works primarily at the possibility of the forging (pun not intended) of a Hindu nation, the second must acknowledge the terms in which political power is sought, competed for, gained or shared, and maintained. That is, it must acknowledge if not always function within the statutory and constitutional constraints imposed upon the formation of ideologies of community, by a multi-party electoral process in a broadly liberal-democratic framework of politics. Within such a framework, the path to political power is the path of the accretion of numbers; but it also demands strategies of compromise and settlement when outright numerical victory is unavailing. Importantly, the one strategy must not be seen to ideologically betray the other, the semiotic representations of ideological program and agenda must remain consistent with elected representatives and their practises (and vice versa). In this terrain, shifting gendered representations of the different strategies – of numbers and of compromise – serve to maintain them both simultaneously. Because they are both strategies for the accrual and maintenance of power, however, they are both masculinised, albeit through the deployment of different hegemonic masculinities. This is instantiated starkly in the repeated references in public media to the ‘two faces’ of Hindu nationalism in India being represented by the ‘moderate’ A B Vajpayee (the former Prime Minister of India) and the ‘extremist’ L K Advani (the former Deputy Prime Minister), both leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and both with strong roots in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. One could add to this the kind of lumpen masculinist iconicity of the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, the shrill gender-crossing masculinity of the Uma Bharati (a former woman leader of the BJP), the organised street-violence masculinity of Narendra Modi (BJP member and Chief Minister of Gujarat during the 2002 genocide of Muslims in that state) and the piously poisonous and vituperative masculinity of Praveen Togadia (head of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad), among several others.²⁹

There is however, a third dimension to the inter-relation of gender and nationalism, and especially so in the case of Hindutva. Apart from the two programmatic aspects of mainframe Hindutva outlined above, which correspond to the gendering of politics we had noted earlier, there is the matter of the politicisation of the processes of gendering undertaken by Hindutva, in which it intervenes in existing forms of gendering to

render them gender-with-a-political-purpose. Recent research has shown how women in particular become targets of such interventionist practices, translating personal desires for alternatives to their immediate and conservative lifestyles as middle class housewives into social and economic imperatives to be more visible and politically active, and those in turn into an ideological cause – the gendered structural and physical reproduction of the Hindu nation (Manisha Sethi 2002, Tanika Sarkar 1998, Butalia and Sarkar (eds.) 1995). Thus an activist femininity is promoted without necessarily challenging existing gender roles or patriarchal relations. My own fieldwork with the RSS conducted in Cochin in 2000 revealed an adaptation of a different social and political situation from the north, to the demands of promoting Hindutva in the south, and specifically in Kerala. The much larger numbers of working women meant a greater sharing of household duties and responsibilities between men and women – a situation adapted to by the local RSS networks by simply promoting the idea of such sharing as a responsibly masculine attribute amongst the younger generation of men, while deploying the local VHP to train young employed single women along with employed and non-employed housewives in the necessities of housekeeping, the inculcation of ‘cultural values’ in children, and the maintenance of conjugal relations, in the strictest of patriarchal paradigms. This in turn is hitched to the idea of a modernising nation that demands such changing gender roles, thereby attracting younger generations of Hindus with the idea that Hindutva organisations in essence are more authentically modern than any tendencies towards westernisation, because they retain the gender values of the past by adapting them to and through the processes of social change. And this is promoted across caste differentials, suggesting the ways in which caste distinctions – while important in determining marital alliances especially – are also forced into secondary consideration, in the face of a uniformity of gender practices that substantially define the Hindu community for Hindutva.

2.9 Conclusion

It must go without the need for elaboration here that the three kinds of gender relations obtained here to nationalism are not either discrete or disparate, but work in tandem and through each other. Gender transformations are fundamental to the agendas of Hindu nationalism; but what is obvious is that existing gender relations continue to determine

the intent, plan and implementation of the strategies of transformation. Existing patriarchal formations constitute a masculine hegemony that ceaselessly adapts to historical and political changes by redefining masculinity and femininity to suit regional and political demands, while retaining the essentially masculinist tilt of the hegemony itself. The Hindu nation may be a distant reality just yet; but the attempts to formulate it in an inflexible binary code of masculinity and femininity continue ceaselessly. In the following chapter, I will begin the exploration of the relations between Hindu nationalism and patriarchy that forms the substance of this thesis, and I will begin this specifically with an exploration and analysis of the term 'Hindu'.

Notes

¹ Gill and Grint note that the use of this term in social scientific writing originated with Weber, 'who used it to refer to a particular form of household organization in which the father is dominant.' (1995: 14) 'The significance of this as metaphor for other and different social organisation lies primarily in its association of masculinity with power – a point that we will return to.

² See for instance Nira Yuval-Davis (1997: 7).

³ The second analogy is perhaps more extensively structurally accurate than can be covered in this chapter, but briefly, one could think of pornography as very often being the scaled-down, laboratory-level, graphic representation of the structures of patriarchy.

⁴ To avoid the clumsiness of this construction, I will in the course of this chapter use 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as short hand for general references to multiple masculinities and femininities, and will specify singular usage wherever relevant in the text.

⁵ Understood here – until we can elaborate it more specifically and analytically later – as used descriptively, and without conceptual prejudice.

⁶ It is revealing that the title of the book that heralded this new field already indicates the equation of men's studies with the study of masculinities.

⁷ Connell attempts to negotiate this particular problem by introducing the notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' as invoking structural and historical factors. But the problem does not go away as long as this continues to refer to men or their practices as forms of masculinities, however classified.

⁸ It may seem here that I am conflating the men's movement with masculinity studies, thereby ignoring the possibility that no strand of the latter would assume an anti-feminist stand. But it is important to remember that the theoretical and

ideological bases for the coming together of men on antifeminist issues would necessarily emerge only from debates that would constitute some form of 'masculinity studies'. It further reinforces the point I wish to make here: that there are theoretical and ideological weaknesses in masculinity studies that render it vulnerable to appropriation by such patriarchal tendencies.

⁹ Connell (1996) identifies four basic forms of masculinity politics: Masculinity Therapy; the Gun Lobby Masculinity; Gay Liberation; and Exit or Transformative Politics.

¹⁰ But see also the work of Franz Fanon, Gandhi, Vivekananda, Thionga wa Ngugi for the employment of gender as a trope in the construction of colonial and postcolonial nationalist discourses and practices. Needless to add, the critique of masculinity studies outlined above may be applied to Enloe's statement here as well: that is, the understanding of 'masculinized' here is evidently as an implicit substitute for 'specifically male relations to power in a patriarchal society'.

¹¹ John MacInnes (1998) offers a powerful argument for a re-examination of the explanatory power of gender as a category. He argues that the term is the product of the transition from feudal patriarchy to capitalism, and the consequent need to justify the continuation of male-biased relations of production and of the sex-based organization of labour, in a polity that now espouses, in principle, the equality of sexes and privileges the rights of the individual. 'Gender', he argues, and the related terms of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', offered social and political theorists a way to retain sex-based distinctions, while re-inventing them as socially and culturally constructed.

While this may be true, the point of course is not to seek explanations for the biases of patriarchy in descriptions of the gender system itself, but to use the terms of gender as analytical categories with referential roots in the natural and the socially constructed worlds – to deploy gender as a useful category of historical analysis, in the words of Joan Scott (1996).

¹² See Karen Gabriel (2010) for a thorough account of the formation of genders in a sexual economy.

¹³ MacInnes (1998) suggests contrarily that the terms are not rooted in the body, but are assigned to the male and female body respectively on the basis of the sexual division of labour, i.e. that there is no logical reason why 'masculinity' for instance, and all its significations need not be ascribed to women. Again, the point is not the logical connection (or lack of it) between the body and its gender, but the historically specifiable connections that in fact demand that they be examined in their totality.

¹⁴ One problem with cultural-constructionist theories of gender is obvious and immediately applicable: they assume - or consciously posit - that gender identities are primary identities, definitive in fundamental ways of individual identities - of

what it means to be a specific individual. Or, to put it differently, cultural-constructionist theories of gender frequently suggest - if not openly state - that the cultural construction of identities is always and everywhere primarily, fundamentally gendered. To argue, in this instance, for the concept of masculine hegemony, is not the same as arguing for gender construction: masculine hegemony is only partially a matter of individual identities, and more a matter of the gendering of a power distribution - literally, a hegemony. Also, if one takes into account other factors that determine identity - race, class, caste, religion, language, tribe - it becomes less tenable to maintain the primacy of gender in the construction of identity. This is amply demonstrated in the way women Hindutvavadis place their identities as Hindus above their identities as women; see for instance T. Sarkar's 'Women, Nation and Community' in Jeffery and Basu (1999). While it is not possible here to examine the full theoretical implications of the negotiations of gender - as an issue of primary determinant - with these other factors, this project is, to some extent, an attempt at precisely such an examination.

¹⁵ See Jim McKay (1993), for a similar but un-theorised usage of this term, but also a very illuminating account of how masculine hegemony operates and functions in practice - in this case in the world of Australian sports.

¹⁶ Walby's own cautions about its usage might serve as a useful starting point for a possible re-deployment of this concept: she proposes the analysis of gender along six separate structures - household production, employment, the state, violence, sexuality and culture - articulated in different ways, 'so creating different forms of patriarchy.' She identifies the private and the public as two main forms of these. (1996: 243) This, while nuancing the problematic, does not as yet withstand the argument put forward by Nira Yuval-Davis, among others, that patriarchy 'is still much too crude an analytical instrument' because it 'does not allow...for the fact that in most societies some women have power at least over some men as well as other women. Nor does it take into account the fact that in concrete situations women's oppression is intermeshed in and articulated by other forms of social oppression and social division.' Nira Yuval-Davis (1997: 7). Joan Scott pushes this argument further, suggesting that theories of patriarchy, because they base their arguments of male domination on physical differences between the sexes, assume 'a consistent or inherent meaning for the human body - outside social or cultural construction - and thus the ahistoricity of gender itself. History becomes, in a sense, epiphenomenal, providing endless variations on the unchanging theme of a fixed gender inequality.' (1996: 159) I have attempted to deal generally with some of these objections above, and will deal specifically with Scott's objections in some detail later; but for reasons of space, like the theorisation of hegemony as a gender-definitive category - to which it is evidently related - this too will have to wait for a fuller elaboration.

¹⁷ R. W. Connell notes how, in the re-examination of history, and in the face of feminist arguments that mainstream history-writing was already masculinist, the ‘central theme of a new men’s history...could only [emphasis added] be what was missing from the non-gendered history of men - the idea of masculinity.’ (1995: 28). It must be noted that there are some exceptions to this tendency: R. W. Connell’s definitive work cited above is one such. Connell also cites - as exceptions again - Jeff Hearn’s *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity, and the Critique of Marxism* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987) and Victor Seidler’s *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason Language and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1989), as work progressing in this direction.

¹⁸ In the argument that follows, I will rely heavily on the theoretical value and weight of the Gramscian concept of hegemony, so a brief definitive note at this point would be in order: the matter is put succinctly by Raymond Williams: hegemony ‘is not limited to matters of direct political control but seeks to describe a more general predominance which includes, as one of its key features, a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships.’ This includes the perceptions of ‘not just intellectual but political facts, expressed over a range from institutions to relationships and consciousness.... [I]t is seen to depend for its hold not only on its expression of the interests of a ruling class but also on its acceptance as “normal reality” or “common-sense” by those in practice subordinated to it.... Thus an emphasis on hegemony and the hegemonic has come to include cultural as well as political and economic factors.’ (1983: 145). I will elaborate further on the Gramscian understanding of hegemony shortly.

¹⁹ For a different, very thoughtful and useful theorising of patriarchy, see Walby (1990, 1995). My main point of departure from Walby’s analysis is in the importance I give to changing conceptions of masculinity as changes in the subjective engagements with patriarchies, and the effects these have on the hegemonic operationalising of patriarchies. For all the complexity of Walby’s analysis, she tends to theorise patriarchy as an external, objective system - the weakness of most theories of patriarchy.

²⁰ See for instance, his ‘Americanism and Fordism’ and ‘State and Civil Society’ in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1996). In other words, it is clear that Gramsci himself saw the process as applicable to the relations that obtain between any given set of groups, not necessarily in class terms, even if he himself did use it mostly in the analysis of class relations.

²¹ Such a conception has close affiliations with the Althusserian notion of ideological interpellation and the subject’s obedience that it implicitly entails. This however is not the space to elaborate on that.

²² I am drawing here on the distinction between the concrete and the real proposed by Antonio Negri (2003)

²³ See for instance Yuval-Davis' (2006) attempt to unravel some of the tangled theoretical arguments and positions in the intersectionalities debate.

²⁴ This is not the space to elaborate on the relations between gender, sex and sexuality; but it is necessary to clarify that I follow the now-accepted distinction between gender and sex as respectively indexing socially constructed and biological differences. Sexuality is understood as the realm of the organisation of sexual reproduction as well as of erotic pleasure, which thereby invokes and regenerates processes of gendering. For detailed discussions of these issues, see Foucault (1978), Snitow (1983), Gabriel (2010).

²⁵ Classic examples of this are the feminisation of the 'othered' and coloured races during the violence of colonisation (see Ballhatchet, 1980; Hyam 1990; Sinha 1995; McClintock, 1996) and the gendering of communities during communal violence (Sarkar and Butalia 1996, Vijayan 2004).

²⁶ In the Indian case, till recently, rape was almost impossible to prove in court: the onus of proving rape rested with the victims, with trials often degenerating into character assassination and implications of moral looseness on the part of the victim, thereby implicitly justifying the rape itself.

²⁷ I am aware of only the myth of the Amazons, wherein the exercise of violence is a specifically feminine attribute. There is the more problematic instance of women (a mother-in-law) organising and wreaking violence on other women (a daughter-in-law) as in the case of dowry death, in which such women have been understood as patriarchal and as agents of patriarchy, drawing attention to the need to identify patriarchy as systemic rather than as arbitrarily resident within specific individuals.

²⁸ "A Hindu is one who acknowledges Hindustan as his fatherland (pitrubhumi) as well as his holy land (punyabhumi). Whether he or she is a devotee of sanatan dharma is unimportant. Anyone who is or whose ancestor was Hindu in undivided India — including someone who was a Hindu but was converted to Islam or Christianity — is also welcome back to the Hindu fold provided he accepts India as his fatherland-cum-holyland." V. D. Savarkar, 1989 [1923].

²⁹ A catalogue of the kinds of Hindutva masculinities on display in the public and political domain would be an interesting exercise, but possibly inexhaustible and in any case beyond the scope of this chapter. The point here is to note how they are generated in response to diverse political situations and demands.

3

The Emergence of the Hindu Right - I

3.1 Introduction

Any discussion of the emergence of Hindu nationalism – as idea, theory, programme, politics, identity – would do well to begin by examining the analytical, conceptual and historical distinctions between the terms ‘Hindu’, ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Hindutva’. Each of these is to varying degrees and in various ways associated with and invoked by the followers and practitioners of Hindu nationalism, and often interchangeably. Leaving aside for the moment the question of the conceptual validity of such association, invocation and inter-changeability, it must be noted immediately that these moves (of association, invocation and interchange) serve the important ideological purpose of reinforcing the claims of Hindu nationalism – to religious sanction, representative-ness, and majoritarian identity. The manners and methods adopted by Hindu nationalism in establishing these claims remain concerns that run through the thesis. Here, they will be addressed specifically through a historical examination of the rise of the Hindu right, and more specifically, in terms of the emergence of the identity ‘Hindu’.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are:

1. To explore the historical origins of the terms ‘Hindu’, ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Hindutva’.
2. To identify and trace the forces that acted on their specific trajectories of evolution.
3. To examine the dynamics of their relations with each other, and the ways in which they invoke or exclude each other.

3.3 Conceptual Issues

The term 'Hindutva' is of later coinage than either 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism', so it is useful to begin with an exploration of the latter two terms, individually and in their relation to each other. Both terms have been ferociously debated, in terms of their historical origins, range and scope of applicability, varieties and versions, constituencies, and political derivatives.¹ Two broad positions may be identified: that of the social constructionists, who maintain that Hinduism is essentially a colonial construct; and that of the indigenists, who argue for the presence of Hinduism, if not by name then by practice, as far back as the Vedic period (anywhere between the first and twelfth centuries BC). Similar battle lines are drawn on the term 'Hindu': the former group, while acknowledging its use prior to the colonial period, insist that its definitiveness as an identity emerged against a Muslim identity, forged by British divide and rule policies; while the latter maintain that a 'Hindu' identity is evident well before this, registering the practitioners of the religion later to be called 'Hinduism'. It is not my intention here to rehearse that debate yet again. Rather, it is to attempt to disentangle the terms from each other, to trace their emergence in the specificity of their respective histories. The immediate attempt will be to show that the contrariness of the two positions in the debate is a result not of historical confusion or ideological affinities (at least in the first instance), but of conceptual slippages that result in a tendency to derive the one term from the other, or even on occasion to use them interchangeably.

The first, most obvious distinction between the two is in their registers of operation. While the first term registers a (somewhat nebulous) social, cultural and religious identity, the second refers to a set of (equally nebulous, mainly religious) practices. In general the practitioners of the second are referred to as and through the first. At this level of generalisation the terms are as clear as they can be, given their nebulousness; and in contemporary everyday usage they usually serve to establish their objects of reference with some intelligibility. The problems with these terms arise when a more specific applicability is sought. Even in everyday usages for instance, the term 'Hindu' may be invoked legitimately to identify a non-practitioner of 'Hinduism'; conversely, many practices otherwise identified as belonging to 'Hinduism' may be observed amongst subjects otherwise classified as non-Hindu (Jain, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, etc), as exemplified by the pervasiveness of the

caste system. One kind of nebulosity in the two terms then arises specifically in and through their relation to each other. That is, slippage and blurring occurs in and through two related processes: in the conversion of a set of practices into an identity ('Hinduism' → 'Hindu'), and in the converse process of the association of an identity with a set of practices ('Hindu' → 'Hinduism'). The questions that arise then are, Are these slippages analogous to each other, perhaps even derivative of each other? More pertinently, what historical and ideological circumstances permit such slippage, and why? Most importantly, what are the implications of this slippage? Addressing these questions will require a closer conceptual and historical examination of the two terms.

3.4 The History of 'Hindu'

The Pre-Christian Era to the Tenth Century AD

Conceptually, the term 'Hindu' is arguably the older of the two terms.² Heinrich von Stietencron argues that it was originally a Persian corruption of the original term 'Sindhu', for the river Indus, so named by the settlers around it. It was used to designate 'the people of Hind, the Indians', and was in use as early as the sixth century BC (von Stietencron, 1995). It re-entered Indian languages in this corrupted form primarily as a geographical indicator for the peoples around or east of the Indus: 'Hindustan means simply "Indian land" not "the land of (the religious community of) the Hindus".' (Habib, 1997) It is important to note three points here. One, the sense of difference or alterity that is inscribed into the term 'Hindu' from its origins is not self-identificatory, but generated heterogeneously, i.e., from the perspective of the Persians. At this point, the term is in use primarily as a geographically specifiable difference with some ethnic connotations. Two, the geographical specificity of the Indus was important only insofar as it marked a border and an ethnic separation. Thus, other points that could constitute such a 'border' or locus of interface between peoples – namely, ports and trading centres across the subcontinent, but especially along the western coast – also saw the deployment of this term. Three, it is clear that this ethno-geographical sense of the term did not possess religious connotations, applying equally to practitioners of Buddhism, Jainism and the loose combination of Vedic-Brahmanical-Sramanical³ practices that was to evolve into what would later be called 'Hinduism'.

Before we explore this transformation of a geographical sense into an ethnic and subsequently a religious identity, it must be noted that, in the period from the sixth century BC to the eighth century AD, the subcontinental region saw the rise and fall of several large empires and dynasties, including those of the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Chalukyas and the Cholas in the south. These empires bound the region with varying degrees of political unity, but were not established as specifically 'Hindu' empires, suggesting that the 'Hindu' identity was not as yet a politically formed one, even if in this period it was accruing some social distinctiveness. Even subsequently, when the empires fragmented into smaller kingdoms and warring princedoms, economic regions 'unified by a specific material culture' were distinct from regions with commonalities of religious or doctrinal practices (to the extent that such regions existed), but both were non-coincident with territorial boundaries of political formations (Kaviraj 1997: 229). The 'Hindu' identity, such as it was, was thus not evident as a political identity demarcating a specific regional or demographic constituency – and this remained largely true well into the medieval period and under Mughal rule. To the extent that there was a politicisation of religious identities, it was primarily in the tussle for power between the Buddhist and the Brahmanical traditions that lasted through the entire period from the sixth century BC to the eighth century AD, with the eventual triumph of the Brahmanical-Sramanical combine.

One question that emerges then, in the transformation of the term 'Hindu' from a simple geographical locator into an ethno-geographic identity with strong religious characteristics by the eighth century AD, is the extent to which this was also a growing process of self-identification as 'Hindu'. Such a process is implicit in arguing a transformation, whereby earlier identities – such as they were, of caste, sect, cult, language, region, profession, etc – were presumably subsumed under the overarching rubric of the term 'Hindu', generated through an 'outside' gaze. Such a self-identification would have been possible only in the sustained presence of that external and heterogenising gaze (transported, as it were, from the western side of the Indus). While the sub-continental kingdoms and empires did receive much attention (both hostile and friendly) from the north and the north-west, a sustained, self-proclaimedly and insistently heterogeneous presence is difficult to identify till the early medieval period and the establishment of the Afghan and Turkish dynasties on

north Indian soil. Romila Thapar notes that by the third century AD, there were 'quite considerable numbers of strangers in the port towns and trade centres of the sub-continent', but goes on to add that 'many of these people had become Indianized [sic] in habits and behaviour' (1966: 121). She identifies two important processes that occurred in this interaction. One was the conversion to Buddhism of large numbers of the 'strangers' (Greeks, Kushanas, Shakas) as they sought to be assimilated into Indic societies. Conversion to 'Hinduism' was not an easy option, because of the technical difficulty in establishing caste.⁴ The other process was reactive, as social laws became rigid in the face of the encounter with the 'strangers', in order that caste purity could be maintained: 'the theories of Manu, the patriarch who is the traditional author of the *Manava Dharmashastra* or Law Code, written sometime during the first two centuries AD, were now quoted as the authority on social laws.' (ibid.) Thus, there is evidence of a distinct socio-cultural-religious discourse based on alterity or difference gaining in definition in this period; however, there is no evidence that it was becoming explicitly identified as 'Hindu'. That is, the Brahmanical-Sramanical traditions, even as they grew in distinction from the Buddhist and Jain traditions, were not as yet identified as exclusively 'Hindu', because the term still encompassed the latter two traditions, and more importantly, was still primarily ethno-geographic in its connotations. Further, even within the Brahmanical-Sramanical traditions, there is much evidence of contention and conflict between diverse sects and cults, and violence was not uncommon, particularly between the Vaishnavite, Shaivite and Shakti sects. As religious identities, these were more consciously defined than the larger, more nebulous identity known as 'Hindu'. In sum, there is little evidence to suggest a strongly self-conscious and avowedly 'Hindu' identity prior to the medieval period, and certainly none to suggest it was a political one.

However, it is important to note that notions of community as being defined along religious lines, were already taking shape. Uma Chakravarti, in her path-breaking essay, 'Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State' (1993) has shown how, instrumental to this process was the formation and entrenchment of caste lines, based on notions of purity, particularly in the period immediately after the Rig-Vedic period. She shows how the safeguarding of communal purity comes to be sited on women's bodies, and maintained through the control of women's bodies and sexualities. In other words, she iden-

tifies the fundamental mechanism through which gender and caste come to be central to the formation of (religious) communities in early Indian history, which is, through the control and regulation of women's bodies. However, although her work addresses the early historical period, Chakravarti goes on to note that '[t]he structure [of Brahmanical patriarchy] that came into being has shaped the ideology of the upper castes and continues to be the underpinning of beliefs and practices even today.' (Chakravarti 1993: 579) She writes,

... [A] preliminary analysis of Brahmanical patriarchy in early India reveals that the structure of social relations which shaped gender was reproduced by achieving the compliance of women. The compliance itself was produced through a combination of consent and coercion. (Chakravarti 1993: 585)

She hastens to clarify, in a footnote, that she is not arguing for a 'monolithic development of patriarchy', because of evidence indicating a diversity of material cultures, regions and groups (Chakravarti 1993: 585). This is an important observation, that has direct bearing on subsequent chapters of this thesis. Here, however, I will confine myself to continuing to trace the evolution of the term 'Hindu' as an identity category.

Unity and Heterogeneity

The issue of heterogeneity noted by Chakravarti is an important one and will be returned to shortly. For now it is sufficient to note that this sense of 'Hindu' – as incorporating the Buddhist, Jain, and the Brahmanical-Sramanical traditions – had by the third century AD, become current in the ports and trading centres across the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent. To the extent it sustained independent of regional and other variations, it was transmitted during and through the expansion and disintegration of the great pre-Mughal empires, especially during the Gupta period (4th – 6th c. AD), across the northern and eastern regions, including and beyond the Bengal region, and even beyond the northern borders of the Deccan kingdoms in the peninsular south. The regions south of the Deccan remained substantially autonomous of the northern incursions, even as late as during Mughal rule. Such political autonomy however, belies the equally substantial extent to which social, cultural and economic interaction, exchange and transmission took place and continued. Several related factors contributed to this transmission: one,

the permeability of land borders and the continuous, albeit incremental migration of populations from region to region, but mainly south and eastward, carrying with them the concepts and identities of the north. Two, the advance of trade and trade routes into every pocket of the sub-continent, linking the different regions economically; arguably these also served to carry the identity of 'Hindu', in the contact they bore to the world beyond the subcontinent. Three, the spread of Sanskrit and the imposition of Brahmanical-Sramanical customs and values: Vedic Brahmanism had managed to establish itself across the southern region from at least the third century AD, and brought with it the spread of the Sanskrit and Prakrit languages and literatures. As Romila Thapar notes,

'No doubt the [southern] kings felt that to conform with the Vedic pattern would bestow a higher status on them. The Brahmins' claim to being in communication with the gods, and their supposed ability to manipulate the unseen powers, was more convincing to the Tamil kings than the claims of the indigenous priests.' (1966: 184-5)

These regions were also strongly influenced by the southward movement of the *Bhagavata* and *Pashupata* cults (worshipping Shiva and Vishnu respectively) as well as by Buddhist and Jain proselytising missions from the north, and the latter especially established strong roots in the south. Together they brought with them many of the debates and controversies of the north, not only between the different sects, but also between these Brahmanical-Sramanical and the Buddhist and Jain systems.⁵ Four, the consolidation of these traditions in the south was also effectively the consolidation – at least among the upper castes – of a sense of an extended community that ranged over the entire subcontinent. The notion of a common land or terrain had existed at least notionally from the time of the great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.⁶ Gerald Larson, without specifying the period, notes that,

In ancient times the Indians [sic] themselves referred to their country as Bhārata-varṣa (...“the land of the Sons of Bharata,” a legendary ruler), Jambudvīpa (the “continent of Jambu” or of the rose-apple tree), Āryāvartta (the “abode of the noble or excellent ones”) and Brahmāvartta (the “abode of the Brahmanical people”). (1997: n. 23, p. 312)

Both epics repeatedly use these names to refer to the land and its peoples – but Larson's note reveals that three of the four epithets – Bhārata-varṣa, Āryāvartta, Brahmāvartta – register a common people as

much as a common land, as well as the fact that it is a strongly upper-caste and proprietary conception of the unity of this land and its peoples.

The Buddhist and Jain traditions did emerge as and in strong opposition to the Vedic Brahmanical order, and especially to its emphasis on caste, but by the end of the first millennium they were rapidly giving ground before the growing dominance of the latter across the subcontinent, even though it remained riven by sectarian tensions. *Bhakti* or devotionalist movements, stressing the accessibility of god through devotion and love and without the Brahmin intermediary, rose in southern India in the seventh century AD, predominantly in Tamil. Strongly influenced by Sramanical and Buddhist and Jain forms of worship, they remained adherent to the Vedic deities but were essentially against the caste system and the exclusivity of Sanskrit learning, thus also challenging Brahmanical hegemony. By the fourteenth century AD they had spread to and across many parts of northern India, reversing the direction of the spread of Brahmanical hegemony. The import of this lies not just in the challenge to Brahmanical orthodoxy but also in the ways in which these counter-traditions sought to weave Vedic ideas and beliefs with regional and local ones, opening the latter to the former. So, while 'they differed widely depending upon time, place, social roots and types of worship' (Simeon, n.d.) they nevertheless succeeded in establishing a pan-subcontinental populist religious pattern of worship that transmitted through the vernacular languages instead of Sanskrit, and that was accessible to the low as well as the high castes. But to the extent that they remained tied to the Vedic traditions, they remained ineffective in dismantling the Brahmanical (especially caste) order, which therefore could maintain a degree of socio-political dominance.

The Assertion of Brahmanical Dominance

Perhaps the most important force in ensuring this dominance was the teachings of Sankara (the first Sankaracharya, whose dates are traditionally set at 788-820 AD), the Brahmin Vedantic scholar-theologian from Kerala, who established the *Advaita* or monistic tradition of philosophy. Sankara's aim was specifically to counter the challenges to Brahmanism from the Buddhist-Jain movements, heterodox sects and the *Bhakti* traditions. He set about this by philosophically assimilating many of the elements of Sramanical heterodoxy into dominant Vedic-Brahmanical persuasions, arguing among other things, that the world of perception was

illusory and true reality could be revealed only through strict asceticism; by turning against unnecessary rituals and rites, and insisting on simplification of the forms of worship; and by travelling extensively across the subcontinent, engaging brilliantly in debates with priests, scholars and philosophical schools, spurring new speculative thinking and converting many to his version of Vedantic⁷ Brahmanism. But most importantly he set up four *mutts* (religious centres or monasteries) in the north (Badrinath in Uttar Pradesh), south (at Sringeri in Karnataka), east (Dwaraka in Gujarat) and west (at Puri in Orissa) of the subcontinent, thereby providing for the first time an organisational and institutional concreteness as well as a sense of geographical extensiveness and unity to the new orthodoxy he was establishing. Taken together, the southward spread of Buddhism-Jainism and the Brahmanical-Sramanical traditions, the northward spread of the Bhakti movements, and later, the consolidation of Sankaracharya's Advaitic Vedantic Brahmanism, all served to establish a sense of an organically whole and territorially defined religious entity, the different elements of which were often in conflict yet remained integrated – largely around the issue of the acceptance of or opposition to caste, but also, and significantly, through a territorial integrity that had as much to do with the dynamics and directions of trade and migration as with ideational and philosophical claims. Thus, by the turn of the millennium and by the time of the arrival of Islamic cultural influences in the subcontinent, while there still was no avowedly and definitively 'Hindu' religious identity, *there was in place an integrated set of philosophico-religious positions and debates, socio-religious practices like caste, and politico-religious consolidations, specifically of Vedic-Brahmanical-Sanskritic dominance, across the geographical terrain of the subcontinent.* It must be noted that Buddhism and Jainism were and remained distinct from this religious entity, though it ceaselessly strove to incorporate them. The term 'Hindu' does not define this religion as yet though. 'Hindu' as a term was still invoked (if at all) even in the twelfth century AD as inclusive of Buddhism and Jainism, indicating the persistence of the ethno-geographic sense.⁸ So, while the grounds for the transformation of this ethno-geographic sense into a specifically religious one – registering the singular (if ill-defined) religious entity described above – are now well in place, the transformation itself, though possibly associatively already underway, is yet to emerge in full historical clarity.

3.5 Islamic Rule and the 'Hindu' Identity

Harjot Oberoi notes that 'at one stage the word Hindu as an ethno-geographic category came to englobe all those who lived in India, without ethnic distinction. It was only under the Muslim rulers of India that the term *began to gain* a religious connotation' (cited in Lorenzen (2003); emphasis added). Islamic contact with the subcontinent can be dated to at least the seventh century AD, through Arab trade along the western coast. Some Arab military incursions into the regions of Sind and Gujarat did occur in the eighth century AD but it was the invasions of the Turko-Afghan Ghaznavid state in the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD that signalled the beginnings of Islamic conquest in the region. Larson notes accurately that, for the first time since the Vedic period,

it was not simply an invading force to be absorbed or accommodated...into the dense and rich subcontinental civilization. This time an entire civilization, at least as dense and rich as the subcontinental, was making an appearance, and the encounter and accommodation would be exceedingly fruitful, albeit also deeply frustrating and painful. (Larson, 1997: 104)

Islamic rule dominated the subcontinent from the thirteenth century onward, with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanates (1206-1526), followed by the Mughals (1526-1858),⁹ till the establishment of British rule. This Islamic presence was predominantly Turkish and Afghan in origin, although there were large numbers of Arabs and Persians too, especially amongst the ruling elite in the north. From the fourteenth century onward, a series of Muslim Sultanates were established in the south; but these were established by Turkish rulers (the *Bahmani* dynasty, for instance) as distinct from the Afghani Mughals, and declared themselves independent of the Mughals. It is significant that none of these regimes were bound by religion: the history of the period is replete with conflicts between the different dynasties, between imperial and regional Muslim powers, and with strong evidence of social hierarchies maintained between the 'originally' Islamic populace and 'native' convertees. Further, there are records of 'Hindu' generals and soldiers fighting in the Mughal armies, and conversely, of Muslim troops in the armies of the regional 'Hindu' princes. Yet Islamic practices and the Muslim populace in general successfully resisted being absorbed into the Vedic-Brahmanical social order, even if a gradual process of mutually tolerant cohabitation, assimilation and synthesis did take place. As such Islam remained defini-

tively heterogeneous to the spectrum of practices and beliefs earlier identified as having consolidated across the subcontinent.¹⁰ The strength of this heterogeneity is evident in the Brahmanical-Sanskritic literature of this period, in which Muslims are referred to by a host of terms that all index them as ‘foreigners’ – *tajika*, *turaska*, *mleccha*, *parasika*, *yavana*, *hammira*, and *saka*. ‘Mleccha’ in particular is interesting, because it was and remains

the term used for those who were outside caste society or did not observe caste regulations. So scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Muslims, Christians, all these are described as mleccha, although, both among Muslims and among Christians there is a specific observance of caste, nevertheless they are regarded as being outside caste. (Thapar, n.d.)

Caste then was integral to the way in which Muslims were perceived. Given the centrality of caste to the existing religious entity, dominated as it was by Vedic-Brahmanical ideas and themes, and given the coherence, sophistication as well as the definitive religious self-identification of Islam, it was perhaps inevitable that the historical heterogeneity associated with the term ‘Hindu’ would involute at this point. To recall the point made earlier, the term ‘Hindu’ had been created as signifying alterity, from the early Persian point of view. That condition of alterity was now gradually becoming articulated in specifically religious terms, and in those, specifically in the rigid and intractable lexicon of caste (‘mleccha’), from the Brahmanical point of view. By the fourteenth century references to ‘Hindu’ as an identity claimed by, rather than being externally attributed to, the upper caste order, are evident in the literature.¹¹ Most of the references indicate an intent to differentiate types of rulers (‘Hindu’ sultan, rather than ‘Musalman’/ ‘Turk’/ ‘Yavana’/etc) but the very act of claiming the ruler as ‘Hindu’ in opposition to the explicitly defined religious identity of the Muslim sultans, intensified the process of perceiving difference along religious lines. Peter van der Veer also notes several instances in this period of state policies being actively engaged in forming religiously defined communities – some of Aurangzeb’s (1618-1707) policies, the prince of Jaipur, Jai Singh II’s (1688-1743) ‘attempts to create a society based on Hindu ideology’, etc. (vd Veer, 1994: 32). In other words, the steadfastness with which Islam was perceived to resist being absorbed, intensified the lines of alterity, impelling an inversion of the gaze whereby the terms and boundaries of the earlier nebulous socio-

religious entity began to lucubrate in and as the religion of a 'Hindu' identity. Thus, in the period roughly after the twelfth century AD the ethno-geographic definition of 'Hindu' increasingly transformed into a religious identity. By the time of the renowned saint-poets of the sixteenth century – Namadev, Pipa, Kabir and Raidas – all of who sought a religious space independent of both Islam and the 'Hindu' orders, the identification of the term 'Hindu' with that larger socio-religious entity is almost (but not yet definitively) complete. (Lorenzen 2003) This was to occur later, under British rule.

Of course, to represent the history of the term thus is in some ways a distortion. The social history of the period is extremely complex, and processes that appear clear in argumentation are not always so in fact. It is important to note here that these transformations in the significations of the term 'Hindu' should not be construed as suggesting that Islamic culture and social practices always remained alien to the subcontinent. The perception of Islam as heterogeneous was a necessary element in the gradual concretisation of a Hindu religious identity. But in actual historical fact, that perception, centred as it was on caste ideologies of inclusion and exclusion, originated from the small Brahmanical elite that interacted with the ruling Muslim elite and found insurmountable differences in religious doctrines and philosophy, generating a long-lasting mutual suspicion and hostility (Larson, 1997: 112). It is not that this elite was blind to the myriad ways in which Islam was taking social and cultural root in the subcontinent. By the sixteenth century, the synthesis of Islamic influences with existing forms of social and economic organisation as well as in music, architecture, language and religion were profound. In religion, the Sufi tradition was an offshoot of Islam with strong strains of meditation and mysticism that blended well with existing ascetic persuasions; *Bhakti* traditions of the period in particular were deeply influenced by these Islamic practices, while Sikhism emerged specifically as an amalgamation of *Bhakti* and Islamic themes.¹² The very awareness of such assimilation however, probably alarmed the Brahmanical elite into an intensified obsession with caste differentiation as a marker of religious purity and difference. Thapar (quoted above) noted the penetration of the caste system into Islamic social organisation. But the gradual replication of caste hierarchies in social practices within Indic Islam, while itself an index of the levels at which assimilation was taking place, was simply an instance of the ruling elite appropriating existing mechanisms of exer-

cising social power, not an example of submission to the Brahmanical order. What is perhaps most significant in these developments is the incipience of a two-fold discourse, elaborating, on the one hand, processes of naturalisation and nativisation whereby Islamic thought and culture disseminated along with Muslim populations across the subcontinent; and, on the other hand, a theory of heterogeneity and intractable alterity, that appropriated the identity 'Hindu' to specifically exclude the Islamic. The first of these was the articulation of a socio-cultural synthesis, however uneven in its distribution and content, that was occurring almost invisibly, unobtrusively; the second elaboration was to gain in force and achieve the status of a historical truth especially under British rule, when the identity 'Hindu' – not as yet explicitly religious – extended into the label for a religion: 'Hinduism'.

3.6 'Hindu' Identity and the European Impact

European presence in India of course pre-dates British imperialism by many centuries, going back to the Greek and Roman visitations of the pre-Christian era and into the first century of first millennium of the Christian era. The arrival of St. Thomas on Indian shores around 50 AD marks the beginnings of Christianity in India. The next major phase of European contact with the subcontinent began with the arrival of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in the late fifteenth century. European contact in this phase was at several levels, beginning with trade and missionary activity, developing into economic and military conquest and culminating in administrative control of the entire subcontinent by the nineteenth century. An important reason for this was the decline of the Mughal Empire, which by the eighteenth century had fragmented into a conglomeration of provinces that barely acknowledged the authority of the emperor. British rule in the subcontinent is conventionally dated to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, with the defeat of one such provincial potentate, Nawab Siraj-ud-daula of Bengal, at the hands of Robert Clive of the British East India Company, leading an army of British troops and Indian sepoys. The British East India Company established a complex administrative and bureaucratic structure over the next hundred years, battling and defeating other European colonial projects – namely, the French, Dutch and Portuguese – as it grew. While supported by the Crown (with British troops for instance), the Company remained essentially a private enterprise till the rebellion of Indian sepoys in 1857 al-

most succeeded in returning Mughal rule to Delhi. Following the quelling of the rebellion, the administration of the subcontinent was taken over directly by the British imperial state, which then ruled till the Partition and independence in 1947.

What is of relevance here is that during this period, the 'Hindu' identity was being examined, elaborated on and recorded, first, by early European travellers and later, through a series of interactions between native intellectuals (read Brahmins) on the one hand and Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and Orientalist scholars on the other. It is important to note here that the second and pertinent phase of European perceptions and understandings of the religions of the subcontinent begin in the sixteenth century, in the Mughal period, when 'Hindu' as a religious identity is accreting some socio-religious senses but has not yet consolidated into a defined religious identity. But these indistinct accretions were sufficient for early missionaries and travellers to be concerned more with the 'Hindu' identity than with Islam. In the course of colonial administration, it became necessary in the later half of the nineteenth century for the British to examine the Muslim community in almost equal detail; but the religion of the 'Hindus' remained the focus of attention even later, for most Orientalists and administrators. One reason for this was obviously that by the time European explorers arrived in the subcontinent in the sixteenth century, Europe was already familiar with Islam from the time of the Crusades, but had little or no acquaintance with the religious forms and formations of the Indian subcontinent. But equally important was the fact that the plethora of deities, practices, codes, systems of thought and intricate socio-religious organisation defied easy identification and categorisation.

The Emergence of 'Hinduism'

Lorenzen (2003) argues that the early travellers and missionaries from at least the sixteenth century record descriptions of religious practices – sometimes from observation, sometimes through communication with native interlocutors, sometimes both – that substantially match the observations in similar, more carefully researched work undertaken by later Orientalist scholars and administrators. Most of this work arrived at a distillation that Lorenzen refers to as the 'standard model' of Hinduism, which is essentially the Vedic-Brahmanical model. By implication then, the socio-religious entity observed earlier as having spread across the

subcontinent was, according to Lorenzen, identified as this standard model by European writers, but without initially naming it 'Hinduism'. Two points must be noted here: one, that many of the early records were written by non-British (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese) missionaries; and two, it was by the nineteenth century that both Indian and European intellectuals, actively engaged in attempting to define this religion, established it as 'Hinduism' or 'the religion of the Hindus'. Lorenzen offers this diversity of intellectual activity all arriving at the same conclusion as proof positive of the existence of 'Hinduism' prior to colonialism (and therefore that it is not a British colonial construct), even if it wasn't earlier named as such. The weaknesses of this otherwise convincing argument are that first, it projects 'Hinduism' backward, assuming it to be a finished, more or less unchanging religious entity from the later Vedic period to the nineteenth century;¹³ and second, it assumes for the most part that the scholarly work on 'Hinduism' in each of these cases was an objective, academic enterprise. When Lorenzen does recognise that this is not the case, it is only to dismiss it, giving rise to further problems with his argument (as we shall momentarily see).

In fact, of course, the discourse on Hinduism has never been an innocent one; the observers each had different reasons for undertaking the study of Hinduism, and perhaps more importantly, brought to their examination of this socio-religious entity certain preconceptions of what constituted a religion in the first instance. The earliest European missionaries were Italian, and, as Lorenzen himself notes, they rarely used the term 'Hindu', preferring instead the term 'gentile' or 'Gentoo'¹⁴ as it came to be anglicised. The term meant 'pagan', and did not refer to any specific religious formation or system so much as serve as a contrast with 'Christian' and 'moor', or Muslim. Lorenzen dismisses their perception of the 'gentoo' religions as diverse and heterogeneous, as motivated by missionary considerations; he is particularly disingenuous in one passage that bears quoting at length:

What could be more convenient from a Christian point of view than the idea that Hinduism was not really a single coherent religion at all, that it was not viewed as such by its followers, and that it was instead a heterogeneous collection of miscellaneous sects, beliefs and idolatrous practices?

Since many later colonial scholars were also committed Christians and, even if not, had little good to say about Hindu beliefs and practices, it is not surprising that they sometimes adopted similar views. (2003)

Lorenzen then proceeds to insist that what they were *actually* referring to, without wanting to acknowledge it, was a unified coherent religious system, 'Hinduism'. The further problems with his argument (apart from those already noted) lie then first, in his dismissal of some descriptions and studies as motivated, while uncritically accepting others, because they serve to reinforce his case that a recognizable religious entity 'Hinduism' did in fact exist prior to colonial times; and second, in claiming that the two kinds of studies are nevertheless actually referring to the same phenomenon.¹⁵ The point here is of course not whether there was or was not such a unification or coherence; we have already established that by the sixteenth century there was an unnamed socio-religious entity, evident more as a set of dynamic and interactive relations rather than a structured and/or institutionalised form, that stretched across the sub-continent, and that was still barely differentiable from the Buddhist, Jain and Parsi religions. The point is that identifying this with the ethnogeographic identity 'Hindu' (itself not entirely clear), and then projecting a nineteenth century construction, 'Hinduism', backward, as referring to *the* religion of this identity, involves a series of slippages between the terms that are conceptually unwarranted. The implications of these observations will become clearer shortly; for now, it is necessary to continue tracing the historical trajectory of the terms 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism'.

Colonial British Perceptions and the Construction of 'Hinduism'

Later Europeans (namely the British) sought to identify the religion of the 'Hindus' not just for religious reasons, as with the missionaries, but for administrative, ideological and political reasons. The extensive work of Orientalists like William Jones, Max Mueller and Monier-Williams, while important in terms of making accessible in European languages the literature and thought of ancient India, sought to avoid the evident complexity and diversity of the contemporary religious forms they encountered by referring back to a putative, more defined and structured classical religion, which had turned corrupt and decadent. This was useful for the British administration as well, in that it could identify communities demographically, for administrative purposes (law and order, taxation,

etc). John Zavos (2000: 32) demonstrates that William Jones' work in particular was highly determined by a text-centred religious perspective, because of which he sought to establish the primary 'Hindu' religious texts that could serve as the law books for the community – an intent that was to have far-reaching consequences. Since much of the information was acquired through Brahmanical interlocutors, it also served to consolidate a relation of power with a local elite, whose discourse on the 'Hindu religion' could then be officialised.¹⁶ Larson describes one important strand of European response to the growing awareness of India's religious history as

highly critical of traditional Hindu and Muslim life, especially such practices as the treatment of women generally, widow-burning, child marriage and polygamy, female infanticide and untouchability, all of which practices had developed through the long centuries of Muslim domination and of tense interactions between Hindus and Muslims in which traditional customs on all sides had become in-grown, rigid and defensive. (Larson, 1997: 124-5)

This led on the one hand to an elite response – trained in traditions of western rationalism – that accepted the critique and propounded reform, leading to the great socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth century; and on the other hand to a deepening of 'the orthoprax caste-oriented ritual Hindu traditions of those middle and forward castes that did not accept Westernization' (Larson, 1997: 126). We had noted earlier the beginnings of the elaboration of a theory of heterogeneity and intractable alterity that had begun under Mughal rule; arguably, it took the interaction of European administrators and scholars with the Brahmanical elite, to concretise this through labelling this upper caste version of religion 'Hinduism'.

Significantly, the term 'Hinduism' was probably coined by an Indian, not a European: the earliest known usage is by Hindu social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy, in two English language texts of 1816 and 1817 respectively, that critiqued some aspects of the 'Hindu religion' as it was then being mapped out (cited in Lorenzen, 2003)¹⁷ Rammohan Roy's position as a member of the Bengali elite, a pioneer in the reform movements of the nineteenth century who was keen to correct various social ills that he perceived to be part of the decadent contemporary form of Hinduism, is well documented.¹⁸ Along with the fact that the

word appears in English language texts, it confirms the argument here that the epithet 'Hinduism' developed as a product of the interaction between the native elite and the colonisers. However, the term was popularised by European writings, such as Alexander Duff's *India and India Missions: Sketches of the Gigantic System of Hinduism Both in Theory and Practice* in 1839, or Monier-Williams' *Hinduism* of 1877. All of these, including Roy's initial usage, consistently referred the term to the Vedic-Brahmanical model of religion that was actively practised by upper castes across the subcontinent, but either did not acknowledge the multitude of socio-religious practices of the tribes and lower castes or footnoted them as variants of the mainstream model. John Zavos cites Alfred Lyall commenting in 1884 that popular Hinduism was "a whole vegetation of cognate beliefs sprouting up in every stage of growth beneath the shadow of the great orthodox traditions and allegories of Brahminism." (Zavos, 2000: 33)

By the middle of the nineteenth century, various Hindu reform movements also began to discuss and debate the 'Hindu' identity and 'Hinduism', particularly in reaction to the sense that the religion was a degenerate one with a classical and pristine past. The directions of reform that they advocated did not coincide, and often clashed; but the fact of an intense discussion and debate over what constituted 'Hinduism' and who its true adherents were, is an overwhelming indication of the semantic instability of the term and of its continuing elaborations. Perhaps most importantly, it is in this period that the various proponents of the diverse elaborations of 'Hinduism' began to *organise* themselves as socio-religious entities, many of them deliberately along the lines of Christianity and Islam, seeking through such imitation to organisationally realise and stabilise a definitive 'Hinduism'. Thus for instance the formation of the Brahmo Samaj (1828), the Calcutta Dharma Sabha (1831) the Prarthana Samaj (1867), the Tadiya Samaj (1870), the Arya Samaj (1875), among many others. Not all of these organisations were upper caste, as in the case of Jyotirao Phule's lower caste organisation, the Satyashodak Samaj (1873), but the logic of formation remained the same. The Satyashodak Samaj was formed in response to upper caste organisation, but served a similar purpose – community definition and organisation – except along caste lines. This again was to have far-reaching consequences. A very significant, related development at this time was the emergence of the discourse of the three periods of Indian history, devel-

oped first by James Mill in his *A History of British India*, which came out in 1818. The argument here was that subcontinental history could be divided into three periods, the Hindu, Muslim and British periods. The disingenuousness with which Mill secularised the last has been commented on, and needs no elaboration here.¹⁹ The importance of this discourse however, lies in the way in which it presents the Hindu period as the 'Golden Age' of 'Hinduism', and the Muslim period as the time when it sank into decay and stupor, implying thereby that the period of Islamic rule was responsible for the current decadence of Hindu civilisation. This interpretation of Indian history was to have a powerful impact particularly on upper caste sensibilities, because it framed a simultaneous discourse of an erstwhile Hindu supremacy, a contemporary Hindu weakness and decadence, and Muslim culpability for the same.²⁰ Mill's intent of course had been to promote '[s]tate-sanctioned textual Hinduism...as the antithesis of contemporary degenerate Hinduism.' (Zavos, 2000: 34). But the sense of absolute alterity between Muslim and Hindu already gaining shape in pre-colonial times, was emphatically confirmed by this discourse, setting in play a communal logic that was fundamental to the evolution of community organisation in the nineteenth century.²¹

The Impact of 1857

One important and immediate consequence of these developments, developed in its turn into an independent factor that contributed substantially to the subsequent directions of the construction of 'Hinduism'. This was the war of 1857, variously understood as a mutiny, a rebellion and as the first war of independence. Commentators as historically apart and diverse as Vincent Smith (1981 [1958]: 664-9) and John Zavos (2000: 34) have equally noted that the main support for the war against the forces of the East India Company came from the conservative elite of both the 'Hindu' and the Muslim variety (especially the princes and nawabs smarting under British rule), threatened by the growing economic and military power of the Company, and upset by its reformist attitudes and policies (the contempt for local history and culture evinced by writers like James Mill and Macaulay, the ban on sati and child marriage, the active encouragement to Christian missionaries, etc). The report that the immediate cause of the uprising was religious²² only served to accentuate the sense that the Company had not taken local religious sentiments seriously enough. At the same time the reformist tendencies

amongst specially the Hindu elite were wary of sympathising with the rebels. What this elite feared was the return to Muslim rule promised by the rebellion. Dilip Simeon notes that

The conservatism of the aristocratic leaders of the rebellion of 1857 was more organic - theirs was not so much religious revivalism as political nostalgia. The attitude of the Bengali 'bhadrak' (gentlefolk) of that time was far more complex - simultaneously orthodox and pro-British (that is, pro-modernisation), that marked the beginnings of communalist revivalism. (n.d.)

When the British government took over the administration of India from the Company after the quelling of the rebellion in 1858, it therefore began a deliberate policy of communal representation. Through this it sought to maintain channels of communication with the different religious communities, as a sign of its respect for their religious sentiments. In doing so, it is important to note that it was responding as much to European Christian missionary demands that the state stay neutral, as to 'Hindu' and Muslim sensitivities, thus bringing a particularly modern sensibility to bear on the issue. (vd Veer 2000) Such a sensibility was premised on the notion of the sanctity of equality of identities, and fundamentally influential on the specific form that political identities would take in the subcontinent. As Sudipta Kaviraj has argued, the nineteenth century (especially its second half) is marked by a change in the mode of politics. The British state introduced three interferences in the existing political system: 1) the language of the new ontology of the social world: rationalistic, with new definitions of individuals, property and society. 'It's unprecedented enterprise of mapping and counting through censuses and surveys suggested and provided a new way of being in a new type of social world, with enormous political consequences for public action.' 2) It actively encouraged reform, 'not merely introducing individually significant alterations of the social order....but in establishing the principle that the state had the authority to do such things, a principle without precedent in Indian social history.' 3) Finally, it sought to weaken the power of the nationalist struggle by finding 'unexceptionably noble principles of political morality' to divide it: 'the encouragement of the idea that religious groups could not live together, and despite democratic constitutionalism, a religious minority would always be maltreated by the majority.' (Kaviraj 1997: 231)²³ Inevitably, subsequent articulations of 'Hinduism' and the 'Hindu' identity began to interchange, as the diverse

socio-religious organisation and groups (both Hindu and Muslim) sought to be the representative voice of the religious community. The point to note is that it is in this development precisely – in the gradual establishment of a politics of identity and a regime of religious representation – that a still nebulous socio-religious identity ('Hindu') completed its transformation into a religious identity ('Hinduism'): the question 'what constitutes Hinduism?' now became crucial to answering the question 'who will speak on behalf of the Hindus?' and vice versa. The centrality of representation to the nineteenth century evolution of the discourse on 'Hinduism' is what will not permit the kind of backward projection of the term that Lorenzen undertakes, and confirms the colonial construction of 'Hinduism'. We will discuss the issue of representation in our discussion of colonial state formation and the introduction of nationalist discourses in India, in greater detail, in the next chapter. Here too, we shall return to it in a moment; it is necessary first to identify some of the other consequences of the developments identified above.

3.7 Heterogeneity, 'Hinduism' and the 'Hindu' Identity

Several dichotomies (both synchronic and diachronic) that plague the term 'Hinduism' emerge from this history: Vedic-Brahmanical vs. popular, little traditions vs. great tradition, reformist vs. orthodox, classical vs. degenerate, revivalist vs. progressive, ancient vs. contemporary – and so on. It is now clear that they are all symptoms of a more fundamental historico-conceptual problem underlying the terms 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism'. The socio-religious entity that became increasingly visible as a pan-Indian phenomenon by the twelfth century AD was and remains a layered, multidimensional one, the different parts of which are engaged in a continuous, continuing and dynamic dialogue. It is true that the Vedic-Brahmanical-Sanskritic tradition did and continues to exercise an almost gravitational force, drawing the different discourses and practices inexorably into engagement with, if not submission to it. But this tradition has itself seen innumerable modifications to accommodate the heterodox and heterogeneous elements that it engages with. Further, apart from the fallacy of 'therefore' identifying it as the mainstay of a religion called 'Hinduism' – if not as 'Hinduism' itself – this essentially upper caste tradition is itself not unitary, has never been so, and was and is riven by numerous sects, sub-traditions, regional variants and philosophical schools, as we have seen. The integrated set of philosophico-religious,

socio-religious and politico-religious phenomena that evolved along diverse historical trajectories but through continuous interaction in that evolution, will go on to be termed 'Hinduism', while the term 'Hindu' will go on to be applied specifically to its assorted followers and practitioners. But here, the significance of 'Hinduism' as an anglicised neologism is of great import: it indicates the centrality of European conceptions of religion and religiosity to the perception, and later even the formation, of this religious identity. There was, prior to the colonial period, no equivalent term for the entity itself, or the almost limitless variety of practices it encompassed. 'Hindu *dharmā*' or 'Hindu *dharm*' has often been used as the Indian equivalent of 'Hinduism', but as Lorenzen himself admits, 'the terms "Hindu" and "Hindu *dharmā*" were never admitted to the premodern Sanskrit lexicon. The roughly equivalent term "*sanātana-dharmā*" [or "eternal dharma"] can, it is true, be traced back to the *Bhagavad-gīta* and the *Purānas*, but, as Wilhelm Halbfass and other scholars have argued, its precise meaning has always been ambiguous.' (2003) Even if we allow that 'Hindu *dharm*' may have roots in pre-colonial India, it is only with great inaccuracy that 'Hindu *dharm*' will allow translation as 'Hinduism' in the colonial period. Central to the problem then is the term '*dharm*' or '*dharmā*' and its translatability.

In the previous chapter, we noted some theoretical difficulties in examining Hinduism as a religion, specifically through examining understandings of what constitutes a religion. Here, some of the issues raised then become clearer. The religion itself, such as it was and is, is more than can be comprehended through the concept 'religion'. This is partly because it insistently intrudes into even the minutiae, the most intimate dimensions of most domains of social life – prescriptively and proscriptively (and it is useful here to recall the ways in which hegemonic systems operate from the 'molecular' to the national levels). But it is also because it intrudes diversely and variegatedly, complexly qualified and conditioned in its intrusions by specificities of region, caste, gender, marital status, age, profession, sect, form of worship, deity worshipped, and so on. The Brahmanical term for these prescriptive and proscriptive frames of reference was and remains *dharmā*, which as we noted defies direct translation, but indexes 'variously "law", "doctrine", "righteousness" and even "truth" in Buddhist contexts. The term *dharmā* also comes to have a technical meaning as the "constituents" or "force factors" that make up the phenomenal, empirical world' (Larson 1997: 70). Evidently, the term

allows for a vast range of applications and situation-specific interpretations, even as it paradoxically registers the inflexibility of a natural or cosmic law (“force factors” that make up the phenomenal, empirical world’ in Larson’s words). (In this sense, it is eminently hospitable to the naturalising tendencies inherent to the dynamics of hegemonic systems – a point I shall elaborate on in the next chapter). Taken together with the multiplicity of sects, cults, movements and doxas, the terrain covered by either ‘Hindu *dharmā*’ or by ‘Hinduism’ is almost boundlessly inclusive and at the same time fragmentary, unorganised and riven by innumerable lines of qualification and exclusion.²⁴ The nineteenth century political context saw an aggravation of this fractious terrain in the emergence of diverse organisations and socio-religious movements that – true to their genealogy – often sought a pan-Indian legitimacy, but invariably remained bound to the local determinants that had given rise to them in the first instance.²⁵ What is of significance here is that by the end of the nineteenth century these divisions were being seen as divisive of a Hindu constituency, a problem compounded by the separation of Hindu from Muslim as constituencies. That is, not only was the Hindu constituency an inchoate and fractious one, its chief political counterpart, the Muslim constituency, was increasingly seen as being more organised and coherent, and therefore more of a threat than its smaller size would have deemed it. This was of course not the case, since Muslim reform movements too were not united and singular. But one strand of Islamic reform did contribute to the problem: the modernist-separatists under Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who ‘believed that finally Muslims had to be separate from Hindus and Hindu civilization’ (Larson: 1997, 127). It is in this political and historical context that the early ideas of a Hindu nation – or ‘Hindutva’ as it was later coined – emerged.

3.8 The Emergence of Hindutva

The New Politics of Representation

We have so far not spoken of ‘Hindutva’ because it is of later coinage, arriving with VD Savarkar’s seminal text *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* published in 1923. But the grounds for the discourse on Hindutva are laid earlier, in the nineteenth century. The very title of Savarkar’s text makes clear that it is addressing, in 1923, a debate that was continuing from at least the time of Rammohun Roy, one hundred years earlier: the question

of the 'Hindu' identity was still far from a settled one. Part of the reason for this is that the very meanings of religion undergo a change in the course of the nineteenth century. As noted earlier, a new sanctity was given to representational politics by the British imperial state, as it sought to establish a hegemonic apparatus of governance – for which the participation and collaboration of the Indian elites was vital – after the war of 1857. For the new language of 'claims' and 'rights' introduced by this representational politics to work, the definition and substantiation of constituencies became singularly important – a process that inevitably gained articulation through attempts to define communities in religious terms. The contestations of the many socio-religious reform movements that sprang up configured a new kind of public space, one in which – precisely because religion was now becoming tied up to questions of representation and communal identity – issues of authenticity and of the domain of the religious began to get foregrounded.²⁶ Intimately imbricated in this was the gradually emerging question of the Indian nation. Peter van der Veer makes the important point that

Separation of Church and State does not lead to the decline of the social and political importance of religion. With the rise of the nation-state [in Europe] there is an enormous shift in what religion means. Religion produces the secular as much as vice versa, but this interaction can only be understood in the context of the emergence of nationalism in the 19th century. And, in the case of Britain, when we deal with the national we deal simultaneously with the imperial. (2000)

Arguably, the converse was also true – that is, dealing with the imperial necessarily implied dealing with questions of nationality and nationalism. The war of 1857 may be situated squarely in the middle of these emergent discourses of the nation: it reveals how deeply the 'Hindu' identity that was forming was imbricated in questions of nationhood. Its contradictory tendencies on questions of socio-religious critique and reform may have led to divergent opinions on the war itself; but it seems fairly clear that these tendencies (whatever their orientations) were framed – implicitly or explicitly – in the vocabulary and terms of nationalism. In short, the gradual articulation of 'Hinduism' as denoting a 'Hindu' religious identity (and conversely, that of the 'Hindu' identity denoting a putative religion, 'Hinduism') took place in and through the formation of a public space embedded in discourses – sometimes contradictory and rebellious, sometimes civil and cooperative – of communi-

ty and nationalism, inextricably linking them. 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' evolved as fundamental aspects of the national question – and inevitably so, given the historical forces at play in that period.²⁷

An important aspect of this development is the gradual introduction in the nineteenth century of hegemony as a form of rule and governance.²⁸ The shape that this hegemony took however was substantially qualified by the vagaries of the historical forces noted above, and by the consequent contradictions in the class through which the imperial state sought to operationalise this hegemony. Amongst the well-known instances of the ideological and discursive difficulties faced by early proto-nationalists is the case of novelist and Hindu ideologue Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, whose *Samya* (a tract on social equality published in 1879) decried the submission to British imperialism; three years later he was to argue that British rule was better than becoming the subjects of Muslim rule again, in his novel, *Anandamath*.²⁹ Chattopadhyay was part of a growing middle class of professionals including lawyers, writers, teachers, doctors, and civil servants. This class was to function, in British imperialist perceptions at least, as the medium for the planned hegemony, participating actively in the new public space, the limits of which were rapidly expanding under the impact of the new urbanisations,³⁰ growing literacy, increasing reach of the print media, and more translations (especially of religious literature) becoming available.³¹ It was to serve as the means by which, through representational politics, imperial hegemony was to 'trickle down' to the 'myriad forms of subaltern class discourse.' (Zavos: 2000, 11). As Zavos and others argue, this was not to be: this middle class, pan-Indian in its effects and range, transformed the arena of hegemony into one where it set the terms of the public space, often therefore manipulating and subverting the imperial hegemonic project itself – not so much with the intent to overthrow imperialism (as yet), as to consolidate its own class-caste definition and position. The classic example of such manipulation was in the manner in which members of the upper caste employed as census enumerators consistently sought to exclude the lower castes from the religious category 'Hindu'.³² The contradictory discursive and ideological tendencies experienced by this evolving middle class are again evident here: on the one hand the need to maintain its upper caste status, dominance and 'purity'; on the other, the increasingly sharp realisation that, in a transformed political context in which representational power was dependent on numbers, it was neces-

sary to acknowledge, engage with, accommodate and involve the lower castes as well.

Reform, Revival and Hindutva

The two examples noted above – of Chattopadhyay and the census takers – identify two of several lines of contradiction. The first divides the loyalty of this colonised middle class as it emerged in and through both resistance to and participation in imperial hegemonic power in the nineteenth century. British rule had introduced an important Archimedean point of critique into ‘Hindu’ self-perceptions, besides promoting the idea of a once glorious civilisation that had been saved from Muslim depredations by European might and enlightenment. But these very factors also threatened to undermine even decimate, through the force of their critique, the traditional order, and to stymie any possibility of recovery of that ‘glorious tradition’, through revival and reform. The colonial Indian intellectual class therefore had to negotiate both the critique and its object in articulating their position in relation to the hegemonic state.³³ The second line of contradiction is a more complex one: it is the locus of negotiations of the critique itself, and may be better understood as an aggregation of several lesser lines of contradiction. Among these are: 1) the lines between upper and lower castes, sometimes manifesting in and through caste organisations; 2) lines between sects, cults, philosophical schools – again often manifested through contesting organisations, and often as, 3) a division between revivalist and reform varieties; 4) between the pan-Indian elites linked by English, and the local elites rooted in Sanskrit and the vernacular – a division that was more or less the same as that between the reformers and the revivalists, but not entirely so;³⁴ 5) between Hindu and Muslim movements, whether of revival or of reform; and 6) between a secular nationalist agenda and a religious nationalist agenda. The last of these divides is a particularly significant one, in that it may be seen as the cumulative *effect* of all the other kinds of divides noted above. It is initially derivable from the fourth division noted above, that between the pan-Indian elite and the regional ones. As the discourse of nationalism deepened its roots in this middle class intellectual milieu, its two major themes of unity and range (or extent) were best articulated through the secular nationalist agenda. Its advantage lay in its position in the imperial hegemony: pan-Indian, perceived and promoted as more egalitarian than its native, Sanskritic equivalent (although in ac-

tual fact both were equally upper caste dominated – a feature that is of tremendous importance in understanding the growth trajectory of Hindu nationalism), programmatically inclusive of the Muslim community in its conception of the nation, and perhaps most importantly, greatly at ease with the discourse and vocabulary of the colonial state and its apparatus of governance, of which they were an essential part.

The members of this new elite...who accepted the notions of humanism, liberal democracy, and enlightenment rationalism became the vanguard for the nationalist movement which would eventually turn the new ideas of liberal democracy and enlightenment humanism against the very British rulers who had introduced the ideas in the first place. (Larson: 125)

This strand of nationalist thought and action was to result in the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. The moderate character of the organisation is revealed in the fact that it was *not* established as an anti-imperial organisation but one that sought to address the failings of the imperial state within its own terms. To this extent, at least in its early years, it actually had the permission of the British state, which saw it as capable of greater representativeness than its regional counterparts. But, to return to the parenthetical note above, this elite was never very removed from its revivalist cousin, precisely because of the dominance of upper caste Hindus in both – a factor that was to intensify Muslim distrust of the INC, and increasingly reinforce its own Hinduist tendencies, albeit never openly.

3.9 Conclusion

In the above arguments, we have tracked the dynamics by which the terms ‘Hindu’ and ‘Hinduism’ emerged historically, as concepts and as identities. It is evident that these terms consolidated into their current understandings under British rule, during the colonial period. In the ceaseless contestations and negotiations that occurred between imperialist discourses on the one hand, and native-modern and native-traditional elites, on the other, two broad understandings of nationalism began evolving. What linked these two understandings however, was their similar and continued emphasis on political control lying with the elite – in this instance, upper-class, upper-caste Hindus. The Indian National Congress came to be the umbrella organisation that tried to represent

both understandings of nationalism and both the sets of interests they represented.

The point to note here is that the INC was the first modern organisation to achieve a truly pan-Indian following and effectivity, precisely because of its programmatic inclusiveness. Even if it was fundamentally elitist in composition and orientation, dominated by upper caste Hindus, its focus on encountering empire on its own ideological terrain ensured that it operated on and in the site of the law and the state – which was pan-Indian. The Hindu organisations of the same period, in comparison, were too bound by regional, linguistic and caste factors, unable to arrive at any coherence of vision or purpose that would yield a pan-Indian unity, at least until the first Hindu Conference of 1909. This was to evolve by 1921 into the Hindu Mahasabha, the party that sought to speak as an openly and professedly Hindu voice. It emerged partly in response to perceptions of organised Muslim socio-political activity that urged a separate Muslim electorate and even a separate Muslim state; but it was also in response to the urgency of the various Hindu organisations to organise on a large scale, on the national scale. The Hindu Mahasabha may be said to be the first truly and avowedly national organisation of political Hinduism; but its constituency remained largely upper caste and middle class, well into the decades after independence. It is in this context that we must see the emergence of the concept and the epithet ‘Hindutva’, whose author, VD Savarkar went on to preside over the Hindu Mahasabha for seven consecutive years. The next chapter will examine these and subsequent developments in the history of the Hindu right.

Notes

¹ For a well-researched outline of the positions in the debate, see Lorenzen (2003). Lorenzen’s basic argument is that Hinduism is not a colonial construct but an identifiable set of religious practices and thought that can be traced back to the pre-Christian era, or at any rate, well before colonialism, even if it is not specifically identified as Hinduism. Lorenzen’s argument hinges on conceptually replacing Hindu with Hinduism quite unproblematically – a slippage that I will discuss in some detail below.

² The discussion that follows draws on several sources, including Thapar (1966), Larson (1997), von Stietencron (1995), van der Veer (2000), Habib (1997), and others.

³ 'Sramanical' refers to the cults of meditation-asceticism that initially separated from Brahmanical orthodoxy around the sixth century BC, following a pattern of devotionalism to a single, usually non-Vedic deity in worship. They were foundational to the emergence of the Buddhist and Jain traditions, and later to the emergence of the *bhakti* traditions in south India (see below). By the early part of the first millennium AD however they were already becoming incorporated into Brahmanical orthodoxies, as the non-Vedic deities gained in prominence in the latter. See Larson (1997: 66-75)

⁴ Thapar uses the term 'Hinduism' here somewhat carelessly, projecting a later construction onto the Brahmanical-Sramanical traditions then extant. She also notes the interesting fact that Greeks and Shakas were conferred the status of "fallen kshatriya" or warrior caste, because they possessed political power. (1966: 121)

⁵ It is instructive to note here that both Buddhism and Jainism had emerged in the second half of the first millennium BC, in reaction to Brahmanical orthodoxy, self-consciously identifying it as the 'other' from which they broke.

⁶ These were composed over several centuries, dating back to the eighth century BC, and had reached their final forms some time in the first half of the first millennium AD. They register a strong sense of a shared territory, stretching from the Himalayas to the southern seas.

⁷ The term refers specifically to the philosophical traditions generated from the Vedas, as opposed to its cosmogonic, ritual and customary content.

⁸ See Lorenzen (2003) who cites the *Prthviraj raso*, a historical romance composed around the end of the 12th century AD, for evidence of its continuing inclusiveness, although the beginnings of a specifically religious sense are also evident here. Lorenzen's article is also useful for an idea of how sketchy the evidence of such usage is in this period.

⁹ The Delhi Sultanates were Turkish, while the Mughals were Afghan in origin.

¹⁰ One instance of the clear lines of opposition between the religions that is much cited is the *Hindu-Turka-Samvada* of Eknath (1533-99), a humorous poetical debate between a Brahmin and a Muslim. It reveals both the Muslim perception of the Brahmanical religion as well as the latter's perception of the former. See Lorenzen (2003).

¹¹ Cynthia Talbot notes that the title 'Sultan among Hindu kings (*hindu-roya-surastrana*),' perhaps the earliest use of the term 'Hindu' in an Indian language, 'begins to figure in Andhra inscriptions from 1352 C.E. onward.' Cited in Lorenzen (2003).

¹² See vd Veer (1994: 33-43) for Sufism in India, and Larson (1997: 103-119) for a useful discussion of the assimilation of Islam in the subcontinent.

¹³ It is interesting that Lorenzen specifically anticipates and denies this charge, while it is clear from his argument that he cannot escape it.

¹⁴ For an interesting account of the history of this term see Sushil Srivastava (2001).

¹⁵ What is perhaps most unacceptable in Lorenzen's otherwise well-researched article is the over-riding intent to displace any argument that western Orientalism could have constructed Hinduism, and consequently to pre-empt any suggestion that it is substantially responsible for the history of communalism in India. His disingenuousness is most startling when he ends his piece with the observation, 'Hinduism wasn't invented by anyone, European or Indian. Like Topsy, it just grow'd.' (2003)

¹⁶ See John Zavos (2000: 31-34) for a discussion of the thinking behind the intent.

¹⁷ Roy notes for instance that, contrary to popular perceptions of the diversity of deities in 'the religion of the Hindus', "the doctrines of the unity of God are real Hinduism, as that religion was practiced by our ancestors, and as it is well known at the present day to many learned Brahmins." His appeal to Brahmanical authority as the true voice of Hinduism is telling.

¹⁸ See Parthe Chatterjee's (1986) discussion of this.

¹⁹ See Zavos (2000: 33)

²⁰ Mill's was of course not the only work that led to such perceptions; important contribution to it was made by other histories like James Tod's *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, first published in 1829, which recorded the legends of Rajput chivalry, especially against Muslim armies.

²¹ See Peter van der Veer (2000) for another perspective on this issue.

²² The apocryphal account is that Indian soldiers were being forced to use cartridges made with animal fat, objectionable to both the 'Hindus' (because of the sacrality of the cow) and the Muslims (because of religious objections to the pig as an unclean animal).

²³ See also Zavos (2000), for the importance of the new trope of *organization* to the emergence and formation of reform movements and representational politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

²⁴ This has led several social thinkers to posit the trope of pollution as the single most important characteristic and organising principle of 'Hinduism'. See for instance, Dumont (1970), Srinivasan (1962), etc.

²⁵ The classic example of such striving is the Arya Samaj and its confrontation with the Sanatan Dharma Sabhas. The former sought to purify 'Hinduism' through a strict insistence on monism, adherence to Vedic texts, minimising ritual

and ceremony, and doing away with caste distinctions. The latter on the other hand was orthodox rather than reformist, and sought to maintain and preserve existing rituals, ceremonies, caste distinctions and traditions, in the face of reformism and Christian missionary activity. Both sought to establish themselves across the country, but both were largely restricted in actuality to their regional spheres of influence, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, respectively. See Zavos (2000) for an excellent discussion of these issues.

²⁶ For succinct discussions of the transformation of the public space in 19th century India, see Zavos (2000: 9-16) Amir Ali (2001), Sandra Freitag (1996) and Peter van der Veer (2000). The history of the socio-religious reform movements has been covered ad nauseum in various excellently researched texts, so the allusions to them here will be confined to indicating the ways in which they contributed to the rise of Hindu nationalism.

²⁷ To argue otherwise in the name of promoting a secular history, while strategically appealing, would be to implicitly acknowledge that secularism in India requires a degree of fabrication, or at least papering over of unpleasant details. This is not only dangerous, it is unnecessarily so, since – even in strategic terms – it is more fruitful to identify the precise lines of force of discourse and practice, however non-secular these may appear, and leave the contradictions inherent in these to undo them.

²⁸ It is important to note the distinction between British attempts at imperial hegemony and the gradual formation of native elite communal hegemonies in the nineteenth century. As Ranajit Guha (1997) has so thoroughly demonstrated, the first was a failure, and was a case of domination without hegemony; the second, which he does not examine at all, I argue (here and in the following chapter), was an unqualified success, in that it mobilised a powerful nationalist movement that eventually led to Indian independence.

²⁹ See Dilip Simeon (*ibid.*) for a brief discussion of this, and Tanika Sarkar (2001) for a more detailed one.

³⁰ It is necessary to remember that important industrial and commercial cities like Madras (Chennai) and Bombay (Mumbai) were essentially established by the British.

³¹ Kenneth Jones has referred to this as the “Protestantization” of Hinduism. See his *Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India...*

³² See Zavos (2000: 13-14). See also Bernard Cohn (1996) and R B Bhagat (2001). An important aspect of this caste divide is the racial theory of the common Indo-European Aryan ancestry of the upper castes, specifically the Brahmins, propounded first by Max Mueller, which permitted the upper castes in particular a sense of racial equality with their colonial masters. Needless to add, the theory

has subsequently been proved to be bogus. See Dilip Simeon (n.d.) and Romila Thapar (n.d.).

³³ See KN Panikkar (1995) for a detailed analysis of this split.

³⁴ The difference lies in the frequent possibility that the regional, vernacular elites could often be reformist and against the regional Sanskritic, revivalist elite, as with the case of the Arya Samaj.

4

The Emergence of the Hindu Right - II

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we followed the historical evolution of a socio-religious formation and its concretization into the definable, albeit controversial and contested, entity called Hinduism. This concretization was inextricably embedded in political debates of constituencies, centered on the question of who or what was a Hindu. By the turn of the century, with specific regard to the process of defining a 'Hindu' constituency, the debate increasingly clarified into one on nationhood, between the moderates – espousing a liberal, secular and inclusive conception of the nation – and the extremists – who mostly inclined toward the idea of an exclusive Hindu nation. As 'Hinduism' gained in currency as registering a definite constituency, the moderates touted its very catholicity as eastern spiritualism's answer to western rationalist secularism. This led to the peculiar paradoxical situation of both the moderates and the extremists claiming the 'Hindu' constituency as it was taking shape, but to conflicting ends. In this chapter I will explore the historical and political trajectories affected by this situation, in the growth and consolidation of Hindu nationalism, until Independence.

4.2 Objectives

This chapter will attempt the following:

1. To outline the consolidation of Brahmanical patriarchy through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, as the masculine hegemony that forms the basis of Hindu nationalism.
2. To analyse the specific roles of gender and violence in the manufacturing of this hegemony.

3. To analyse the political and ideological orientations of the various nationalist movements in relation to the gendered emergence of Hindu nationalism.
4. To offer a critique of Gandhian nationalism as, in some ways, crucial to the articulation of Hindu nationalist thought.

4.3 The 'Public' and 'Personal' Space in the Nineteenth Century

Even before the legislative move of setting up the Morley-Minto reforms, and despite the eventual and substantial dilution of the Indian Councils Act of 1909, the British had (at least officially) set in administrative practice a policy of non-interference in what they perceived as native customs and traditions, leaving the adjudication of these matters largely to the religious leadership of the communities. Yet, while the colonial state decided to refrain from interfering in native customs, it nevertheless deemed it necessary for administrative purposes to identify, taxonomise and homogenize them (given their enormous diversity) in consultation with the religious leadership of the communities in question. We have already noted in the previous chapter how significant this was in the construction of a singular 'Hindu' identity and in the manufacturing of a hegemonic form of governance. What is noteworthy here is that this hegemonic formation (as well as the communalised identities it was built on) was fundamentally inscribed by the new, vastly expanded and homogenized public-personal dichotomisation – one that attempted to apply across the terrain of the imperial state. Amir Ali notes that

British and Anglo-Indian law had a 'territorial' scope and ruled over the 'public' world of land relations, criminal law, laws of contract and of evidence. In sharp contradistinction to this were Hindu and Muslim laws which were defined as 'personal', covering persons rather than areas, and dealing with more intimate areas of human existence – family relationships, family property, and religious life. This sharp distinction was further bolstered by the Queen's Proclamation of 1859, which promised absolute non-interference in religious matters. (Ali 2001)

By the second half of the nineteenth century then, this policy had led to the construction of a series of hegemonic formations separated (horizontally as it were) along personal and therefore communal lines; these

were in turn effected by the same public-personal divide that separated each of them (vertically) from the territorial imperial state.

This had several important consequences: first, as Sandra Freitag (1996), Amir Ali (2001), Partha Chatterjee (1986) and others have shown, it had the momentous effect of almost entirely overhauling existing distinctions between the private (or the personal)¹ and the public, and the dynamics between them. In the first instance, as Kaviraj notes, the state in pre-colonial India was never as central to the lives of its subjects as it came to be under and after colonization (Kaviraj 1995: 301ff). Prior to the interventions of the colonial state, the dynamic between the public and the personal was arguably much more localized, determined largely by the organization of power and hierarchies both geographically – at the respective levels of the village, province, kingdom, etc in specific regions – and communally – in terms of the specific, locally available relations between castes and religious communities, and between these communities and the particular dispensations of the local (princely or *nawabi*) state (Kaviraj 1997, Dumont 1970, Heesterman 1997). In contrast, the political dispensation evolving in the west and that was introduced into the subcontinent by the British from the eighteenth century onward was already fundamentally inscribed by the emergent discourses of liberal individualism, secularisation and the public-private dichotomisation of the social and political realms (Kaviraj 1995, Fox-Genovese 1991), embedded in and shaped by the dynamics of an evolving capitalist economy. Since religion within this dispensation was essentially a matter of individual and therefore private concern – along with issues of domesticity, marriage, family, etc. – the colonial state's approach to religious matters in the subcontinent too was to treat them separately from public domain matters (criminal laws, laws of contract, land relations, etc). Yet this did not lead to the relegation of religious matters to an implicit private realm. Such relegation required a cognitive framework in which religion could be understood as the choice and practice of the otherwise secularised individual subject-of-the-state.

Religion and Community Formation

Arguably, the British worked with a conception of the religious that – besides being dominantly shaped by the Semitic, organised, text-based religions – was founded on its separation from secular or profane power and authority (and importantly, vice versa): none of the various tradi-

tional and customary practices that constitute 'Hinduism' either sought or made such a separation – and indeed, given the understanding of *dharmā* outlined earlier, could not have made it even in its hegemonic Brahmanical² form. Further, as the census operations undertaken from the late nineteenth century were to reveal, it was notoriously difficult to distinguish caste from religious affiliation; the identity 'Hindu' and the entity 'Hinduism' in particular were repeatedly and openly contested through and in public domains and institutions (Bhagat 2001). Thus the policy of non-intervention brought into being and fashioned a sphere of practice and contestation that was officially 'private' but – because such a nomination had no historical or structural precedent in the socio-polity – had no identifiable constitution or defined content.³ These had to be determined paradoxically through very public contestations and debates within the communities thus identified as 'private' – between traditional and westernised elites, caste elites, religious elites.⁴ These terms were intensely contested, however, not just because they were to apply cross-territorially, across differences of region, caste, language, etc. By the turn of the century, the British state had decided 'to share its patronage among diverse sections of its subject population (in order to strengthen its position)', in the 'granting of public appointments and of political representation' (L Carroll, 1978: 244). Since the basic criterion for public appointments was caste status, this led to intense contestations amongst the various *jati* groups to establish *varna* superiority, and the formation of numerous caste associations intent on promoting themselves in caste terms as well as in terms of 'public' claims in the evolving politics of representation (Carroll 1978; Jaffrelot 1996; Zavos 2000). In seeking to institute a hegemonic elite that would serve its purposes, the British imperial state thus initiated a series of engagements and contestations within 'public' space, that depended on the specific character of the 'private' that was articulated. In the event, it mattered little that the project of instituting hegemonic control was a failure as far as imperial interests were concerned, and that the imperium was in the final analysis a dominance maintained largely through coercion (Guha 1997). Rather, for the Indian elites, the discursive ordering into the public-personal opened avenues of establishing hegemonic control within the communities that were taking shape. What was at stake in these debates and contestations was the character of the hegemony to be established and thus the identity of the community itself.

Caste, Gender and Community Formation

This is especially the case with the 'Hindu' identity, because, as we have already established, as a definitive communal identity it took shape through this very process, unlike the Muslim, Sikh or Christian identities. In other words, it was more essentially defined by elite contestations over the personal than its subcontinental counterparts.⁵ More pertinently though, the main issues under contestation – the practice of sati, widow remarriage, abolition of child marriages, rights of inheritance, the education of women – were clearly centred on the rights and status of women,⁶ thereby rendering the contestations over Hindu personal law (and consequently the Hindu identity itself) essentially a contestation of patriarchal ideologies. The British colonial state engaged largely and consistently, not with the unified 'Indian' identity envisioned by the INC but with separate and multiple patriarchies, within and between communities (Sangari 1995). Even as a system of representational politics was gradually evolving, the British perforce had to negotiate the issues noted above with and through the respective communal patriarchal elites. In the case of the Hindu identity,⁷ the initiation of census enumeration and of social reform movements that addressed the question of caste further complicated the issue. On the one hand, by the end of the nineteenth century, various caste associations had formed across the country, struggling to promote their communities within the bureaucratically assigned and acknowledged social categories. On the other, these struggles were inevitably also engagements with powerful upper caste articulations on 'Hinduism', which, whether liberal or conservative, tried to suppress the question of caste altogether.⁸ The essential point here is that these engagements were largely on the terrain of the reform of the 'personal', inevitably therefore also entailing contestations over women's rights and status.⁹

The ambiguous legacy of colonial modernity was that it came to be restricted to upper-caste women. Caste and gender were the two issues internal to Hindu custom and society that had to be reformed in order for upper-caste male reformers and nationalists to claim a moral-ethical space for anti-colonial nationalism. Though the 'woman's question' as articulated by upper-caste reformers consistently elided issues of caste, radical assaults on caste ideology consistently focused on how caste regulations governed women's behavior. (Rao 2003a)

Thus, Brahmanical patriarchy (following from Uma Chakravarti's 1993 account of it, as noted in an earlier chapter) remained decisively the hegemonic framework for defining the Hindu identity, even as lower caste social reform movements like Phule's, Periyar's, Narayana Guru's and Ambedkar's offered powerful contestations of Brahmanical patriarchy from alternative frameworks that focused on gender and caste equality.¹⁰ It is important to note however, that the patriarchal foundations of the personal were consequently never questioned, even as the constitution and constituency of the personal were. In fact, it would be accurate to say that these contestations had the decisive effect of remoulding and sharpening patriarchal formations in India, as I will argue below.

Partha Chatterjee in his well-known analysis has argued that, while on the one hand the abolition of sati and later of child marriage, the promotion of women's education, and so on, did create greater spaces and opportunities especially for upper caste women to participate in public life, on the other, there was a concomitant clarification of the gendered lines of separation of social spaces: the inner, private and domestic was increasingly understood as feminine space and the outer, public and non-domestic as masculine space: this, according to Chatterjee, was part of the 'nationalist resolution of the woman question'.¹¹ Of course, this is too schematic a representation of the situation to sustain historical scrutiny; as Manisha Sethi notes:

Not only is such a rigorous division untenable, but also that woman's question [sic] did not silently fade away as [Partha Chatterjee] implies. It continued to figure prominently in the public debates. Women, their bodies and their sexuality continued to inform the nationalist discourses and fore grounded publicly despite their so-called relegation to the private sphere even well into the 20th century.¹²

Further, as Anupama Rao notes,

[S]ocial reform in colonial India modernised gendered relations in the upper-caste family while often dispossessing lower-caste women of their rights to property and inheritance in attempts to homogenise caste and community-specific laws regarding such practices. (Rao 2003a)

Consequently, the clarification of social spaces that Partha Chatterjee observes taking place in the nineteenth century, must be understood as an important but partial component of the broader ongoing process that

we noted above: the consolidation of upper caste (specifically Brahmanical) patriarchal hegemony – which Chatterjee identifies as the ‘new patriarchy’ (1993b: 128) – as the normative frame in the construction of the identity ‘Hindu’. The ‘personal’ became the space where the Brahmanical hegemony that was already in place across the subcontinent from at least the beginning of the millennium (as we noted in the previous chapter) would be re-inscribed, in the articulation and definition of the ‘Hindu’ community. But crucially, the ‘personal’ also now became the space where Brahmanical hegemony was striving to establish itself as a ‘new patriarchy’, as the *gendered* identity of the community. Hence the emergence of the discourse that situated the nation on the bodies of its women, contrasting the purity of Indian womanhood to the immorality and spiritual barrenness of English women.¹³ The questions that then arise are, of course, why an upper caste hegemony that had already been in place for several centuries now sought to transform its patriarchal organisation – to re-image itself as a ‘new patriarchy’ – and what the arrangements of this new patriarchy were.

The ‘New’ Patriarchy

The answer lies partly in the specificity of colonial contact. Colonial and Orientalist discourses of gender, civilisation, modernity and power engaged with their native upper caste counterparts in complex and dynamic ways. This engagement eventually incited a hybrid discourse of gendered identity and nationalism. Hansen refers to the “double discourse” of colonial governance, one of which was of domination in relation to the ‘irrational, passionate and traditional’, essentially subaltern, masses; and the other of persuasion and negotiation, in relation to the educated middle classes, literate provincial elites, leaders of castes, sects and petty kingdoms and of religious communities (Hansen 1999: 32). The Thomas Macaulay proposal of 1835 – to deliberately fashion through English education a compliant class of westernised Indians who would help rule by proxy – was abandoned after 1857, in favour of courting the traditional elites; nevertheless, English education and European political values and concepts gained enormous prestige in the circles of the communal and caste elites (Seth 1999; Guha 1997). The most important consequence of this was that the terms of political engagement between the British and the (moderate) nationalist leadership, right until independence, were drawn from these values and concepts. As Ranajit Guha notes:

Both [British and nationalists] proceeded from the standpoint of liberalism to regard the colonial state as an organic extension of the metropolitan bourgeois state and colonialism as an adaptation, if not a replication of the classical bourgeois culture of the West in English rendering. Generally speaking, that phenomenon was regarded by both as a positive confirmation of the universalising tendency of capital....(1997: 3-4)

Through the “double discourse” of colonial governmentality, the British tacitly bestowed, on the one hand, the powers of representation in the public sphere only on the educated and the rural elites, thereby excluding the vast numbers of ‘irrational’ masses; and on the other, specifically after the controversy over the Age of Consent Bill of 1891, conceded to them almost inviolable rights of governance in the personal or private sphere. Mrinalini Sinha has argued that the discourse of demasculinisation that accompanied colonialism was reactively countered by the assertion of control over the domestic or personal realm. This must be understood though, not as a sign of the strength of the nationalist elites in encountering and countering colonial dominance: this, far from challenging colonial power, was aligned with and sanctioned by it (Sinha 1995: 140). It is now well established that a very influential section of this early nationalist elite, in fact, far from countering colonial power, repeatedly avowed the importance of continued British rule in India. The double discourse then was more a sign of the uneven and contradictory operations of imperial power in its colonial setting.¹⁴ The specific problem that the nationalist elites consequently had was not that the British were ruling India; rather, it was the inevitable disjunction that this double discourse wrought between colonial political ideologies and colonial practice: British rule was criticised for not being “British” enough,¹⁵ insofar as it limited elite agency and control to the realm of the personal – a limitation that could easily be, and was, understood in gendered terms, as we shall shortly see.

4.4 Emulation or Imitation?

The Problem of Poverty

Much of this early criticism though, was aimed not at achieving self-governance (and in this sense was, in Sanjay Seth’s words, “nationalist” almost by default, inasmuch as the petitioners were Indian and the petitioned British.’ (Seth 1999: 101)) Rather, it was obsessed with the prob-

lem of poverty in India, which, it was believed, a truly “British” rule could ameliorate instead of exacerbating (as articulated so felicitously in the “drain of wealth” theory). However, as Seth points out, the growing concern about the poverty of India amongst the nationalist elites in the later half of the nineteenth century is matched by their lack of any actual concern for the poor. He suggests that the reason for this is not just their prioritisation of class over national concerns but that poverty for them ‘functioned as a metaphor for backwardness, which under colonial conditions meant powerlessness and humiliation.’ (Seth 1999: 105) British rule could and should ameliorate poverty, in this view, not through direct programmes but through economic and industrial modernisation – which is why British policies aimed at improving labour conditions or tenant security were vocally opposed as harmful to Indian enterprise. He goes on to note that for the nationalists,

To become modern and strong, India had to emulate England – and the unspoken question behind the poverty debate was, “Why, after more than a century of British rule, has India not become powerful and wealthy like Britain?” (Seth 1999: 106)

Such an emulation was practicable only through first gaining access to, participating in and then establishing control over the processes of economic and industrial modernisation, as well as the capital it required – all of which lay in the public domain under British control, and all of which required a complex restructuring of the existing, localised, caste-specific relations between gender and labour. I will return to this observation momentarily.

A host of scholars (Nandy 1983, Kakar 1990, Chatterjee 1986, etc) have noted the profound impact of ‘the hyper-masculinist discourse of British Orientalism in India’ (M Sinha, 1999: 447) and the consequent Indian imitation of colonial Victorian notions of masculinity. Their arguments however, focus largely on the perception, adoption, reproduction and adaptation of attributes and dispositions identified as masculine by (for the most part) the Indian elites, who were most in contact with the British. Such a line of argument is both insufficient and flawed: it tends to be – wittingly or not – patronizing in seeing the colonized Indian elites as unreflexive, un-selfconscious mimics of the British. While this may or may not be true, it also treats masculinity as simply a set of transferable epiphenomena, a cultural currency of attributes and disposi-

tions that were purchased, used and exchanged in the marketplace of colonial cultural semes – rather like sartorial accessories, readymade to be attached or detached on a uniform and undifferentiated base. I have already discussed the uses and limitations of this line of reasoning in Chapter II. Suffice it here to note that these arguments are actually alluding to the gendered representational manifestations of a deeper structural process: that of the search for socio-economic parity that formed the beginnings of anti-colonial resistance. The process of masculinization of the Indian elites discerned here is thus an effect of changes in the structural arrangements and composition of Brahmanical patriarchy and its growth and spread into a masculine hegemony. It may be understood less as blind imitation and more as the effect of a process of social reverse-engineering, as it were – seeking to restructure social spaces, and their concomitant hierarchies, as well as their gendering, in such a way that they matched the prescriptions and demands of the colonizer, and *its* concomitant hierarchies and gendering.¹⁶ And, as perhaps with all processes of reverse engineering, the end product was less an imitation than a hybrid, since the aim was not replication of the imperial socius, and its divisions and distributions, but the safeguarding of the economic and political interests of the Indian elites. Arguably then, the masculinization of the public sphere was not so much an effect of cultural mimicry as the consequence of a very specific socio-economic imperative: the protection and propagation of upper caste patriarchal interests.

The problem for the nationalists was that British economic policies fell in the domain of ‘public’ law, outside the jurisdiction of the patriarchal elites who dictated ‘personal’ laws. In order to influence these, it was necessary for them to position and present themselves – by virtue of their educated ability to better appreciate the benefits of British rule on the one hand, and of their proximity in manners, custom and religion to the uneducated masses on the other – as a mediating class between the two. In other words, they sought to straddle the divide between the public and personal realms carved by the colonial administration, claiming representative status of the one in the other.

Problematising Imitation: Gendering the Economic

It was in this context that the constitution of the personal laws became crucial. As we have already noted, Hindu personal law was determined in and through the contestations over social and religious reform among

the Brahmanical elite, primarily between the westernised liberals and the conservative revivalists. These reform movements invoked diverse sources of sanction – the scriptures or shastras, western liberal values, and importantly, caste and community practices, which could often only be vouched for by numbers.¹⁷ Increasingly then, social reform became political movement – more strident, more communalised, and more determined by upper caste dispositions and interests than ever before. It is important to note that, consequently, the meanings of the ‘public’ and ‘private’ were constituted in a fashion singular to this colonial context. The entire debate on the constitution of the personal took place dissociated from the liberal capitalist history that had so informed and fashioned the discourse of the public and the private in the context of Britain. There, the gendering of social spaces – marking the public as masculine and the domestic as feminine – was a concomitant, even necessary condition for the consolidation of the bourgeoisie and the spread of capitalism and liberal hegemony (Fox-Genovese 1991). In the Indian context, the gendering of social spaces was overdetermined by issues of caste and community. While the nationalist elite shared the metropolitan bourgeoisie’s belief in the universalising tendency of capital (to return to Ranajit Guha’s observation), it was subject on the one hand to criticism of its personal laws (or private spaces) from that same bourgeoisie, and on the other, to debates on the constitution of the personal within its own communal and caste formations. Moreover, the debate was embedded in a context in which the idea of a coherent, specifically Indian economy – which this same elite, whether in rural or urban areas, already had enormous stakes in – was beginning to emerge consistently with and through the nationalist economic critiques of colonial rule. Perhaps never before in the subcontinent had the relations of economic to political power been drawn so extensively and explicitly as under colonial rule: the advent and establishment of communication and transportation on a scale hitherto never witnessed by the subcontinent, along with a vision (and practice) of industry and commerce that was (at least theoretically) unbounded by restraints of caste, creed, language or (perhaps most importantly) region – these were instrumental in the emergence of this new relation of economic to political power.¹⁸ At stake in the determination of personal law then was not just the communal identity, but also the ability of the communal elites to claim that identity representatively in negotiating with the imperial state on matters in the public domain, par-

ticularly in the formulation and implementation of its economic policies. The nature of the public-personal dichotomy was thus qualitatively different in the Indian context, marked not by secularisation and the demands of liberal capitalism, but by the extension and entrenchment of upper caste, upper class patriarchies into communal patriarchies. The aim was thus as much to construct and consolidate communal identity as to secure hegemonic control over economic and industrial modernisation along the lines of imperial Britain – in fact, the one was a necessary condition for the other. That is, for the belief in the potential of capitalism to reproduce its effects (of modernisation and industrial success), it was first necessary to secure control over capital, production and distribution *through* the new politics of representation. At the heart of the nationalist movement then, was a drive to emulation that was not a mere imitative gendering that effectively feminised the realm of the personal but was additionally, undercut by a sense of racial and economic inferiority, as well as crosscut by communal and caste divisions.¹⁹

It must be clarified here that the feminization of the personal was not in itself a particularly new phenomenon, nor specifically a consequence of or reaction to British colonialism, but was already an integral part of upper caste – specifically Brahmanical – gender relations. What was new was what Soma Marik refers to as the modernization of this patriarchy,²⁰ by way of structural modifications to meet and exploit the demands of the imperial political and economic order, and the cellular propagation of these modified structures through the ranks of the caste system. The most striking instance of such modernization is probably the case of transformations in land relations introduced by the British, and their impact on gender. The British introduced two kinds of changes into Indian land relations, the *zamindari* and the *ryotwari* systems.²¹ They both served to introduce the notion of private ownership of land, and in that process, dramatically altered the dynamics of all social relations, including gender. Veena Oldenburg (2002) has shown how this was in particular responsible for the transformation in the understanding of dowry. Anupama Rao summarizes Oldenburg's argument thus:

British attempts to rationalize the economy meant that they homogenized and codified laws, especially those regarding land tenure, and in that process women became invisible, they became dependants on men. So colonial law, what we historians have tended to call Anglo-Indian law, in fact enabled a more masculine economy to emerge. Boys also became more

important in this economy, and the higher social worth of boys meant that dowry became a sort of economic transaction through which the groom's family made demands on the bride's family- i.e., we are taking care of her, she is less worthy, she's not capable of working in a commoditized economy, et cetera. So dowry by the 1850's went from being a way of showing the appreciation a family had for their daughter to becoming a demand.

....

Briefly put, we might argue that though colonial governance might have rendered certain spheres of Indian society more free by bringing them into the domain of Western progress and improvement, it did so erratically, without great awareness of the contradictory processes it had initiated in indigenous society. Colonial law's intervention in matters of sexual propriety and caste morality strengthened the sovereignty the colonial state claimed for itself, and it strengthened upper-caste privilege and patriarchy (2003).

Evidently here, the practice of dowry was not abandoned within the new political economy; rather, it changed in value and meaning, and in turn served to change the values and meanings of the specific genders. Ownership of land and property came to be masculinized even more explicitly than they already were, with women losing almost all rights of possession.²² The demand to meet the revenues levied by the British administration now fell on individual landowners, rather than the community, leading to greater indebtedness. Additionally, it was increasingly possible for males to gain employment in or through the British administration – in the army, police, and lower administration, in particular – but not for women, leading to a premium being placed on male children, and the consequent demand for dowry as a compensatory source of income for a debt ridden family. This in turn led to greater control being exercised over women's sexuality, as the means of reproduction of the (male) community and the sole guarantee of patrilineality. Concomitantly, through these changes, as women came more and more explicitly to be associated with *being* property rather than *having* property, the already existent upper caste seclusion of women into the personal/private domain began to gain in popularity amongst the other castes – a practice further impelled by, on the one hand, the competitive demands of the colonial economy and its tacit blindness to the costs of female labour (whether in the public or private domains) (Nirmala Banerjee 1999); and, on the other, British and Hindu protectionist, social reformist interven-

tions in other areas – sati, child marriage, widow remarriage, polygamy, women’s education. This one instance amply demonstrates the fact that the transformations in Brahmanical patriarchy, and its increasingly evident masculinization, were not simply a consequence of socio-cultural emulation, but the effects of very specific changes in the political economy of the period. This trend only accelerated with the growth and spread of the nationalist movement, and its calls for greater Indian participation – leading eventually to autonomous charge through independence – in the economy, industry and administration of the realm.

4.5 The Consolidation of the ‘New’ Patriarchy and the National Community

To return now to the questions we had posed earlier – why an already entrenched upper caste dominance now sought to transform its patriarchal organisation as a ‘new patriarchy’, and what the arrangements of this new patriarchy were – it becomes clear that such a transformation was not only necessary but inevitable. As Kaviraj (1999) has convincingly argued, the structures of relations within and between pre-colonial communities, while precisely defined in terms of everyday practices and conduct, were “fuzzy”, in that the numbers, distribution and location of community members were not factors in determining the identity of the community. This arrangement – aptly described as ‘a circle of circles of caste and regional communities, with the state sitting at the centre’ by Kaviraj – sustained Brahmanical dominance to the extent that the latter both imposed and guaranteed the caste system itself; but within this arrangement, the individual patriarchal organisation of each community operated relatively autonomously, and was not necessarily bound by Brahmanical codes and rituals. In contrast, the colonial administrative apparatus drew on and introduced a conceptual universe of rationality, instrumentalism and enumeration that demanded a radical reconstruction of the very bases of identity and community formation. Suparna Bhaskaran, for instance, cites Macaulay as saying,

‘I believe no country ever stood in so much need of a code of law as India and I believe also that there never was a country in which the want might be so easily supplied. Our principle is simply this – uniformity when you can have it; diversity when you must have it; but, in all cases, certainty.’

She goes on to state that,

Those who prepared the Indian Penal Code (IPC) drew on English law, Hindu law, Muslim law, Livingstone's Louisiana Code, and the Code Napoleon. Disregarding the numerous complex variations of customary law and practice prevailing among Hindus and Muslims in different parts of the country, Macaulay decided that all Muslims were governed by the Quran and all Hindus by the Manusmriti. (Bhaskaran 2002: 20)

To elaborate this: the colonial apparatus, as it gradually entrenched itself, was faced with the choice of either recognising each caste and religious community separately (and thereby preserving the existing order of social relations) or subsuming them all under the general racial-religious rubric of 'Hindu' (defined in consultation with the perceived religious leadership of the Brahmins and which stood in a singular relation to the colonial state). The initial response of the colonial state was the former, but when it became clear that the bewildering plethora of community distinctions was potentially infinite and seemingly without any recognisable rationale, it very quickly switched to the latter course of action, in conformity with its own conceptual and ideological orientation²³ – the process we have outlined above. The new dispensation offered the possibility of realising clear institutional and economic gains of a sufficiently common kind, cutting across the separate circles of communities, through mobilisation and collective action directed at a highly centralised state (Kaviraj 1999: 147-8). The location of identity was consequently not just in the complex dynamics of social relations anymore, but increasingly in a more instrumental understanding of representation and collectivities as well. Upper caste domination that hitherto had remained embedded in – and therefore constrained by – the intricate web of social relations, was faced with a new task: that of speaking for the community from its position of dominance, and yet retaining that dominance despite being a minority, in the emerging politics of numbers and representation.

As communal identity progressively came to be decided by the constitution of the practices of the personal, upper caste dominance, whether in reformist or in conservative garb, sought to cast the sphere of the personal for the entire community in the image of its own constructions of the personal – i.e., in the organisation of Brahmanical patriarchy. Significantly, both conservatives and liberals amongst the Brahmanical elite were united on the approach to two important issues, caste and gender: both wanted to subsume, even erase questions of caste in the projected construction of the 'Hindu' identity, while gender reconstruction in the

juridical institutionalisation of personal-communal practices became the principal basis of that identity. Thus, the conservative elite sought to establish Brahmanical practices (specially of gender) as valid for all castes, in their attempts to homogenise 'Hinduism'; the westernised liberal elite in turn sought to erase caste practices of any kind as a corruption of 'Hinduism'. On the issue of gender however, the latter experimented with varying amalgamations of Brahmanical and liberal values and practices – strongly encouraging the education of women, for instance, but floundering most often on the questions of women's control over their sexuality or of the nature and extent of their participation in the public realm.²⁴

It was soon evident that, in the new political arrangement, control in the public sphere could be regained (to some extent at least) through mobilising and controlling numbers – which demanded that the entire corpus of communities that could be labelled 'Hindu' be shown to share and participate in Brahmanical ideologies of the personal. Here, the discourse of de-masculinisation that accompanied the reduction of elite power served a dual purpose: on the one hand, it incited a reactive limiting of colonial power to the realm of the public, and the concomitant preservation of native patriarchies in the realm of the personal; on the other, through this very reaction, it became the basis for Brahmanical patriarchy to present and establish itself as the more culturally, even civilisationally evolved, superior to both the British and the other (more 'degenerate') caste patriarchies – philosophically, spiritually, ideologically. The location of superiority in the realm of the personal produced two dovetailing discursive effects: one, because the personal was the realm of the spiritual (and of a sense of spiritual superiority arising out of a claim to spiritual purity), the sense of national identity evolving reactively to British imperialism was almost inevitably founded on religiosity and religious communalism; and two, the transformation of this spirituality from an inchoate, apparently fissiparous diversity of ideas and practices into a singular homogeneous entity, Hinduism, could only be effected through social, rather than religious, restructuring²⁵ – a restructuring at the heart of which lay 'the woman question'.

To elaborate on this change, it is necessary to remember that pre-colonial caste relations were as much about the social and economic inter-dependency of the different castes present in any given region, a condition in which multiple patriarchies co-existed in hierarchical for-

mation but were not, as divergent patriarchal structures, the sole bases of caste difference.²⁶ The latter were as much interpreted and realised through differences in social function, economic status, regional disparities of wealth distribution, and so on. Under the colonial regime's radical interventions in the sphere of contractual laws and in the new representational politics with its demand for caste to be subsumed under a single religious identity, these other modes of marking caste differences receded behind the concern with instituting a specific form of masculine hegemony as definitive of the 'Hindu' community. The personal realm as the repository of the feminine became an essential means of reifying Brahmanical gender practices as representing a 'Hindu' communal patriarchy, through their (intended) restructuring of and replication in other caste patriarchies. Thus Brahmanical patriarchy assumed hegemonic proportions as definitive of 'Hindu-ness' precisely because Brahmanical dominance in other spheres of social relations began to weaken.²⁷ Existing patriarchates therefore came under immense pressure to accept and adopt Brahmanical values and practices as their own, as discursively and ideologically powerful enough to counter the possibility of British intervention, and its accompanying mark of de-masculinisation. I will return later to the specific dynamics of this masculinization; for now, it must be noted that it was thus in and through the personal realm that Brahmanical patriarchy became the basis of the transformation of a qualified Brahmanical dominance (in pre-colonial times) into extended Brahmanical hegemony (from coloniality onward) – a masculine hegemony that was strongly emulative of the colonial power on the one hand and yet often oriented oppositionally toward it in the imagination and construction of a unified 'Hindu' community on the other.

4.6 Political Dynamics of the 'New' Patriarchy

It is important to note that the transformation of patriarchy outlined above was not uniform either temporally or spatially, but varied in intensity, tempo and ideological and structural specificities from region to region. The ways in which Brahmanical masculine hegemony evolved in Bengal (under the heavy influence of the Prarthana Samaj, and later the Ramakrishna missions) differed substantially from its evolution in say, Punjab (through the contests and compromises between the Arya Samaj and the Sanatana Dharma movements) or Kerala (where it negotiated the matrilineality of the Nairs on the one hand and the rise of the lower caste

Sri Narayana Guru movement on the other). Further, at no point in this process can we observe a completion, the extension of Brahmanical masculine hegemony was constantly challenged, resisted and hindered almost as much as it was advanced. The hindrance came from several sources and in several forms: in the strategic indifference of the colonial power to native agendas of social transformation, in the contests between diverse such agendas, in the emergence of independent lower caste and tribal movements, in the proselytism of Christian missionaries, and so on. The ceaseless engagement with these various hindrances was to render the evolving hegemony somewhat fragile and fractious, but nevertheless manifestly an upper-caste hegemony. Further, when this hegemony sought to establish itself nationally, it also encountered resistance from other communal patriarchates, with telling consequences for the nationalist, anti-imperialist struggle. So, even before it could establish itself with any coherence, by the first decade of the twentieth century, upper caste patriarchal hegemony was already being torn by the centrifugal pull of multiple contradictory imperatives. The vital requirement to project and establish itself as representative of not just the Hindu community, but of all of India, was undercut on the one hand by increasing opposition, within this very hegemony, between the moderates and the extremists as well as between secular and Hindu nationalists; and on the other hand by hostility from other external hegemonic formations. The most telling instances of these were in the splitting of the Indian National Congress – by then already the most effective institutional organization of upper-caste hegemony – into the moderates and the extremists, and the formation of the Muslim League in opposition to the Congress (perceiving it to be essentially a Hindu party), both in 1906. The intricacies of the politics of the period have been studied and commented on *ad infinitum*, and do not require rehearsal here. Instead, I would like to pay attention to some specificities of this politics that are pertinent to our understanding of the evolution of Hindu nationalism.

To begin with, it is essential to understand that both, the internal fracturing of the Brahmanical patriarchate and the external scission from it of particularly the Muslim communal patriarchate, were catalysed specifically by the attempt to transform social restructuring programs into the singular political agenda of anti-imperialist nationalism. While this was probably inevitable, the fact of the fracturing has tended to suggest a greater ideological disparity than there actually was. Differences within

the Brahmanical patriarchy arose primarily on the question of *swaraj* (self-rule): how much was sought, by when and by and for whom. Till the early decades of the twentieth century, the moderate-dominated INC's nationalism was confined to articulating a desire for greater Indian participation specifically in the administration and commerce of the sub-continent, and the political and economic rights it claimed were explicitly sought for the educated elite.²⁸ The extremists, in contrast, wanted an immediate end to British rule, and were willing to take up arms to this end. The extremists were also more concerned about the plight of the rural peasant masses, and sought to draw attention to it, as much as mobilise these masses – often through religious institutions and practices – against the British; but for them too the end was rule by the educated elite rather than revolutionary transfer of power to the people.²⁹ For both, the first priority of the nationalist movement was clearly to protect the economic and social interests of upper caste patriarchy, and to ensure control over the social restructuring that was already underway – even if they did not always agree on the precise terms of that restructuring (traditionalists versus reformers, Arya Samajists versus Sanatan Dharmis, etc). Both the extremists and the moderates – who remained the dominant group in the INC throughout – are further divisible into Hindu traditionalists and secularists, resulting in a general distribution that can be represented in the following table (with some leading names to illustrate the schisms):

Table: Political Composition of the INC

| | Moderates | Extremists | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hindu Traditionalists | Gokhale, Gandhi (Box 1) | Tilak, Aurobindo (Box 2) | Hindu nationalists* (Box 5) |
| Secularists | Nehru (Box 3) | Bhagat Singh, Bose (Box 4) | |

* This cell is deliberately appended to the table to represent the uneasy equation of the Hindu nationalists with the INC, sharing many of the characteristics of the adjacent cell, yet following an independent ideological trajectory.

Put differently, the INC was predominantly a Hindu traditionalist, moderate organisation, obliged by its resolve to follow non-conflictual Constitutional methods of reform, as well as by its pan-Indian representative ambitions, to adopt a secular stance.³⁰ Its emphasis on constitutional means distanced it from the extremists, on the one hand, and its obligatory secular stance distanced it from the Hindu nationalists, on the other. However, as is evident from the table, the thin line separating extremist Hindu traditionalists from Hindu nationalists meant that, even after the INC split in 1906, both could and did retain strong influence and a continued presence on a fairly large scale in the INC – marked for instance by the reunion of the breakaway extremists with the moderates of the INC in the period of the first world war. Further, several leaders of the INC were closely associated with Hindu nationalist organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS at various points in time, while others were either actively involved in them or at least openly endorsed them. Thus, its fundamentally upper caste Hindu orientation and concerns ensured both, that it was ideologically never very far from the Hindu nationalists and that it would (inevitably) invite sustained suspicion from the Muslim communal leadership.³¹ Additionally, the INC was bitterly critiqued and rejected by important lower caste leaders like Phule and Periyar for what they saw as its Brahmanical caste chauvinism,³² in fact, during the partition of Bengal in 1905, the Nama Shudras of Bengal formed an alliance with the Muslims, supporting partition against the upper caste nationalist resistance to it.³³ In effect then, the only major point of difference between the dominant sentiment in the INC – as op-

posed to its official ideological stand – and the persuasions of the Hindu nationalists, was on whether or not the nation, post-independence, could be explicitly identified and claimed as a Hindu nation.

4.7 A Brief Recap

In the above discussion, I have sought to show that the reform movements of the nineteenth century and the introduction of representational politics, as well as the increasing awareness of the economic consequences of imperialism, led to the gradual restructuring of Brahmanical patriarchy from a set of similar but differentiated, localised, caste- and sect-specific arrangements into a broad-based communal hegemony that sought to protect and promote upper caste interests, and necessitate for them a greater, more effective role in the new economic and political dispensation of imperialism.³⁴ We have already noted that this hegemony was sought to be founded on the evolving separation of the public/civic from the private/personal domains. It essentially involved the replication and propagation of Brahmanical gender-practices (of the concentration and treatment of women-related issues in the private realm as ‘personal’ issues) and the concomitant embedding of these in a religio-spiritualist discourse – which as we have noted, ensured that the resultant nationalism that was emerging would necessarily be deeply coloured by religion. But besides the pervasive politico-religious element, the emphasis on locating issues relating to the family, women, inheritance, etc in the personal realm had the consequence noted earlier: the inevitable masculinization of the public arena – not just through the exclusion of women from it, but through the fact that that exclusion was also a form of direct control over women – i.e., it worked through confinement, the monitoring and regulation of sexuality, arranged marital alliances, de-legitimation of widowhood, sexual violence, denial of education and of financial autonomy, etc. The forms of control over women and their bodies guaranteed the masculinity of the men, since it not only indicated ownership (a male privilege), it also established not-being-controlled as not-being-feminine, i.e., as being masculine. The gendered conception of possessing agency (or not) could and did slip easily into upper caste self-perception (communal and individual) in relation to the colonizer – feminised by virtue of lacking agency/being controlled – and in relation to other communities – threatened masculinity, by virtue of limited agency/lack of control. To reiterate the point, it is clear then that the dis-

courses and practices of masculinization that began to mark the Brahmanical patriarchy in the nineteenth century were thus not simply in imitation of the hyper-masculinity of the British, but generated from within the socio-economic transformations that this patriarchy was undergoing. Arguably then, this arrangement was the basis of the ideological core common to the entire nationalist movement, irrespective of other hues (secular/moderate/traditional/Hindu nationalist/etc).³⁵ Taking this together with the fact of the sharpening of communal lines of separation, it was inevitable that community formations and confrontations – whether between Hindus and Muslims or between colonizer and colonized – came to be articulated in a deeply gendered discourse. It is at least partly as a result of this that the last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a sharp increase in incidents of communal violence – an increase that was to sustain, and in some areas further intensify, especially through the 1920s, right through the decades to the carnage of Partition.

4.8 Problematising Violence

Two clarifications are required immediately: one, the point here is not that there were not other causes to communal violence, or that they were any less in significance: they range in explanatory variety from ‘socio-economic tensions’ amongst the labour in industry, ‘agrarian disturbances’ (S Sarkar, 1983: 60-3), middle class cow protection movements (Zavos, 2000: 81-7), the Montford reforms and separate electorates (S Sarkar, 1983: 234-5), to anxieties about communal sexuality and Muslim population growth (amongst Hindus) and Hindu unification (amongst Muslims), to (later), the two nation theory. The point is that, whatever the cause(s) of the communal violence, it occurred (or at least began) in the realm of the public, an already definitively masculinized realm, and more importantly, a realm increasingly torn by inter- and intra-community competition for the available politico-economic stakes. In this competition being manifested through violence, repeatedly, specially between religious communities, there is evident the dominance of a particular discourse of masculinity, both in the perceived ‘problems’ (of whatever kind) and in their violent ‘management’. The second clarification follows from this: to argue thus is not to suggest a ‘natural’ relation between violence and masculinity, *per se*, but rather the production, propagation and prevalence of a specific understanding of masculinity in the public realm

(with, of course, an attendant impact on the private/personal). In both clarifications the specific hegemonic masculinity being referred to is the association of masculinity with power and the concomitant association of femininity with powerlessness. The arrangements of this hegemony, with its relegation of women to the private/personal domain, and all its attendant implications of control and agency, were hitherto exercised as a form of gender organisation, primarily in the upper and middle castes; they now, however, became a marker of communal identity. The reconstruction of the 'private' in terms of 'personal law', and the concomitant establishment of the 'public' as a territorial, pan-Indian category, ensured that gender organisation in the 'private' now had resonances in the 'personal', and consequently in the 'public' realms, so that the masculine hegemony of Brahmanical patriarchy now seeped through into the construction of the community in the competitions of the public sphere, and brought with it its preferred form of hegemonic masculinity. The heated debates around the Age of Consent Bill, the Widow Remarriage Act, etc, stand testimony to this.

Order and 'Danda'

How and why did violence feature in the articulation of this hegemonic masculinity? The answer to this question is layered and complex. British presence in India, at least by this time, was by no stretch of the imagination maintained by consensus, let alone through democratically registered choice on the part of the Indians. By the end of the nineteenth century, it had 'evolved through complex layers of cooptation, complicity and transformation' (Hansen, 1999: 32), frequently entailing coercion and disciplinary action (in diverse proportions and measures, depending on region, circumstances, strength of resistance, etc). Ranajit Guha identifies two kinds of legitimations of violence in the colonial public realm, wrought into interaction in the service of the colonial state apparatus: one, the colonial language of Order and the other, 'the *idiom of Danda* which was central to all indigenous notions of dominance' (original emphases; Guha, 1997: 28). 'Order' was maintained by and through the colonial army, penal system, police force and bureaucracy; further, 'Order, as an idiom of state violence, constituted a distinctive feature of colonialism primarily in one respect:...it was allowed to intrude again and again into many such areas of the life of the people as would be firmly kept out of bounds in metropolitan Britain.' (Guha, 1997: 28)³⁶ 'Danda',

drawn from ancient Indian polity and based on monarchical absolutism, ‘emphasizes force and fear as the fundamental principle of politics’ (Guha, 1989: 238). In the *Laws of Manu*, Danda is described as the son of the ‘supreme generative deity Brahman himself’, ‘a red-eyed, dark-skinned god’, ‘the universal authority’ (Guha, 1989: 238). Guha further notes that

All the semi-feudal practices and theories of power which had come down intact from the pre-colonial era or were remoulded, without being radically altered, under the impact of colonialism, fed in varying degrees on this idiom. The private feudal armies and levies, caste and territorial panchayats governed by local elite authority, caste sanctions imposed by the elite and religious sanctions by the priesthood, bonded labour and begar [forced labour], *the partial entitlement of landlords to civilian and criminal jurisdiction over the tenantry*, punitive measures taken against women for disobeying patriarchal moral codes, elite violence organized on sectarian, ethnic and caste lines, etc., are all instances of [colonial coercion] framed in the idiom of Danda. (Guha, 1997: 28-9; emphasis added)³⁷

Hansen makes a similar point when he discusses the notion of sovereignty in the Indian context: he notes that the creation of the Penal Code in 1833 was an attempt to homogenize the public/civic realm and establish a monopoly of violence by the state, as a means of maintaining “public interest” – an entirely new concept in the subcontinent. However,

Beyond a few high-profile attempts to curb what were seen as traditional ills of Indian society [sati, ‘thuggee’], local forms of justice and/or revenge were dispensed by powerful families, or local notables or strongmen without much interference from the judicial system or the police. In spite of this obvious fragmentation and lack of a monopoly of violence, the colonial officers were determined to assert and perform the paramountcy of colonial power. (Hansen 2005: 119)

Hansen also spatializes these disparate practices of violence, locating that of the colonial power – corresponding to Guha’s ‘Order’ – in the urban centres and predominantly amongst the upper class, upper caste elite; while the indigenous practices of authoritarian violence – corresponding to ‘Danda’ – remained the prerogative of the rural elite, in the ‘outlying areas of the colonial territory’ (Hansen 2005: 119). In other words, the topography of the public realm as it evolved through the

competitive formation of caste and religious communities was not only indelibly marked by its masculinization (in terms of the exclusion of women from it), but was wrought and shaped by two interacting concepts of legitimised violence. Put another way, *notions of legitimised violence and male exclusivity were historically conjunctured as dovetailing constituent and interactive elements in the structuring, orientations and dispositions of the public realm as it evolved in the nineteenth century.*

Gender, Community, Violence

To understand the complex relations between violence, masculinity and community formation in the public sphere at this time then, it is first necessary to recall that the shaping of community identity in the nineteenth century was severely gendered, was even defined more or less entirely on the basis of differences in the communal organisation of gender and sexuality. The public articulation of that identity was also thus inevitably gendered, and since the public was by now definitively masculine space, that gendering of identity was also inevitably masculine. The choice of strategy – violent or non-violent politics – as a means of articulating communal identity also thus came to be gendered, as masculine or non-masculine. Again, this does not in itself explain the turn to violence – the reasons for that remained various and situation, region and event specific – but it opens the possibility for violence to be repeatedly articulated and interpreted in gendered terms. If we now examine the evolving communal patriarchates and their nationalist discourses in this context, we note that, at the level of the elites, nationalist discourse was articulated in two ways: one, against the British, and anti-imperialist; the other, against Muslims (and later, Christians and communists as well) and anti-secularist. We have already seen that there was substantial overlap between the two (see Boxes 2 and 5 of the earlier table). While there were many instances of the first turning to violence – particularly in the case of the extremists (Box 4) – the dominant strain of anti-imperialist nationalism was, as we have already noted, moderate and non-violent, largely adhering to the dictates of imperial ‘Order’. Again, there were many instances of the second – essentially Hindu nationalist – also turning violent,³⁸ but precisely because of the overlap, and because of the dominance of the moderates, much of Hindu nationalist *practice* (as opposed to discourse) remained non-violent – *at the level of the urban elites.* The situation was very different in the mofussil and rural areas, and

amongst the lower castes and poor. It was here that, from the late nineteenth century, India witnessed a series of incidents of social agitation often amounting to full fledged riots. Not all of these were religio-communal in nature: some were in fact peasant expressions of violent resistance against the colonial state, or against its indigenous representatives in the form of zamindars or landowners; some were labour agitations against low wages and/or poor working conditions; there were increasing instances of inter-caste conflicts, into the first decade of the twentieth century; the (sometimes violent) agitations around mass conversion movements by lower caste and tribal groups; besides these, there were increasing instances of overtly anti-imperialist militancy in the mofussil areas; the first agitations in the twenties around the issue of the linguistic organisation of the states – and so on.³⁹ But several of these took a communal turn, and then there were many that were expressly communal – especially when conjoined with or led by urban elite Hindu nationalists – as for instance in the Cow Protection Movement, which was seen by the Hindu nationalists as a means to organize and spread Hindu communalism in the rural areas.⁴⁰ As is evident, these instances of growing social violence in the rural areas, while primarily determined by the codes of ‘Danda’, precisely because they were often locked in anti-imperialist conflicts, manifest the signs of both ‘Order’ and ‘Danda’ in the shaping of nationalist discourses, in and through the transformations in Brahmanical patriarchy. The masculinist nationalist discourses that emerged in this context thus necessarily engaged with violence (as language and as practice), whether or not they actually assimilated and deployed it. I will return to the question of how this choice (on the deployment or not of violence) was made later: for now, we need to attend to the extent and quality of the differences between the nationalist discourses.

Violence and Politics

For the moderates, the social violence was a double-edged weapon against the British administration: its occurrence bolstered their claim to political and economic power within the representative politics of the colonial ‘Order’, as the only native buffers against anti-imperialist anarchy. But it also was a constant threat to that same claim, in that it could either be appropriated by the extremist nationalists or it could spiral uncontrollably, as happened on several occasions.⁴¹ For the extremist na-

tionists, these diverse instances of violence needed to be channelled into either an anti-imperialist revolutionary urge that would violently overthrow the colonial state, or (specifically for the Hindu nationalists) a programmatic exclusion and eradication of non-Hindus, primarily Muslims, from the Indian territory. But for both, nationalism was never anything but pan-Indian in conception. The nationalist leadership was largely from the urban upper and upper-middle castes, from business and professional social backgrounds, often landowning and/or with strong familial and communal roots in rural areas, with substantial exposure to English education: as already noted, their interests lay in maintaining the economic and political leverage they had acquired with the British administration. Violence and agitational politics were harmful to these interests, not just in terms of harming business, but they were localised and focused on regional concerns, and hence tended to weaken the nationalists' emphasis on a pan-Indian unity, without which the latter were in any case too much of a minority in regional matters. For the dominant moderates in particular, the very idea of agitational and violent politics was also threatening because it always contained the potential to become an anti-upper caste revolutionary politics; while for the extremists, this danger was sought to be avoided through invocations to religion and tradition, i.e. through the larger process of communalisation – the evolution of a singular communal patriarchal hegemony that underlay whatever ideological or sectarian differences were professed. Whatever the ideological persuasions of the nationalist elites then, as G Aloysius has argued (1998: 114ff), their insistence on nationalism as a pan-Indian concept led to the refusal to recognise, in their own terms, the national relevance or even legitimacy of local self-determination movements and agitations, or even to engage in dialogue with them. Arguably, this in turn intensified the agitational nature of the latter; but more significantly for our purposes, it permitted manoeuvring space for the Hindu nationalists – as well as the fundamentalist Islamic elite – to incite the rampant communalisation of social violence that occurred in the second decade of the twentieth century. Thus, while the increasing instances of social unrest proved useful to them, to the extent that they tested the British administration and reinforced their claim to representative leadership, such unrest was on the one hand consistently sought to be defused by the moderate leadership, and on the other, to be communalised by the Hindu nationalist leadership – and, as we have repeatedly maintained, the two were not as

antithetical as they appear. In retrospective balance, both forces were essential to maintaining and extending the influence of the upper caste patriarchy, in relation to the British as well as to the lower castes, and in that sense, served the same end.⁴² It is in this specific sense that we can say with some certainty that the elite attitude to and engagement with violence (in discourse and practice), in the final analysis, was determined by its effect on and consequences for the 'new' upper caste patriarchy – and in this specific sense, was gender determined. Or, to put it differently, the relation between violence and gender in the colonial context was, in the final analysis, mediated through and by caste.

If we return now to the question posed earlier – about the basis on which the nationalists decided whether or not to adopt violence as strategy – it is clear that the standard explanation – that for the moderates, violence was to be definitively eschewed, while for the extremists, specifically the Hindu nationalists, it was a necessary component of the constitution of the nation, intrinsic to the very conception of it – is too simplistic to be actually explanatory. To recap briefly, the question arose in the context of the intensification of social violence and of the confluence of discourses of masculinity, with those of the communal constitution of the public sphere. In such a context, the turn – or not – to violence cannot be fully explained in terms of ideological program or inclination, or even in terms of strategy (to the extent, if any, that these can be separated). This is especially so if we accept the argument above, that in balance, both violent and non-violent strategies were essential to the nationalist elites. While the resorting to violence by the latter does mark, to some extent, the political difference between the moderates and the extremists, this difference in itself cannot and does not explain the eschewal of – or the turn to – violence.⁴³ Further, violence was frequently resorted to, as we have noted, outside of the control of the nationalist elite, whether moderate or extremist, which empirically confirms that its deployment was not based on elitist ideologies; but it also logically implies that its deployment – or not – was not the sole prerogative of the nationalist elite. To address this question fully, it is necessary to recall and reiterate that this period was witnessing the reformulation of the Brahmanical patriarchy that constituted the socio-cultural basis of the nationalist elite: the 'modernization' of Brahmanical patriarchy was essentially aimed at accommodating the demands of imperial power by modifying existing Brahmanical social orderings, in such a way that it maximised

the power and control of the (male) upper castes in the new political and economic dispensation. In order to do so, this elite had to engage with challenges on three different fronts: one, from the imperial British state; two from other communal elites, primarily the Muslim elite; and three, from emergent regional tribal and lower-caste movements. Each of these challenged the representative status that the Brahmanical elite claimed for itself, with regard to the newly designed and designated 'Hindu' community specifically, but also with regard to the nation in general. The available tactics for dealing with these challenges were basically: one, to violently overcome them; two, to disarm them through persuasion and (advantageous) compromise; three, to overcome and nullify them ideologically, as invalid and unnecessary; and four – which was the option that emerged almost unintentionally, in the overall manoeuvrings of the different factions of the elite – a strategic use of all three tactics, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes discretely, or in combinations.

4.9 Hindu Nationalism and Violence

Arguably, the first tactic of violence was actually used more often as threat – and in this sense, to bolster the other two tactics – than with any serious anticipation of achieving ultimate victory through violence – whether over the British, the Muslim community or the lower castes. The reasons why violence could not be – and was not – the sole tactic should be obvious: firstly, upper-caste patriarchy, in spite of its social and ideological strength, was (and remains) a numerical minority – whether in relation to the British, the Muslims or the lower castes. For it to engage successfully with the challenges to it – that too on three fronts – through violence, at the very least, it would have had to be composed of much larger numbers spread evenly across the colonial territory, when in actual fact it was composed of a miniscule percentage that was more urban-centred than rural, and comparatively fewer even in most urban areas. Secondly, as we noted earlier, a substantial number of the upper castes had land, business and professional interests and stakes that would have suffered heavily from following a solely violent strategy. Yet, the language of violence, and the will to use it, was not alien to this section, as is evident from the principle of 'Danda'. Besides, the association of violence and martial codes with masculinity and power – already embedded in 'danda' and certain upper caste ideals like the kshatriya code of honour, and augmented by the awareness of British colonial codes of

martial masculinity – demanded that there could be no complete eschewal of violence, in the response to the challenges. It was thus almost inevitable that violence would be invoked and used in conjunction with other modes of responding to the challenges. It is evident most clearly in Bal Gangadhar Tilak's institutionalisation of an essentially private festival (the Ganesh Chaturthi) into a public one that, through the mobilisation of Hindus, transformed into a show of numerical strength aimed at both the British and the Muslims (and the inevitable communal riots that followed); in the sporadic but incessant incitement of Hindu communities into communal violence against Muslims by Hindu nationalist leaders; in the continued and routine attacks by upper caste armies on lower castes (whether or not in response to socio-political movements organised by the latter); in the anti-imperial violence of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad; and, of course, in the establishment of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 1925, as a communal, quasi-martial organisation. But this continuous and persistent violence was never either allowed to become organised or legitimised, nor was it ever completely quelled – but from the last two decades of the nineteenth century and up until independence, it played out a ceaseless background score of varying volume and intensity on the grand stage of the independence movement. By the time of the Communal Award of 1932, communal relations were extremely volatile, and communal lines had hardened as never before: but it was only with the epochal event of partition that it erupted beyond control, leading to the conflagration that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. It was in one sense inevitable: the British had begun vacating their administrative powers, and neither the Hindu (or for that matter the Muslim) nationalist leadership, nor the liberal nationalists of the Congress, had the reins of governmental control as yet to check the violence that they had been so steadily stoking for decades. It was in this moment of governmental liminality then that Partition took place, implying the complete withdrawal of Order from public space, leaving it open to the machinations of Danda – and it was truly 'the red-eyed, dark-skinned god' that reigned over this bloodbath. It is in this context that the iconic and ideologically loaded figure of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – as well as his ethics of non-violence, his gender practices of ascetic celibacy and self-feminisation, and his political-economic program of self-rule, village based economy and 'trustee-ship'

of the wealthy – gain an apparently paradoxical and overwhelming significance.

4.10 Gandhi and his Ideas

It is perhaps inevitable that a study of gender and the growth of Hindu nationalism should look at this larger-than-life figure with some ambivalence, so it is best to clarify here that the intention is not to offer yet another study of Gandhi or his ideas, but to situate them in relation to the theme of this study – the gendered growth and consolidation of Hindutva. Gandhi's political and philosophical ideas evolved over a long period, but can for our purposes be narrowed to a few recurrent themes. The more prominently known of these are, Satya (Truth), Ahimsa (Non-violence), Swaraj (variously either Self-rule or Home-rule), Sarvodaya (Universal benefit) and Satyagraha (broadly the philosophy of non-violent resistance, literally the pursuit of Truth, effectively the combination of the other four). In what follows, I will very briefly undertake to locate this conglomeration of ideas and practices in the context outlined above, with specific attention to the transformation in the processes of gendering that accompanied the evolution of the nationalist and anti-imperialist discourses, and their consequent impact on the shaping of Gandhian thought, as well as their implications for Hindu nationalism. The contention here is that Gandhi and Gandhian thought served the crucial purpose of inciting (in the Foucaultian sense) a discourse of aggressive upper caste Hindu nationalism, precisely by emphasising non-violence and Hindu universalism, with the aim (intended or not) being to ensure that the focus of the nationalist struggle would always remain on upper caste interests.

Already it should be clear that the conglomerate of Gandhian themes listed above are evidently emerging out of and addressing the debates underway in the nineteenth century amongst the nationalist forces. It is true that Gandhi formulated many of these ideas in South Africa – specially the ideas of Sarvodaya, Ahimsa and Satyagraha – and it could be argued that he was therefore responding to a different set of circumstances, a different political reality. But this would be firstly, to ignore the fact that the British perceived Indians in the same light, whether in India or in South Africa. Secondly, it is well known that the genesis of this conglomerate lay not in South Africa but in Gandhi's debates with expat-

riate Indian extremists like Veer Savarkar and Shyamji Krishnavarma in London – debates that were essentially extensions on foreign soil of identical debates underway amongst the nationalists in India. Finally, the constituents of Gandhian thought share the same preoccupations and concerns as the nineteenth century nationalists: about the nature and constituency of the self, the nature and constituency of Hinduism, the significance of caste, the roles and status of women, and the relation between the individual and the communal selves. Gandhi's formulation of Satya as a transcendental Truth that must be *sought* – and in that sense definitive of a *journey* to a goal rather than the goal itself – is arguably an answer to the theological and ideological contestations, both within 'Hindu' thought and between 'Hinduism' and other faiths.⁴⁴ Without questioning Gandhi's own faith in this transcendental principle of Truth, it is evident that through it, he offered a forcible argument for moving beyond the specific sectarian and religious positions that threatened to tear the nationalist movement apart. That it had this specific function is clear from the fact that Gandhi did not offer this understanding as an alternative religious position, but rooted it within 'Hinduism' itself, as a civilisational enterprise unique to 'Hinduism', projected as the most accommodating of all religions.⁴⁵ By doing so, he sought not only to establish the spiritual superiority of 'Hinduism' to other religions, but also an innate integrity and homogeneity that belied what he saw as unnecessary and unwarranted sectarian conflicts. Thus, closely tied to this was the doctrine of Ahimsa: if Truth was transcendent, and if the relentless journey towards it was the only way in which it could be known, it followed that there could be as many journeys as there were individuals undertaking them, with none the wiser than the other. Such a conception of Truth necessitated the positing of a strictly non-violent environment as its potential condition of realisation, hence the paramount importance of the notion of Ahimsa or non-violence.⁴⁶ We will see shortly how this doctrine had a particular relevance to addressing caste conflict. Here, we note further that it brilliantly inverted the British perception of the Indian as passive and lazy:

There is a charge laid against us that we are a lazy people and that Europeans are industrious and enterprising. We have accepted the charge and we therefore wish to change our condition. Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and all other religions teach that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits, that we should set

a limit to our worldly ambition and that our religious ambition should be illimitable. Our activity should be directed into the latter channel. (1997 [1909]: 42-3)

The charge of passivity is inverted into the superior moral position of non-violence, and that of laziness into the quest for spiritual goals. Not only does this wrest moral superiority out of British hands, it recasts the terms of assessment, so that it is now the conqueror and his actions that stand under scrutiny, rather than the conquered. The doctrine of Ahimsa thus served simultaneously as a means to reign in the fissiparous tendencies within the nationalist movement, and to throw the onus of explaining himself on the coloniser. Furthermore, it cast the coloniser as materialistic and rapacious, and thereby, the entire enterprise of colonialism as violently exploitative, in contrast to the peaceful and spiritual civilisation thus exploited. This was a complete inversion of the earlier nationalist position, that for India to be strong it needed to emulate the coloniser: Gandhi instead invited the coloniser to emulate the colonised. The boldness of this discursive move cannot be underscored enough: it went in the face of the entire Hindu nationalist attempt to project the 'Hindu' community as virile, martial and itself descended from a glorious imperialist past. By inverting the terms of assessment, Gandhi entirely reconfigured the gendering of the community – in fact, reconfigured the process and meanings of gender itself. Gandhi thus drew from within the same discursive streams as Hindutva – that propounded a long-standing and uniform 'Hindu' religion, a glorious and accommodative 'Hindu' civilisation, the spiritual and moral superiority of the colonised, even the idea of a consequent and putative 'Hindu' victimhood in the face of Muslim and British imperialism – but generated an alternate discourse that was apparently at complete odds with that of the Hindu nationalists, not only effectively stealing their thunder, but as it turned out, achieving far greater success in his enterprise than they. But this particular and uneasy relation is more complex than it appears, and in order to grasp its fuller implications, we need to first comprehend the remaining themes of Gandhian thought.

The Gandhian idea of Swaraj was the crucial conceptual link between the community of individuals in pursuit of the Truth and the individuals themselves. For Gandhi, true swaraj was not freedom from British rule but the governance of the self. Again, while this is a necessary element in the sustenance of Ahimsa, it also receives a conceptually and theoretical-

ly distinct treatment. Integral to swaraj are the practices of celibacy and abstinence, the spurning of modernity and its amenities, the espousal of the village industry, and hands-on participation in menial labour. Gandhi recognised the practical difficulties with this demand, particularly in terms of the caste-defined resistance to menial labour, but insisted that true swaraj lay in the struggle to master the self. In the specific context of the demands for modernisation and westernisation – i.e. the emulation of the British – true swaraj thus came to mean, not countering the British as a people or as an imperial regime, but opposing the modern civilisation that they bore and represented.⁴⁷ Evidently then, Gandhi is aligned here with the nationalist elite that (at least initially) chose not to oppose the British; where he parts ways with them is in refusing to acknowledge that they were worthy of emulation, in their technological and industrial achievements. Gandhi's agenda was to counter British imperialism symptomatically, i.e., as a symptom of a corrupted and de-spiritualised western civilisation, with the moral and spiritual strengths of 'Hinduism'. Inevitably, such a stand fell foul of the nationalist elite's economic and industrial agenda for the country, but it did serve a very important purpose: it completely inverted and cast back on the European coloniser the Orientalist discourse of a corrupt and degenerate Hindu civilisation, recast the nationalist struggle for independence as a civilisational one, and cast an inclusive net that sought to cover and neutralise the multidimensional contradictions of the subcontinent under the single rubric of spiritualism.

This leads us to another dimension to Gandhian thought. If the ideas of Truth and Non-violence were born in response to specific ideological contestations underway in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were also moulded by those very contestations. As I argued earlier, these contestations were founded on the recasting of gender, and took shape around the problematic of the 'woman question'. Some scholarly work already exists on how Gandhian ideas actively partook of this process of recasting gender – Ashish Nandy's (1983) work, for instance, on Gandhi's feminisation of himself (also see Kamlesh Mohan 2008) – but this, to my mind, merely scratches the surface. What needs to be taken into account is what we have noted above as the transformation of Brahmanical hegemony into a 'new patriarchy'. By instituting Brahmanical social practices as the personal law of the community, and by insisting that all lower castes were necessarily subject to these laws as part of

the 'Hindu' fold, Brahmanical patriarchy transformed and extended its social reach, without ever actually relinquishing the hierarchies that had sustained its dominance. Nandini Gooptu notes for instance, how the Arya Samaj's efforts in the second decade of the twentieth century to ritually purify and reintegrate the 'untouchable' castes, was essentially 'to achieve orderly homogeneity in the Hindu community, and the attendant denigration of lower-caste practices, in effect amounted to a perpetuation of the prejudices against pollution and inferiority in ritual status that the Arya Samaj was supposed to undo.'(2001: 156) Gandhi's own attitude toward caste was even more conservative, drawn from the Sanatan Dharmists, and of profound significance for us here: drawing a distinction between caste and varna, he openly averred that it was the varna system that had stabilised and prevented the disintegration of Hinduism as a religion, but denounced its corruption into the contemporary caste system and its attendant rituals of pollution. His resistance to lower caste separatism from 'Hinduism', as propounded by Ambedkar and Phule for instance, was partly political compulsion and partly a genuine belief that without the lower castes functioning to service the upper castes, 'Hinduism' would collapse.⁴⁸ Gandhi's characterisation of the Dalits as Harijan ('people of God') was in this sense understood by lower caste leaders as just another manifestation of upper caste attempts at cooption. Of greater consequence here is the fact that such a cooption was also sought to be founded on the principle of Ahimsa, thereby deliberately subverting any potential for revolutionary (or even dissenting) action on the part of the lower castes, contributing to the famous stand off between Gandhi and Ambedkar on separate political representation for lower castes. Further, since Gandhi himself viewed Ahimsa and Swaraj as 'feminine' pursuits, and strove to promote the principle of shakti, valourising women as innately gifted practitioners of Ahimsa and Swaraj,⁴⁹ arguably the end effect (if not the intent) of this cooption was the feminisation (in the specific sense of disempowerment) of the lower castes in relation to the entrenched upper caste patriarchies. But even apart from such a symptomatic gender-reading of the deployment of these ideas, it becomes clear that, in the very insistence on Brahmanical patriarchal codes and norms like the varnashramadharma, there is inherent a promotion of upper caste masculine hegemony – a promotion that is made even clearer when we look firstly, at the ideas of Sarvodaya and Trusteeship, and sec-

only, at the response to Gandhi's insistence on Ahimsa in Hindu-Muslim relations.

It is in this context that Gandhi's notions of Sarvodaya and Trusteeship are rendered suspect. When he argues in the *Hind Swaraj* that

We cannot condemn mill-owners; we can but pity them. It would be too much to expect them to give up their mills, but we may implore them not to increase them. If they would be good they would gradually contract their business. They can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred handlooms and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven. Whether the mill-owners do this or not, people can cease to use machine-made goods. (1997 [1909]: 109)

Gandhi's disingenuity is patent, suggestive in fact, of the active presence of a class interest at work. Whether or not that be the case, it is definitely dubious that Gandhi can and does condone the lack of application of Ahimsa and Swaraj on the part of the petty and large capital bourgeoisie, while stridently demanding it in the case of the lower castes (as for instance in his fast to death over the issue of caste based electorates.) The contradictions can only make sense in being situated in a gender framework: the lower castes were (and are) traditionally feminised and hence the demand of the practice of Ahimsa from them; the same cannot be expected of the 'mill-owners; we can but pity them'. It is in this sense that the economic scheme of Sarvodaya, with its village based economy, is essentially an argument for the domesticisation and thereby the feminisation, of labour, in a context when local capitalism is just setting to establish itself. A similar disingenuity is evident when Gandhi proposes his theory of Trusteeship as a means to achieve the equal distribution of wealth in society:

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and

will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.⁵⁰

Again here we notice the exhortation to non-violence of the poor, while no concomitant insistence to moral action is made on the rich – it is simply assumed.⁵¹ Arguably, these ideas are oriented toward facilitating ‘the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth’, i.e. the establishment and protection of local capitalism. Taken individually, the concepts and practices espoused by Gandhi have an idealism and a spiritual appeal that thus dissipate when they are taken in totality.

To this extent, his ideas of Ahimsa and Swaraj, and through them the perpetuation of Brahmanical patriarchy *as* ‘Hinduism’, were perfectly in consonance with upper caste Hindu nationalist thought, as well as the economic interests it stood for. It was when Gandhi extended the principle of Ahimsa to Hindu-Muslim relations that he ran foul of the latter. It is here that the gendering of this discourse becomes most evident. As long Ahimsa and the asceticism of swaraj were demanded and expected of the poor and the lower castes – as integral to their spiritual commitment to being Hindu – they were approved of as lofty ideals by the Hindu nationalists. However, when Gandhi began openly courting Muslim support for the INC, and advocating Hindu non-violence in relation to Muslims even during communal riots, he was severely criticised and even denounced by the Hindu nationalists, as emasculating the Hindu community⁵² – the charge, in fact that led to his assassination. Clearly, the gendered nature of the understanding of Ahimsa – buried as long as it was in relation to the lower castes – became explicit in relation to the Muslims. Gandhi’s own vacillation between understanding Ahimsa and the disciplinary regimes of Swaraj as masculine first (in the Hind Swaraj for instance) and feminine in his later writings only emphasises the unstable relations between gender and power that obtained in this shifting, transforming terrain of gender relations.⁵³

Gandhi, Violence and Hindu Nationalism

The emergence of Satyagraha as a concept with unstable gender configuration then was inevitable. Gandhi himself identified women as the best teachers of this concept, and also advocated that it be used sparingly. Yet he was absolutely clear that women belonged in the domestic realm, even if the demand of the nationalist movement was to bring them to the

streets. Gandhi's nationalism here seeks to fix the unstable and shifting terrain of gender, doubly: firstly through the ideological appropriation of the terms of femininity as domestic, nurturing etc, to further a larger seemingly 'spiritual' agenda; and second, in that very move, fixing these terms by yoking them onto a national communal identity, so that to belong either as lower caste, lower class or women in the 'Hindu' fold, is to be domestic, nurturing, etc. But in the logical extension of this to Hindu-Muslim relations, the entire edifice of upper caste interests that it had sought to protect apparently became seriously threatened. In the event, it was one of the more significant causes of the creation of the RSS, set up in response to upper caste Hindu anxieties about the emasculation that Gandhi's policies of non-violence would wrought, given their popularity. It is worth noting here that Hindu nationalist ire was provoked mostly by the call to practice Ahimsa toward Muslims; the similar call of Ahimsa toward the British, while criticised, did not cause the kind of vituperative anxiety – articulated repeatedly as a fear of emasculation – that was roused by Gandhi's so-called 'appeasement of the Muslims'. The explanation for this lies partly in the impulse to emulate the British amongst the Hindu nationalists, which therefore did not enter into direct conflict with the call to non-violence; but it was also partly a direct reaction to the consolidation of the Muslim patriarchy as separate from and impervious to the codes of control that Brahmanical patriarchy was establishing.⁵⁴ Gandhi's call to non-violence was understood in this context as a delimitation and disempowerment of Brahmanical patriarchal self-perception, rights and power. Further, there was another contradiction inherent to the Gandhian project of Ahimsa and Swaraj: it insisted on restraint even as it incited the people to non-cooperation, itself a violation of the law (rendering 'non-violent non-cooperation' a contradiction in terms), but more importantly, legitimising the *logic* of violence, even as he explicitly repudiated its practice, thereby permitting an always-possible and subversive backdoor entry for actual violence to undo the discourse of non-violence.⁵⁵ As we noted above, this was effectively and inevitably what happened with the rupture of Partition.⁵⁶ Ironically then, Gandhi's attempted epistemic shift in articulating together gender, nation and 'Hinduism' by relocating gender lines and meanings in a discourse of spirituality, served to consolidate them in their orthopraxes even more – and it is in this sense that we can understand the Gandhian conceptual and ideological universe as serving, in a classic Foucaultian paradox, to

incite a more aggressive Hindu nationalism than had been hitherto in existence.

This is not to argue that Gandhi was a closet Hindu nationalist, actually working to serve its interests while ostensibly set against it. Rather, in the unfolding of upper caste power dynamics, through the debates, contestations and controversies over how to define and understand 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' as well as through organisational and practical activities, the positions and potentials of the different and divergent schools, sects and discourses were defined as much by their playing off against each other as by their own internal, ideological and political dynamics. This 'war of position', to use a felicitous Gramscian phrase, was different in that it took place *within* the Brahmanical patriarchy as it sought to define and consolidate itself. Gandhi's ideational system emerged as one such position, and in that emergence, forced certain accommodations and alterations in the other positions extant at the time, specifically the Hindu nationalist (even as, for sure, his ideas were themselves moulded by the other currents of upper caste thought). It is evident that upper caste anguish about inadequacy, effeminacy and impotence helped define and determine, albeit inversely, the Gandhian theory of non-violence; but arguably, in that very inversion, and in the concomitant insistence on the spiritual strength of a putative transcendence of orthodox gender constructions – a transcendence that struck at the very core of the masculine hegemony of Brahmanical patriarchy – Gandhian ideas functioned as the catalyst that generated a counter insistence on orthodox gender constructions and practices. Again, it cannot be emphasised enough that Gandhi's ideas of Ahimsa, Swaraj, Sarvodaya, Trusteeship, etc did enjoy success nationally and internationally – *as long as they were denuded of their gender component*. It is here that we can locate the reaction of upper caste liberal nationalists to Gandhi. His spiritual nationalism and his mass appeal lent enormous strength to the nationalist movement: but his attempt to transform gender meanings in and through his political ideas were tactfully ignored or outrightly spurned. History is witness to the failure to take root of specifically the gendered aspects of Gandhian ideas; but it does show how Hindu nationalist ideas grew in strength precisely in reaction to this inverted gendering, as the ideological position that best represented upper caste patriarchal interests – and it is in this that their proximity to the liberal nationalists lies. It is in this that we see also the continued and insistent focus on upper caste strategies and goals as the

dominant concerns of the nationalist movement, with the gendered bo-geys of violence and non-violence serving as the lens through which this focus was successfully maintained, right through till independence and the holocaust of Partition.

4.11 Conclusion

It may seem a trifle odd that, in a chapter devoted to the rise of Hindu nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century, there is no discussion of either the key figures of the movement, or of the organisations that came up, like the RSS or the Hindu Mahasabha; it may seem odder further, that instead there is a fairly lengthy discussion of Gandhian ideas in their relation to Hindu nationalist thought. But the intention in this chapter has not been to simply review these historical developments, which have been sufficiently and competently covered by a whole host of scholars to require yet another telling. Rather, in this chapter I have tried to provide a history of the growth of Hindu nationalism from a perspective that attempts to weave together the frameworks of gender, caste and community formation from colonial times to Partition and the iconic figure of Gandhi. I have tried to examine patterns of processes and trends, rather than confine myself to individuals, events or institutions. I have tried to show that Hindu nationalism was not just a direct outcome of colonial policies with regard to the administration of the Indian territory, but the consequence of struggles between upper caste patriarchates over the right to represent the now concretised 'Hindu' community. I have argued that this struggle was partly determined by a drive to emulation of the coloniser, but also and importantly, a consequence of diverse attitudes towards violence as concept and as means. In this context, the chapter examined the figure of Mohandas Gandhi, his ideas of non-violence in particular, and the course of gendering that he charted politically. It concluded that ironically, Gandhi's ideas were in some crucial ways instrumental to the turn to aggressiveness and violence that marked Hindu nationalism by the time of independence and Partition. In the following chapter I will continue to outline the trajectories and trends of Hindu nationalist thought and its socio-economic and political bases, from independence to the present.

Notes

¹ The distinction between the terms 'private' and 'personal' as used specifically in opposition to 'public' indicates not only the different historical trajectories followed by these terms in Europe and South Asia respectively, but also the difference in meaning that they consequently imply for the understanding and use of the term 'public', in the two respective contexts.

² I use the term 'Brahmanical' throughout this chapter, and (unless otherwise specified) elsewhere too, less as referring to a particular caste, and more as referring to the caste-scheme that was constructed and maintained by the upper castes in general, and particularly defended by the Brahman caste.

³ The historical and conceptual dynamics of the term 'private' are exceptionally well-revealed in P Chatterjee's account of Rammohun Roy's dual lifestyle, in the maintenance of two homes, one Indian and the other western, the one private and the other public – as if embodying in his very lifestyle the schism that was becoming institutionalised in the socio-polity. See Chatterjee 1986.

⁴ Referring to the contestations over personal law in India, Sandra Freitag notes that in the Indian case, it is less a public sphere that has evolved (as with Europe) than a public arena. See Freitag 1996.

⁵ This partly explains the insistent backward projection of the Hindu identity by members of the Hindu elite from the nineteenth century onward, attempting to establish public, governmental, and/or imperial histories to the identity beyond the personal law confines of the present.

⁶ There is a large corpus of literature documenting and analyzing this, including Chatterjee (1986), Nandy (1983), Sangari and Vaid (1989), Sangari (1995), Mani (1987), etc.

⁷ I will confine myself in the discussion that follows with the 'Hindu' community, both for lack of space to go into the details of the reform movements in other communities as well as to stay focused on the developments leading to the rise of Hindu nationalism.

⁸ As for instance with the more liberal Arya Samaj or the conservative Sanatan Dharma Sabha. See Zavos 2000 for an extensive analysis of the ways in which caste issues were negotiated by the upper caste nationalist organisations. As Nicholas Dirks has noted, 'it is striking that most explicit critiques of caste condemned it for its divisiveness, portraying it as a barrier to the gradual unification of the Indian people under the essentially beneficent, modernising rule of the British.' (Dirks 2003: 232)

⁹ See Burton (1998) and Sarkar (1993) for analyses of how caste and race came into intense and controversial contestation in determining what constituted a

'Hindu' practice in the personal realm – here, in the specific case of the discussions leading to the Age of Consent Bill.

¹⁰ But in the final analysis remained fundamentally unable to dismantle it. The reason for this could only have been, and was, the gradual acquiescence of lower caste groups to the hegemonic hold of Brahmanical patriarchy – or what was later to be termed 'Sanskritisation'. For detailed analysis of this transformation, see Dirks 2003. For an account of lower caste resistance to Brahmanical patriarchy, see also V Geetha (2003).

¹¹ "The [materialistic world] was a place where the European power had challenged the non-European peoples and by virtue of its superior material culture, had subjugated them. But it had failed to colonize [India's] inner, essential, identity of the East which lay in its distinctive and superior spiritual culture. That is where the East was undominated, sovereign, and master of its own fate. For a colonized people the world was a distressing [and embarrassing] constraint [especially for Indian males attempting to maintain their masculinity] forced upon it by the fact of its material weakness. It was a place of daily humiliation, a place where the norms of the colonizer had to be accepted...No encroachments of the colonizer must be allowed [by Indian males if they were to maintain dignity under colonial oppressive conditions] in that inner sanctum. In the world, imitation and adaptation to Western norms was a necessity; at home, they were tantamount to annihilation of one's very [Indian male identity]." Chatterjee, (1993a: 238-239).

¹² She goes on to note that the caste specificity of the reform movements – upper caste, primarily Brahmanical – has been largely ignored, thereby eliding the trenchant critique of Brahmanical patriarchy offered by lower caste leaders like Jyotiba Phule (Sethi 2002). While this is arguable, her observations serve to underline the ways in which gender is cross-cut by caste in the colonial context.

¹³ See Chatterjee (1993a). Of course, the same would hold for the Muslim and Sikh communities of the time.

¹⁴ Sudipta Kaviraj draws attention to the double strategy of legitimation that the colonial state frequently drew on, one based on existent structures of power and feudal discourses of legitimation in the subcontinent, and the other based on the Enlightenment discourses of rationality that they brought with them. (Kaviraj 1999: 142-150)

¹⁵ See specially Dadabhai Naoroji's magnum opus *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901).

¹⁶ I will return later to the specific mechanics of this restructuring and how it occurred.

¹⁷ Jaffrelot (1996) and Zavos (2000), in their respective works have both demonstrated the ways in which Hindu reform organisations in particular battled for

numerical supremacy through the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, especially in north India.

¹⁸ See Manu Goswami's (2004) exposition of this point. AR Desai's (1976 [1948]) classic study of Indian nationalism had pointed out the importance of print communication to the emergence of nationalism in the subcontinent (Benedict Anderson was of course to later elaborate this as a theory of the formation of the imagined community known as the nation, in his famous work). The Indian elites were now increasingly aware of themselves as a more or less uniform class with similar backgrounds and common interests, spread across the subcontinent.

¹⁹ Nandy's (1983) is in many ways the pioneering (albeit highly problematic) work on this point.

²⁰ In her very brief critique (2001) of Partha Chatterjee's essay 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question'. See her footnote 6. See also Himani Banerjee's (2000) trenchant critique of Partha Chatterjee.

²¹ This is not the space to go into these terms and their meanings, and I will confine myself to a discussion of their relevance to our understanding of the growth of Hindu nationalism. For a discussion of the terms, see Judith Brown (1985), pp. 74ff, 90ff. Also see Peter Robb (n.d.).

²² See for instance the 'Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act 1856', excerpted in Chakravarti and Gill (2001: 60-2)

²³ Kaviraj refers to this as the move from adopting indigenous forms of the legitimation of power, to the imposition of European Enlightenment modes of the same (Kaviraj 1999). The basis of the gathering or throwing together of these diverse communities was exclusionary – all those that were not distinctly Islamic, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jewish. Arguably, these two modes of the legitimation of power continued – and continue – concurrently, with varying emphasis at different times and places. Of course, this then necessitated a similar move with respect to these other communities – what we have noted above as the communalisation of the socio-polity through the public-personal divide.

²⁴ It need hardly be added that these developments remained confined for the most part to upper caste, upper class women. Some of the most complex engagements with these questions are evident in the thought and practice of figures like Rammohun Roy, Swami Vivekananda, and perhaps most influentially, Mahatma Gandhi. See Chatterjee (1993a), Nandy (1983).

²⁵ While this came about in several ways, the most effective programmes were those undertaken by the Arya Samaj – with its fundamentalist and purificatory return to the Vedas – and the Sanatan Dharma – with its attempts to consolidate existing social structures as eternal givens.

²⁶ The argument here is not new, and has echoes of Karl Marx's conception of the cellular organisation of pre-colonial Indian society, later developed by Barington Moore, Satish Sabharwal and others. See Corbridge and Harriss (2000: 32-7) for a discussion of these understandings. The difference here is that I have tried to understand this fragmented or cellular organisation as it affected – and was affected by – the consolidation of Brahmanical patriarchy.

²⁷ See V Geetha (1999) for the marginalisation of the Brahmanical elite, the consequent discourse of de-masculinisation that emerged, and the attempt to resolve this problem in the realm of sexuality.

²⁸ Sumit Sarkar notes that it was essentially an upper class, upper caste nationalism aimed at protecting and advancing the interests of this minority, through demands for instance for greater participation in the Indian Civil Services, which only the educated elite could have. (1983: 96ff).

²⁹ The notable exceptions were figures like Chandrashekar Azad and Bhagat Singh, but they came in the 1930s.

³⁰ It helped that its leadership was frequently and largely in the hands of committed liberals like Pheroza Shah Mehta, the Nehrus, etc.

³¹ This point, without the larger theoretical implications regarding Brahmanical masculine hegemony that I am striving to elaborate here, has been made by several other scholars; William Gould's (2004) is to my knowledge the first book length study to focus on this.

³² The dominant view amongst lower caste leaders was that while British rule, with all its problems, still offered opportunities to break out of the stranglehold of the caste system, independence won on the terms of the INC would only benefit the upper castes, and ensure a return to the subservience of caste Hindu society. (Aloysius, 1998)

³³ G Aloysius notes that because the vast majority of Muslims were converts from the lower castes seeking an escape from the caste system, in most regions they shared a (horizontal) solidarity of interests across religions that bound them together more than the more abstract (vertical) religious solidarity across regions. (Aloysius, 1998: 84-5)

³⁴ G Aloysius (1998: 122) makes a similar point, without referring to the transformation specifically in terms of it being the transformation of a patriarchy.

³⁵ Even the almost notorious and deliberate self-feminization of MK Gandhi did not extend to relinquishing control over his wife Kasturba or, infamously, over his children, whom he ruled with an iron fist. See Chandulal Dalal's (2007) biography of Gandhi's son Harilal Gandhi.

³⁶ Guha gives, amongst others, the examples of the army managing health and sanitation, as in the case where it stepped in to fight plague in Pune; or the administration mobilising labour for tea plantations in Assam; etc.

³⁷ Guha goes on to identify other conceptual pairs – ‘Improvement/Dharma’, ‘Obedience/Bhakti’ – that were operational in the attempt to establish a colonial hegemony, which he argues, failed – but these are not of immediate concern to us.

³⁸ And this was never independently, but as part of larger incidents of violence involving masses of lower caste and class people.

³⁹ G Aloysius (1998) notes that it is important to see these movements not as attempts to subvert the nationalist cause, as has sometimes been seen particularly by nationalist historians, but as instances of early, localised self-determination movements, that differed from the mainstream nationalist movement only in that they were localised anti-imperial struggles.

⁴⁰ In a rare instance of unison between the Arya Samajists and the Sanatan Dharmis. See S Sarkar (1983: 59-63, 79-80), J Brown (1994: 178-80), G Pandey (1999: 305-17), among others, for details of these incidents of violence.

⁴¹ The most well-known of these was the infamous Chauri Chaura incident of 1922 incident when anti-imperialist protestors picketing liquor vends turned violent and torched a police station, killing 22 policemen.

⁴² While this does appear a conspiracy theory, in suggesting that the otherwise antithetical operations of the moderates and the extremist Hindu nationalists were basically oriented to the same end, it would be more accurate to read it as the historical compulsion to self-preservation of the caste system, or at least, of those who benefited from it. See G Aloysius (1998) for a similar reading. It is also important to clarify that this scheme is more indicative of trends in, than definitive of, the politics of the period: exceptions to it – as with the secular extremists, or the non-nationalist socio-political lower caste movements that resisted the spread of the upper caste patriarchy – only serve to prove the general rule, in their inability to make any significant impact on the dominant political trends.

⁴³ Such an explanation would be circular, even tautological: ‘the moderates eschewed violence because they were moderates, and they were moderates because they eschewed violence’, and so on.

⁴⁴ Gandhi: ‘Nobody in this world possesses absolute truth. This is God's attribute alone. Relative truth is all we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it. Such pursuit of truth cannot lead anyone astray’. (*Harijan*, 2 June 1946, p167)

⁴⁵ Gandhi: ‘My Hinduism is not sectarian. It includes all that I know to be best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism....Truth is my religion and

ahimsa is the only way of its realization. I have rejected once and for all the doctrine of the sword'. (*Harjan*, 30 April 1938, p99)

⁴⁶ Of course, Gandhi elaborates this far beyond such a functionalist understanding, as a discipline in itself, as a way of approaching everything from the quotidian to the other-worldly. But this is only to be expected, if the doctrine of a transcendental Truth is to be maintained unexceptionably. It is worth noting in passing the striking similarity of such a conception to the individual-centred (as opposed to church-centred) quest for salvation in much Protestant thought. Similarly, the consequent notion of the Protestant work ethic no doubt appealed very much to Gandhi, as much for its emphasis on individual abilities and merits as for its easy applicability in the business community – the banias – that he belonged to. What is striking about this conception is thus its definitive modernity, looping around the communitarian dynamics of the period to propose a notion of identity and self that is centred on the relation of the individual (rather than of the community) to state/society/religion, based on a transcendent notion of Truth, even as it maintains a strongly 'Hindu' frame of reference.

⁴⁷ The well-known story of how Gandhi, when asked by a western reporter what he thought of western civilisation, replied that he thought it would be a very good idea, is a particularly apt illustration of this point.

⁴⁸ Gandhi saw no contradiction between his beliefs on the one hand, that all professions, and therefore all castes, were innately noble and dignified, and on the other, that the lower castes should endure their status with humility, as predetermined and religiously sacrosanct. For a very quick overview of Gandhi's views on caste, see the brief compilation by Shiva Shankar at <http://www.mail-archive.com/zestalternative@yahoogroups.com/msg00151.html>, accessed 12 Dec 2005.

⁴⁹ I have suggested...that woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. (H, 24 February 1940, pp. 13-14) For a review of Gandhi's engagement with 'the woman question', as well as of feminist responses to this engagement, see Sujata Patel (1988)

⁵⁰ From <http://www.mkgandhi.org/trusteeship/chap06.htm> accessed 12 Dec 2005

⁵¹ Gandhi does acknowledge that if the rich refuse to honour their part of the ethical contract, it poses problems but insists that non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience by the poor will suffice to rectify matters (*ibid.*).

⁵² See in particular Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Godse's writings in his journals to this effect. Gandhi himself was provoked by the criticism into offering defences at various points on his attitude to violence and cowardice. See <http://www.mkgandhi.org/nonviolence/phil8.htm>

⁵³ Gandhi's re-engineering of gender and sexuality goes further than this, to advocate what Ashis Nandy has termed a 'dissident androgyny' as a transcendent gender, incorporating the masculine and the feminine – but this is not the space to go into a discussion of that. For an interesting analysis, see Gayatri Reddy (2003).

⁵⁴ This is apart from the dominant narratives of Muslim rapacity and lasciviousness that Hindu society needed to be shielded from. Such narratives tend to ignore the many instances of British rapacity with regard to 'Hindu' women (Ballhatchet 1980), or the repeated British interventions in what were perceived as definitive customary practices for 'Hindus' (sati, child marriage, proscriptions on widow-remarriage, women's non-entitlement to inheritance, etc.) and for this reason cannot be considered a sufficient reason for the hostility toward Muslims.

⁵⁵ For a thoughtful engagement with Gandhi's ideas of non-violence, see Bilgrami (2003)

⁵⁶ This is neither the space nor the argument to discuss the appropriateness of Gandhi's strategy, here and as a political strategy in general. But it may be noted in passing that Gandhian non-violence probably works best if understood as a political strategy of ethical inversion, rather than as an ideology of the self.

5

From Independence to the Emergency

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the continuing evolution of Hindu nationalism through the period from independence to the period of the Emergency (1975-77). Again, as in the previous chapters, the intention here is not to offer yet another narrative of events in the contemporary history of India, but to attempt to discern trends and patterns in the social, political and economic dynamics of this period, that were conducive to, or encouraged the growth of Hindu nationalism. In particular, I will examine the effects of post-independence political and economic policies on the further and continuing modifications of Brahmanical patriarchy, and the consequent impact on the rise of Hindutva. Broadly, one may speak of three stages in the period after independence: the Nehru period (1947-64), the Congress-I period (1966-96, referring to the period when Indira Gandhi for the most part, followed by Rajiv Gandhi and then Narasimha Rao, were prime ministers) and the period of coalition politics (1996-present).¹ The stages chart, in one sense, a process of increasing democratisation in the Indian polity; in another, they also mark the gradual abandonment of the principles of socialism – and some would argue, of secularism too – as well as witness the increasing volubility of discourses of caste, on the one hand, and of nationalism and sub-nationalisms on the other. Additionally, and perhaps most relevantly for our purposes, a new term is introduced into our attempt to track the growth of Hindutva, which is the discourse of development. Prior to independence, the themes and issues that constitute what is today broadly understood in the term development had been of secondary (but related) concern to the quest for independence; when this was achieved, it almost immediately became the most important focus of the new post-colonial

government. In this chapter then I will attempt to track a history of, and therefore a perspective on, the dynamics that obtain between the various issues noted above, and their consequences for the subsequent directions in the construction of gender and Hindu nationalism in India, specifically up to the declaration of the Emergency in 1975. This date interrupts the three-stage periodisation I have noted above; however, in itself it marks a momentous shift in the trajectories of politics in the country – and serves therefore, as a useful narrative node around which the analyses of all three stages may be articulated.

5.2 Objectives

The objectives of this chapter may be stated as follows:

1. To identify some of the economic, socio-political and historical factors that operate in this period and determine our understanding of its political and cultural configurations.
2. Specifically, to examine the issue of ‘development’ – its meanings, programmes, ideological bases and its implications and consequences – as it has affected the formation of gender in India, and of Hindutva.
3. I will argue that the discourse of development, despite undergoing several mutations, even today remains a strong and determining factor in the understanding of the (future of the) nation, and consequently of Hindu nationalism.
4. To produce an analytical narrative of the gendered dynamics unfolding within Brahmanical masculine hegemony, in its relations to the various forces that are in political play in this period.

5.3 From Colonial ‘Modernity’ to Post-Independence ‘Development’

The links between colonial conquest and industrial-economic growth in Europe are today common knowledge, as are the effects of colonial conquest on colonised societies. However, the effects of colonial conquest on the formation of the nation-state in Europe, on the one hand, and on its social and cultural dynamics on the other, are less well known, and have been less easily discernible. This is partly because of the fact that the most visible current of colonialism was the ‘exporting’ of Europe to

the colonies: the site of engagement between coloniser and colonised was predominantly the latter's society, not the former's. This has allowed for the presumption that European society itself remained largely removed from the scene of the action, its history therefore charting a course substantially independent of this process. As Edmund Burke, III, remarks:

we tend to see colonial histories as taking place in a space that is separate from that in which European history occurs. Accordingly, colonial histories appear as derivative histories, rather than shaped by the same world historical processes as modern Europe. In this "sleeping beauty" theory of modern history, agency resides alone with Europe, while the non-West is seen as without history, fatally blocked from change because of its alleged cultural defects (eg., Islamic obscurantism, oriental despotism, the Asian mode of production) until awakened from its millennial slumber by the kiss of the West. (1998)

There were, however, inevitable reverse currents, less easily discernible, by which the fact and process of colonialism also affected the colonising powers.² One such current was controversially highlighted by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978), the (somewhat sensationalist) basic thesis of which was that European knowledge of its colonial subjects was coded within an ideology of 'Western superiority', resulting in a severe Othering of the 'East'. While severely critiqued from several quarters (e.g. Ahmed 1993; Cohn 1996) for being variously unoriginal, essentialist, insufficiently substantiated, lacking in nuance, sweeping to the point of caricature, and historically sometimes wildly inaccurate (to name just a few), Said's book did draw attention to the terms in which the self-perceptions of the European ruling classes were being constructed through the period of imperial expansion. Simply put, what has variously been referred to as Europe's 'civilising mission' or 'the white man's burden' – combined with the ideas of progress, historical advancement and the eradication of backwardness and barbarity – were not just justifications for conquest (as they have routinely been understood) but often fervently held ideologies that were, in their essence, vocational commitments to a recasting of the European self. The moulding of the European psyche by the colonial encounter has been convincingly demonstrated for instance in Franz Fanon's (1967) searing analyses of colonial relations.

Closely related to this current was another, which was the eventual effect on European nation-state formation of the complex, often treacherous manoeuvres and battles that were played out between the different powers (European and non-European) on colonial terrain. The relative powers of the different European states – wealth, economic and territorial size, industrial and infrastructural programs, military capabilities, political and administrative constitution – all came to be negotiated and determined substantially (albeit indirectly) by the outcome of their repeated engagements in the colonial theatre. This and the establishment and consolidation of the colonial administrative machinery that followed, because of its particular requirements – intellectual, physical, social – instituted fundamental changes within European social space in terms of education, professional opportunities, occupational and vocational status, recruitment procedures, and related to these, the very important process of the gendering of functions and roles within the imperial machinery (Ballhatchet 1980, McClintock 1996, R Hyam 1990, Sinha 1995, Stoler 1997). For instance, specifically feminine (or rather, feminised) occupations evolved like nursing, or the governess; the ideal of the housewife as mother, home-maker *and* charitable social activist evolved especially in the colonies (Burns 1998; Reidi 2002); but in particular, it inculcated a definitive relation of masculinity to power that was troped in an industrial language:

In the later half of the nineteenth century...self-control was often expressed through industrial or mechanical analogies; manliness represented disciplined control over natural forces, just as the steam engine and other industrial technology managed "the natural energy of water and fire" (...). The Empire was a natural place for such masculinity to be expressed and to be textualised in stories of adventure ...which would then reproduce manliness as an object of desire for young readers. (Holden 1998: 2)³

We have already seen how, in the encounter between the colonisers and the upper-caste colonised these gender ideologies in particular played out; by the time of independence, they become the ideological and political terms in which the leadership of the upper-castes begins to frame its agendas. Franz Fanon puts it in acerbic, if somewhat overstated terms:

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. But as soon

as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie. (1967: 166)

Fanon's words point to the regularity with which, in post-independence contexts, there is a replication of the colonial intent (perhaps inevitably) – as if, post-colonially, the only way to *possess* (to claim or reclaim) an identity that was destabilised by colonialism itself, was through a second, 'colonising', appropriative move. Certainly for the early Hindu nationalists, independence offered an opportunity to gain a sense of power by redefining and re-enacting the imperial 'civilising' process as the (re)construction of the Hindu nation itself. Combined with the drive to emulate the economic, industrial and infrastructural achievements of the coloniser that we had noted in the previous chapter, this complex, potent epistemic configuration that germinated in Europe's encounter with its colonies, then finds a new medium of return to the colonies after independence: the discourse of development.

5.4 The Politics of Development: Nationalism-Development-Modernity⁴

Satish Deshpande in an overview of the political economy of modern India, writes,

At its most fundamental level, the rhetoric of development provided the former colonies with a dignified and distinctive way of obeying the imperative towards a modernity already indelibly marked as western. Thus, development acquired a powerful emotive-nationalist charge in the non-western world, because the West is "always-already" the norm for most modern institutions and ideas, including those of the nation, development and progress.... [D]evelopment comes to be seen as a *national mission* and not only as a world-historical process of the modern era. (1998: 149)

The extent to which this is to be seen as an 'import', however, is dependent on the extent to which the tradition-modernity dichotomy is operationalised in the analysis of the colonial and post-colonial situation. That is, once we understand the intricate, even intimate dynamic of the

colonial encounter, its formative effects in the shaping of 'modernity', and the manner in which it renders the discursive split of traditional-modern as homologous with indigenous-western, it is clear that the process of modernisation under colonialism – whether in the 'west' or in the colonies – already contains within it the seeds of the ideology of development, then coded as the civilising mission. Modernity is in this sense very much a product of the colonial encounter, as much as the idea of 'tradition' and no more alien to the colonies than the idea of 'indigenouness'. It was as familiar to the colonies as the coloniser, and as exclusively possessed by him as his power – in fact, *was* the secret of his power. Its manifestations were not just scientific and technological sophistication, or level of industrial development, or complexity of economic organisation, but in the entire apparatus of governance that was required for and deployed in the control and administration of these.

This is a key point, because as in the case of India, many ex-colonies inherited and continued with this apparatus and its concomitant ideologies of governance – a democratic constitution, guarantees of civil and democratic rights, a secular state, electoral politics, a complex bureaucratic machinery, etc.⁵ Yet 'modernity' was always, and still remains, a condition of the 'West', while 'development' was always, and still remains, that for which the former colonies must aspire – their 'national mission' in Deshpande's words. The actual distinction then, between the two intimately related ideas – modernity and development – is not that they are two stages in a neutral continuum in the objective world (development leading to modernity) but that they are ideologically loaded terms instituted to signify an insurmountable geographical separation, with two projectedly divergent historical paths. In this projection, development will never – and was never intended to – evolve into modernity, being indelibly marked by the ineradicable alterity of 'indigenouness', whether understood in terms of race, ethnicity, religion or even language-family – just as European nations will never be spoken of as being, or ever having been, developing countries, at *any* point in their histories.⁶ The entire discourse, practice and project of development is thus in the direct lineage, and probably the most lasting legacy, of the 'white man's burden'. But the imagined historical trajectories of the two – modernity and development – though germinating in the same historical moment of colonial encounter, have branches that will never meet.

The significance of all this for us lies specifically in the emergent imagination and discourse of the nation-state under colonial rule. At the risk of being slightly repetitious, as we had pointed out in the previous chapter, the coincidence of views of Brahmanical and Victorian codes in the process of framing Hindu personal laws – on the issue of the public/private divide and its deep gendering – though arising out of different histories and intended somewhat differently, translated into the common law/ personal law divide and the differential construction of masculine hegemonies within each community thus reorganised by these new social realms. The common law realm being the realm of control of economy and the industry, the drive to emulation attendant on the emergent masculine hegemony of the upper castes was as much about the re-casting of Indian society to meet the prescriptions and demands of the coloniser's modernity – as a means to power – as it was about the consolidation of Brahmanical patriarchy into the 'Hindu' community. It was thus an essential prerequisite for negotiating with the new apparatus of government and its mechanisms of representational politics. The achievements of the various reform movements – in the education of women, in the protection of their rights to life (after widowhood) and property, in the repudiation of child-marriage and the promotion of widow-remarriage, etc. – are recognisable then as the endowments of a protectionist and benevolent 'new patriarchy', not as the consequences of women demanding and claiming them in large numbers, and/or through organised movements (Tambe 2000). Besides, they were too few in number, and too confined to upper caste women, to be understood as organised women's movements. Further, the notion of women as a (political) community, remained completely subsumed (if at all it had formed)⁷ by the intense battles of community formation along caste and religious lines. As the previous chapter argued, these were in fact founded on gender reorganisations that, by explicitly shaping public space as masculine, effectively foreclosed the possibility of women's issues emerging in it, except as means and markers of community distinction and definition, and mediated through male interventions. The emergent understanding of the modern nation-state, especially for the Hindu nationalists, was thus fundamentally gendered by that very modernity, although it was continually rendered in the discourse of tradition. Inscribed in the formation of the new nation-state then, was the language of rights born of individualism, but articulated in the grammar of community and com-

munity formation, essentially bespeaking the interests of the Brahmanical patriarchy. In sum, the gendering of spaces and communities according to the new patriarchy was also informed by the drive to be modern – or to emulation, as was pointed out earlier – that, post-independence, merges neatly with emergent discourse of ‘development’.

Gender and Development, Post-Independence

The Indian case is thus interwoven by the complexities of, on the one hand, colonial modernisation which was to eventually translate into the development process, and the transformations in social and economic relations demanded by this process; and on the other, by the adoption of a political system that was originally designed to enshrine the rights of individuals over communities.⁸ Its subsequent adaptation to the colonial and post-colonial imperative to acknowledge the rights of communities to safeguard their ‘Cultures’, over and above the claims of the abstract universal individual, is symptomatic of the mutations that ‘modernity’ undergoes in the colonial context – but more significantly, it is a mark of the complex struggle to integrate the post-colonial state’s modernity with the ‘other’ modernity of the newly emergent nation and its communities. In practice then, even as the Westminster model of liberal democracy, with its material roots in a capitalist dispensation and its ideological roots in individualism, was adopted as the form of post-colonial government by the newly independent nation, the rights of its individuals remained frequently tangled in the issue of community rights – and rooted in a political economy that cannot be described as solely feudal, capitalist or socialist, but a nebulous amalgamation of all three. Partha Chatterjee offers us an insightful theoretical formulation for this amalgam:

[I]n situations where an emergent bourgeoisie lacks the social conditions for establishing complete hegemony over the new nation, it resorts to a ‘passive revolution’, by attempting a ‘molecular transformation’ of the old dominant classes into partners in a new historical bloc and only a partial appropriation of the popular masses, in order to first create a state as the necessary precondition for the establishment of capitalism as the dominant mode of production. (1986: 30).

We will return to the idea of the ‘molecular transformation’ suggested above later: for now, it is necessary to briefly examine the idea of the state that emerged through the debates immediately after independence.

Corbridge and Harris, following Kaviraj and Chatterjee, indicate the difficulties faced by the Nehruvian Congress in seeking to establish a strong state that could initiate and guarantee the social and economic reforms required to ensure secular and equitable development, in the face of resistance from 'big business and landlordism' (2000: 29, 32-8); to this we can add the resistance of the communal and caste patriarchal elites. The then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru's response was to seek a functioning compromise on all contentious issues, and nothing expresses this more clearly than the controversy surrounding the passage of the Hindu Code Bill in the 1950s, eventually passed as a series of fragmented bills dealing with marriage, inheritance, adoptions, etc.

Nehru considered it a priority for his government to have this Bill passed, immediately after independence, precisely because it would index the modernity of the new nation-state. However, the arguments centred not on the substantial question of women's rights, and their implicit modernity; the proponents of the Bills used the question of women's rights to argue that their passage was vital to reform and modernise Hinduism itself – was vital in fact, for maintaining the unity of Hindu society. Opponents of the Bill(s) maintained firstly, that every community (and especially the Muslims) would have to undertake legislative reform, and not just the Hindus; and secondly (and rather contradictorily), that matters of marriage, inheritance, etc had clear scriptural directives, and therefore belonged in the realm of personal law, not to be tampered with by secular-constitutional injunctions – which the proponents of the Bill(s) believed would lead to the fragmentation of Hindu society, and therefore of national unity.

Crucially, discussions about the modernity of India, at nearly all levels, related to concerns about national unity. Projects for modernisation, whether based in a traditionalist framework of ancient Indian values, or a Nehruvian model of economic development all shared a common assumption that the critical obstacle to India's modern identity was ethnic and religious divisiveness. So, Congress traditionalists, attempting to promote the values of a united India through the advocacy of Sanskrit studies, connected modernisation to ideas of an ancient Indian unity that had overcome caste and religious difference. (William Gould, 'Violence, Modernity and Tradition', n.d.)

The progressives eventually won, despite being in a minority, but only because Nehru made so many concessions to the opponents of the Bill even within the Congress, that its substantive ameliorative content for women was little more than token, succeeding in creating a myth that is today dear to the Hindu nationalists – that the ‘Hindu’ community has modernised its personal laws and liberated its women from oppressive customary injunctions, while others, specifically the Muslims, have yet to do so.⁹ The entire episode makes amply clear the intimate relations between conceptions of nation, modernity and gender: the final legitimacy for the Bills was not the substantive issue of the suppression and oppression of women in the ‘Hindu’ community, but the need for national unity in the making of the modern Indian nation-state. Further, it serves as a striking example of the way in which the masculine hegemony of the national Brahmanical patriarchy used (and continues to use) the discourse of the nation-state – as well as the state itself – to undermine and neutralise any attempt to contest its power. It would be a complete misconception of the dynamics of this incident to see the ‘progressives’, Nehru included, as seeking to challenge or dismantle Brahmanical masculine hegemony. The ‘challenge’, such as it was, was a logical effect of the discourse of modernisation – specifically, a semantic by-product of the constitutional adoption of the language of rights. The promptness with which it was diluted, and large concessions to opposition granted, indicates the extent to which ‘progressive’ sentiment on it was – in substantial terms – not so very much in disagreement with conservative Hindu traditionalist and nationalist views, and thus the fundamental coherence of masculinist allegiances or homosociality (Gabriel 2010) within an otherwise fairly heterogeneously constituted Brahmanical patriarchy. We will return to these issues later, when we examine the relations between the growth of the women’s movement in India and Hindu nationalism.

If one reflects further on the probability that Nehru would have had a very good idea of the kind of resistance he would have had to overcome, then in one Machiavellian sense, it could even be argued that the episode served wholly another purpose: to win Nehru support on another project altogether. This project was the emphasis on planned heavy industrialisation that he (along with Subhash Chandra Bose) had been working on and been enamoured with from the 1930s, and which had met with stiff resistance from Gandhi and his followers. The Congress as a whole had manifested a mixed reaction: from the establishment of the first National

Planning Commission in 1938, in spite of strong scepticism, to the gradually increasing interest (within the less conservative and bourgeois sections of the Congress) that led to the initiation of the First Five-Year Plan in 1951, the idea of planning was in many ways ‘a prelude to an intra-Congress tension reinforcing the multi-class character of the party’ (Bidyut Chakrabarty 1992: 280). Given that Nehru had been promoting the idea of planning since 1938, it is probably safe to argue that by 1951, he must have known that compromises and bargains, as much as rational persuasion, would be required to push it through – hence possibly, the ease with which he conceded ground on the Hindu Code Bills. In spite of this, as Chakrabarty makes clear, he also had to sacrifice Bose and accommodate staunch Gandhians and other conservatives in the Planning Commission, in order to appease the stiffer resistance to planning within the Congress. That Nehru nevertheless succeeded in pushing the idea of planning through is testament to the intensity with which he believed that social transformation was necessary; but also that it was necessary that it ‘be achieved by administrative fiat’ (Corbridge and Harris, 2000: 38), top-down, and not by the vagaries of unguided social and economic processes.

Nehru’s major achievement in this was in successfully drawing private big business interests into supporting the idea of planning, principally by using the threat of imminent social unrest and possible violence. It is worth noting that after independence, Nehru’s opinion of the same agitational politics that had been central to the freedom movement – and that remained a prominent feature of the Indian political scene – now saw a complete *volte face*. ‘Politics, for Nehru, had become a question of negotiating the day-to-day problems of development: “...The problems facing the country are mainly economic and in a sense the biggest issue is the Five-Year Plan...”’ (Dipesh Chakrabarty [quoting Nehru] 2005: n.d.) Chakrabarty also notes that the issue of maintaining public order in the face of disruptive agitational politics remained debated well into the 1960s, before it ‘lost all political utility (i.e., the ruling classes lost the capacity to impose discipline)’ (Dipesh Chakrabarty 2005: n.d.).¹⁰ But Nehru’s own obvious disgruntlement with agitational politics resulted in his repeatedly emphasising the need for a strong and disciplinary state, if economic development was to follow.

By identifying the state as a supra-institution, not only did Nehru perform a historic task; he also created a congenial atmosphere for the capitalist

state to thrive which emerged not through a bourgeoisie victory over feudalism but through an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the dominant feudal classes – thus making passive revolution triumph in a context pregnant with the possibilities of a civil rebellion. (Bidyut Chakrabarty, 1992: 286)

What both Chatterjee and Chakrabarty refer to as a ‘passive revolution’ in this instance may be understood as the process by which the masculine hegemony of the Brahmanical patriarchy was both consolidated and extended, specifically through the machinery of the state. In the previous chapter we had referred to what Thomas Blom Hansen terms the ‘double discourse’ of colonial governmentality, which had already instituted an Indian administrative class, essentially middle class and upper caste in constitution, that remained very much in place even after independence (Hansen 1999: 46). After independence, they were therefore well positioned to further and consolidate the interests of the Brahmanical patriarchy.

As we have already seen, this was a heterogeneously constituted patriarchy whose interests were in no sense always unified, and Hansen’s idea (noted in the previous chapter) of the double discourse serves as one way to index this heterogeneity. Of equal significance here is the other, related dichotomy mentioned in the previous chapter, the tension between ‘Order’ and ‘*Danda*’ that evidently remained a factor in governance even after Independence. We will shortly elaborate on how these terms may be usefully deployed in analyzing this heterogeneity: but for now, we may propositionally argue that the ‘passive revolution’ noted by Chatterjee and Chakrabarty was the process of establishment of ‘Order’ (through a “molecular transformation” of the ruling elites, specifically through the gender issues thrown up by the Hindu Code Bills), in and as the consolidation of Brahmanical masculine hegemony. However, this transformation was not so much an attempt to erase the hold of *Danda*, especially in the large non-metropolitan areas of the country, as to gradually establish a hegemonic alliance – even if, arguably, the process of transformation predated the moment of independence, with its origins in the great caste and gender reform movements of the nineteenth century. The arguments of the previous chapter have already made clear the manner in which the emergent bourgeoisie gradually allied with the older feudal elites – characterized there as liberal-western versus conservative-traditionalist ‘Hindu’ tendencies – rather paradoxically, *through* the con-

tested terrain of these movements, with the end being essentially to preserve and protect upper caste interests. It is this alliance – more implicit than explicit, more tacit than stated – that was characterized as the ‘new patriarchy’ of a reorganized Brahmanical masculine hegemony. In the post-independent context, it is the shifts in balance in this alliance, and its interruptions by caste movements and other processes of social change (development, the vagaries of agriculture, war, economic liberalization, etc) that eventually made possible the political rise of Hindu nationalism in the late eighties and early nineties – as we shall shortly see.

5.5 The Early Directions of Hindu Nationalism

It is nevertheless important to recognise the fundamentally common orientation – of preserving and protecting upper caste interests – of this newly independent Brahmanical masculine hegemony.¹¹ It is true that its explicitly Hindu nationalist component had become substantially discredited after the violence of Partition and particularly after the assassination of Gandhi, leading to the ban on the RSS in 1948. The latter’s consistent opposition to the ostensibly secular politics of the Congress allowed it to be readily branded a communal organisation, with Hindu nationalism itself becoming consequently marginalised as a communal ideology. ‘Hindu nationalism developed into a kind of trope, which acted to define or affirm the non-communal credentials of the INC.’¹² These schisms however belie and distract from the latent patriarchal continuities, based on class, caste and gender affiliations, within this hegemonic formation.¹³ From the time of the (albeit brief) ban on the RSS to its ‘opportune’ re-emergence to prominence as part of the opposition to Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, Hindu nationalism seemingly disappears politically, and reappears just as magically, if anything even stronger than it had been. The most widely accepted explanation for this disappearance is that it was the effect of Congress dominance and the early popularity of secularism; the concomitant explanation for the sudden reappearance is that, although the RSS was almost invisible at this time, it continued to work and spread incrementally and inconspicuously, creating a network that sprang into action with the Emergency.¹⁴ While both of these factors may indeed be true to some degree, as explanations in themselves they are both insufficient and fallacious: firstly, they are premised on the belief that Hindu nationalism and secularism are entirely incompatible *as political stances*, which need not be the case; arguably the

ban on the RSS was a consequence of the assassination of Gandhi, more than of any fundamental ideological difference between the avowedly secular sections in the INC and the Hindu nationalist ones, or of any inherently greater strength in, or popularity of, the former. Secondly, the argument assumes these positions (secular vs. Hindu nationalist) to be no more than political programs, so that the banning of a program was understood as sufficient to erase its ideology and its politics; this is in fact a misconception arising from the first fallacy. In actual fact, as we saw in the previous chapter, there were large areas of overlap between the avowed Hindu nationalists on the one hand and the Hindu traditionalists, the conservatives and the Hindu liberals on the other, that together constituted the bulk of the Indian National Congress. This meant that banning the RSS did not in fact much damage Hindu nationalism as such. Rather startlingly, it also implies that of the two – secularism and Hindu nationalism – it was the first that was actually no more than political program: the second was evidently much more deeply embedded in the socio-polity than its institutional manifestations indicated. And thirdly, these explanations do not account for how the RSS managed to survive and expand in the ‘secularist’ years after independence – especially given that, even though the ban was revoked after a year, the RSS had to accept very stringent terms whereby it would desist from any political activity. Further, as Basu, et al (1993), point out, ‘[t]he decade that followed lifting of the ban was not, on the whole, a happy one for the RSS or other right-wing groups’ (p. 32), given that it saw the Communists form the main political opposition to the Congress, and that its own organisation was substantially in disarray. Understood thus, it is difficult to accept easy explanations that Hindu nationalism had been temporarily defeated by the secularism of the Congress in the post-independence decades, but continued to work in the shadows to re-emerge with the Emergency (given its own state of disarray). While its apparent disappearance as a mainstream political project no doubt owed substantially to the ban, its re-emergence cannot be explained by the work of the RSS alone, but by the fact that it never really lost its hold as an ideology *outside* mainstream politics in this period, where the continuities of Brahmanical masculine hegemony, based on a host of issues and concerns other than the communal/secular divide, remained intact (indeed, to understand Hindu nationalism as essentially premised on the communal/secular divide *is* the problem). As John Zavos puts it, ‘The shapes of Hindu na-

tionalism, in this sense, are not the shapes of Hindu nationalism necessarily constrained by the limits of the Sangh-Parivar and other overtly Hindu nationalist organisations.¹⁵

This is in fact one of the fundamental arguments of this chapter: *that the apparent political 'resurgence' of Hindu nationalism from the seventies onward is in fact no more than the political re-articulation of the Brahmanical masculine hegemony that it always had been, and remains, founded on, and that this hegemony in fact had never really either weakened or diminished, even while it has mutated and continues to do so.* This is not to argue that the secularism of the Indian National Congress (or of any of the other smaller political formations) was cosmetic, or only a political slogan, but that it had to contend with a hegemonic formation that had existed for centuries, and that – while it had obviously mutated – remained the most dominant and pervasive socio-political condition. We will return to these considerations later; to comprehend them fully, it is necessary to first return to the condition of this formation at the time of independence.

With independence, it was inevitable that this broad hegemonic formation should seek to consolidate its position by appropriating the instrument of the state. However, as Hansen notes, '[o]ne of the paradoxes confronting the new nationalist leadership was that it had to reverse its own critique of the practices and governmentalities of the colonial state and make these same, often unreformed, practices and rationalities into an instrument of social transformation.' (Hansen 1999: 46) The unrest that had proved so useful on the one hand, in destabilizing the imperial state, and on the other, in strengthening this hegemony's position as mediator between that state and the mass of its colonial subjects, now proved not only inconvenient, but threatened to destabilize the newly acquired institutional powers of this hegemonic formation. Where it had functioned as a buffer between the state and its subjects pre-independence, with the shifting of political and power alignments post independence, it now occupied a new and somewhat awkward position in relation to the masses it had represented (or at least claimed to represent) under empire. Specifically, it now had the paradoxical function of representing the masses to itself. Further, the dynamics within the alliances that constituted this hegemony in the first place, were now different: once state power had been acquired, it was no longer required to be united (as against the empire). Instead, the various constituent factions of the alliance¹⁶ – within and outside the Congress, the dominant politi-

cal persona, as it were, of this hegemonic formation – began contesting for the domination and control of state resources. In the early years after independence this contest was substantially controlled by the institutional bonds of the enormous Congress party machinery; where such control was not possible or viable, or where there was resistance to the Congress itself, the state machinery was mobilized, resulting in the passage of a series of repressive Acts.¹⁷ But even by the late sixties it was evident that these measures were not going to hold; dissent – both within and outside the Congress – was proving instrumental in the subsequent and steady dismantling of its structure (of which more later). It is in this context that we can understand Nehru's emphasis on planning as, among other things, also an attempt to simultaneously address, deflect and defer the response to the myriad demands, at various levels and in diverse regions, of the factions of the alliance – which, interestingly, were now increasingly positioning themselves as the mediators and buffers between the new Indian state and their respective agitating populaces.¹⁸ Planning, in this sense, was offered to India as a scientific, rational and impersonal (and therefore just) program of action, unprejudiced by history or community affiliations, that could and would satisfy all constituencies. It was Nehru's template for the further transformation of the existing Brahmanical hegemony into a new hegemonic order, an invitation to consolidate the alliance based, not on a common enemy, but on the possible realization of a common future. In what follows, I will attempt to sketch the social and political trajectories that emerged out of this consolidation into the present.

5.6 Fault Lines of the Present¹⁹

Broadly, in the period immediately after 1947, dominated by Nehruvian development policies in economics and the Congress Party in politics, two small ruling elites, consisting of an urban, upper-caste, national elite, and a rural social elite of the dominant peasant castes and rural upper-castes, together constituted a small middle class.²⁰ The dominance of Nehru in the Congress up to the 60s meant that even here, it was the urban elite that, being pan-Indian and English-proficient, controlled the state. Writing of this formation as 'the Nehru settlement', Rudolph and Rudolph note:

The Nehru settlement had been based on a coalition of urban and rural interests united behind an essentially urban-oriented industrial strategy. Its senior partners were India's proportionately small but politically powerful administrative, managerial, and professional English-educated middle-classes and private sector industrialists. (1987: 51)

Pavan Varma (1998) also lucidly describes the infatuation of this class, particularly its English-educated component, with the Nehruvian imagination of a socialist, industrialised and modern Indian future, even as it almost unconsciously worked to dilute this vision through its ceaseless consolidation of its own hegemonic position and character. Until the early sixties, this elite was convinced it was undertaking the project of nation-building selflessly, when in fact it is now evident that it had actually been a process of systematic consolidation of its control over the state and over the resources the state could mobilise for it. It was a process by which this broad class-formation accrued a social, cultural and economic capital base for itself, referred to by Barrington Moore as a 'bourgeois revolution' (cited in Robert Stern, 1993: 3). Nevertheless, at this point in time, immediately after independence, it would be fair to say that the political disposition was in fact a secular one: not so much because of a weakening of religion in the public sphere, as the preoccupation with nation-building that had fired the imagination of this particular class, with the Nehruvian vision of dams and heavy industries (and their metonymic expressiveness of progress, redistribution of largesse, and the generation of power) as the 'temples of modern India'. Not only had the Hindu Right been driven underground and lost substantial credibility for its role in the assassination of Gandhi; but more pertinently, this hegemonic class was still dominantly a westward-looking one, seeking the economic fruits of their 'independent' control over industrialisation and technological growth promised by Nehru. Further, it established itself as a pan-Indian ruling class that, until the 60s, maintained a lid on regional unrest, partly through the Congress system of accommodation and patronage politics – which however, was arguably in a steady process of deterioration right from independence – but substantially also through the famed 'steel frame' of the Indian bureaucracy (Khilnani: 2004 [1997], 38). But the logic of the democratic electoral process was to ensure that the rural elites could in due course begin to mobilise numbers, as the political counter to the systemic power of the urban elite.

The social tensions that emerge in the sixties are, as it were, symptomatised by the political transformations that occur then. Even as the urban bourgeoisie was consolidating itself, this was the period that saw the emergence into political visibility of the rural elite, rising to power through the electoral process itself, banking on the demographic strengths of caste and regional communities. Bhikhu Parekh notes Nehru's inability to impose organisational control in the Congress party leading to its becoming 'a loose and flabby organisation, a party of parties permitting a wide variety of factions, bound by nothing more than a vague commitment to "national ideology"' (1995: 39). This is the period when the Congress begins to visibly weaken as a pan-Indian party, and caste and regional political formations gain strength in the states. What contributed substantially to this process in the late 1960s was the massive and often violent political unrest that followed Indira Gandhi's coming to power in 1966 – a result of a combination of crop failure, food shortage, escalating food prices, a severe foreign exchange crisis leading to devaluation of the rupee, increased defence expenditure following the Indo-China war of 1965 – leading to an important and irrevocable emphasis on militarization – and a general slowing down of the economy. Additionally, the language debate and the popular assertion of the vernaculars in opposition to English (and in the southern states, to Hindi as well) led to the linguistic reorganisation of the states. Arguably, this served to enhance the gradually increasing power of the regional elites. Further, the third Five Year Plan saw a turn toward agriculture-centred policies initiated after Nehru, under and after Lal Bahadur Shastri, partly due to successive years of drought (1966-7) and food grain shortage, partly to pressure from the World Bank. This was accompanied by the increasing powers of the Cabinet and the ministries, as well as of the National Development Council (constituted of the Chief Ministers of the States), at the expense of the influence of the Planning Commission (Corbridge and Harris, 2000: 69-70). But as Francine Frankel (1978) has shown, agricultural reform, which was key to the success of the heavy industrialisation charted in the first stages of planning, was strongly resisted at the state level because electoral and financial support in state politics came from the rural rich peasants and merchants, and under the federal structure agriculture was controlled by the states.²¹ Thus on the one hand, there was increased political attention to agriculture, with power shifting from the Planning Commission to the NDC, while on the

other, precisely because of poor implementation of land reforms, the beneficiaries of this attention remained the rural elite. Pavan Verma notes that these policies ‘changed the status quo only to the extent that they shifted power from a handful of very rich upper-caste farmers to a broad band of middle-level cultivationalists of the intermediate castes.... And it was they who benefited the most from the Green Revolution’ (1998: 93).²² The federal structure thus contributed to the centre-states divide, as regional elites began to defeat the Congress and come to electoral power in the states, with the 1967 national elections. With the fracturing of the Congress in 1969, it became clear that Indian politics would no longer be determined by the sense of homogeneity that the Congress had provided as an organisation. It is increasingly evident then that this period is marked by a process of the visible heterogenisation of the body politic. Yet, it was still a somewhat limited heterogenisation, essentially a consequence of rural elites laying claim to and gradually wresting power from the urban elite.

In many ways, these ‘bullock capitalists’ (as the Rudolphs termed them) constituted the social and political base for the dramatic transformations in politics that took place in the late sixties and into the early eighties. New, locally strong political parties emerged, representing, differently, the interests of regional elites and of caste and religious minorities; as this tendency intensified, even by the late eighties it became increasingly evident as a trend towards alliance politics at the regional, and later, national levels. The state’s affirmative action – or reservation – policies, though tardily implemented, also began contributing to the emergence of a new, small but vocal political leadership for the lower-castes. Together, they represented newly economically empowered groups that, even by the late sixties, were laying claim to middle class status in terms that refused to acknowledge anymore the old caste affiliations and statuses. Most of these new arrivals to middle class status were the intermediate caste, land-owning peasants, like the beneficiaries of the Green Revolution noted above. But as Yogendra Singh notes, their new status was not economically sustainable in the long term through continued dependence on agriculture, and the lack of investment in business and industry.²³ The new agricultural policies may have succeeded in creating wealth – and that too in an uneven distribution pattern – but this was coupled with the anxiety that it could not sustain, because of its dependence on the vagaries of seasons, quality and quantity of produce, pests,

etc. What were desired were the security and the prestige offered by state employment. The state as chief agent of development, and therefore of resources, became the field of competitive rivalry between these various groups (Deshpande 1998: 157).²⁴

We may now broadly identify the different axes along which various divides emerge within this historical bloc, especially from the late sixties. We have already identified the first as the rural-urban divide among the elites; this subsequently takes on the shades of a divide between the central state and the regional states, in one sense, and into an opposition between diverse coalitions of regional parties and the Congress, at the state and the central levels, in another. (Coalition politics in this sense – as we noted earlier – came into existence in India fairly quickly, albeit at the state levels, with the results of the 1967 elections. At this stage however, it is pertinent to note, the Hindu-right Jan Sangh – the precursor of today's BJP – was part of very few of these coalitions.) This in turn suggests another kind of vertical divide – that between the regional parties themselves, which remains a powerful divisive force even till today. This divide works to separate parties of one region from another, as well as between different parties in the same region. While commentators like DL Sheth (1999) locate the source of this divide in the inability of the regional elites to agree to an alternative language, say Hindi, to replace English as the language of power (which explains region-wise separations), we need to note the importance of other political and ideological differences between and within the regional elites that contributed to the maintenance of the divide till well into the eighties. Among other issues, one can list differences on sharing of river waters, migrants and migration between states, differences in caste and culture, claims on shared or common land resources like forests, sanctuaries, pasture land, etc. Additionally, there were (and continue to be) ideological affiliations and programmatic differences within the same region, that could register horizontal divides of caste or class – as for instance with the increasing influence of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu or the emergence of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and subsequently the left-extremist Naxalites, out of the original CPI – as well as sect-based vertical divides, as with the Muslim League in Kerala or the Akalis in Punjab.²⁵

Having said this, it is important to note that the political impact of this increasing heterogenisation of the body politic was to be felt only

much later – specifically, about two years after the 1971 elections and following the increasing social unrest against Indira Gandhi's Congress. Till then, several factors worked to prevent this nascent heterogeneity from emerging into full political visibility. Firstly, while the Congress was already showing signs of breaking up by 1969, it was still too extensive, structurally resilient and politically coherent an organisation to be dismantled by uncoordinated, isolated and localised factionalism; only with the concerted efforts of the various smaller parties, combined with the strong rejection of the Emergency by the electorate, did the coalition of 1977 manage to oust the Congress. Secondly, it remained for a while the primary instrument for the maintenance of Brahmanical hegemony; and even through and after Indira Gandhi's massive 'leftist' phase from 1969 to 1975, when the patronage system – which was essentially a modern, state-managed version of feudal benefaction – that had been in place in the Congress was thoroughly and comprehensively subverted, the principle of patronage itself was not; it was merely redirected, concentrated and centralised in the figure of Mrs Gandhi herself (see P. Brass, 1984; Corbridge and Harris, 2000: 74-8). This ensured that the actual social mechanics of Brahmanical hegemony remained unaffected by the larger institutional changes of nationalisation, bureaucratisation and subsidisation; rather, it became even more patently self-serving and governed by sycophancy. Thirdly, when Indira Gandhi's strategy of subversion began in the late sixties, it was already feeding into a social erosion that was underway: Corbridge and Harris note that, following the Green Revolution, the

increasing power of the rich peasantry, and of their capacities to mobilize support across rural classes because of the connections of kinship, caste and patronage...was tied up also with the horizontal mobilization of Backward Classes, eroding the hold of the historically dominant high-caste local elites and...that of the Congress party (Corbridge and Harris, 2000: 82).

So, even as she managed to bypass the regional party bosses and score triumphantly through local satraps in the 1971 elections, on the explicitly 'socialist' (read populist) political planks of nationalisation, poverty alleviation, land reform, etc, her own strategy turned against her when she proved unable to deliver on the election promises.²⁶ In the event, the resultant unrest had no institutional political mechanism of

containment, and instead fed the process of caste, language and religion based political formations that emerged in opposition to the Congress.

One important consequence of these divides was the emergence of strong regional chauvinisms amounting in some cases to sub-nationalisms in several regions that fed off the federal structure and the already existing divide between the national mainstream and the various regional polities.²⁷ Apart from the already troubled regions of the North-east²⁸ and Kashmir, nationality questions that were already nascent around issues of language and culture evolved into full-fledged linguistic chauvinism, marked by the language riots of the sixties in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and elsewhere, with the linguistic reorganisation of the states – recording the transformation of one kind of divide into another (language to nation). Evidently then the discourse and practice of nationalism did not subside with independence but were in turn appropriated by heterogeneous groups within the nation to later turn into full-fledged nationality movements. These differences were not always articulated as differences of language: by the mid-seventies Kashmir had emerged as a distinctly ethnic nationalism (based on perceived differences in language, religion and history), and Punjab was emerging as the base of an international Sikh nationalism based on religion.²⁹ The purpose and focus of this research precludes addressing these issues in full: but it must be noted here that, whatever the differences between them, these various sub-nationalist movements were neither autochthonous, nor independent of or unrelated to the other forms of social and political unrest that emerged in the sixties and seventies. In short, even as emergent elite formations were taking shape in reaction to the pan-Indian hegemony of Brahmanical patriarchy, they remained substantially divided and disparate, inflected by lines of division both internal to them – of caste, region, language, interests – and external – the federal structure of the polity, the interventions of central institutions like the bureaucracy and the judiciary – till well into the eighties. Paul Brass schematises this nicely when he notes it as

...[A] vast difference between the politics of national integration, of government and opposition, of planning, of secularism, and of rapid industrialization which Nehru symbolized and the politics of faction, caste, patronage, nepotism, communalism, and mixed subsistence and cash crop agriculture that operated at the state and district level'. (P Brass, 1984: 90)

Again here, Brass's schematisation resembles Guha's conceptual binary of Order-*Danda*, as well as Hansen's spatialization of it noted in the previous chapter.

'Order' and 'Danda', Post Independence

It is necessary at this point to examine the analytical utility of these terms in relation to the socio-political context we are referring to. Where we had earlier discussed these terms as indexing the different orders of the practice of violence in the nineteenth century, here – while retaining the emphasis on violence – these terms may also be used to discuss the transformations in the hegemonic order underway in this period. It is clear that the idea of 'Order' remained (and remains) a principal trope for the governmentality sought to be established by the post-independence state. Under Nehru, this Order was envisaged as being delivered through the five-year Plans and the bureaucracy; Nehru's reluctance to actively involve the Congress in the process marks his awareness that, while as a party it was participating in the political process of 'Order' (multi-party democracy), as an organisation it was already governed by processes and principles that lay (and lie) outside the modernist idiom of 'Order' and that may best be expressed through the countervailing trope of '*Danda*'. '*Danda*' then is understood here, not just as the principle of violent authority (as understood by Guha), but as shorthand to refer to the variety of regional and local conventions and codes of authority and governance that, on the one hand, sought to use the new political mechanisms of 'Order', but on the other, also resisted its superior Constitutional authority, prerogatives and its unifying centripetal force. These could include the entire gamut of 'non-rational', 'pre-modern', 'traditional' arrangements of power and control: existing caste and gender hierarchies, language and dialect relations, religious, sect and cult affiliations, village or other regional affiliations, ethnic bonds, the *panchayat* system, landlord-tenant relations, formal and informal kinship ties and networks, patronage systems, clientelist arrangements, etc.³⁰ The emergent nationality movements, caste movements, agrarian uprisings, trade union agitations, language, ethnic and communal riots, all index the engagement of '*Danda*' in this sense with 'Order'; while the converse – the engagement of 'Order' with '*Danda*' – is revealed especially in Indira Gandhi's transformation of the political theatre in India during the late sixties and early seventies. In particular, her cultivation of local satraps, her subversion of

the organisational structure of the Congress party, her implicit and sometimes explicit endorsement of nepotism, and indeed, her own political promotion of her son Sanjay Gandhi and of herself as an icon (in the slogan 'Indira is India', first coined by the then Congress President Dev Kant Baruah) – all index an acquiescence of the political processes of 'Order' to the demands of '*Danda*'.³¹

But of significance for us is the registering of these as contesting constituents *within* Brahmanical hegemony, transforming the nature of that hegemony through the process of contestation itself. If the realm of 'Danda' was governed by varieties of 'non-modern' notions and systems of authority, its principles of legitimation – irrespective of the variety – drew ultimately (directly or indirectly) from the orderings and injunctions of Brahmanical patriarchy; conversely, the realm of 'Order' (represented by the bureaucracy, the professional and mercantile classes, the industrialists, the leadership and the constituencies of most political parties), simply by virtue of the fact that it was dominated by the upper castes, was already a Brahmanical (masculine) hegemony, which tended to draw its legitimacy as much from this hegemonic position as from its affiliations with (or at least, proximity to) the Indian state. The contestations between these two realms must then be understood not so much as conflicts between opposing socio-political factions, as negotiations (with varying degrees of intensity, vehemence and violence) between constituents of the same broad political field. This will be clearer when we remember that the inhabitants of one were almost invariably also inhabitants of the other, especially in the realm of 'Order', and that the terms themselves ('Order' and '*Danda*') are more analytically than substantially discrete. The negotiations between these realms, then, must be understood as a continuous and unstable process, definitive of the specific dynamics of this hegemony, as well as its shifting balances of power. Given this instability of power, it was inevitable that this hegemonic condition would open up, allowing the formation of forces resistant to it. But what is remarkable about this particular hegemony is the ability that it has historically displayed to accommodate and absorb such resistances – a point I will shortly make clearer.

5.8 The Curious Case of Indira Gandhi

The dramatic changes that took place in the Indian socio-polity in the late sixties and early seventies were thus critical moments in the shifting power-relations of this (masculine) hegemonic formation. It is not coincidental that they occurred when Indira Gandhi was in power. It is now well known that she came to power almost accidentally, in the sense that she was supposed to have been a stop-gap prime minister, till the power struggle between the old guard – known as ‘the Syndicate’ – in the party was sorted out. Her political isolation began, in this sense, at the very beginning, and was explicitly a consequence of her being both young and female. But her transformation of herself and her political condition, from being a ‘shy and inexperienced girl’ into ‘the only man in the cabinet’,³² is an index also of the extent to which she had necessarily to appropriate the trappings of power specifically as gendered. In order for her to be taken seriously by the party, she first had to dismantle the underlying structure of the hegemonic order of the party itself. In 1966, when she was promoted to Prime Minister-ship, the party was controlled by the Syndicate – a laterally networked alliance between men of more or less equal political stature and power from across the country, and from across the ideological spectrum within the Congress.³³ Their structural controls over the party – particularly at the grass-roots level – meant that she either had to depend on them to carry her politically, or dismantle and reorganise the structure itself to suit her. As it turned out, her decision to follow the latter strategy led not only to the splitting of the Congress, but forced her also into separating the state elections from the general elections, thereby affecting the very political structure of the country. Arguably, it may have even forced her into the 1971 war with Pakistan as a means to prove herself a ‘strong’, ‘masculine’ leader, and eventually also contributing to her dictatorial mode in instituting the Emergency of 1975.

But encoded in these dynamics is also the continuing confrontation of the themes of ‘Order’ and ‘*Danda*’. As we have already noted, this was the period when the contest between the two realms was reaching criticality, given the multiple fronts on which tensions were unfolding, inside and outside the Congress – indeed, some of the external tensions actually feeding into the internal ones. With the Syndicate hampering her hold on the party, and the party itself showing signs of losing its ability to mediate and contain social tensions, Indira Gandhi was perhaps left with no

choice but to use the institutional power of the state to address these diverse tensions. But in using the structural and institutional power of the Indian state to centralise and consolidate her own political power, Indira Gandhi both strengthened and weakened the realm of 'Order': strengthened, by centralising political power in the institutional mechanisms of the state, especially the police and the administrative services; and weakened, (a) by dismantling those non-state institutional mechanisms that served to mediate between the realms of 'Order' and '*Danda*' – the party networks in particular; and (b) by employing the principles of '*Danda*' within the realm of 'Order' – as in the appointments of judges favourably inclined to her in the judiciary, the promotion of sycophancy, the establishment of coterie rule, the protectionism towards her son Sanjay Gandhi, even the actual misuse of her own powers of office, etc.³⁴ The point of significance for us though, lies not in the details of this dynamic, but in (a) the persistence of the gendered nature of hegemonic power, through these transactional changes; and (b) the gradual blurring of the line of clarity between what constituted the realm of 'Order', and what the realm of '*Danda*'. Taken together, these two points of significance suggest that, even as masculine hegemonies entered into contestation and/or negotiation, the fundamentally gendered quality of the hegemonies (as masculine) were never challenged or questioned, but even remained the basis of the contestation/negotiation – hence Mrs. Gandhi's acceptance as a leader at precisely the moment when she began appropriating the language, style and strategies of power as gendered – i.e., as *masculine*. Even when she was promoted – and promoted herself – as 'Mother Indira', she was arguably employing a trope from the affective realm of '*Danda*', wherein the figure of the (widowed) mother is mythically and hierarchically endowed with great power³⁵ – but within and by the patriarchal discourse it is derived from. In other words, this figure, rather than challenging the masculine hegemony of patriarchy, is ultimately and paradoxically, its affirmation. And the confirmation of this is to be found in the RSS's approval of Indira Gandhi as a hero(ine) of the country.³⁶

With the imposition of the Emergency in 1975, Indira Gandhi tried to reassert the principles of 'Order' in a socio-polity that had obviously begun to disintegrate.³⁷ But well before this move, it had become clear that the principles of 'Order' that underlay the mechanisms of the state, had become inextricably intertwined with those of '*Danda*' – not just through

Mrs. Gandhi's various subversions, but in the unfolding dynamic of democratisation itself. A substantial part of the social tensions that challenged Indira Gandhi's reign was the emergence into political visibility and audibility of previously marginalised and invisibilised sections like the emergent middle peasantry. With the continuing deterioration of the Congress's ability to reign in dissent, and to accommodate difference, the Brahmanical hegemony that it represented was inevitably exposed to pressures from these vocal and intensely charged emergent groups – the very groups that initially supported Mrs. Gandhi, and then rose against her when she could not deliver on her promises. In terms of social profile, Mendelsohn argues that it was composed primarily of the urban 'lower middle class', who identified the Congress with the 'westernised' urban elite, and formed the basic constituency of the Jana Sangh; disgruntled and restive students and workers who rallied under Jayaprakash Narayan; and the emergent *kulaks* or middle peasantry, who, like the urban lower middle class of clerks and petty traders, disliked the stranglehold of the urban bureaucratic elite (Mendelsohn 1978); and according to Inder Malhotra, Indira Gandhi's biographer, the Sikhs of Punjab too formed an important part of the resistance (Malhotra 1989).³⁸ (Arguably though, the last category – i.e., the Sikhs – overlapped substantially with the category of the middle-peasantry, in terms of the benefits accruing from the Green Revolution; nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between the categories because neither were all middle peasants Sikhs, nor did the Sikh resistance arise purely as a class issue, but also as an issue of religio-ethnic identity.) It is thus a curiosity of the history of the period that apart from the middle peasantry, the strongest resistance to the Emergency came from the Sikhs, the RSS and Jayaprakash Narayan's movement: one a religio-ethnic nationalist movement, the second a right-wing nationalist organisation and the third a Gandhian-socialist peasants'-and-students' movement. What is of significance for us is the confluence of these movements in ideological terms, on the site of resistance to the Congress: it was a confluence that renewed and re-oriented the discourse of nationalism in specifically religious and ethnic terms, linked to the moral discourse of Gandhian socialism, and addressed to a mixed constituency. This constituency was not only disgruntled and restive with the failure of the developmentalist paradigms sponsored by the Nehruvian Congress (and by Indira Gandhi's populism), and with the aura of corruption associated with the Congress by the

middle of the 1970s, but profoundly receptive to these renewed discourses (Verma 1998; Corbett and Harriss 2000). In other words, the nationalist discourses that remained disparate and disbursed along lines of ethnicity, region, language, etc. in the sixties now began to coalesce under the dominant articulations of Hindu nationalism. It is important to recall here again that the discourse of Hindu nationalism is not confined to its institutional forms (i.e., the RSS, the BJP, etc.) and that it can and does manifest in other political and social bodies as well – as we shall shortly see.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tracked the growth of Hindu nationalism in the political sphere, as well as the factors that permitted, aided or incited this growth. I have shown that the ideology of ‘development’, insofar as it was a direct product of modernist nationalisms, served substantially to strengthen and consolidate the forces of Hindu nationalism that had, till independence, remained relatively less organised, less influential and more disarrayed than the forces that promoted an ostensibly secular nationalism, under the banner of the Indian National Congress. In the postcolonial contestations over the meanings and practices of modernity, too, Hindu nationalism initially gave way before the Nehruvian insistence on a planned, secular path to modernity. But the failure of this project was itself at least partly the result of the persistence of Hindu nationalist currents that eventually came to the fore in the aftermath of the imposition of Emergency. Intimately connected to the persistent (albeit glacial) growth of Hindu nationalism through the sixties and seventies, was the caste factor: as we have seen, the gradually increasing political visibility of middle and lower caste political organisations contributed substantially to the weakening of the political base of the Congress. In addition to this, though, there was a consistently active discourse of gendered power that became especially visible around the figure of Indira Gandhi. Of particular significance here was the way in which Mrs. Gandhi tried to mobilise themes and tropes from the realm of ‘*Danda*’ – specifically the invocation of the figure of the nation-as-mother-goddess in her public self-projections – in the more secular domain of ‘Order’. Arguably, this too opened the way for the greater acceptability of Hindu nationalist discourses in the public domain. In the following chapter, we will explore the unfolding of these multiple processes – the ideology of development,

the dynamics of caste, the transformations in the articulations of gender, and the further evolution of Hindu nationalism.

Notes

¹ Strictly speaking, national coalition politics goes back to the formation of the Janata Party and its coming to power in 1977. Kaviraj (1998) argues convincingly for understanding the coalition politics at the state level during the sixties, as indexing a necessary condition of Indian politics, based on coalitions within the ruling bloc, rather than an evolved choice.

² I am not concerned at this point with what might be termed the molecular level of the impact of colonialism on Europe: changes in cuisine, architecture, furniture, sartorial styles and materials, additions in and modifications of vocabulary, modes and styles of representation in the arts and literature, the knowledges and practices of medicine and hygiene – all of which were immense – since this is neither the space nor the specific argument to detail those.

³ See also Herbert Sussman (1995).

⁴ It goes without saying that this trio does not have a necessary relation so much as a contingent, historical relation. They therefore do not automatically imply each other.

⁵ That these may have subsequently been rejected, destroyed, modified, or replaced in many instances – Pakistan, Algeria, Mexico, to name a few – with the vagaries of each individual nation's local history, does not affect the primary case.

⁶ Admittedly, the discussion here is dominantly with reference to modernisation theories of 'development'; but as long as the ideology of development remains tied to that of modernity, in the manner outlined above, it matters little whether we are looking at modernisation theories, dependency theories, or theories of globalisation and development: the argument remains the same. Recent initiatives to think of development in more 'holistic' terms – paying attention to grassroots requirements, local socio-cultural conditions, ecological and environmental factors, etc – or in terms of rejecting macro-industrial developmental paradigms in favour of a focus on human welfare, human resource development, etc. while laudable, remain haunted by the comparative normativity that possesses 'development'. Again, this is not the space to elaborate on this – a thesis in itself.

Japan is in many ways the exception that proves the rule here: while for all economic and industrial purposes, it is considered a 'developed' nation, it remains an uneasy member of that club. Never having been officially colonised, it related to modernisation and modernity in almost purely instrumental terms, as 'imports' that were necessary evils. Further, it was historically guilty of imperial ambitions that ran dangerously counter to European (and by the 20th century, Euro-

American) hegemony – ambitions that were perceived to be rooted in its vaunted and utterly alien ‘traditions’. The unspeakable barbarism of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is in this sense a metaphor for the shattering of those ‘incorruptible’ traditions by the acme of modernity, the atom bomb – for it was after this that the Japanese polity was subjugated, tutored and transformed into the ‘modernity’ of electoral democracy. See Andrew Gordon (2008).

⁷ There was, in Bengal and in various other parts of the country, a series of movements of women organizing for change, but essentially restricted to the middle class, and very limited in its brief. See Borthwick (1984).

⁸ Corbridge and Harriss for instance, note that ‘the institutions of a modern state are not rooted, in India, in a civil society of freely associating individuals sharing a common set of beliefs and a common moral code’ (2000: 37).

⁹ This is not to suggest that the Bill served no useful purpose – in fact, it probably did initiate the long (and unfinished) legal process of establishing women’s rights in India – but that it was seen by both its opponents and proponents as a matter of significance not in itself, but as it reflected on the community and the nation. See Jaffrelot (1999) pp. 102-106 for a discussion of this debate and its outcome. See also Rina Williams (2005).

¹⁰ Chakrabarty obviously overstates the case; but the implicit perception of a growing ‘indiscipline’ in civil society that eventually led to the imposition of the Emergency is important, and will be addressed shortly.

¹¹ A polemical point can be made here: that independence was of real consequence only for this powerful minority, insofar as it left them with a state system and an economic and industrial infrastructure that offered real possibilities of reinforcing hegemonic control over the rest of the populace. Arguably, the vast masses of the Indian populace continued and continue a miserable and poverty stricken existence that remains unaffected by whether it was under exploitation by the British or by this new elite. While it would be inaccurate to state that nothing has changed since then, given the emergence of various kinds and formations of counter-hegemonies particularly in rural and provincial India (caste-based parties, regional parties, militant class movements like the Naxalbari movement), leading to some land reform and redistribution programs, the Green Revolution, some statistical evidence of decreasing poverty and mortality, increasing literacy and savings and consumption patterns, etc – nevertheless, to argue that therefore independence has transformed the political economy of exploitation in India towards a more egalitarian and equitable mode of production, would be an enormous overstatement. See also G Aloysius (1998) for a sophisticated argument along these lines.

¹² From the anonymous group of researchers at World-Journal, at <http://soc.world-journal.net/governingindia.html>, accessed March 18, 2006. Hereafter referred to as WJ.

¹³ WJ's understanding of Hindu nationalism is one of the very few to recognise that it is about much more than its manifest institutions or organisations. 'This process has done much to obscure the embeddedness of Hindu nationalism in developing ideas about Indian culture and social relations among political elites. Recognising the shapes of Hindu nationalism, then, means looking beyond the discourse of communalism and acknowledging the network of contexts in which key ideas emerged.' (ibid.) However, WJ's eventual emphasis on studying it as an ideological phenomenon restricts their analysis in a different way, preventing the examination of Hindutva as generated within and out of specific hegemonic alignments and practices, which is what I hope to achieve here.

¹⁴ See for instance, among many, Christophe Jaffrelot (1996), Sunil Khilnani (1997), Achin Vanaik (1997: 45-6), Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), etc.

¹⁵ In an article that is part of WJ (n.d.). While Zavos is able to identify this problematic, he attempts to analyse it as a boundless seepage of idioms and symbols, ideological forms, systems of representation, which I believe is an insufficient analysis, because of the networks of economic and social practices that are made sense of through these representations.

¹⁶ Pranab Bardhan ([1985] 1998) has identified the main constituencies of this alliance as industrial capitalists, rich farmers and professionals (particularly in the bureaucracy).

¹⁷ In 1947 and 1948, the Indian government, maintaining that it was fighting communalism and maintaining internal security, passed several laws such as the Punjab Disturbed Areas Act, Bihar Maintenance of Public Order Act, Bombay Public Safety Act, and Madras Suppression of Disturbance Act. These laws gave wide-ranging powers to the security forces to detain and arrest anyone in the name of national security and upholding public order. In 1950, Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress government passed the Preventive Detention Act which was then used to arrest trade union activists.

¹⁸ Rudolph and Rudolph's (1987) characterisation of the Indian state as a 'weak-strong' one may be understood as a direct consequence of this tension – between the 'weakening' pull of the institutional fragmentation, rural unrest, and later, rising communalism; and the 'strengthening' centrist orientation, the extensive machinery of the bureaucracy and the establishment of a heavy-industrial base directly controlled by the state.

¹⁹ For a succinct account of the politics of the period since independence, see Partha Chatterjee's (1998) introductory essay 'A Political History of Independent India'.

²⁰ For a compact and incisive examination of these issues, see D L Sheth (1999) from which I draw for the immediately following remarks.

²¹ See also Corbridge and Harris (2000: 56-65)

²² While the Green Revolution is usually associated with Punjab, firstly, the overall impact of the new agricultural policies was felt all over the country, but especially in north India, with more or less the same consequences; secondly, national politics was and still is hegemonised and substantially determined by the preoccupations and dynamics of the "Hindi belt"; and thirdly, for the purposes of this research as well, this area was most influential on the eventual emergence of Hindutva to political power.

²³ 'In a generation or two even a land holding of a size within the ceiling limit permitted by the state...gets fragmented. And without avenues for mobility to non-agricultural employment the younger generation of peasants finds itself exposed to unavoidable downward mobility or even pauperization.' (Quoted by Pavan Verma, 1998: 116-17)

²⁴ Deshpande goes on to argue that this eventually leads, rather ironically to the failure of development as ideology.

²⁵ This also explains for instance the more recent emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party alongside the Samajwadi Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, and the Janata Dal in UP and Bihar, all claiming to represent the interests of the entire region, but essentially representing caste or religious communities. But see also KC Suri's (n.d.) contention that, especially since the eighties, ideological differences between parties have increasingly become postural and even irrelevant, since all parties must proclaim to be 'secular, socialist and democratic, as it is mandatory for the parties to proclaim true faith in these principles while they register with the EC' (Suri, n.d.: 19). The determining factor according to Suri, is political convenience and personal predilection.

²⁶ Partly due to the successive failure of rains and consequently crops, in the early seventies, but also to ill-conceived policies on nationalisation of the food grain trade, leading to hoarding, black marketeering, and food riots. See P Verma, 1998: 79-82. See also Brass (1984) for an on-the-ground account of how the changes in the Congress's strategies affected its social base and vice versa.

²⁷ See Atul Kohli (1997) for a useful, if rather optimistic, analysis of ethnic nationalisms in the Indian context.

²⁸ Here the colonial and highly repressive Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance was, in 1958, regularised into an Act and extended from Manipur to apply

to the entire north-eastern region, and has since then never been revoked – a sharp, but often overlooked reminder of the racist, exclusivist stance of the Indian state towards the entire region.

²⁹ Individual cases vary: Kashmiri and Sikh nationalisms were unresolved issues from before independence, while Naga and Assamese nationalism evolved after independence. Again, while Kashmiri and Sikh nationalisms had strong religious dimensions, Naga, Assamese, Marathi, and Kashmiri nationalisms demonstrate strong ethnic components. Some of these nationalisms have subsided almost to the point of irrelevance, as with Sikh nationalism, and some were never articulated as anything more than regional-ethnic chauvinisms, like the Marathi and Tamil nationalisms. These differences however, only reinforce the larger point: that nationalism may have mutated into diverse forms post-independence, but did not disappear. For a concise overview of the Punjab issue, see the special issue on 'Re-imagining Punjab' (*Seminar* 567, Nov. 2006). For both Kashmir and Punjab, see Larson 1995.

³⁰ The problem with unqualifiedly labelling these as 'non-rational', 'pre-modern', 'traditional' is of course, that they came to be labelled as such precisely through (and at the point of) their engagements with the countervailing 'modern'; in this sense they are as constructed by 'modernity' as the very idea of 'Order'. Nevertheless, even these constructions do draw on certain pre-modern understandings of power, sometimes expressed in the understanding of politics through the term '*dandi-nit?*' (or the politics of Danda).

³¹ These were not phenomena introduced by Mrs. Gandhi into the political theatre; the processes of engagement of both, 'Order' with '*Danda*' and vice versa, were already underway under Nehru. But the point here is not to judge or pin responsibility so much as to identify and understand the process itself.

³² '*Goongi Gudia* (Dumb Doll) and *Woh Chokri* (That Girl) were the derogatory nicknames addressed to the PM behind her back.' Anonymous, at http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Indira_Gandhi/id/1895543, accessed 15-05-2009

³³ The key players in this alliance were Babu Jagjivan Ram, Kamaraj, Nijalingappa, S.K. Patil and Atulya Ghosh.

³⁴ For an interesting attempt to analyse these developments in terms of the problem of what they call 'securitisation' (or the compromising of democracy through the imposition of Emergency) see Mallick and Sen (2006).

³⁵ See Kosambi (1962), Berkson (1995). Although this power is essentially symbolic and often without any substantial agency, it is interesting that Indira Gandhi managed to endow it with precisely that agency, but sought to legitimise that agency through this figure, thereby signalling that agency as drawn from within masculine hegemony and not posed as a threat to it.

³⁶ See *The Hindu's* editorial 'Indira Gandhi as parivar heroine' for an account of this (Thursday, Jun 23, 2005)

³⁷ There is a substantial volume of literature on the Emergency: see for instance, PN Dhar (2000), but also the relevant sections in Jaffrelot (1995) and Corbett and Harris (2000).

³⁸ Mendelsohn also draws attention to the point that the resistance to the Emergency was predominantly a north-Indian phenomenon, with the southern states voting for the Congress in the 1977 elections (Mendelsohn, *ibid.*).

6

The Present

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will cover the period after the Emergency, into approximately the last decade or so of contemporary India. While continuing to trace the political, social and economic factors that shape the consolidations of Hindu nationalism in this period, this chapter will also identify and explore some other forces at work in the calibrating of its discursive and practical dimensions. Specifically, it will undertake an examination of the relations between Hindu nationalism on the one hand, and the Muslim and Christian communities and the women's movement in India, on the other. The chapter will further the analyses of the links between the political developments identified and examined in the previous chapter, and elaborate on the tensions that result from these in Brahmanical masculine hegemony. It will then use this discussion as the basis for the analysis of some significant events of this period, that were to prove critical to the consolidation of Hindu nationalism. In order to comprehend the operations of this hegemony from, as it were, a point of extreme historical proximity, this chapter also glosses (wherever possible) the macro-level analyses with more immediate accounts of and perspectives on Hindu nationalism drawn from the field, thereby providing the streams and flows of the larger picture with the more concrete graininess of empirical detail. The intention is to provide a macro perspective on the current status and workings of Hindu nationalism as well as of the Brahmanical masculine hegemony that it is founded on. But in order to do all of this, it is necessary to first continue the analysis of new social configurations in caste-based political formations, and their implications and consequences for the consolidation of Hindu nationalism.

6.2 Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are:

1. To trace the historical culmination, in the present, of the political processes set in motion since independence, and particularly since the Emergency.
2. To explore some key events in the period after the Emergency, and their consequences for the growth of Hindu nationalism.
3. To analyse the relationship that has evolved over the last few decades, between Hindu nationalism on the one hand, and the Muslim and Christian communities.
4. To examine the uneasy relation between the growth of the women's movement and Hindu nationalism in this period.
5. To provide an analytical outline of the gendering of events and processes, in the formation of the Indian present.

6.3 New Social Configurations and Hindu Nationalism

We have already noted earlier the economic anxieties of the emergent middle peasantry. The emergence in itself did not have uniform effects across the country: its regional variations and responses to local politics indicate rather, that the various axes of division noted earlier substantially influenced the kind of political positions and dispositions that were adopted.¹ Moreover, it is important to note that it was less the case of the emergence of a new class than the formation of an alliance between an older rural elite of 'rich and capitalist farmers...with rich, middle and even poor peasants' (Lindberg, 1995: 840), thereby disrupting the older hegemonic understanding between the rural and urban elites, and concretising a new bloc based essentially on the sense of economic anxiety, coupled with regional affiliations (themselves often coloured by local economic conditions). Nevertheless, despite regional variations, one may broadly argue that this economic anxiety coupled with the sense of arrival into middle class status created conditions ripe for the political resurgence of right-wing Hindu nationalism in three ways. Firstly, the new arrivals came – rather paradoxically – with a sense of the failure of the state to deliver on its promises of a developed industrialised economy that could afford to indulge the vagaries of agriculture: if heavy agricultural subsidies (undertaken increasingly for populist reasons) had gener-

ated wealth for them, it could not sustain the generation of this wealth, as we noted earlier, because of the dependence of this kind of agricultural wealth, on both, political whim, as well as, in the final analysis, on the weather. This became increasingly clear in the early seventies, as the economy under the Indira Gandhi regime reeled under spiralling inflation and the weather played truant with the harvests. Consequently, this class sought greater control over the political and administrative power that had hitherto been in the hands of the urban elite, to which it had been subordinated through the bureaucracy and the Congress machinery. With the weakening of the Congress and the emergence of regional parties, this emergent constituency was also effectively seeking alternative political mechanisms and means to articulate itself.

Secondly, as noted earlier, this new constituency came into a public sphere – or, more accurately, sought access to the sphere of political and economic power – that was till recently under the hegemonic control of English-educated ‘westernised’ industrial bourgeoisie, professionals and bureaucrats, and which was dominantly upper-caste. It is of some significance that the political phrase so favoured by the Hindu Right today, posing ‘Bharat’ against ‘India’,² with the former carrying connotations of authenticity (as opposed to the averred alien-ness of the latter construct), came into being at this moment of confrontation, with and through the farmer’s movements of the seventies (S Lindberg, 1995: 840). Much as this new class aspired to the lifestyles of these sections of the urban elite, they remained largely excluded from it by virtue of education, occupation and caste. But there was now available to them another legitimating discourse that they could lay claim to, in opposition to the vaunted social superiority of the existing elite, and as moral critique of it, from an ideological position of ostensibly greater authenticity. Hindu nationalism as a political program now found an extended and susceptible constituency to begin taking root in.³ Indeed, there can be no clearer testimony to the argument made earlier, that Hindu nationalism in this sense is not just the programmatic ideology of a specific political party, but is constituted of and draws from the hegemonic condition that forms the basis of the political program.

It is in this sense that, in the final analysis, the regional variations in responses to local political conditions get evened out: whether the middle peasantry were indifferent to, actively supporting, or actively opposing the *communal* politics of the Hindu Right, they were all at one with it

in its opposition to the hegemony of the urban elite, and in their positioning of themselves as the more authentic voice of 'Bharat'. For obvious reasons, this also came to be articulated in terms of an opposition between 'tradition' and 'modernity' – an opposition that was very often sited on the body of women, as the infamous cases of Shah Bano, and subsequently of the Sati of Roop Kanwar, exemplified (we will return to these shortly). In any event, these changes were given political grammar, articulation and legitimacy by the discourses of the Hindu right. Thirdly, in the process of heterogenisation that was thus effected in the body politic, especially after the elections of 1977, the formation of alliances became an important means for countering the Congress. In the course of alliance formation, the Hindu nationalist Jana Sangh became an important part of the Janata Party, but by 1980, broke away to form the Bharatiya Janata Party. By exchanging 'Sangh' for 'Party', by bringing Sikkander Bakht (a Muslim) on board its working committee, and by claiming the more social-democrat lineage of the Janata Party through the term 'Janata', the BJP distanced itself from the direct nominal association with the RSS and announced its interest in promoting itself as a more inclusive, even 'secular' organisation that aimed to ally the diverse interest groups that were emerging, *even as it maintained itself as ideologically bound to Hindu nationalism*. In fact, the primary cause for the separation from the Janata Party was the issue of 'dual membership', i.e., protests from other constituents of the Party about the Jana Sangh's members also being members of the RSS. Thus, the process of political heterogenisation proved crucial to the political resurgence of the Hindu nationalists – which several commentators have remarked on as the paradoxical phenomenon of deepening democracy giving rise to anti-democratic forces in India.⁴

The separation of the BJP from the Janata Party was thus effected by the failure of these alliances to consolidate; this in turn was partly due to power-tussles between senior leaders like Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, but partly also to the inability of the counter-hegemonic forces that were thus emerging within Brahmanical hegemony, to accommodate and unify the diversity of social interests and groups that constituted them. One consequence of this was what came to be called vote-bank politics, with parties vying to address the specific concerns of individual interest and pressure groups. The conversion of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh into the Bharatiya Janata Party was obviously one such venture,

targeting the majoritarian 'Hindu' community, but evidently with a much clearer awareness of its (caste) diversity, and a willingness to engage with this that had not been evident with the more (upper) caste-bound Jana Sangh. Two clarifications are required here: one, that this is not to imply that caste and communal differences were no longer issues in the BJP: rather, it was an acknowledgment that the Party had to take on board other castes, even other religious communities, as well as address their interests (at least nominally), if it was to gain any political success. The strategy that it adopted to deal with this requirement was threefold: (a) it raised the bogey of 'Muslim appeasement' by the Congress – with which it had consistently attacked Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders earlier – yet again, but this time as an issue of concern to lower castes as well, insofar as the alleged policy of appeasement was both a temptation to conversion to Islam, and was simultaneously at the expense of resources that could have (and should have) been disbursed among the lower castes. This anxiety was given an enormous boost by the controversy over the Meenakshipuram conversions of 1981.⁵ (b) It began a campaign against castism and untouchability, both within its organisations as well as in the public sphere – as for instance, with the proclamation by Hindu Sants and leaders at the 1979 World Hindu Conference that neither castism nor untouchability has sanction in the Hindu scriptures.⁶ (c) It simultaneously initiated an active process of 'sanskritization' that essentially ensured the cultural hegemony of the caste elite. This was undertaken formally – through the setting up of educational institutions like the Vidya Bharati institutes (from 1977), the Saraswati Shishu Mandir for small children (begun 1967, affiliated to Vidya Bharati 1978) and social welfare institutions like the Sewa Bharati (from 1984) – as well as informally – through social and community interactions, subtle pressures of prescription and proscription, and perhaps most importantly, through redefining the terms, meanings and values of elitism. The second clarification required here is that the BJP was not either the first or the only political organisation to perceive and pursue the advantages of vote-bank politics, whether of caste or religion: the Congress and other parties too followed this policy – in fact one may even argue that the Congress preceded the other parties in this direction. In the early seventies already the Congress was openly soliciting the Muslim community; by the early eighties, it found this traditional support weakening, and began targeting the (Hindu) community – partly also as a necessary consequence of its

policies in Punjab, which led to the alienation of the Sikhs. By the time of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, the discourses of communal nationalism were in high visibility in the political space, with Mrs. Gandhi herself falling victim to it.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that Indira Gandhi's death served to intensify communal discourses, and the separation of communities specifically along religious lines, especially through the violent backlash that was unleashed on the Sikh community after it. If, prior to this event, the 'Hindu' political identity had been somewhat subsumed by community formations along the lines of class, caste and language, and fragmented by other ethnic identifications as well, these heterogeneities were jolted, so to speak, into homogeneous alignment as 'Hindu' by the pan-Indian magnitude of the response to her death, and more specifically, in its articulation along communal lines – in 'the assertion of a pan-Indian Hindu identity in response to a weak centre' (Subrata Mitra 1991: 776). Irrespective of whether this response was spontaneous or machinated,⁷ in this particular instance, the coalescing of the 'Hindu' identity was a reaction, not to the Muslim community (its usual target), but to the Sikhs – a community that, rather ironically, political Hinduism has traditionally seen as part of its own constituency. What is of particular significance for us is that the 'Hindu' community came once again to be defined in violently masculinist terms, not through or from the conservative or extremist margins of 'Hindu' society but from the 'liberal' centre, from within the Congress party. The entire episode serves as yet another instance of the extent of sway of Brahmanical masculine hegemony, and of the gradual but increasingly unmistakable clarity with which it is articulated politically as Hindu nationalism – irrespective of the actual political party it emerges in.⁸

6.4 The Tensions in Brahmanical Masculine Hegemony

It is possible to observe in the above processes a repeat of the patterns of representation-politics of the 19th century that we discussed in the previous chapter. The significant difference here of course is that the gendered delineation of communities that took place in the nineteenth century is here substantially modified. The 19th century dynamics of the emergence of Hindu nationalism had been crosscut by the colonial encounter, emergent caste identities and the redrawing of the pub-

lic/private divide; in the present scenario, the dynamics – while still crosscut by caste – are also shaped by the processes and dynamics of developmentalism – what we referred to earlier as the legacy of colonialism – and its implicit promises of modernity. It is neither coincidental nor surprising then, that the sense of disillusionment with the Nehruvian paradigm, particularly amongst the urban middle classes, that is evident from the seventies crystallised into the turn to liberalisation – as a shortcut to the sought-after modernity – in the eighties; but this immediately incited the oppositional discourse earlier remarked on between tradition and modernity, with the former being articulated by the growing assertion of communal and caste lines. Through the eighties, this tendency was only exacerbated as parties jockeyed with each other to consolidate communal and caste vote banks, while trying to maintain the interests of both sides of the tradition/modernity divide. The resultant tensions within Brahmanical hegemony played out in various ways in this decade, the dynamic of this playing out being watermarked by several crucial events. The first of these is a cluster of Supreme Court judgements directly impinging on the relations between communal identity, women's rights and masculine hegemony and was catalysed by the Supreme Court judgement in the Shah Bano case of 1985.⁹ While the Court had decided in favour of Shah Bano, the conservative leadership of the Muslim community saw this decision as interference in the (traditional patriarchal) rights of the community over its women, and the Rajiv Gandhi government, buckling under pressure from them, overturned the decision and legislatively sanctioned the sanctity of the shariat in Muslim personal matters. Similarly, in the Mary Roy case, again the Supreme Court superseded the Syrian Christian customary laws of inheritance for women and decided in favour of the (woman) plaintiff.¹⁰ However, in this instance, similar protests from the patriarchal elite of the Syrian Christian community were ignored by the government. The third incident in which communal identity, patriarchal power plays and women's rights intersected was the Deorala sati of Roop Kanwar, which, when it came to court, was dismissed as sanctioned by law:

The Supreme Court in its judgements in the Mohammed Ahmed Khan versus Shah Bano Begum ((1985) 2 SCC 556) and the Mary Roy versus State of Kerala ((1986) 2 SCC 209) and their fall out, contrasted to the Supreme Court's April 29, 1992 order in the sati issue dramatise [sic] the women-law-tradition nexus in a political situation that is blatantly commu-

nal. In the former the scales were tilted in favour of women while in the latter, the court invoked Article 25 [which guarantees the fundamental right to worship] (Abraham 1997: 7).¹¹

There are several complex shifts in the accommodative dynamics of Brahmanical masculine hegemony evident in the three instances provided here: on the one hand, the discourses of 'Order' embodied in the judiciary are deployed (in the Shah Bano and Mary Roy cases) to reinforce the perception that Brahmanical masculine hegemony is progressive, benevolent and benefactorial, and more concerned with protecting the rights and liberties of minority women than their own patriarchies; on the other, the discourses of '*Danda*' evidently informed and shaped the stance of this same hegemony (even in its 'Order' avatar), in its exoneration of the accused in the Deorala Sati case, on the grounds of the sanctity of religious rights. Further, the government's overturning of the Supreme Court decision in the Shah Bano case, while clearly an instance of vote-bank politics, indicates how institutional arrangements of power (in this instance, electoral democracy) can determine the direction of transformations in hegemonic alliances, even as the fundamentally gendered character of the hegemony is retained. In one sense, the shift takes place precisely to protect the gendered character of the hegemony, as the case indexes the possibilities by – or circumstances and conditions under – which masculine hegemonies otherwise posed as oppositional (on grounds of religion and/or community) can come into alignment or consensus, on the grounds of gender. This event however, in turn led to accusations of 'Muslim appeasement' by the Hindu right, threatening yet another fissure in the increasingly concretising Hindu polity. This, the government then sought to counter by allowing Hindus access to the Ramjanmabhumi shrine in Ayodhya (which had remained under lock since 1950, due to litigation on communal rights over the property) – a move with far-reaching consequences, since it gained little for the Congress, but served to legitimise and boost the claims of the Hindu right. In the 1989 elections, this was an important factor in the defeat of the Congress and the hung parliament that resulted.

There were obviously other factors as well – and these form the second cluster of events determining the play of tensions within Brahmanical masculine hegemony: they include the Bofors scandal that hit the Gandhi family in particular, reviving the allegations of corruption in the Congress that had led to its earlier debacle in 1977; the stark contrast of

this with the steep fall in the performance of the Indian economy under the liberalisation policies of the Rajiv Congress, and the attendant crisis that was looming in the industrial, agricultural and the market sectors; the fiasco of Indian military intervention in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka that eventually led to the 'humiliating' recall of the Indian forces, thereby initiating a discourse of shamed masculinity in a failed imperialist venture; the continued intractability of the ethnic conflicts in the north-east and in Kashmir in particular, which the Hindu right repeatedly raised as the 'weakening' of the Indian state under the Congress; and all of this framed in a public discursive space opened out (from 1984) to private producers and broadcasters, leading to an explosion of television channels, many of which were owned and/or controlled by the various political parties.

This last is of particular significance because of the way in which it transformed both the content and the reach of discourses in the public sphere. But this is not the focus of this thesis; besides, Arvind Rajagopal (2001), among others, has written extensively on the impact of media, especially television, on the growth of the Hindu right in the eighties. Here, we will confine ourselves to observing the following: one, the boom in television brought televisual, serialized adaptations of the two Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (in that order), into almost every home in India; the former in particular served as a powerful narrative of Hindu martial valour that was thoroughly exploited by the Hindu right in the Ramjanmabhumi campaign that was initiated, eventually to culminate in the destruction of the Babri mosque in 1992 and the subsequent wave of anti-Muslim riots that broke out across the country.¹² This was followed by a spate of serialisations of Hindu legendary figures and heroes, the most important of these being the controversial serial on Chanakya, often referred to as the 'Machiavelli of India' (Herbert Gowen, 1929: 178).¹³ Taken together, these served to reshape the public imagination of Indian history along strongly 'Hindu' lines that emphasised upper caste hegemony and masculine valour as integral to it. Inevitably, these tales of (past) Hindu glory served as a stark contrast to the everyday narratives of corruption, poverty, political deceptions, etc., that were also becoming more easily and extensively available to the public through this same media – which is why, through the nineties, an important campaign plank for the BJP as it grew politically, was 'clean governance'. This is also why, with the explosive economic growth of the

Indian middle classes in the nineties, bringing with it a sense of 'Indian' resurgence in the global comity of nations, the utility of 'past glory' (with its associations of martial valour) as a mobilisational theme faded, to be replaced by the media slogan of (contemporary) 'India shining' (and its associations of economic prosperity and progress) by the time of the 2004 elections. The dramatic failure of the latter indexed both, the extent to which the Hindu right and its dominantly middle class constituency had deluded themselves; as well as the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of returning to the former theme. We will return to these issues in a moment; for now, it is necessary to understand them as they unfolded – which brings us to our second observation regarding the media and the Hindu right.

Two: Rajagopal notes the coincidence of liberalisation, media expansion and the rise of the Hindu right as, in fact, not coincidental but feeding on each other. Referring to Hindu right interpretations of liberalisation, he writes:

With the lifting of socialism or state interference...and the liberalization this implies, democracy springs forth, and the psychic transformation proceeds. From being seen as a burden, events seemed to suggest that "Hinduism" too was a part of the repressed truth of society, released by the lifting of state controls and the mobilization of latent popular forces...? (Rajagopal, 2001: 36)

Rajagopal goes on to argue that in fact, the broadcasting of the epic – even while accelerating Hindu revivalism – served also to consolidate the regimes of liberalisation (2001: 242-3); it would probably be more accurate to say instead that the epic offered a triumphalist narrative of good over evil, in which the evil, in this instance, was the old regime of socialist secularism and the good, by extension, Hindutva itself. The implicit sense of a suppressed political unconscious being released, that Rajagopal draws our attention to in the Hindutva understanding of liberalisation, suggests, in our terms, that for the Hindu right, the 'Order' of Nehruvian planned governance was the repressive mechanism on the '*Danda*' of right wing politics that was released by liberalisation. However, it would be more accurate (again) to say that these events signified less the resurgence of a repressed political unconscious than a shift into a new set of power alignments within Brahmanical hegemony along the lines of Order/*Danda*. But there was another aspect to this same *Danda*

politics that had been “released” by the failure of the Nehruvian program and the espousal of neo-liberalism, through Rajiv Gandhi’s New Economic Policy: the politics of caste – and this is the third set of factors that we noted earlier as determining the play of tensions within Brahmanical masculine hegemony.

Although the recommendations of the Mandal Commission (on affirmative action for ‘Other Backward Castes’) were announced as early as 1980, its translation into law was delayed till the coalition government of VP Singh passed it in 1989, in the face of stiff political opposition and a violent upper-caste backlash that led to the fall of his government. (Its implementation remains tardy till date.) Curiously, it required an upper caste leader (VP Singh – albeit with lower caste backing) invoking the discourses of ‘Order’ – that rational governance and social justice required the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations – promoted in the first instance by the upper castes, for this change to occur.¹⁴ That it was legislatively passed at all was thus another indication of political power shifting into a new configuration, and of the increasing political visibility of the lower castes – but *within that same hegemonic formation*: for, it must be remembered that the discourses of both, ‘Order’ and ‘*Danda*’ are in the final analysis, both legitimising discourses of – and emerging from within – this same hegemonic formation. In other words, the fact that the shift in power took place legislatively, without significant change to the systems of either ‘Order’ or ‘*Danda*’ indicates the extent to which this masculine hegemony – of Brahmanical patriarchy – itself remained intact. Indeed, in some ways it was reinforced by the now open mobilisation of large sections of the ‘Hindu’ community, across caste lines, for the Ramjanmabhumi movement (noted above) – a campaign that sought to ‘heal’ the damage done by the announcement of the implementation of the Mandal commission, by ‘uniting’ Hindus against the ‘common enemy’, viz. the Muslim community. Both, in the campaign itself and in the media’s representation of it, this came to be discoursed on as the battling of ‘mandal’ with the ‘*kamandal*’ (the Hindu ascetic’s pot), indicating what Rajagopal (2001) argued as the mobilisation of symbols from popular religiosity in the construction of the campaign. This was arguably part of the larger agenda of sanskritisation whereby the Hindu right (specifically) sought to expand its base, and Brahmanical hegemony (in general) sought to maintain its hold. These manoeuvres

and their actual consequences were noted succinctly (and with noticeable contempt) by a leading right-wing columnist:

Over the next decade, Mandalism was made irrelevant by India's intelligent political class that decided co-option was better than confrontation. Today, they [the lower castes] are aggressively bidding competitively [*viz*] to expand the arena of job reservations, but it doesn't evoke a reaction because there are no sarkari [government] jobs going. (Chandan Mitra, 2004)

It is thus significant that the process of economic liberalisation took off almost simultaneously with the implementation of reservations. The withdrawal of the state from the production and market sectors meant that the state would, in the course of time, have fewer jobs to provide, and employment would be determined by the market and the policies of private corporations¹⁵ – i.e., while Brahmanical masculine hegemony itself remained (and remains) intact, it was manoeuvring to shift the political economic basis of its sustenance.

6.5 Muslim Communities and Hindutva

The Hindu right's engagement with Islam, as we have noted earlier, was mediated by colonial perceptions of the latter – derived from Orientalist scholarship – as a violently masculinist, patriarchal and aggressively proselytising religion.¹⁶ We have already seen how, in the last decades of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth, Brahmanical hegemony employed the sense of external threat to consolidate its hegemonic power in the new politics of representation. The formation of the Muslim League and the demand for a separate Muslim nation that followed produced a mixed reaction in the Hindu upper caste leadership of the Congress: on the one hand, they saw this as playing into the colonial strategy of 'divide and rule', and as a violation of the territorial integrity of the country, and strongly resisted it; on the other, the more radical factions, interested in establishing India as officially 'Hindu', welcomed the idea of the Muslims leaving India to the Hindus. The trauma of partition only fuelled the sense of antipathy; nevertheless, after independence there was a general decrease in the number and frequency of communal incidents – partly because of the developmental agenda of the Nehruvian state, partly because the Muslim elite (that had sought partition and were able to make the migration out of India) had left, and partly because of

the ban on the RSS in the decade immediately after. The poorer Muslim communities that remained were (and had been for long) economically and socially bound to the larger body of agrarian and artisan communities that they were a part of, in ways that superseded religious affiliation. Incidents of communal violence began escalating again from the late seventies and into the eighties, at precisely the time that the Hindu right was beginning to gain greater political visibility – but importantly, also at a time when anti-Islamic sentiment across the world was beginning to escalate. This is not to suggest a global conspiracy so much as a confluence of global ideological tendencies with local ones in India. With the deposition of the Shah of Iran in 1979, a new kind of politically radical Islam had emerged that drew approval, if not adherents, from across the Islamic world.¹⁷ It was distinguished by being simultaneously revolutionary and reactionary, thereby raising both, the anti-communist and the anti-Islamic anxieties of the north/west; and its appeal lay in its proclamation of austerity, militancy and a jihad on the corrupting influence of the north/west, that was understood to characterise the US-supported reign of the Shah. This was particularly appealing to male youth in the poorer Muslim nations and societies, in its offer of both, a spiritual legitimisation of their poverty and an agenda for heroic action. It was also thus instrumental in creating the media figure of the jihadi – as fanatical, fundamentalist, virulently anti-‘western’ and violently masculinist – in the Anglo-American media and press (Liaquat Ali Khan, 2005).

While Hindu relations with Muslims in India was not directly determined by this event, the influence of global media representations were already being felt in India with the liberalisation of television in the eighties (Rajagopal 2001). The public imagination of the Muslim as fanatical and fundamentalist was substantially bolstered by the controversy over the Shah Bano case in the mid-eighties. ‘The Shah Bano case was converted by the BJP and a broad section of the print media into a symbol of the supposed Otherness, separatism and backwardness of the Muslims.’ R Sengupta (2005: 25) The organisations of the Hindu right capitalised on this as well as on the more regional history of hostility arising out of gendered and sexualised colonial and Orientalist perceptions and histories (outlined in earlier chapters), followed by partition, the wars with Pakistan, post-independence communal violence, anxieties over conversion incidents like those at Meenakshipuram and even allegations and rumours of Muslims always supporting and cheering for Pakistani

cricket teams. What is of significance here however, is that the Brahmanical-hegemonic perception of the Muslim as savage outsider (the '*mleccha*' noted in Chapter III) dovetailed neatly, on the one hand, with the lower caste origins and affiliations of the majority of Muslims remaining in India; and on the other, with the increasing tendency in the north/west media to see the Muslim in similar terms, thereby presenting the Hindu right's antipathy to Muslims with a sense of global legitimacy. The entire anti-Islamic discourse of the early Hindu nationalists – Savarkar, Golwalkar, Hedgewar – began to concretise in actions that were not the confined, sporadic violence of communal riots but the organised, pan-national political mobilisation of the late eighties, that culminated in the Rath Yatra and the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. The series of major communal incidents that followed – the riots in Mumbai, the bomb blasts, repeated and frequent incidents of communal violence across the country, culminating in the savage attack on Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 – took place when the Hindu right had come to dominate political discourse in the country, in the nineties and into the first decade of this century – a period that was marked in the north/west first, by the Gulf war and its consequences, and second by the vehemence of the US response to the attack on the twin towers in New York on the 11th of September 2001, the subsequent concretisation of the figure of the Islamic terrorist, and of the international perception of Islam as an ideology of terror.¹⁸

6.6 Women's Movement and Brahmanical Masculine Hegemony

There is another important set of factors that I will touch upon, as affecting and informing these transformations in Brahmanical masculine hegemony: this is the growth of the women's movement(s) in India, and its complex interactions with this hegemonic formation. From the reform movements of the nineteenth century, women had begun gaining significant presence in public life in India, and participated strongly in the freedom movement. While they remained active and visible even after independence, it was in the political upheavals of the 1970s that the women's movement began to really take shape, participating in the anti-Emergency programs and demanding equal involvement in the political and developmental process.

In 1974 Indira Gandhi, India's prime minister, told reporters: "I do not regard myself as a woman. I am a person with a job to do" (*The Asian Student*, 23 November 1974). A year before, a popular magazine for "modern" women released a special Independence Day issue with Indira Gandhi portrayed as Goddess Durga on the cover. It said, "to be a woman – a wife, a mother, an individual – in India means...that you are the storehouse of tradition and culture and, in contrast, a volcano of seething energy, of strength and power that can motivate a whole generation to change its values, its aspirations, its very concept of civilised life (*Femina* 14, 17 August 1973). Women in Indian politics have always negotiated these two extreme poles: as the unsexed equal or the highly feminised goddess or queen. (S Sen, 2000: 57)

Apart from the instance of Mrs. Gandhi (which we have already discussed), Sen draws attention to the paradoxes that underlay and were to continue to confront the Indian women's movement. It was in this period (the seventies) that the various factions of the movement began to consolidate organisationally, and through the eighties and into the nineties, a variety of organisations addressing a variety of issues and at various levels took shape across the country. However, this also reflected the growing awareness of being heterogeneous, if not actually fractured and fragmented: as Mangala Subramaniam noted, '[t]he inability to accommodate intersecting systems of class, caste, ethnicity, and religious power relations in organization building created tensions and divisions' (2004: 637). One reason for the fragmentation has been cited as the growing power of Hindu nationalist discourses in the polity, and its appropriation and transformation of the discourse of women's rights (see Subramaniam, 2004, but especially Butalia and Sarkar 1996, on this). While this cannot be denied, it is possible to identify deeper and more fundamentally significant historical processes at work here. One of the consequences of the nationalist movement's locating of Indian-ness in the domestic realm, was that women and femininity came to be closely linked to the conception of national identity, as we have noted earlier. Throughout the independence movement and even under the impact of the communist and socialist movements of the thirties and forties, this association remained strong. It persisted even after independence (in some ways grew even stronger), and women's activism was subordinated to political activism focusing on class, caste and language issues, especially in the 1960s. Women's issues were either understood and organized as extensions of

activities in existing political parties, or (often even within such extensions) neglected altogether. While women organizing under the aegis of larger political organisations continue to work on women's issues in association with the work of the larger organisation,¹⁹ the seventies therefore also saw a demand for autonomous focus. This eventually took shape in the emphasis on independently organized activity, especially after the government report of 1974, *Towards Equality*, demonstrated that women's condition had deteriorated, not improved, since 1911 (Gandhi and Shah, 1992).

However, the legacy of the association of femininity with culture and domesticity in the nationalist movement, especially with regard to hegemonic understandings of femininity derived from within Brahmanical patriarchy, had left a lasting impact: on the one hand, it placed many feminists in the cleft between appearing anti-national if they displayed affiliations of any kind with non-Indian feminisms, and traditionalist/culturalist if they drew from or constructed 'Indian' feminist positions, or denied the label altogether,²⁰ on the other, the association of femininity with maternity – the Mother India complex of the nationalist movement – effectively sabotaged, or at least made very difficult, the addressing of various issues crucial to the empowerment of women, especially those relating to sexuality, the articulation of desire and the exercise of choice. 'The good woman, the chaste wife and mother empowered by spiritual strength, became the iconic representation of the nation' (S Sen, 2000: 10; see also Karen Gabriel, 2009 for a detailed analysis of the iconography of Mother India). The idealization and concomitant desexualisation of women as national mothers in and during the anti-colonial nationalist movement, while certainly empowering insofar as it created a discursive space, and within that an identity, for (especially upper caste) women to enter into and participate in the public domain, also rendered that same discursive space inflexible, stultifying and fundamentally hostile to more genuinely democratic understandings of women as desiring, thinking, able and sovereign subjects.

It is possible to argue that, given the extent of the often barbaric oppression and subjugation of women in Brahmanical patriarchy – including both, formal conventions like child marriage, sati, dowry, denial of property rights, denial of the right to divorce, etc., and tacitly condoned practices like denial of education, denial of choices, sexual exploitation of lower caste women by men from their own and higher castes, sexual vio-

lence on women in general,²¹ ill-treatment and abuse of widows, domestic exploitation of labour, etc. – the early women's movement found even the limitations of iconizing acceptable, if it empowered them to deal with these more pressing issues. This was however, a tenacious and insidious legacy, insofar as it then became difficult to break out of this mould, as the representation of Indira Gandhi as Durga (referred to in the previous chapter) so clearly demonstrates. Further, the emergence of feminism and the women's movement in the Indian context, as well as the weakening of the very construct of the public/private divide – all indicate the extent to which modernisation (or its 'developmental' avatar) proved enabling for women and for those disempowered by the caste system, and counter-active to the masculinist biases – the masculine hegemonic dispositions – of that very developmentalism. Yet, in practice, it also meant a dispersal of masculinism into other spheres of human activity, with a concomitant gaining of masculinist control over these.²² (One thinks of the masculinisation of technological and scientific knowledge, and of the social power that these represent, possess and give access to in modernity.) Thus, these currents of assertion, claim to power and social change – these counter-hegemonic flows – are themselves subject to the forces of, for instance, privatisation and technologisation fundamental to modernisation. But they are also not complete or coordinated: they are to a large extent reflexive responses to each other, and to the larger shifts in the organisation of Brahmanical masculine hegemony.

After independence, upper caste women in particular continued to find this Brahmanical patriarchal discourse of chastity and maternity the most enabling figuration of femininity, within the confines of Brahmanical patriarchy, even when they chose to challenge its oppressions. This however, indexes another problem: the acceptance of this hegemonic femininity within the women's movement also implied the marginalization, disavowal or outright rejection of gender practices (especially of femininity) from outside the Hindu upper castes – especially with regard to practices pertaining to sexuality, like informal sexual alliances, inter-caste or inter-community marriages, divorce, multiple partners, etc.; but also to real or perceived attempts to mobilize women on specific caste or communal issues, along caste and/or communal lines. The movement was and remains haunted by the bogey of being dominated by Hindu upper caste, middle class women, signaling the difficulties of negotiating issues of caste and community even in the relatively critical

spaces of the women's movement – and thereby, the hegemonic (and clearly, profoundly co-optive) power of Brahmanical masculine hegemony.²³ Consequently, the response of the Indian women's movement to major issues concerning women in particular – the question of communal personal laws, the incidents of sati, the escalation of dowry deaths, the escalation of violence against women in general, female feticide and infanticide – was compromised by the uneasy relations within its heterogeneous components, and by its own investments in the discourses of Brahmanical patriarchy. Additionally, issues like beauty pageants and the uniform civil code created much dissonance in the ranks of the movement, because the dominant response was easily perceived – however mistakenly – to be approximating that of the Hindu right.

Women's complex relation to Brahmanical masculine hegemony has also dogged one of the major concerns of the women's movement, which is the question of personal laws. On this vexed question, there have been some very constructive suggestions regarding the shape and character of a Uniform Civil Code (to replace Personal Laws) from within the women's movement, but the diversity of suggestions themselves indicate the multiple dimensions inherent to the Personal Law question, and the multiple affiliations that come into play in determining the emphases in the suggestions. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, citing Nivedita Menon's outlining of these positions, summarises them thus:

1. Compulsory egalitarian civil code for all citizens;
2. Reforms from within communities, with no state intervention;
3. Reform from within as well as legislation on areas outside the personal laws;
4. Optional egalitarian civil code;
5. Reverse optionality, i.e., all citizens to be mandatorily covered by a gender-just code across "private" and "public" domains, but with the option to choose to be governed by the personal law of their religious community. (2003: 157-8)²⁴

She goes on to note that the first option 'has been more or less given up as a feasible or even desirable demand and ceded to the Hindu right' (ibid.: 158) – meaning that, in effect, the women's movement has recognized that it cannot confront the question of personal law from outside the question of community identity, but must find options that negotiate

the question through the community *and* the state, even as it must ensure that the former in particular does not become the determining factor.

This is not to suggest that the women's movement is on the defensive before communitarian – specifically Hindu upper caste patriarchal – obduracy and aggression. Brahmanical masculine hegemony did have to engage with the movement, and did have to make adjustments in its organisational patterns to accommodate women's voices and concerns – but it did so in its own strategic ways. The woman question raised by the nationalists remained foundational to the inscription of the nation as 'modern' – a condition that was as unavoidable as it was desirable. Brahmanical masculine hegemony sought to engage with this disconcerting modernity that was sited on the bodies of 'its' women firstly, by promoting the nationalist discourse of (Hindu upper caste) women as good, chaste and maternal, so that the focus of women's issues and concerns shifted from the political pursuit of genuinely and democratically available agency and autonomy, to a concern with living up to this ideal. U. Kalpagam (2000), using Pierre Bourdieu's theories of *habitus* and *doxa*, has analyzed the ways in which women internalize patriarchal prescriptions and expectations, rather than resist them. She shows the multiple levels at, and the ways in which, women have to engage with patriarchal injunctions, conforming to them often even while using those to their own ends: internalization and resistance can both happen, if not simultaneously, then at different sites, and with reference to the same individual(s). For instance, women who actively resist conforming to patriarchal expectations in the workplace, may choose to conform to those prevailing in the domestic space of the family, usually because of the dynamics of intimacy and affect that are so crucially mobilised in the constitution and maintenance of the family. It is this complex relation of women with patriarchy – especially on the site of the family – that proves insidious in the latter's cooption of women and women's issues.

The initiation of the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti as early as 1936, as the sister organization of the RSS, was arguably one such move, to contain what were seen as the deleterious effects on women of 'western' education and ideas, and to emphasise the domestic function and maternal-symbolic value of women; the Samiti's agenda was clearly to reinforce the role and function of women in the maintenance of patriarchal power through the institution of the family. However, it was ostensibly set up to allow women a degree of equal participation in the activities of the

Sangh: Laxmibai Kelkar, the founder of the Samiti, is reputed to have stated this as her objective, to K B Hedgewar, the then head of the RSS.²⁵ This strategy of what Thomas Blom Hansen has referred to as 'controlled emancipation' (Hansen, 1994) is however not just about redefining the relation between the domestic and the public for women: it is also about recruiting them into violence. Through organizations like the Durga Vahini (set up in 1991), the Sangh parivar indoctrinates young girls and women (with a special focus on those from the lower classes, lower castes and tribal communities) and trains them in physical combat, under the guise of providing self-defense training (Bacchetta 2004; Sarkar 1999).

As in the case of the RSS and other such fascistic organizations, there is considerable stress on physical training and the martial arts. Notwithstanding all this outdoor activity, there is an overwhelming stress on domestic values. Women can assume activist roles without violating the norms of Hindu womanhood challenging patterns of inequality within the home and the world (Hasan 2009: 17)

Whatever the stated objective of this training, the effect is to provide women with a sense of apparent 'equality' and (masculine) power, which is exercised especially during riots against men (and women) of the 'other' (usually Muslim, but also Christian) communities, but without disturbing the patriarchal order within the 'Hindu' community itself (Basu 1999; Hasan 2009; also Chhachhi 1991). Further, the coercive element inherent to any hegemonic condition is rendered even more 'natural' (Sethi 2002) because it is actively inculcated into (and by) both men and women: violence is apparently 'de-gendered', naturalized, and serves as the medium of resolution for the contradictions that emerge between upper caste and lower caste, notions of 'tradition' and 'modernity', 'Order' and '*Danda*'.

The success of this strategy was manifestly proven during the Gujarat riots of 2002, when upper caste women and lower caste men and women participated actively in the violence against the Muslims, with the women often goading and taunting the men to greater and more extreme forms of violence, including sexual violence. This is not dissociated from the phenomenon of increasing incidents of moral policing, whereby, at one extreme, films and art dealing with issues of sexuality have been vandalized, and the artists or filmmakers brutally attacked; at another, there

have been repeated attacks on couples in public places, women dressed 'inappropriately' or 'shamelessly', internet cafes reputed to be promoting or providing access to pornography, etc. Indeed, it is possible to argue that sexuality, attitudes towards it, the control of speech around it and the fundamental consequence of these for the organizations of gender relations and identities, is a crucial site of concern and anxiety, and yet paradoxically, of silence, denial and censorship, both, within the discourses of Hindu nationalism specifically and in the larger domain of public speech in which those discourses are embedded (Hasan 2009). In the following section, I will attempt to engage in greater detail with some of these issues as they relate to violence, specifically through the lens of 'terrorism', as it manifests in contemporary Hindu nationalism.

6.7 'Terrorism' and Hindutva

In the specific context of the Brahmanical masculine hegemony of Hindutva, layered as it is by multiple, intersecting and sometimes contesting hierarchies – of region, gender, caste, class, age, language (at the macro level) and of the organisation of the community, the family and of sexuality (at the micro or molecular level) – violence (of varied kinds and intensity) is instrumental in the articulating of the multiple hegemonies with each other and thereby in maintaining the macro-hegemonic formation of Brahmanical hegemony. Arguably, the Muslim community (along with the Christian, which we will discuss shortly) serves as a single, apparently homogeneous externality to this hegemony, that helps to define it – and the more violently it is externalised (whether by Hindutva mobilisations or by 'Islamic terrorist' actions), the more intensely this hegemony gains definition. This was made explicitly clear in perhaps the two most crucial events in recent Hindutva mobilisation: the rath yatra leading to the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the Gujarat riots of 2002. In the first instance, the rath yatra was specifically planned as a counter to the perceived divisiveness of 'Hindu' society that would result from the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations on caste-based reservations. The Ayodhya issue had been simmering for many decades before the Rath Yatra; it gained prominence with the opening of the locks and permission being granted for the performance of *pujas* (or ritual prayers) by the Rajiv Gandhi government, as a token of Hindu-appeasement following the outcry of Muslim-appeasement in the Shah Bano case. By 1987, communal riots had bro-

ken out across northern India, as the VHP in particular intensified the campaign for the temple; but despite the VHP's call for bricks to be sent to Ayodhya from every district of the country, and the ritual laying of the foundation stone for the temple on 9 November 1989, there was not yet in evidence a sense of mass mobilisation towards this end.²⁶ It became the focus of a concerted mobilisation to violent action – through LK Advani's Rath Yatra, which commenced on 25 September 1990 – only after the implementation of the Mandal Commission's report (7 August 1990). 'Advani's [sic] lawyer told the reporters after his appearance [at the Liberhans Commission set up to inquire into the demolition] that the Rath Yatra was meant to save the Hindu society from disintegration which the Mandal [sic] had unleashed.' (Rawat 2001) That is, the pan-Indian mobilisation of sentiment on the building of a Ram temple at Ayodhya was implicitly and later explicitly founded on the destruction of the existing mosque.²⁷ While the sentiment that the mosque had to be destroyed was not new – being part of the VHP's and the Bajrang Dal's rhetoric of 'liberating' the Ramjanmabhoomi (the birth place of Ram) through the eighties – it had remained largely implicit in the demand for handing over the disputed lands to the VHP. Even through the communal conflagrations that spread through north India during the demand for sanctified bricks – which essentially meant that ostentatious and often provocative public rituals of 'sanctification' of the bricks had to be held in every district in the country – there was never any explicit official statement of intent to destroy the mosque. By July 1992, however, such statements were made openly by VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders (Katju, 2003: 58); these were tacitly or overtly endorsed by the BJP – which by now had begun to associate quite openly with these organisations.²⁸ The alignment of the BJP with the more radical VHP and the actively militant Bajrang Dal is a telling instance of the way hegemonic formations articulate around the issue of violence: in order to prevent the perceived fragmentation of 'Hindu' society consequent to the implementation of reservation for OBCs – a violence that would (and did)²⁹ arise from within that society through opposition, rather than alignment, between its layers of caste-based hegemonic formations – the Hindu right sought to divert that violence onto the 'external' figure of the Muslim.

Given the extremely backward status of the Muslim community in general – as made evident by the recent Sachar Committee Report (2006) – their position in relation to the larger formation of Brahmanical he-

gemony is one of extreme vulnerability to its coercive mechanisms (whether of direct action in the form of organised violence, or state-initiated actions, such as encounter killings).³⁰ Vibhuti Narain Rai, a former high-ranking Indian Police Service officer, noted in an interview that 'if you analyse the history of various riots that have taken place in India since 1960 or so, you will find that there has probably been no single riot in which less than 90% of those killed have been Muslims' (Rai 2006). He also notes that 'many of the so-called Hindu-Muslim riots are nothing of the sort – they are simply clashes between Muslims and the police' (ibid.), indicating the extent of state involvement and complicity in the targeting of Muslims. He goes on to add that

an average policeman – and most policemen are Hindus – gets his value system from his own society or community. And that is why the average policeman often thinks of Muslims in very negative terms. Many policemen seem to believe the standard stereotypical images of Muslims being 'dirty', 'untrustworthy', 'violent' and 'pro-Pakistani'. And this is what leads to them thinking of Muslims as 'aggressors' who initiate riots. (ibid.)

It is in such a context that we must locate the figure of the 'Islamic terrorist', as he appears in public discourse: it is a matter of some consequence that this figure first makes an appearance on the Indian political scene *after* the destruction of the Babri mosque and widespread communal violence that followed, with the serial bomb blasts across Mumbai in 1992-3. These strikes were avowedly retaliatory, the tactics intended to cause terror – but what is not noted often enough is that it is no more or less terror than is caused by murderous mobs in a communal attack. As Subhash Gatade writes, "'terrorism" unleashed by the majoritarians is easily disguised under the bursting of 'pent up anger' against the minorities' (Gatade 2008). The difference is, that the 1992 incidents indicated the availability of technological and financial resources to the 'Islamic terrorists', and consequently the cold-blooded intention to use them, that communal mobs do not either have or openly index: communal attacks are almost always treated as spontaneous, and their consequences therefore as contingent rather than intended effects. The Mumbai attacks were also significant because they were sponsored and undertaken by Muslim elements of the Mumbai underworld, rather than by any avowedly Islamic-fundamentalist group – thereby reinforcing the perception of the Muslim as inherently dangerous and criminal. If on the one hand, this and the incidents of 'Islamic terrorism' that were to follow were

therefore indicators that the Muslim community would not be easy and/or passive targets for Hindutva violence, on the other, they served to intensify the sense of alterity and externality to Brahmanical hegemony that was sought through Hindutva initiated communal violence in the first instance.

This is further confirmed when we look at the second of the two events: the communal carnage in Gujarat in 2002. The scale and spread of the violence, as well as the sheer one-sidedness of it, has led some commentators to remark that it was a case of genocide rather than of communal rioting, since the overwhelming majority of those killed were Muslims.³¹ What made Gujarat even more significant was that it offered proof to the Hindu right that genocide as a strategy could provide positive electoral results:

“The Gujarat experiment is a success,” declared Ashok Singhal [prominent VHP leader], after the massacre of over 2000 Muslims in Gujarat and the election of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) [in the Assembly elections that followed]. He and other BJP leaders went on to assert that this ‘success’ would be replicated all over India. (cited in Rajagopal, 2003)³²

The Gujarat carnage was supposedly in retaliation for the alleged attack by Muslims on Hindu sadhus (holy men) and kar sevaks (volunteers) returning from Ayodhya, at Godhra, an attack that was characterised as a ‘pre-planned’, ‘terrorist’ one by both the Chief Minister Narendra Modi and by the Justice Nanavati Commission (appointed by Modi) in its interim report (the findings of the Commission were subsequently contradicted by a Supreme Court Committee appointed to investigate the same incident, with the Gujarat High Court also endorsing the findings of the latter). The evident and immediate invocation of the ‘terrorist’ stereotype, and the implicit justification it was supposed to offer for the carnage that followed, is an index of the apparent credibility it had gained by this time in the Indian (read ‘Hindu’) public imagination. That in the nine intervening years between the Mumbai blasts of 1993 and Godhra, 2002, there were few major incidents of communal violence and just two incidents of bomb-blasts (in Chennai and Rameshwaram in 1995) involving Muslims³³ (Rajeshwari, 2004: 2, 24-32), is also an index of the extent to which the ‘globalisation’ of this figure had permeated into national political discourse and the media (especially in English).

The only 'local' incident that would have contributed significantly to this stereotyping was the high-profile attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001: the question that arises is, would this incident, which was explicitly linked to Kashmiri separatist outfits by the state, have resonated in the Godhra case unless there was already a pervasive imagination of all Muslim-related violence as 'terrorist'? Irrespective of the answer to this, the stereotyping of the Muslim as 'terrorist' has worked like a self-fulfilling prophecy: in the six years after the Gujarat carnage culminating in the attacks in Mumbai on 26 November 2008, there have been at least 12 cases of bombings linked to Muslims, and a corresponding increase in Muslim-related incidents of communal violence.³⁴ Taken together, what this indicates is the emergence in this period of a dialectical, even a peculiarly dialogic relation, between Brahmanical masculine hegemony and its Muslim counterpart, in which the 'dialogue' is the articulation of the hegemonic power of each through violence: the conflicts and dialectics possible between the layers of internal and subordinate hegemonic formations in each case – based on class, caste, gender, etc. – are subsumed by this meta-dialectic, denying, as far as possible, any scope for the violence to turn inward and implode the hegemonic formation. It is in this sense that right-wing nationalist movements like Hindutva on the one hand, and transnational phenomena like Islamic fundamentalism on the other, serve to channel and realign the tensions internal to their societies, and indeed actively reinforce the sources and causes of those tensions.

The pervasiveness of the stereotype of the Muslim as 'terrorist' – among many other Muslim stereotypes – is also reinforced by another kind of argument. Profiles of arrested and/or convicted Islamic 'terrorists' are circulated revealing many of them to be educated, often professionally qualified young men belonging to middle class families,³⁵ this is then touted as proof that poverty or lack of education are no longer adequate as explanations for Muslims turning to terrorism, it is rather the religion itself. This is obviously an easier explanation to accept than the more accurate one, viz., that, through the articulations of communal masculine hegemonies (within themselves and in relation to each other), differentials of caste, class, gender, region, etc., are subsumed by the demands of the larger hegemonic formation, which then determine the dynamics by which its individual subjects relate, to each other and to the subjects of other hegemonic formations. It is for this reason that, despite

the atrocities perpetrated on the Muslim community being extensively covered in the media every day of the Gujarat violence, the public response was often characterized as muted, if not indifferent. As Sarmila Bose (2002) remarked, '[l]ouder than the clamour of the national media during the Gujarat carnage was the deafening silence of the absence of outrage in the wider society'. There was a definite sense that there was no real difference in perception between avowed Hindutva supporters and the purportedly secular 'average Hindu', on the matter of the *legitimacy* of the attacks on Muslims; disapproval was more explicitly on the *scale* of the attacks.³⁶

The depth to which this perception of the Muslim has sunk is indexed through the emergence of another phenomenon (fortunately, amounting to few so far) – viz. the 'Hindu' terrorist (see Gatade 2008). While the targets of Hindu 'terrorist' groups like the Abhinav Bharat have by and large been Muslims and Muslim localities, what distinguishes them from the earlier communal rioters is that they have adopted the international 'Islamic terrorist' modus operandi: they operate clandestinely, in small numbers organized in cells, manufacture bombs in secret and detonate them in public places. Their initial successes led Bal Thackeray of the Shiv Sena to openly celebrate them and encourage them to outshine their Muslim counterparts (Gatade 2003). Most remarkably, there is evidence now suggesting that these groups have deliberately and cynically left clues of the above modus operandi in several instances of bombing (including possibly the Delhi blasts of 2005), thereby exploiting (and exacerbating) the image of the Muslim 'terrorist': this image is now so entrenched in the public imagination that the question of blaming anyone but the Muslim 'terrorist' did not even arise till these recent revelations.³⁷ What this indicates is that, on the one hand, the play of hegemonic formations as articulated through violence maximizes degrees of external alterity and difference to facilitate the focusing of that violence, thereby generating near-monolithic identities that (especially at the point of violence) do not cognize internal differences, either in themselves or in the Other; the hold of Brahmanical masculine hegemony thus ensures that the 'average Hindu' perception of the Muslim is singular, stereotypical, unrecognizing of nuances or complexities and bordering on the mythical. On the other, the same dynamic demands the ceaseless generation of (the threat of) violences – not just externally directed towards the Other but internally, between their constituent hegemonic formations, and ac-

cordingly varying in intensity – in order to sustain the hegemony. Both these processes – of incitement to violence and the control of violence – are thus foundational to the functioning of these hegemonic formations.

6.8 Hindutva and Christian Communities

Hindutva antipathy to Christianity is not new; however, it had not actively and concertedly targeted the Christian community till the nineties. Since the attack on Christians began in the late nineties (with the high watermark being the murder of Graham Staines, an Australian missionary working in Orissa, in January 1999), this became a pattern, with some particularly violent incidents, including the rape of nuns in several cases, raising international protest. While it is possible – and not inaccurate – to understand these as consistent with the attacks on Muslims, since both communities have been explicitly identified by Hindutva ideologues as inimical to ‘Hindu’ India, the question that arises is, why at this time, and why not before? Christian respondents in Kerala were of contradictory opinions: one suggestion was that the Mumbai bomb-blasts of 1993 and later, had pushed militant Hindutva onto the back-foot, and that they were wary of taking on a fight that would yield harsh reprisals – hence the attacks on Christians (especially on weak and isolated pockets of Christians like missionaries and nuns) who, being a much smaller minority, offered easy pickings. The contrary suggestion was that, having brought down the Babri Masjid and pushed the Muslim community onto the back-foot, as well as achieving real presence in political power at the centre through the NDA government, Hindutva forces now felt they could push their agenda further: hence the attacks on Christians. Christian respondents in Delhi generally tended to incline toward the second suggestion, but added that it was unlikely to last as a strategy, since prolonged attacks on the Christian community would draw international (read ‘western’) ire and consequences. The regional variations in the responses are suggestive also of the relevance of context: the first response, which imputed cowardice – and in one instance even gendered this cowardice by suggesting that ‘this macho nonsense won’t work in Kerala, let them just try it!’³⁸ – to the Hindutva attackers, is possibly from a perception of the community as strong in numbers, unlike in other parts of India. Similarly, the proximity to the centre of national politics and to an international community in Delhi, could well explain the second and third responses from Delhi. The second in Kerala, however,

cannot satisfactorily be explained by this immediate understanding of context and regional variance; there is nothing in the data either to suggest other variables at work.³⁹ There is however, another possible explanation for this response emerging from the Kerala Christian community: this period also saw an intensification of BJP political activity in Kerala, and was marked by a series of bloody and violent clashes between RSS volunteers and CPM cadre in the volatile district of Kannur in northern Kerala, which drew national attention.⁴⁰ The spate of these incidents was suggestive of a newly aggressive strategy that went beyond Muslims to target the other two groups identified as enemies by Hindutva – the Christians and the Communists (Savarkar 1989 [1923]: 126).

Apart from this, though, it is important to note that the perception of the Christian community outside of institutional Hindutva is not generally a hostile one. Christians are generally perceived to be peaceful and, if not as nationalistic as the Hindu, not generally thought of as anti-national, *qua* the Muslim. Indeed, among some of my Christian respondents I even observed a willingness to concede to ‘Hindus’ that they had ‘a natural right’,⁴¹ a first claim to the nation that Christians and Muslims did not necessarily have. While this speaks volumes for the sense of alienation that the Christian community experiences, it is an equally voluble comment on the extent to which the community has remained non-confrontational. Further, there is widespread recognition, especially in urban areas and especially in the middle and lower middle classes, of the importance of Christian missionary contribution to health care and education in particular. Sanil Kumar, a *pracharak* assigned to the Amruthabharathy Vidyapeetham (a series of schools run by the RSS) in Ernakulam, observed with a touch of irritation that ‘Everyone wants their children to have an English education, and every Christian who can speak two words of English is opening a school and calling it a “convent” and exploiting this desire’.⁴² The Amruthabharathy Vidyapeetham was set up specifically to counter the influence of the Christian schools; he informed me, proudly, that even hardcore, card-carrying CPM cadre would approach him for admission for their children, because ‘people are gradually appreciating the importance of our work, and want their children to grow up with an in-depth familiarity with Indian culture that we provide.’ Taken together, these remarks are indicative of two, not entirely incompatible tendencies in the broader field of Brahmanical masculine hegemony: one, the desire for a ‘western’ education, and the

other, an equal desire for a strong sense of national-cultural identity. It is a dichotomy quite similar to the dichotomy between nativists and modernisers in the nineteenth century (that we discussed in Ch. IV), and in many ways, genealogically derived from that tension. Irrespective of these considerations, the effect is that there is a real tension in the larger dynamic of Brahmanical masculine hegemony, between the desire to 'modernise' and emulate the 'west', and the desire to intensify the 'traditional' and celebrate and relive the 'glorious past'. The Christian community is caught in the cleft of this tension, in the sense that it, willy-nilly, represents the 'west' and 'westernisation'. In this sense, it already occupies a position – albeit an uneasy one – within the multi-layered configuration of hegemonies that constitutes Brahmanical masculine hegemony, even if mainstream Hindu nationalism seeks to reject it.

6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn the significant political lines of the period after the Emergency and the dynamic of the interaction between the social, the political and the economic (specifically the developmental), leading to the present. The ideologies and the social and political practices of Hindu nationalism have been determined and defined by these dynamics, as much as they have been fundamental to the unfolding directions of those dynamics. After the Emergency, and under the Janata regime, the RSS in particular and the Hindu nationalists in general expanded their domains of influence quickly and effectively, posing a serious threat to the political dominance of the Congress government. However, both the Congress and the Hindu nationalists (who were often indistinguishable in their politics and policies) had to contend with two consequences of the adoption of the modernist project: one, the rise to power of the lower and scheduled castes; and two, the multiple, though sometimes diverse and conflicting voices of the women's movement. Both these challenges to Brahmanical masculine hegemony were engaged with and strategies were deployed to neutralise them, including the invocation of violence. The persistence of masculinist biases through the evolution of the processes sketched above seems to suggest that they are constructed into the very processes and conditions of modernisation. The chapter also examined the relations of Hindutva to global and transnational forces,⁴³ in particular its relations to Islam and its perceptions of the Muslim community. By exploring the role of violence in the sustenance of Brahmani-

cal masculine hegemony's relations to the Muslim community, I have shown how dissensions and differences internal to this hegemony are sought to be suppressed and/or channelled into hostility to the Muslim as 'Other'. The chapter also argued that Brahmanical masculine hegemony works by articulating contraries together, sometimes in consonance with Hindutva hegemony and sometimes in tension with it, as in its responses to the Christian community – but always offering the basis for its consolidations. In the last and concluding chapter that follows, I will present a summary of the findings of the thesis thus far, examine some of its limitations, and offer some concluding remarks on the implications of its findings for the future of both, Hindutva and secularism, in India.

Notes

¹ See S. Lindberg (1995) for an account of these differences.

² This is another dichotomy that corresponds roughly with Guha's – and our own – distinction between the realms of '*Danda*' and 'Order' respectively, but as I have repeatedly argued, these terms are at best analytically counter-posed, with no substantial separation. The 'Bharat'/'India' divide similarly is a notional one, indicating realms of political affiliation, rather than substantial territorial or even demographic difference. As with all binaries, in the case of these two too, the terms are mutually dependent and defined against each other.

³ See Pavan Verma for the same point (1998: 142).

⁴ See for instance Kohli (1995).

⁵ For this incident and its analysis see Mumtaz Ali Khan (1983). The OBCs in particular were sensitive to this issue, as conversion by the lowest castes effectively rendered the latter invulnerable to the social sanctions of the caste hierarchy, and therefore to the oppression and exploitation of the OBCs, and gave the lower castes a sense of social equality with their caste superiors.

⁶ See the VHP website report on this event at <http://www.vhp.org/whc2.php>, accessed 23-05-2007

⁷ The debate on this is still raging, given the recent exoneration of Jagdish Tytler and Sajan Kumar, Congress leaders charged with inciting murderous masses into slaughtering Sikhs during the Delhi riots of 1984 following Mrs. Gandhi's death.

⁸ It is of some significance here that the RSS openly supported the Congress against the BJP during the eighties, as the party that was more likely to protect 'Hindu' interests. See Malik and Vajpeyi (1989: 320-21).

⁹ The Shah Bano case was a landmark case in contemporary Indian jurisprudence on Personal Law. In 1985, the Indian Supreme Court passed an order that inter-

preted the payment of maintenance in divorce cases as coming under civil, and not personal, law; this was in relation to the granting of maintenance in favour of Shah Bano, a Muslim woman whose husband had divorced her in 1978. The order was perceived by some sections of the leadership of the Indian Muslim communities to be an infringement of the Muslim Personal Law, who then threatened countrywide agitations against the judgment. The then Indian government, under the Prime Minister-ship of Rajiv Gandhi, passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, in 1986. This Act essentially overturned the Supreme Court's verdict and limited the period of payment of maintenance to the customary (brief) period of 'iddat' after divorce, when the husband is obliged by Muslim personal law to maintain his ex-wife. The response of the government raised another kind of controversy, with secular and right wing forces, along with the women's movement, coming together to accuse the government of playing communal politics and of 'appeasing' the Muslim community.

The ramifications of this judgment and the subsequent controversies were significant. It was instrumental in Rajiv Gandhi's decision to revive the forgotten issue of the 'liberation' of the birth-place of Ram – an issue that the BJP happily capitalized on and made its campaign plank for the 1989 elections – and was one of the major reasons for the dramatic re-emergence of Hindu nationalism. Further, it is an outstanding instance of: (a) the confluence of otherwise divergent, even inimical, patriarchal formations on the site of the control of women's entitlements; (b) the multiple mechanisms through which the *bases* of Hindu nationalist sentiment ramify into even purportedly secular organizations and issues; and (c) the peculiar, even awkward, position that the secular women's movement finds itself in, in relation to the issue of personal laws, since its strongest ally in the demand for a Uniform Civil Code is the right wing BJP. For an informative account of these issues, see Cossman and Kapur (1996). For a different analysis of this case – accounting for the presence of women-supporters on both sides of the controversy – by understanding it as emanating from the claims of the multiple identities present in any individual subject, see Chhachhi (1991)

¹⁰ Mary Roy, an educationist and women's rights activist, sued her brother for an equal share of her father's property, after the latter's death in 1965. According to laws governing the Keralite Syrian Christian community, Roy, as the daughter, was entitled to only a quarter of the property or Rs. 5000/- whichever was less. After a 21-years long legal battle, the Supreme Court ordered in her favour, bringing all Christians in India under the Indian Succession Act (1921), which grants equal property rights to sons and daughters.

¹¹ Cited here from <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/grhf/SAsia/forums/sati/articles/judgement.html>

¹² Several of the respondents (upper castes and OBCs; no SCs) during my field-work who had participated in the campaign in various ways reported an intense sense of empowerment and vindication, as well as of belonging. The sub-textual narrative was often a replay of the epic itself, with the mosque signifying Ram's expulsion from Ayodhya, and its destruction consequently both the defeat of Ravan (the villain in the epic) and the restoration of the victorious Ram to his rightful place.

¹³ *Chanakya* was written, directed and the lead role acted by Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi, who was subsequently accused of providing the BJP with 'spiritual justification' for their communal politics (see Madhavi Irani (1991)). Chanakya was depicted as the unifier of India, after the Greek invasion.

¹⁴ The extent of the complexity of these dynamics is further revealed by the fact that the liberalisation so celebrated by the Indian bourgeoisie was actually initiated by the same VP Singh, when he was appointed by Rajiv Gandhi as finance minister in 1984, before they fell out.

¹⁵ Gail Omvedt (2000) makes a similar point. While I disagree substantially with her perception of the current economic reforms as beneficial in the long term, I do agree with her on the issue of across-the-board reservation, irrespective of class differentials within the backward caste communities.

¹⁶ The irony of this perception is not often enough remarked on, given the savagery of the conquistadores in the name of Christianity in South America or the inhuman brutality of the slave trade, that was often condoned because it was also seen as a process of bringing 'heathens' to Christ.

¹⁷ It must be remembered that the Congress government in India, eager to keep its Muslim vote-bank, was the first country to ban Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, which then led to the fatwa against him and the reward on his head, issued by the then Ayatollah, Khomeini.

¹⁸ For a particularly vitriolic version of this, see Craig Winn (2004).

¹⁹ For instance, the AIDWA or All India Democratic Women's Association of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), for instance, or the Mahila Congress of the Congress (I).

²⁰ One thinks of Madhu Kishwar, for instance, who has gone on record as denying even the label feminist as non-applicable to her (Kishwar 1990); or somewhat differently, the late writer formerly known as Kamala Das, who converted to Islam and changed her name to Kamala Suraiyya.

²¹ In the eighties in particular, there was a high-intensity campaign against rape and the biases of the rape-laws, which Hindi cinema eagerly participated in, making the issue even more public and volatile.

²² There are several studies of this, but a useful sketch of the main themes in this issue is provided by Gill and Grint (1995).

²³ See Anupama Rao's (ed.) *Gender and Caste: Issues in Indian Feminism* (2003b) for a set of critiques of this marginalization.

²⁴ This option was perhaps the most viable of the options to emerge, but remains debated. It was first proposed by the Working Group on Women's Rights (1996).

²⁵ See the webpage of the Samiti, <http://www.sanghparivar.org/wiki/rashtriya-sevika-samiti>. There is a striking difference in the names of the two organisations, that is well worth noting: firstly, the word 'samiti' is feminine, while 'sangh' is masculine; secondly 'samiti' indicates a somewhat informal gathering or assembly while 'sangh' indicates a formal organisation; thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, 'sevika' is a woman/girl who serves, while 'swayamsevak' means volunteer, or one who exercises a degree of agency in his serving. In other words, there is, built into the idea of the Samiti itself, the understanding that women are not expected to be organised (hence the looser term 'samiti'), but their service is expected to be unquestioningly forthcoming, with no agential options in it. Thus, the very names of the two organisations index their fundamentally patriarchal bent.

²⁶ Indeed, Vidya Subrahmaniam (2003) suggests that the Ayodhya issue is one the Hindu right deliberately keeps perpetually simmering but incomplete, as bearing the potential for repeated invocation for mobilisation.

²⁷ This was despite no clear archaeological evidence that (as was repeatedly claimed) the mosque had been built over a pre-existing temple. Indeed, when it became difficult to maintain this claim, the rhetoric shifted to asserting that the existence of the temple was a matter of faith for the Hindus, not of historical proof, and so the temple would be built irrespective of the verdict of the court.

²⁸ Till this period the VHP and the Bajrang Dal had remained relatively unrelated to the BJP, and had in fact, on several occasions openly supported the Congress, especially under Rajiv Gandhi; it is only when the BJP began to itself openly espouse the cause of the temple at Ayodhya that these organisations began to work directly with it, and in fact, expressly dedicated themselves to cultivating a Hindu vote-bank for the BJP (Katju, 2003: 59).

²⁹ In the agitations over reservation that led to several cases of self-immolation (as a form of protest) by upper caste youth, and to caste conflicts across the country.

³⁰ The infamous Batla House killings of 'terrorists' in Delhi on 19 September 2008 is the most recent of many such incidents.

³¹ See for instance, 'Genocide', the Special Issue of *Communalism Combat* (2002), and the *Concerned Citizens Tribunal Report Vol. II* (2002)

³² <http://www.countercurrents.org/guj-rajagopal260703.htm>, accessed 19 February 2004

³³ There were several involving Christian communities, which I will discuss shortly.

³⁴ See <http://news.oneindia.in/2008/09/13/chronology-serial-bomb-blasts-in-india.html>, accessed 8 January 2009.

³⁵ See the apparently sympathetic ‘The New Terrorists’ on <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/sep/16spec.htm> (accessed 11 June 2006), for an account of this.

³⁶ Umesh, a chartered accountant in Delhi, and a self-professed liberal with no explicit Hindutva sympathies, remarked: ‘We need to get a proper perspective on this, it’s not just about one community attacking another, but about how much provocation was there. How long can you reasonably expect even a tolerant community like Hindus to keep quiet? This was going to happen [sooner or later]. But yes, the government should have controlled it better....’ (personal conversation, 19 Feb 2003).

³⁷ See the news item ‘Radical Hindu terror plot in unsolved bombings?’, at http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_radical-hindu-terror-plot-in-unsolved-bombings_1206918, accessed 8 January 2009

³⁸ Suresh, 22, student, second generation protestant, interviewed on 18 December 1999.

³⁹ For instance, if respondents with this view were all from a particular class, or travelled more, thereby availing of a less regional perspective; but this is not the case, since it was a view held by respondents from diverse classes and with varying histories and extent of travel.

⁴⁰ See for example, news reports ‘3 Killed in RSS, CPM Clashes’ (*Hindustan Times*, 6 March 2008) and ‘Kannur Erupts Again, 2 Dead’ (*Hindustan Times*, 19 January 2009), which also note that this struggle has been going on for decades.

⁴¹ Fr. Vincent Kundukullam: ‘It is not unnatural that Hindus should feel that India is their country.’ Personal conversation, 13th September 1999. Fr. Kundukullam (1998) is also the author of a concise monograph on the RSS, in Malayalam.

⁴² Personal conversation of 10th January 2000. The allusion in “convent” is to the lay expression ‘convent educated’, which signifies English-medium education in a Christian school. This has conventionally carried high social premium, with Christian educational institutions carrying a reputation for providing quality education and discipline.

⁴³ In this connection, for reasons of space and focus, I have not engaged with the significant inroads of Hindu nationalism – institutional and ideological – into the

Indian diasporic communities around the world. For an account of these, see for instance, Bhatt and Parita (2000).

7

Conclusion

7.1 Review of Arguments and Findings

This study has sought to review and then part from, the dominant trends in the theoretical and analytical debates on men and masculinity, as well as the broad directions of study of Hindu nationalism. In the first case – regarding men and masculinity – I have argued that existing attempts in this direction still require theoretical elaboration of the relations that obtain between structures and gender-forms. I have critiqued the existing literature on men and masculinity for overly focusing on and emphasizing forms of masculinity, at the expense of the structural dynamics that generate and sustain those forms. I have addressed this issue by focusing, in the first instance, on the ways in which institutions, organizations and structures come to be gendered, and consequently, on the processes of gendering that are invoked in the articulation and elaboration of power within specific structural, institutional and/or organizational relations. I developed this argument specifically with regard to masculinity/ies by proposing the idea of ‘masculine hegemony’. Through this term I suggested that – at least in largely democratic societies – uneven power distribution may be understood in Gramscian hegemonic terms, and that this hegemony is usually gendered as masculine. Any given hegemonic condition is layered by multiple and intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination that determine the access to and exercise of power – the distribution and possession of its resources and rights – within it, as well as the terms within which that power is (to be) exercised. These hegemonic forms extend far beyond conventionally recognised macro manifestations – race, nation, region, religion, community, class – to its manifestations at the fundamental ‘cellular’ (or in Gramsci’s terms, ‘molecular’) level of the family and the organisation of sexuality. Thus, the

multi-layered hegemonic formations that constitute the given hegemonic condition are diversely marked by other signs – of race, class, age, region, religion, etc – but are all inflected by the foundational discourse of gender. This is the broad theoretical perspective within which the thesis was elaborated – its fundamental theoretical contribution – because it provided for the multiple articulation of complex phenomena with each other, across history as well as across regions.

Based on this, it sought to approach the issue of Hindu nationalism from a historical perspective that takes into account not just its political rise in the last two decades of the twentieth century, but the *longue durée* processes that engendered this politics. The study therefore began by examining the various semantic and social transformations of the term ‘Hindu’, starting with its early derivation from ‘Indus’, through the medieval period to its coalescence into the more concrete religio-social entity that emerged through the colonial encounter and the caste and other reform movements of the nineteenth century, until its politicization into a religio-cultural nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century. Crucial to understanding this evolution, the study argues, is the pan-Indian spread of the Brahmin castes (as opposed to the localized presence of the lower-castes), and the consequent identification of ‘Hindu’ territory with the presence of the Brahmins. The colonial unification of India into a single political unit was thus coincidental with the politics of caste. In mapping this process, I have emphasized the gender and caste dynamics inherent to the construction of this identity, and elaborated on the economic, communal and political determinants of this gendered dynamic in the construction of the identity ‘Hindu’. The thesis examined the outcome of the confrontation between colonizing and colonized patriarchies, as well as the negotiations that came into play within the diverse colonized patriarchal formations in this confrontation. It argued then that the strongly Brahmanical caste-profile of the anti-colonial nationalist movement indicates the extent to which Brahmanical masculine hegemony and its practices came to define the hegemonic understanding of the identity ‘Hindu’ as well as ‘India’ – and continued to do so even after independence. The argument of the thesis is that, unless one takes account of these processes, it is difficult to full comprehend the depth, scale and reach of Hindu nationalism – as a latent and as an active ideology.

Thirdly, the thesis argued the need to examine another factor in the understanding of Hindu nationalism – the idea and practice of ‘development’ – and briefly historicized the idea of development in its modernist episteme. It then charted the trajectories of its implementation through the Nehruvian emphasis on Planning and state driven social change, and the consequent impact on the socio-polity of the country after independence. It analyzed this through the gender and caste dynamics of this period, arguing that the Brahmanical hegemony of the pre-independence period begins to transform in the seventies, as it negotiates with and then accommodates (through the double process of gradual but deliberate sanskritisation and incremental release of state control) the increasing visibility and volubility of lower caste presence in the political domain. Similarly, even as women’s movements successfully moved the state to implement policies that actually empowered women, the gradual and ongoing process of shifting control of the economy from the state to the private sector has ensured that safeguards for women, labour, lower castes and other marginal groups are almost non-existent, or at best, remain arbitrary and at the behest of the private sector. It argued that Hindu right women’s organizations are working to ensure that women adopt appropriately secondary and submissive roles (legitimized by a nationalist agenda), even as they gain greater presence in the burgeoning private sector that requires their labour. Further, as the ability of the Congress to accommodate diverse, even contradictory demands began to weaken in the late sixties and into the seventies, a system of vote-bank politics was introduced into the political sphere that substantially aggravated an already sensitive communal history – leading to an increase in incidents of communal violence, and to the explicit articulation of identities in sharply gendered (in the sense of violently masculinist) terms. The study proposed that the processes of liberalization and privatization were thus crucial to the transformation of Brahmanical masculine hegemony, in its strategies to retain hegemonic power.

Finally, the thesis explored the tensions and relations that obtain between the multiple dichotomies generated in the thesis – personal/political, upper caste/lower caste, Hindu/non-Hindu, masculine/feminine, modern/traditional – through examining specific identity-groups, events, as well as accounts of individuals, and attempted to provide through this an intestinal view (so to speak) of the discursive, practical and relational field within and from which Hindu nationalism is

generated. This was located in relation to relevant major processes of national as well as international change, specifically the notion of globalisation as it is understood in relation to the formation and consolidation of identities, and the phenomenon of terrorism. The thesis suggests that these are inextricably interwoven phenomena, and that in order to make sense of Hindutva conceptions and practices of masculinity, it is necessary to take into account those processes by which it both defines and feeds its notions of power and failure, self and other, masculine and feminine. The thesis thus sought to present the analyses undertaken in the preceding chapters as not simply operating at the macro or micro levels exclusively, but as drawing from an understanding of Hindu nationalism and Brahmanical masculine hegemony that is necessarily arrived at by weaving back and forth between these levels, stitching them together.

7.2 Main Contributions

This thesis is the first to attempt an analysis of men and masculinities in Hindu nationalism in terms of the interplay of subjects and structures, through the idea of a Brahmanical masculine hegemony. In fact, it is the first work to propose and theorize the idea of patriarchy as masculine hegemony, thereby attempting to revive the analytical value of the term 'patriarchy'. It has done so not only by offering a detailed theoretical understanding of the dynamics of 'masculine hegemony', but by analytically elaborating this understanding through the examination of the historical evolution and contemporary dynamics of a specific hegemonic formation – Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism. In doing so, this thesis has also contributed specifically to:

(a) Debates around the history of a 'Hindu' identity. Here, the thesis is the first to propose that the two extreme positions that dominate the debate – one that argues that this identity has 'always' existed, and the other that asserts that it is a colonial invention – may both be right. The thesis has suggested that it is possible to trace the historical presence of a socio-religious hegemonic formation, prior to the colonial period, even if that formation cannot be identified as 'Hinduism'. It was later identified as the religion of the 'Hindu', and subsequently as 'Hinduism', in the colonial period, not through its own self-proclamation as such, but as a category of the colonial census mechanisms – implying thereby that the

identity 'Hindu' is the layered product of multiple historical effects and interventions.

(b) Discussions around the question of violence and Hindu nationalism: the thesis has proposed that violence is not just an effect of historical hostility between communities but continuously and systemically generated through the dual discursive incitements of 'Order' and '*Danda*'. While these terms were first suggested by Ranajit Guha, this thesis has been the first to elaborate them in relation to the violences that Hindutva has engaged in. In the process, this thesis has also contributed to a fresh understanding of the figure of Mohandas Gandhi and his propagation of non-violence as a political strategy.

(c) The question of the support base for Hindu nationalism: this thesis has argued that Hindu nationalism or Hindutva sustains not just on the programs and practices of its institutional forms – the Sangh parivar (family) and similar organisations like the Shiv Sena – but on the Brahmanical masculine hegemony that it is founded on, incites and strives continually to intensify. While other commentators have noted that there is a larger and more pervasive discursive field from which Hindutva draws sustenance, this thesis is the first to theorize that process in gendered structural terms.

(d) The growing discussion on 'religious' terrorism: by locating the growth of Hindu nationalism in relation to the contemporary global political stage, this thesis has also sought to cast new light on the phenomenon of 'religious' – specifically 'Islamic' – terrorism. It has argued that rather than violence emanating from the prescriptions of a specific religion or religious ideology, it is the direct effect of conflicting masculine hegemonies, in the maintenance of hegemonic control. In this sense, it has brought the theory of masculine hegemony to bear on the issue of 'terrorism'.

7.3 Limitations of the Thesis

The thesis was initially conceived of as a political anthropology of Hindu nationalism, with a focus on gender. It was therefore originally planned with two phases of fieldwork, in two specific sites – Ernakulam in the south and Delhi in the north of India. However, after the first phase of fieldwork, and in the course of writing the early parts of the thesis, it soon became clear that this methodology would not be appropriate to

the direction of the work. It was evident that the focus of the thesis on the relations between masculinity and Hindu nationalism demanded an initial examination of the latter specifically in historical and discursive terms, rather than through immediate empirical analysis. This in turn led to elaborating the phenomenon in relation to processes of modernisation and development, on a pan-Indian scale, further rendering localised investigations at best partial and in real terms, rather redundant. The study therefore undertook instead to continue to examine Hindu nationalism in macro terms, on the scale of the country, and opted to use the material generated from fieldwork as a general guide to the main argument, rather than as empirical evidence or even illustration. It was important to retain the pan-Indian perspective that the thesis had begun with, and that was necessary to comprehend the idea of Hindutva as a masculine *hegemony*; arguably, if the thesis had instead elaborated on the empirical data of the fieldwork, the focus would have shifted from the study of this hegemonic condition, to its localised manifestations – which may well be a future direction of research. Consequently, a minor limitation of the thesis is that, while it draws on empirical evidence, and its arguments are built from and through the experience of fieldwork, it offers no intensive analyses of organisations, events or individuals, as extensive instances of Hindutva in operation.

Another limitation that must be noted is that, because of its attention to forms and practices of masculinity, the thesis at times appears to be inattentive to corresponding ideas and practices of femininity, and to the relations of women to Brahmanical masculine hegemony in general and Hindu nationalism in particular. While this has sought to be avoided as far as possible, where it does appear to be the case, it has been the result of the need to elaborate on and clarify the operations of masculinity in the constitution of this hegemony, rather than of a deliberate disavowal or ignorance of the significance of women and femininity to these phenomena. Further, the focus and intent of this thesis was to establish the workings of Brahmanical masculine hegemony as the bed from which the Hindutva tree has grown, and which continues to sustain it. This is not to suggest that there have been no counter-hegemonic forces against Brahmanical masculine hegemony: these would include Dalit and other lower caste organisations and formations; tribal organisations and formations, especially those mobilised by radical left ideologies; sections of the women's movement; and urban, liberal-democratic, usually upper

class and upper caste intelligentsia. Even within the broad formation of institutional Hindutva, there have been signs of dissonance – as for instance, between the VHP’s hardline approach to promulgating Hindutva and the BJP’s softer approach, governed largely by the demands of electoral and alliance politics; or the Shiv Sena’s insistence on yoking Hindutva to localized Maharashtrian chauvinism, against the insistently pan-Indian perspective of the RSS. On other fronts, the emergence of Mayawati as a powerful Dalit leader in the state of Uttar Pradesh has forced the Hindutva to negotiate with her Bahujan Samaj Party, and on her terms. But dealing with these perfunctorily, formulaically and as adjuncts to the central focus, in the interests of producing a more rounded thesis, would effectively be tokenism, and politically a disservice to recounting the very crucial struggles these counter-hegemonic forces are engaged in: any genuine account of these would require another – or more – thesis/theses.

Finally, despite the broad theoretical and spatial sweep of the thesis, it has not incorporated several issues – or has only addressed them in partial detail. For instance, it has not explicitly undertaken to examine the ideological and political programs of Hindutva ideologues, or party manifestos; it has not analysed the ideological role of key terms in such programs. Illustratively, the affective pull of terms like *matrubhumi* and *pitrubhumi* (respectively, motherland and fatherland) that yoke the everyday familial to the grand narrative of the nation, could be analysed as indexing a field of beliefs, actions and relations that constitute the masculine hegemony of Brahmanical patriarchy, within and from which Hindu nationalism finds its visceral roots. However, this would have pulled the thesis into a specific kind of semiotic and discourse analysis and away from its focus on unravelling the constitution of the hegemonic in Hindutva. As such, again, it remains a line of research for the future.

7.4 Concluding Remarks: Of Endings and Beginnings

This thesis began as an objective study of the phenomenon of Hindu nationalism, with a specific focus (as noted above) on its gender relations. In the course of undertaking it, however, it became increasingly clear to this researcher that objectivity would be a difficult condition to meet: as physically male, socially and culturally masculine, nominally Hindu and politically inclined towards (broadly) feminist ideas and away

from religious-nationalist ones, attempting to undertake a study of Hindu (nationalist) masculinities nevertheless cut close to the bone, and demanded, in many ways, a radical review and restructuring of notions of self, social identity and indeed of social relations. In this sense, this thesis has been phenomenally difficult to write precisely because it entailed in several ways a radical rewriting of the self. (Theoretically, it could have been undertaken without that: but in practical terms, that hypothetical thesis would have been substantially weaker.) But it has also therefore been a lesson in understanding that political processes are not just about the institutions that anchor them – sometimes through the sheer inertia of institutions – or the events that manifest them, but about the collective dynamics of the teeming bodies, the groups of individuals and the multiple social relations that constitute them. This is not perhaps a new lesson, but a difficult one. Raymond Williams once noted that, ‘The mistake, as so often, is in taking terms of analysis as terms of substance’. One could conversely (but without contradiction) also argue that it is a mistake to treat terms of analysis as disconnected from terms of substance: that is, especially in matters of gender and sexuality, the analysis – however esoteric – must devolve to the practical and the agential: it cannot be dissociated from the latter. This is almost as true for the study of nationalism (indeed, perhaps of any ideological program that addresses the construction of individual and social identities). When one argues for the understanding of both nationalism and of gender as constituting hegemonic formations then, one is drawing on precisely that quality of the conception of hegemonies as operating dynamically between micro and macro levels, and constituted by each.

It is in this sense that this thesis, in the final analysis, is about the broad base on which Hindu nationalism preys, and which it in turn feeds. Unless we take cognizance of this, and look beyond the electoral performances of the Bharatiya Janata Party, or the cultural nationalism of the RSS, to the ways in which hegemonies are maintained using the very tools and structures intended to dismantle them – as with the developmental agenda – we will not truly grasp the magnitude of the struggle for secularism. This term may be dismissed – as it often is – as being of Western origin, or inimical as a concept to Indian realities (however one understands those); but the dismissal itself is a mark of Brahmanical masculine hegemony in reaction. It is of the first importance then, to understand secularism as not just about the relations between religion

and society, or church and state, but about the recognition of the gendered bases of those relations, that resist a genuine separation of terms. It is about the production of discourses, programs and practices that truly comprehend the gendered and sexualised terms on which all relations – whether seen through the lens of religion or not – are constituted. It is only on such an understanding of the secular that a genuinely effective resistance can begin to be organised, to counter the Hindu right or its masculinist violences.



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Before defending his doctoral thesis entitled *Making the Pitrubhumi: Masculine Hegemony and the Making of the Hindu Nation*, Mr Prem Kumar Vijayan had attained an MA and MPhil in Literature from the Delhi University, and attended a number of intensive short courses and workshops in culture and society, research methodologies, pedagogical tools in higher education. In 1998 he was awarded the four-year DGIS-DPO Doctoral Research Fellowship by The Netherlands government.

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- ‘Gender Designs: Men’s Studies in the Context of Hindutva’, forthcoming in *Exploring Masculinities in India UNIFEM Global Masculinities Series*, Sanjay Srivastava & Rahul Roy (eds.) London: Zed 2012 (forthcoming)
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