Chapter 6

Gender as a Symbolic Resource: Immigration Discourse and Nationalist Project

Even before Perestroika, from the time of ‘the thaw’ under Krushchev, polemics over national identity and values led to opinions from differing ends of the political spectrum to put forward their own national ideal. Central to this picture of each model nation was the model symbol of that nation. That symbol of the nation was the Russian woman set in a carefully defined gender hierarchy blissfully performing her given gender roles. Debates regarding the nature of such an idyll were carried out in newspapers and magazines. West inclined papers like ‘Yunost’ (Youth) and ‘Literary Gazette’ and papers with a nationalist inclination like ‘Molodaya Gvardia’ (Young Guard), ‘Literary Russia’ and ‘Contemporary’ argued about the future course of their nation deploying gender to demarcate between their ideals. Westerners idolised, “... a bourgeois ideal - a lovely girlfriend, deliberately indifferent to politics and public life, in contrast to the official “political” woman; their heroine was interested in men, sex, clothes, was dependent on men in all respects, in other words, she was a “private” woman. "Russophiles" took as their ideal the Russian peasant woman of former centuries, who lived according to the laws of nature, in keeping with traditional patriarchal ideas, of which she was the main vehicle, according to the views of those who created this image” (Azhgikhina 1995). The common ground between the democrats and conservatives was their opposition to the model Soviet woman and the social order which had sustained it.

National identity or any nationalist project for that matter commonly appeals to national memories and narratives of the ‘nation’. Men and women are situated differently in this narrative regarding their roles, location and activities which influences formal allocation of citizenship rights and duties. The relationship of the
individual to the state is influenced by cultural and national ideologies and the location of the individual within these structures. Gendered characteristics, for instance those that define what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine', are crucial to all nationalist and cultural ideologies. Cultural narrative situates men and women differently since, “Culture as a concept, is not just shared but is grounded in unequal relations and is differentially related to people and groups in different social positions” (Dirks et al. 1994: 3).

Yuval-Davis (1993) points to the role of women as both biological and symbolic/cultural 'reproducers' of the nation, and the ways in which these concepts have structured women’s obligations and rights as well as their subjectivities and experiences in different national contexts. When ancient cultures are invoked as 'golden age' and are made the reference point for recasting gender identities into traditional roles it is primarily women who symbolise the ‘essence’ of the ‘golden age’. But this is a politically loaded process as different political players construct nationalist discourse in a contest for power and resources. Cultures are not ‘timeless’ or eternally durable. Infact, “in many cases, timeless traditions turn out to have been ‘invented’ and not very long ago at that...a central aspect has been a claim of relative coherence and internal consistency- a “system of symbols”, a “structure of relations,” but studies point to culture as multiple discourses, occasionally coming together in large systemic configuration, but more often coexisting within dynamic field of interaction and conflict” (Dirks et al. 1994: 3). In the latter section of the following chapter we will look at the ways in which women are deployed as a symbolic resource in drawing the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion crucial to any nationalist project. We will also look at the ways in which gender stereotypes constructed and reinforced by nationalist project impact the real lives of individual women.

The first section of the chapter will look at the phenomenon of large scale Russian women’s, mostly with professionally skilled backgrounds, immigration to other countries. The impact of negative stereotyping of women in Russia on immigrant women is huge. It feeds into the existing stringent and exclusionary ideologies of anti-immigration laws and notions and serves to restrict the process of rehabilitation of these women into destination country’s cultures and work force. Globalisation has resulted in an increasing trend of movement of goods and people
across national boundaries. But a crucial aspect of this phenomenon is that while goods and commodities are forcing open national borders in search of newer markets, immigration policies are becoming more and more stringent restricting the movement of people, particularly labour, across the globe.

Nationalist rhetoric contributes to the processes of exclusion targeting both internal and external ‘others’ and their insistence on pure ‘gene pool’ and ‘origins theory’ deploys ‘their’ women as not just symbolic but actual reproducers of the nation. Demographic concerns are not addressed through liberal immigration policies rather they are utilised to exclude and for putting greater pressure on women to bear children and fulfil their ‘natural’ gender roles. Russian women who have gone abroad as migrants have not only been subjected to forced deskilling, they have been subjected to negative stereotyping by a immigration discourse that labels them as fundamentally ‘promiscuous’. Conversely, trafficking of Russian women illegally to over 50 countries in the world has led to their stereotyping not only in Russia but also abroad. All Russian immigrant women have been targeted to some extent by a heavily sexualised immigration discourse which makes them more vulnerable, easier to exploit and excluding them from jobs. We will look at the stereotyping of migrant Russian women labour force and the linkages between gender ideology and international balance of power which is fundamental towards the formulation of immigration policies.

Stereotyping Immigrant Women Labour Force from Russia

Immigration policy has often served as an instrument of foreign policy for different countries. The rules have been made flexible or strict keeping in mind the international balance of power and varying interests of rich and poor nations. For instance, immigration rules were formulated enabling easy entry of immigrants from the socialist block into Western countries in the context of the end of Second World War and escalating East-West tensions and West’s foreign policy imperative of fighting communism.
Collapse of Soviet Union and the socialist block of Eastern Europe has once again reverted immigration rules to a more protectionist and stringent entry rules into more prosperous and rich West. Muller (2002: 20) has pointed out that, "...Ideological support for generous non-rejection policy with the aim to admit refugees for permanent resettlement and asylum is no longer needed in current post-socialist state. Now, non-entry is the essence of immigration policy... a strategy of containment of threatened populations in the area of origin or in their vicinity. A new category of IDPS - Internally displaced persons - has been coined to designate them."

New forms of labour immigration have been introduced which seek to retain 'the economic benefits of immigration labour while divesting itself of its social cost' (Goodman 2001: 1). A common feature has been the casusalization of labour contracts with the removal of permanent rights of residence and the reduction in social rights (Rudolph 1993).

Globalisation has led to impoverishment of many countries and severe job cuts for millions of people world wide. The need for work is combined with the demand for foreign workers willing to accept "informal wages", waiver of their legal working rights and adequate work conditions and no social security. Muller (2002: 19) notes that along with the need for cheap labour divested of its labour costs, the tendency of most powerful and prosperous nation-states is to be 'tough' and selective on immigration. She says, "...most workers remain firmly tied to the territorial world of the state system, with border controls restricting their movement remaining as tight as in the past and often tighter. Globalisation processes have precisely revitalised rather than diminished one crucial function of the nation state, namely that of controlling the movement of people across its borders. Erecting walls around richer and therefore more and more desirable economies feeds and encourages illegal trafficking in people." The more people attempt to migrate to richer nations in search of jobs; they are subjected to an exclusionary cultural nationalist discourse which keeps them as a ready constituency for political manipulation.

The changing context of globalisation and detrimental effects of its economic policies are forcing people to look for survival strategies often taking them across borders into exploitative, unskilled and low-paying jobs. Post-transition situation of erstwhile socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has also changed
international geographical and political boundaries. The re-composition of European immigration landscape after 1989 has changed previous immigration patterns. Previous international immigrations have turned into internal ones, those that used to be domestic, internal movements have now become international (with the disintegration of Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia into twenty two new states). The areas of origin, of destination and transit are interwoven; and border regions have become porous and lucrative centres of profitable activity for some people and insurmountable obstacles and exploitation for the mobility of others (Muller 2002: 25). Changed immigration patterns have enabled a greater flexibility to rich destination countries which do not bear social security costs of migrant labour. With the incorporation of Eastern Europe into an enlarged European Union and a new social and economic system, transnational immigrations to and from this region is increasingly of a short-term income generating type in which the families do not move for permanent relocation. As far as social security, welfare provisions and education are concerned they draw on and depend on their home countries, not the host countries (Morawska 2000). This is an important difference to the immigrations of the guest-worker period and also adds emphasis to the cost effectiveness of encouraging such type of migratory movement and the benefits it accrues to big capital and powerful nation states.

Immigration processes have not been gender neutral. Post-transition immigrations have seen a higher number of women with highly qualified educational and work backgrounds migrating for a variety of reasons. Literature available largely focuses on high skilled male or low skilled female immigration and not high skilled female immigration from Post-socialist countries. Women from these countries might have immigrated for work or for reasons other than work and have to fight to retain their high skilled identity in the new labour market.

The earlier pattern of immigration was characterised by a greater presence of men in it who were specialised and highly skilled. This pattern is complicated by the entry of women with similar backgrounds trying to fit into the existing patriarchal mould of the receiving countries. It has visibilized the gendered discourse and stereotyping of immigrants in the host country which distinguishes between ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ immigrants. The cultural stereotypes constructed and
disseminated in popular media and commonsense of the host country is often in sexual, rather sexist and policing modes, which sets ‘us’ apart from ‘them’ and reveals the repressed and invisible patriarchal values deeply embedded in an, what might otherwise be seen as, a relatively egalitarian gender discourse. It has also been effectively employed to control, monitor and regulate the immigrant flows and formulate immigration rules.

East European women generally had broad access to higher education and to the labour market in the period of socialism (Kosmarskaya 1999; Einhorn 1993). Unlike the representation in popular media women from East Europe and former Soviet Union migrate because of their “…experience of a loss of previously held benefits and rights acquired under socialism, than with the recently changing roles enabling them to gain more freedom” (Muller 2002: 24). The loss of work identity and deskilling of women in the sex segregated labour market of the West has compounded the difficulties of these women (Lemish 2000).

Their work background, training and specialization are rendered useless in the new labour market where they are looked upon as workers with unsuitable and inadequate qualifications. In such situations, “…The re-training measures for instance, with their focus on skilled production work, have benefited men more than women who entered the service sector…This in turn had an impact on families because of the uneven integration of family members into German society, women remained more isolated” (Muller 2002: 28). In a study on the phenomenon of large Jewish Russian immigration to Israel, Remennick (1999: 446) notes that the saturation of professional market, and demands of a different set of technical and social skills along with “… a traditional male worker preference by Israeli employers, this caused dramatic occupational downgrading among female immigrants. Throughout the 1990s, their unemployment rates have been two to three times higher than among men and they more often have jobs unrelated to their skills…” Women immigrating to foreign cultures have to fit themselves into the cultural codes of the destination country or else face being stereotyped as a ‘deviant’ with its attendant risks.

Russian women often have engineering, construction and other Soviet type heavy industry specialities considered non-feminine and are not in demand in Israel. Many have had to go for retraining in ‘feminine’ occupations (e.g. receptionist, social
worker, nursery teacher), which for women engineers also meant redefining and downgrading their professional identity and hence losing of a large part of their personal identity. “Marginalized and forced to the bottom of the social structure, working in menial service jobs, these women faced a completely different social environment from the one before immigration” (Remennick 1999: 447). Remennick concludes that whatever standard of comparison is used there is little doubt that female immigrants face substantial occupational, economic and social downgrading. Studies conducted by Kosmarskaya (1999) and later by Vishnevski (2008) reveal discrimination suffered by women in the process of resettlement.

Many studies have been conducted to look into the reasons of the discrimination faced by skilled migrant women labour force from this region. While the high-skilled female immigrants initially believed that they could be accepted as high-skilled, this goal turned out to be difficult for most. They were forced to reconceptualize not only their actions but also their own identities as they, with varying degrees of success, strove to re-enter the skilled sectors of the labour market of receiving countries (Liversage 2009: 121).

Their relative lack of success can be attributed to various reasons. The type of skills that males mostly have is scientific, technical, and managerial skills that are not only more easily internationally transferable but are also more often in high demand (Cornelius et al. 2001; Saxenian 2001). Women may instead move within fields such as medicine and teaching, where qualifications can be more difficult to transfer (Aggergaard-Larsen et al. 2005; Raghuram and Montiel 2003). Then their status at the time of entry also influences their future prospects. Entering as dependants or refugees as opposed to the more male dominated entry routes of work immigration or inter-company transfer often creates additional work-related obstacles, such as lack of work permits for accompanying spouses (Boucher 2007; Purkayastha 2005). Gendered family divisions of work also influence the chances of success for women in the tougher and more competitive western labour market. Women hold major responsibility for childcare which is an even more demanding task when women have lost their former social networks (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Salaff and Greve 2004). In such situations of absent or inaccessible child care facilities women are forced into unwanted domestication. This has been seen by researchers as hampering
the labour market entry of high-skilled immigrant women in liberal economies with limited childcare facilities (Cooke 2007; Man 2004; Purkayastha 2005; Reskin 1993). Different cultural codes and societal norms play an important role for the post-migratory adjustment of high-skilled women. Faced with survival difficulties they either have to opt for jobs that have very little to do with their skills or return back to their country of origin.

Gender segregated international labour market has seen the predominant trend of men being recruited into jobs in construction, agriculture, household renovation, agriculture, cleaning, repair and other contractual and informal services. Women are recruited in domestic help jobs, caring for elderly and sick, cleaning and other such ‘feminine’ jobs (Remennick 2003). The demographic imbalance and its crises in rich Western countries has led to an increasing shortage of hands to do these type of less paid, less skilled jobs and that is where those that have been deprived of their previous securities, education and skilled background and jobs are being forced to migrate. “The educational and skill level of Central Eastern European migrants is high and their origin is predominantly urban: over half of those of Jewish background who left Russia for Israel or Germany had a university degree...From 1990 to 1993 top German scientific institutions received 1257 scientists from Russia, Poland and Bulgaria. A majority of them (some 80%) were men, reflecting the gendered demand and an uneven gender distribution in science in Germany, rather than an imbalance in the sending countries...where women used to be comparatively more present in scientific jobs” (Muller 2002: 30).

Another interesting aspect of these immigrations has been to open up the contradictions between upper class, privileged and more competitive women of the rich West and the declassed, deprived and peripheral women of the former socialist block, now a part of the developing world. Taking up the study of immigrations from this region to Germany, Friese (1995) has noted that many of the East European “live-out” cleaners, baby sitters and care takers to whom the German middle-class, career-oriented women transfer the reproductive work that they would have had to do themselves, are themselves also middle class, academics or professionals in their own countries and are trying often to hold on to these jobs. Whereas the former engage in career-building, using their class and citizenship privilege to buy themselves out of
performing privatised tasks of social reproduction, employing other women to perform these tasks, the latter are de-classed. Thus, "...the increasing equal opportunities between German men and women in the outside world are increasingly overlapping with increasing inequalities among women: German on the one hand and Polish, Russian, Filipino etc. on the other. As for the gendered division of labour in the household, the presence of foreign female substitutes enables the status quo to be preserved" (Muller 2002: 35).

It has revealed the stakes of women in the developed world in maintaining the exploitative global extraction of surplus wealth at the cost of the developing countries where women are increasingly incorporating critiques of globalisation to make the world not only free from patriarchal domination but from neo-liberal white male economic hegemony over the developing world. This has also contributed to the critiques of feminist identity politics with its emphasis on local and micro struggles without contextualising it in broader concerns of the effects of a militarised globalisation, particularly on poor nations.

Gottstein, Muller and others have studied the gendered nature of immigration and the patriarchal ideological basis of formulating immigrating rules. Researches have documented that women form a majority of the world’s refugees. However, It is not women but men who constitute a majority among the asylum seekers in the countries of destination. At its root is the ideology which makes a sharp distinction between public and private spheres with women’s roles viewed as being primarily within the private, domestic sphere. "Politics is seen as public and therefore predominantly masculine. Women are rarely seen as political actors in their own right and therefore rarely as potential conventional refugees. Because of this lesser likelihood, the families and groups back home are also less likely to sponsor the immigration of a woman than that of a man...women arriving with their husbands are generally classified as dependents" (Muller 2002: 36). Despite the independent background of women from former socialist countries, they are forced to present themselves as ‘dependents’ to be considered as more suitable candidate for immigration. Even before they reach the destination country they have to renegotiate their place in society as an auxiliary one to that of men’s.
Sexualized articulation of immigration with questions of fertility in order to imagine 'desirable immigrants' and dramatically hyped media and policy articulations of immigration with security concerns that serve to configure the 'undesirable' or threatening immigrant or refugee serves to articulate popular frames that shape the formulation of immigration policy and its processes of exclusion and inclusion (Funk et al, 1993). In welcoming imagined desirable immigrants while simultaneously repelling undesirable immigrants, these articulations together shape an effective politics of immigration that seeks to produce and regulate the population while securing the state and its national borders against a whole range of 'undesirable' others (Vukov 2003). The ongoing project of nation building deploys these mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion through immigration policies that serve as crucial sites through which public imaginings of the future nation are shaped and struggled over. Social exclusion is increasingly linked to formal citizenship status as well as to migrants’ conditions of residence (Kofman and Sales 1998).

Globalisation’s promise of free mobility of people and goods is belied by the fact that precisely at a time when the role of nation states is believed to have been significantly reduced and national boundaries having become porous, we can see the opposite trend of hardening of state and its enhanced role in regulating and monitoring the movement of people across borders. Vukov has pointed out that, "...the mutual inscription of neo-liberal economics, racism and sexuality into the mechanisms of the state is crucial to the contemporary bio-political regulation of immigration...the current conjuncture in which so many liberal democratic states have adopted a position in which they need to be seen as being 'tough' on immigration and crime. While governmentality theory would tend to acknowledge that such bio-political interventions by states rely on the existence of a sense of threat against which they can be seen to be securing their populations...how such a sense of threat has proliferated through the media, the discourses and social myths through which it has been represented and given meaning, how it has fuelled particular policies, as well as the difficult task of formulating strategies to contest its recuperation for regressive governmental agendas... In the first instance, a sexualized vision of immigration is posed as key to the life of the population and population growth (including the economy). At the same time, in the second instance, immigration is posed as a threat to the population that must be continually regulated..."
and contained through the monitoring of security, health, sexuality and race and ethnicity. This tension underlies the oscillation in settler nations between a xenophilic, pro-immigration discourse of economic nationalism and population growth and a xenophobic, anti-immigrant cultural nationalism” (Vukov 2003: 337, 339, 341). These tensions are evident in Russian nationalist discourse, as we will discuss in the later part of the chapter. The experience of Russian women migrating outside has also highlighted the ways in which the destination country’s cultural anti-immigration discourse and Russia’s own patriarchal nationalist casting of women in the traditional mould feeds into each other reinforcing the patriarchal control over women’s bodies and sexuality. The binary divisions of white and black, high and low, male and female, native and newcomer are basic to the creation and maintenance of social categories that sustain inequality by establishing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu 1984; Zerubavel 1991; Bar-Yosef 1996).

Both categories of sex and race are considered as more fixed, physical, personal, primordial, and permanent features. However, attributes of a social class or immigrant group are more amenable to change and are not such permanent and obvious markers that time cannot erase. Immigrant status is usually a transient state, a matter of time, which disappears after a generation or two. Furthermore, one's class can be modified by mobility. Even race or ethnicity may be attenuated to some extent by intermarriage. However, Gender is more biologically determined and usually more conspicuous. Nonetheless, beyond their biological and ascriptive aspects these categories are to a large extent socially constructed, politically negotiated, and transformed (Yancey et al. 1976; Bem 1993; Brekhus 1994; Nagel 1994). In other words, it is important to bear in mind that the “otherness” of outsiders is constructed and nurtured by stereotypes, and their externalization serves to legitimize their differential treatment (Reskin 1987; Lorber 1994).

Remennick has noted that besides the constraints faced by both sexes in adjustment to the new culture, women face “...In most cultures, sexual and reproductive issues are seen as primarily moral, rendering such differences particularly potent in shaping the experiences of female newcomers” (Remennick 1999: 441-42). Apart from this, the heavy influx of illegal trafficking of women from this region for sexual services not only leads to inhuman exploitation of vulnerable
and young women into sexual slavery, it also contributes to the negative stereotyping of both, the voluntary and involuntary sex workers and those that are not involved in this trade at all. All women from Soviet and Eastern region are of 'deviant sexuality' which is deemed dangerous and is supposed to be kept under constant scrutiny and control.

Illegal trafficking in women has emerged as one of the most lucrative world wide industry yielding large profits. It is mainly related to sex labour and prostitution and yields an estimated annual profit of US $7 billion (Muller 2002: 22). Muller (2002: 39) has explored this dimension of immigration in the 1990s and has remarked that, “...While women from South East Asia and Africa have been trafficked into Europe for a long time, women from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are now the majority in this lucrative trade. In Central and Eastern European countries, proximity has lowered the costs of transport and made it easier and more profitable to traffic women from there...The context in which women and girls are becoming more and more vulnerable to violence and exploitation has developed an internal dynamic and will be difficult to change. They come from fragile economies where structural reforms have adverse effects on their livelihood. Economic and social inequalities and limited opportunities for work in the former communist countries make women easy targets for professionally organized networks that recruit them and assist them in their immigration. Attracted by promises of “decent” and well-paid work through advertising of jobs that do not exist, or kidnapped and sold by their male relatives or boyfriends, these women are trapped in prostitution.”

The enhanced demand for sexual labour is also a result of increased male mobility in sectors such as tourism, business executives, and military and militarised peace-keeping. In the Norwegian context Stenvoll (2002) has studied media coverage of Russian immigrants, particularly women. She has looked into the framing of all Russian women immigrants into the overarching discourse of polluting the physical and moral health of Norwegian men. The terms in which fears and panic associated with the Russian women’s immigration have been expressed as, “...comments on prostitutes and/or Russians coming to Norway often imply a large and even threatening number, through the use of words such as flow, flood, wave, ocean, explosion, invasion, horde and swarm. Fear is expressed of a ‘Mafia invasion’ and of an ‘explosion of HIV’, and Russian buses ‘filled’ or ‘packed’ with
women are reported to roll across the border 'every weekend', invading the 'small' Norwegian villages. One article even states that Finnmark is 'literally flooded' by Russians. It might be useful to see such imagery as part of a centre-periphery thematization, where small and idealized rural societies in a sparsely populated country are set in contrast to the supposed urban jungle and large population across the Russian border" (Stenvoll 2002: 153). Such induced phobia popularised in mass consciousness makes women easy target of violence and exploitation.

Amongst receiving countries that became the destination of largest post-Soviet immigration from Russia were Israel, Germany, France and Scandinavian countries i.e. Denmark, Finland, Norway. We will take the case of Russian women immigrating to Israel also because Israel has received one of the highest numbers of Russian migrants. In the post-Soviet immigration to Israel in early 1990s, "...among some 750,000 Soviet-Jewish immigrants, over 200,000 were women between the ages of 20 and 50 (IMIA, 1998), i.e. the period of life when economic, sexual and childbearing activities all peak and overlap. Between 1990 and 1997 about 8% of the 5.5 million citizens of the country were immigrants from the former Soviet Union settled in Israel" (Lemish 2000: 334).

Soviet Jewish women who arrived in Israel in early 1990s were subjected to negative stereotyping for a number of reasons, significant amongst which were the popular representations of moral panic of Israeli social order being invaded by the Russian prostitute. The immigration of 1990s was accompanied by a heavy influx of trafficked women, particularly in Israel as it was a much easier destination and transit point due to its non-selective immigration policy. Along with moral panic and fear of diseases all migrant women from this region were packaged and presented in popular discourse as the alien ‘other,’ as women, who can seduce men easily by stressing their sex appeal, emerged as a key element in popular discourse. The fear of being outnumbered by immigrants was often portrayed in the media as a moral panic in the face of such heavy influx of Russian immigration to Israel.

Russian women were attributed with loose morals indicated by high divorce rates, single motherhood, and their use of abortion as a contraceptive technique and low number of children. All such ‘unnatural’ characteristics got a wide coverage in Israeli media. Khotkina and others have pointed that overt sexual harassment in the
workplace was uncommon in this social stratum, at least before the advent of the free market, with its sheer sexism and built-in disadvantage for women (Khotkina 1994; Buckley 1997). Most Russian-Jewish immigrants were socialized in the relatively egalitarian gender culture of the Soviet intelligentsia. In Israel, these female engineers, musicians and teachers suddenly found themselves in the midst of a ‘male culture of the Israeli ‘street.’ (Sawicki 1995) In fact, Remennick (1999: 450) said that, “...During their first years in Israel, women with a Russian accent were often made blatant sexual offers in the markets, public gardens or buses, in apartments they rented (by the owners) and, of course, in their new workplaces.”

Based on a study of newspaper coverage of Russian women immigrants Lemish finds that, “…The most dominant image associated with newspaper coverage of female immigrants from the former Soviet Union is that of a supplier of sexual services. These include references to prostitutes, call girls, masseuses, stripteasers, and the like. “Russian whores” or “Russian prostitutes”...“Fresh meat for Israelis” (Ma’ariv, 11 December 1994) or the headline that states “Meat for rent,” following a subtitle “A new immigrant”; “The minute she opens her mouth to ask for a job, they only want to sleep with her” (Ha’ir, 15 July 1994); “Vodka, caviar and strip-tease” (Ha’ir, 16 December 1994); five call-girls from Russia tried to infiltrate Israel through Egypt” (Ma’ariv, 23 June 1995); and finally, “I am a prostitute, and not ashamed to admit that I enjoy it” (Yediot Acharonot, 1996)” (Lemish, 2000: 339-340). These are some of the media representations Lemish describes to emphasize the degree to which Russian women are expected to conform to the ‘promiscuous’ type for which then they are punished.

Pheterson (1996: 65) has argued that, “…within sexual politics, an important distinction is maintained between ‘chaste’ and ‘unchaste’ women, and that the prostitute is merely the prototype of the unchaste (and thus stigmatized) woman. The category ‘unchaste’, defined in a dictionary as ‘indulging in unlawful or immoral sexual intercourse; lacking in purity, virginity, decency (of speech), restraint, and simplicity; defiled (i.e. polluted, corrupted), has a disciplining effect on all women.” To avoid ‘the whore stigma’, women constantly have to convince others and themselves that they are chaste, decent, honourable and pure, and in the process their range of possible actions is constrained. “Thus, this stereotype is useful not only in
‘othering’ deviant migrant women but in keeping ‘our’ women within the ‘chaste’ boundaries” (Stenvoll 2002: 157).

Since the inception of the state of Israel in 1948, there is an ongoing debate between the concept of ‘melting pot’ versus pluralism and ‘multi-cultural and multi-ethnic’ society. In 1950, when Jews were coming into Israel from the Middle-East, Africa and many countries of Europe, the mainstream policy was assimilationist i.e. assimilation of all migrant Jews into one nation or a cultural community of which different ethnicities would be like different threads of the same cloth. Later, it was also felt that immigrants from former Soviet Union and other places should be encouraged to retain their own cultural traditions. This was reflected in numerous ways such as, many newspapers are published in Russian catering to people from former Soviet Union and one festival celebrated by Jews from Morocco has been declared special holiday. Russian Jews have their own political party. There are many such instances in which we can clearly see how different cultures and ethnic backgrounds attempt to retain their own traditions and way of life to demarcate their cultural identity from the larger national identity. Russians have a weak religious affiliations and a more secular background and their unwillingness to serve in the Army has made their political and economic participation in the mainstream a more problematic issue and their presence an uneasy one. These relatively autonomous identities are wrapped around class and ethnic divisions within and between communities.

Women’s negative stereotyping could also be a result of contradictions emerging in an economy where jobs are becoming more scarce and competitive. Particularly in a country like Israel which has had a very liberal immigration policy in which competition for resources, jobs and cultural hegemony between Jews of European and non-European origins can result in such negative deployment of stereotypes for Russian Jewish women. Remennick remarks on such processes of ‘othering’ migrant women and says that, “...For these groups, the promotion of negative stereotypes of Russian-speaking women may be instrumental in securing their inferior status...that the described encounter in fact expresses a deeper social antagonism between Jews of European and non-European origin in Israel” (Remennick 1999: 455).
It is in this context Russian women migrating to Israel have been subjected to a negative stereotyping by state and religious institutions which portray them as excessively secular and 'impure' ethnically. Inter-caste marriages between Jews, Russians and non-Jews (in half or quarter of Jewish population) is a normal phenomenon and these practices have led to the creation of a new caste which is neither fully Jewish nor any other clearly defined ethnicity. This group has been accorded the status of second-class citizens in the mainstream of Israel. Remennick (1999: 456) further emphasizes this by pointing that, "...ethnically intoned discourse, apart from poisoning the air around women who look and sound Russian, subjects them to many humiliating 'clearance' procedures like ancestry checkups three generations back and interrogations at the Rabbinical Court at any change of civic status."

Toren has pointed towards the contradictions arising in Israeli society as a result of conflicting Israeli policies of assimilating and unifying different ethnicities on the one hand and preserving cultural pluralism on the other. The two mutually contradictory aims of immigration policy of Israel are revealed in the weak and unstable balance between class, religion and gender concerns. Defining 'self' in juxtaposition with 'other' is one of the easiest ways of elaborating how that 'self' should be and this is most powerfully enabled by utilizing gender stereotyping. As Toren (1999) said, "...By comparison, gender equality i.e. the position of women in society and the labour market has not been a significant social-political issue and has only recently gained some visibility and interest. The laws pertaining to gender equality of opportunity, employment, pay, and affirmative action are still not prominent, nor are they seriously enforced."

Lemish elaborates on the deployment of 'deviant' discourse in Israel and the ways in which it helps to circumscribe other communities such as the Arabs and more importantly Israeli women's political opposition. Jewish culture places family as the centre of cultural existence. Stereotyping Russian women as deviants because they do not fulfil expected norms of a functioning wife and mother and their ambivalent marital status and doubtful reproductive practices (abortion etc.) aligns them with unnatural femininity and deviant sexuality just as being a whore does. Portraying immigrants as criminals or addictive alcoholics places them on the fringes of
normative mainstream Israeli society. Sometimes conflating uncontrolled, unnatural and deviant sexuality of Russian whores with the enemy Arabs represents them more explicitly as the enemy. Lemish (2000: 343) elaborated on such occurrences which demonstrated this tendency. She explained how, "...an organization of Israeli women, ‘Women in Black’, who protested against the occupation and demonstrated every Friday for six years in 25 locations in the country in the pre-peace talks period and offered a political alternative to the national consensus were portrayed as lonely, frustrated and faithless women. Framed as “Arabs’ Whores” who do not love the “Land of Israel”, they were denied their civil voice, marginalized by the public, and excluded from the media. Conflating Russian women immigrants’ sexuality with consorting with the enemy is then read as double treachery". This exercise functions well to keep women well within their traditional roles as caregivers or dependent roles as the “wife” or the “daughter” or as passive victims of crime and domestic violence.

Russian women face hostility from Israeli women who are co-workers since there is a general opinion that all Russian women have come to Israel to hunt for Israeli boyfriends or husbands. Downward social mobility is intertwined with sexual disadvantage for female immigrants. The disadvantage of coming from a culture in which women often ended unsatisfactory marriages through divorces resulting in a high divorce rate in former Soviet Union also enabled a further negative stereotyping in Israeli society. "Divorced mothers in our sample often experienced disapproval on the part of immigration officials, social and welfare workers, their children’s teachers and other social gatekeepers, including hints that they were a burden on Israeli society. ‘They see divorce as a woman’s caprice, or her inability to adjust to men, to sacrifice her own wishes and ambitions for the sake of the family and children’, commented one woman. ‘They think we are all welfare cases, living on the backs of “good taxpayers”, while this is not true for me and many others. We make our living ourselves like anyone else and provide for all the needs of our children, said another single mother’ (Lemish 2000: 454).

The stereotypes of occasional exceptional success stories of Russian women offer a moral disciplinary lesson from token successful women to the majority who did not make it. Empowerment, as often suggested by neo-liberal individualism, is an individual choice, possibility and initiative as is proven by select stories which are
isolated from their structural context. "By ignoring the institutional structures, social policies, constraints on resources, and opportunities behind this system of oppression, the individualized stories in the newspapers serve to defend the unequal power arrangements rather than challenge them" (Lemish 2000: 346). The exception proves the rule and consequently this discourse is in fact disempowering for the majority of the unsuccessful Russian women immigrants. Not only women who are sexual slaves and are exploited and duped into prostitution by the hugely profitable sex industry but those immigrant women who have come to look for work and who are attempting to adjust to a new life and culture are victimized by the overarching patriarchal disciplinary discourse and stereotyping by the Israeli media and society.

Hall (1997) believes that through stereotyping immigrants, particularly raising questions of women’s sexuality and their appearance, makes it easier to marginalize them from the centre of society. The polarized binaries revealed in popular representations such as the deviant whores and unfit mothers versus Jewish femininity and motherhood are utilized for ‘othering’ migrants and disciplining Israeli women. This kind of polarization helps in preserving those symbolic boundaries through which assimilating culture manages to define its identity. Outsiders coming into Israel represent a perpetual threat of rendering impure the ‘self’ of the absorbing culture. Lemish (2000: 345) points that ‘Othering’ enables a greater solidification and unification of the subjective sense of the people and entire culture. This process is common to societies facing social, cultural and political divisions…explain the maintenance of hegemonic perception of conflicts with others through media stereotypes. It includes personalizing “us” while demonizing “them”, and minimizing the context of “our” conflicts.”

Women’s sexuality and bodies are deployed symbolically by an immigration discourse to exclude and to define the boundaries of ‘the nation’. Immigration is the central site through which national communities are institutionally imagined and materially constructed. It is significantly linked with the nationalist project which is also premised on defining a national identity and distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’. As we will discuss in the next section both nationalist and immigration discourse construct and reinforce each other and deploy gender as a symbolic resource for recasting national and gender identities.
Nationalist Project and Recasting Gender Identity

Nations and nationalisms have been a powerful force in shaping events in modern history. Although there have been debates regarding serious underlying issues such as which came first, nation or nationalism, the linkages between the two have been blurred often by nationalist rhetoric which claims to transcend the immediate political and economic contingencies of dominating interests that govern the structure of a nation. In particular, the links between nation and state and nationalist appeal to the masses are glossed over in favour of constructing an overarching identity which claims to transcend conflicts, inequalities, contests for resources between different groups of people located differently in the hierarchy of the nation-state.

The primordialist theory of nationalism represents a pre-existing nation and sees nations, or at least ethnic groups, as a social reality dating back to thousands of years. In contrast, modernist theories of nationalism argue that until around 1800, nothing more than local loyalties existed. It was only when European states needed to modernize their economy and society that they imposed national identity and unity from above. The most influential and pioneering theorists of nationalism like, Gellner, Hobsbawm and Anderson are among the modernists who argue that modern phenomena such as the arrival of printing press and capitalism are necessary conditions for nationalism. We will give a brief overview of influential theories of nationalism and their basic postulates.

Renowned theorist of nationalism, Anderson (1991), defined the nation as 'an imagined political community,' which might be 'limited or autonomous.' A nation is imagined in the sense that its members feel close to or bound with each other on the basis of shared language, caste or religion without having met actually all the residents of that nation. Media plays a crucial role in creating this 'imagined community' which addresses citizens of this nation in ways that enables its members to create and feel a shared national identity. This nation is limited in the sense that it is imagined within the geographical boundary of that nation, outside which a different nation exists. It is autonomous in the sense that no other nation can claim its rights over another nation.
In this imagined community inspite of many inequalities and exploitation, shared identity of that nation can be so powerful that its members can wilfully kill others or give their own life to uphold the idea of the nation. According to Anderson, the advent of print capitalism also made this phenomenon possible. To increase their circulation and spread, books were published in vernacular and local languages apart from classical which enabled people from the same region or linguistic backgrounds to understand each other better. Anderson (1991: 5-7) believes that the origin of modern European nation-states was close upon the heels of the arrival of 'national print language.' In this sense he says that the creation of nation and nationalism was tied up with fulfilling political and economic aims emerging as a result of the onset of modernity.

Another renowned ideologue of nationalism, Gellner (1983), called the creation of the nation a completely modern phenomenon arising out of nationalism. He emphasized on communal (community) cultural bases as the important shared bases of nationalism. Nationalism is, first and foremost, a political concept according to which political and national entities should have coordination between them. Nations were the result of pressures created by the demands of the industrial revolution. When people from different backgrounds started moving into towns it became necessary to create a common identity. Perhaps capitalism’s perpetual need to retrain workers gave rise to the need to create a common language. Its creation was contingent upon the creation of a common past and common culture and by turning 'low' folk cultures into 'high' state cultures. This prepared the grounds of patriotic nationalism which encouraged workers to work hard not just for themselves but for an entity higher than themselves which was the nation. This was how a common culture, language and history unified a highly fluid and stratified labour force.

Issues of the past and origins had special significance for cultural nationalism because this posited the nation as an unbroken, unified historical tradition and an eternal cultural entity. This is the reason why traditionally cultural nationalism and its claim to a golden past have been opposed to forces of modernity. Smith (1994: 18) combined the eternal and modernity theories of nationalism and developed an ethno-symbolist approach to nationalism. He claimed that for national identity mythical homeland is always more important than the actual territory falling within the
geographical boundaries of that nation. A nation is made of all people, legal and political institutions, nationalist ideology, international recognition and borders. Even though the nation is the creation of modernity, many ethnic elements can be found which have remained preserved in this modern nation. He says that the most crucial dimension in understanding nationalism is how we understand the role of the past in the construction of our present. It is at this point different theorists of nationalism and nations differ from each other.

So, we can discern two types of nationalisms. First is civic nationalism which places greater importance on the civil rights of the citizens than over their primordial bonds and encourages common cultural values. There is always the possibility of people from different origins to interact with each other in this variety of nationalism. Then there is cultural or ethnic nationalism which places its emphasis on primordial bonds between people and unifies them under a common ethnic heritage. Cultural or ethnic nationalism is based on the hereditary connection of people. It is much more exclusive and does not include people from different ethnicities into its fold.

Zubaida concretely contextualized nationalist discourse in its political and economic context and said that the durability of ethnicity can be seen in particular social and political processes. Ethnic homogenization was the result of forging national unity by the central governments in pre-modern age. He said, “‘Common ethnicity’ and solidarity are not the product of communal factors given to modernity, but are themselves the product of the socioeconomic and political processes which, in the West, were institutionalised into state and civil society. These became the genealogical antecedents of modernity” (Zubaida 1998: 14). He argues that the ‘ethenes’ is itself a cultural construction of nationalism, rather than its cause.

Otto Bauer (1999) argues about a ‘common destiny’, which is of crucial importance for the construction of nations. It is oriented towards the future, rather than just the past, and can explain more than individual and communal assimilations within particular nations. On the other hand, it can explain a subjective sense of commitment of people to collectivities and nations, such as in settler societies or in post-colonial states, in which there is no shared myth of common origin. At the same time it can also explain the dynamic nature of any national collectivity and the perpetual process of reconstruction of boundaries which takes place within them, via
immigration, naturalization, conversion and other similar social and political processes. Ignatieff (1993) and Kristeva (1993) basically maintain this dichotomous classification, but gave it a much more explicit moralistic tone of 'good' and 'bad' nationalism than Smith. Ignatieff (1993) promotes 'civic nationalism' as a way to reduce pressures for the rise of 'ethnic nationalism' which is exclusive, authoritarian and consumed by racial hatred. Such pressures usually increase in crisis and transition times such as after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Some of the theoretical insights developed by post-colonial theory can be relevant for countries of the former socialist block, particularly in the context of nationalist upsurge. Chatterjee (1993) has noted one complex and important configuration that recurs in postcolonial contexts. Anticolonial nationalist movements often differentiate group identity into material and spiritual, assigning to "their" women the burden of representing tradition which could be some recently invented form. This enables them to safeguarding the spiritual essence of their group. Men are thereby freed to be unmarked, and are bearers of rational, subjects of "modernity." East European women found many of their rights subject to a critical re-evaluation by rising nationalist forces in their countries. The attempts to imbue women with the 'spiritual essence' of traditions and as bearers of national identity have become stronger across the entire region. The abortion debate across the region has revealed the close link between women's rights, nation building and nationalist discourse.

Marxist thinker, Hobsbawm (1990: 9-10) defines nationalism as, "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent". He proposes that nation is a modern creation but is not fixed and changes according to its particular historical specificity. He places the development of the nation at the intersections of politics, technology and social transformation. He argues that instead of looking at nation building as a top to bottom phenomenon only, there is a need to understand it also as an initiative from below to the top. This is similar to the fact that just as state ideologies do not decide how and what will people think, similarly people prioritize their national identity over and above their other socially acquired identities. He underlines the importance of the development of specific language, region and class consciousness, which in turn leads to mass politics and makes the creation of the nation possible.
Soviet Union was faced with unique challenges from multiple nationalities inhabiting there. One of the biggest challenges faced by the Bolshevik leadership after October 1917 revolution was finding a resolution to the complex problem of the conflicts between the aspirations of mutually competitive nationalities existing within Soviet Union. They attempted to solve this intricate question by taking measures such as granting autonomous rule up to a limited extent and giving full freedom for cultural development to each ethnic community according to its size and history. However, as we know that historically, it always remained very difficult to avert tensions owing to different levels of development and history of past struggles.

In the 16th party congress Stalin spoke about two mutually contradictory deviations- one was regional separatism and other was Russian chauvinism which was immaturely advocating the fusion of nationalities. Opposing both these tendencies, Stalin underscored that only national character is the most important dimension of national unity. He (Stalin 1999: 192) wrote in 'Marxism and the National Question,' that, "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture". He further elaborated that it is national character that sets the future course of national ideology. Therefore it is the most important dimension in the development of nationalism. The utility of nationalism or patriotic sentiments was adequately demonstrated during 'the great patriotic war' in 1941-45. Soviet leadership cultivated national ideology under the immediate imperative of building an economy under the perpetual threat of foreign occupation and invasion.

The brief overview of influential theories of nationalism points to a common element which underwrites all nationalist projects and theories. That is its search for an identity based on some commonality, whether it is territory, language, culture, ethnicity, religion and so on. This unifying identity is always vis-à-vis an 'other' both internally and externally. Within an overarching dominant national identity, even when different groups and differing interests are assimilated, their location within the hierarchy can render them marginal and in conflict with the aspirations of those that control the majority of resources and power. As the new nation-state engages with the process of redefining itself it is based on a selective process of inclusion and exclusion whereby some groups are accorded the status of 'genuine citizenship' and
are granted rights to various resources and power. Simultaneously, others are excluded or conditionally included in a hierarchical relationship. However, nationalist discourse, while establishing the hegemony of particular groups and interests, masks the inequalities and discrimination by a cultural discourse that, though hierarchical, can claim to be inclusive. Explorations into the patterns of how states and nations regulate sexual, gender, racial and cultural borders, struggles around citizenship reveal how states and nations re-imagine and reconfigure their power and extend their reach. Kim-Puri (2005) has noted how social class, race, gender and sexuality are central nodes not only for challenging cultural and political exclusions but are also sites where inequalities are created within the framework of nation states.

**Gendering Nations and Nationalisms**

Without ignoring the historically positive role liberatory nationalism has played in various nations' histories, it is nevertheless important to note the repressive potential of nationalist project for the marginalized groups. They are deployed as a symbolic resource in constructing the nationalist discourse but are never a part of its claim to resources and power. In this context, it is surprising how almost no linkages are made between gender and nationalism by any one of the influential theorists of nationalism with few exceptions like Chatterjee. Gendering nationalist construction and its processes reveal how historically, nationalist forces and formation of national identity have had a differential impact with real consequences for the lives of men and women and how such discourses are shaped by the existing gender order.

Gender and nation are social constructions shaping each other and as Ivekovic and Mostov have pointed out, "...nations are gendered; and the topography of the nation is mapped in gendered terms (feminized soil, landscapes, boundaries and masculine movement over these spaces). National mythologies draw on traditional gender roles and the nationalist narrative is filled with images of the nation as mother, wife, and maiden. Practices of nation-building employ social constructions of masculinity and femininity that support a division of labour in which women reproduce the nation physically and symbolically and men protect, defend, and avenge the nation" (Ivekovic and Mostov 2004: 10 ). Gender identities and women’s
bodies become symbolic and spiritual boundaries and are the property of the nation requiring the defense and protection by patriotic sons. They are sites on which struggle for power is played out by new or future guardians of the nations. Nationalist imagery reinforces sexual imagery and stereotypes. "Women's bodies mark the vulnerability of borders, in fact in the nationalist scheme of things, they embody the borders; they are "signifiers of ethnic or national difference" (Menon and Bhasin 1998: 252; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989) and the boundaries of the state. The blurring between nation and state diffuses the role played separately by both and it cannot explain how nationalist imagery and rhetoric is translated by the state through a variety of policies. This distinction is taken up in greater details by Yuval-Davis.

One of the foremost theorists of gendering nationalism, Yuval-Davis (1993: 14-15) argues that it is crucial to separate the state both from 'the civil society' and 'the nation' to do any analysis of the relationship between gender relations and national projects in which the state often plays a crucial role. She points that, "All three domains (the state, civil society and the familial domain) produce their own ideological contents and in different states would have differential access to economic and political resources. Ideology does not reside (in a privileged sense), therefore, in any of these spheres. None of these spheres is ever homogenous, and different parts of the state can act in contradictory ways to others- and their effects in different ethnic, class, gender and other groupings in the society could be different. Different states (and the same state in different historical circumstances) also differ in the extent to which their powers of control are concentrated in the central state government or local state governments. Furthermore, they differ in their tolerance towards different political projects which are in conflict with those that are hegemonic within central government.

These questions of the correspondence, in political projects, of the different components and levels of the state, involve also the questions of what are the mechanisms by which these projects are being reproduced and/or changed; of how state control can be delegated from one level to another; and probably most importantly, of how sections and groupings from the domains of civil society and the family gain access to the state's coercive and controlling powers. It is within this context that the relationship between 'nations' and 'states', as well as between other
forms of ethnic groupings and the state had to be analysed—a precondition to understanding the ways women affect and are affected by these processes...nations not only are eternal and universal but also constitute a natural extension of family and kinship relations. The family and kinship units in these constructions are based on natural on natural sexual division of labour, in which the men protect the ‘women and children’...’ This imagery positions women as a symbolic collective. The nation is the allegorical mother whose children are the patriotic guardians, heroes and martyrs. Individual plight of women is relevant only up to this limited extent.

The nature of imagining ‘the nation’ as an eternal, universal, natural extension of family and kinship relations has very close links with the way gender hierarchies are inbuilt into the actual social organization. Gal and Kligman (2000: 22) have commented that, “… discourses about reproduction contribute to the reconstitution of the relationship between a state and its populace. State-making is in part of a process of establishing and maintaining centralized authority over a territory and those who inhabit it. But this relation of authority can be figured in many ways. Whether people are represented in state discourses as “subjects”, “citizens”, “workers”, “brothers-in-nationhood”, “children”, or “kin and family members” is a matter that is dramatically enacted and demonstrated, in practice, through the implementation and justification of strictures on reproduction and sexuality.” Ivekovic and Mostov (2004) have also remarked upon how the instrumentalisation of national body politics facilitates consolidation of the nation-state through regulatory practices.

Unbroken history, from one generation to the next, is essential to construct a golden past to which those who have ties of blood, kinship belong and who are then, true heirs or citizens of the given nation. Such a process of selecting and excluding from one’s history, rituals and traditions is not done only symbolically. It has very real ties through reproductive practices in which women and more importantly their wombs become the biological link between generations. This entails controlling sexual and reproductive behaviour of ‘our’ women and punishing the ‘deviants’ and simultaneously contaminating the wombs of the ‘other’ community or identity. Gal and Kligman have explored this dimension of, particularly ethno-nationalism and its consequences for women. They argue that, “For most forms of (ethno) nationalism, making the members of the nation is not only a symbolic classifying process, but also
very much a material, corporeal one: Links between generations must, perforce, be reproductive links, embodiments of membership. One’s relation to the future and to history is understood in generational terms, through stories of physical, biological reproduction. And when nations are institutionalized, some forms of reproduction are defined as the sole, legitimate, genuine, authentic means of national reproduction. Thus, whether both parents, and only one, were members of the same national group and whether or not the birth occurred on national territory become questions of great moment in individual lives, in legal conflicts about rights and responsibilities, and in making national boundaries (Gal and Kligman 2000: 25).

Yuval-Davis (1993: 37) also point towards this dimension of nationalism. She says, “...women’s membership in their national and ethnic collectivities is of a double nature. On the one hand, there are always rules and regulations which relate to women as women. This is especially important to remember when we consider the political implications of the ways women are constructed as biological reproducers of ‘the nation’. Inspite of the fact that usually, if not always, in the sex/gender systems in their societies men are dominant, women are not just passive victims, or even objects, of the ideologies and policies aimed at controlling their reproduction. On the contrary, very often it is women, especially older women, who are given the roles of the cultural reproducers of ‘the nation’ and are empowered to rule on what is ‘appropriate’ behaviour and appearance and what is not and to exert control over other women who might be constructed as ‘deviants’. As very often this is the main source of social power allowed to women, they might become fully engaged in it”.

What this reproductive link can mean for women is that controlling their bodies and sexuality becomes the logical project of nationalism. Gal and Kligman (2000: 26) remark that, “…the focus on motherhood and women as “vessels of the nation/race” also carries other interesting contradictions. Because national movements are most frequently conceptualized as “deep horizontal (male) fraternities”, they often implicitly adopt the logic of patrilineal systems in which women are not only the indispensable locus of continuity, but also the outsiders who must be controlled. Through the potential of their unruly sexual behaviour, women are seen to pose as a threat to the group. Thus, women are blamed for the demographic decline, and for being too “selfish” to have children. Women are charged with engaging in “birth
strikes”; they are accused of siding with political systems such as communism that are considered as unnatural or of committing treason if they do not wish their sons to die in wars. Oddly, then, the common narrative of national “victimization” by outside forces, especially by other nearby nations, can also include the narrative of the nation victimized by its own women, who are seen as an internal enemy. This result is often reached as well in the postcolonial narratives outlined above, if women are perceived as betraying the “culture” whose spiritual essence they are supposed to represent. The control of women thus becomes a logical project of nationalism”. Women and their bodies become “entry point for invasion” (Ivekovic and Mostov 2004).

This places women in a subordinate position in the gender hierarchy of the nation. They are the internal ‘other’, members of the community but not equal political subjects. Alcaron (1999) points that in particularly ethno-nationalist context, while women are held responsible for the continuance of the nation, they are also always suspected. Since they the symbol of the purity of the nation, they can also be contaminated. So the nationalist imagery accords the status of a revered mother to a woman but in actual practices and life of an individual woman she is always a potential stranger. Therefore, women are not the active bearers or representatives of the nation and their acceptance is always made conditional by the regulatory policies of the state which defines proper roles in the national hierarchy and the dynamic of patriarchal organization and possibilities of exclusion. Her attachment to the nation is “based as much on the penalties of exclusion, as well as national myths of inclusion” (Ivekovic and Mostov 2004: 18).

The politics of inclusion and exclusion whether in ethno-nationalist terms to ensure the purity of origin or their ‘gene-pool’ or in terms of who is entitled to genuine citizenship rights and privileges in the modern nation are very real struggles and negotiations for power between old and new elites and differently positioned power groups. Therefore, dominant interests represented by the state have a stake in national projects. Regulatory policies of the state impinge upon many dimensions of women’s lives which plays a crucial role in manufacturing a patriarchal consensus between active and powerful political and economic players entrusted with the task of nation-building. As Gal and Kligman (2000: 28) have pointed out that, “Many levels and aspects of state organization can be mobilized for the institutionalization of
biologized national selves. All involve reproduction in some way: legal constraints on who may marry whom; regulations on what constitutes "normal" sexuality or the proper work of men and women; assumptions (often written into tax codes) about acceptable family forms, about who is expected to provide childcare and other caretaking support; the timing, rate, and ease of marriage and divorce. Clearly, not only ideas about nationhood, but also about health, respectability, sexuality, and idealized gender are often involved. These ideas, when legislated, enacted, and so institutionalized, corporeally create the boundaries by which national selves, and ultimately national groups, are systematically produced." The nation thus produced and reproduced reinforces or, as was in the case of former Soviet Union and East Europe, reorganizes patriarchal gender order and identities to consolidate its control over power and resources.

Gender reading of the nationalist project makes the fault lines of nationalism starkly evident. Moreover, national identity in particular, produces difference as inequality and is a result of inequality (Bose and Manchanda 1997). Borders and nations produces binaries like 'we' or 'us' and 'other' or 'them' which are crucially helped in their construction by gender hierarchies. Gender and patriarchal hierarchies facilitate the reshuffling and reconfiguring of social and communal order and the state. The stability and continuity provided by patriarchal order which remains a point of consensus between old and new elites is especially important when all institutions and state machinery are collapsing as during the break up of Soviet Union.

Post-collapse birth of independent nascent nation-states and nation-building policies and practices of the new 'national-states' has been accompanied by a revival of nationalism, especially of a variety of ethno-nationalism. Mostov, while analysing the emergence of these 'ethnocrats' in the new 'ethnocracies from a gender perspective exposes the, "...naturalizing" processes through which people are bound to (or separated from) one another and constructed as differently situated gendered/sexuality members. These ethnocracies emerged as relationships of power in which the rulers were those leaders successful in promoting themselves as uniquely qualified to define and defend the (ethno) national interests and the ruled, a collective body defined by common culture, history, religion, myth and presumed dissent...The strategies of ethnocrats were supported in much of Eastern Europe...by a patriarchal
consensus, a willing transformation of social and political landscapes, and a reduction of political subjects and political space. The collective entity of class was replaced by (ethno) nation and an old/new hierarchy of national guardians emerged together with sexually repressive gender rules, return to ‘traditional’ values, misogynistic values and a hyper virile militarism...reduce the categories of political subjectivity, and to limit access to institutions of social power...The ethno-national model of belonging (and exclusion) is based on acceptance of ‘natural’ bonds and roles (as in ‘natural’ gender roles and sexual reproduction) defined by tradition and interpreted by national elites” (Ivekovic and Mostov 2004: 18-19). This consensus helps construct ‘security concerns’ of European nations justifying inclusion and exclusion of ethnicities and immigration patterns and the patriarchal liberal order underpinned by a neo-liberal economy which does not allow much scope for egalitarian, competent and empowered democratic political subjects.

Nationalist Revival in Russia and Reorganizing Patriarchal Gender Identities

This process was most keenly witnessed in the region of Eastern Europe and former USSR after the collapse of Soviet socialism. Almost all independent nations formed after the collapse of Soviet Union found themselves in a state of crisis of survival and national identity which set off an ongoing process of redefining themselves both, internally and in relation to the rest of the world. The rapidity with which events surrounding collapse of USSR took place left most of nascent independent nations, which were till then part of a powerful and ideological challenge to the forces of neo-liberal capitalist liberal democratic social order of the West, in a precarious context of finding their place in the international balance of power. An important component of this search for ‘indigenous’ identity involved a rejection of their immediate Soviet socialist past. Located in oil rich, geo-strategic and politically sensitive borderlines of Nato-Warsaw military spheres of influence, these countries have become the focus of diplomatic attention of geo-political rivalry over the shape of post cold-war reorganization of the world.
In such a situation, Russia particularly stands out as a country which has fundamentally reorganized its social, political and economic order, yet has laid a claim to the historic legacy of Soviet socialism. Competition over increasingly scarce fuel resources and Russia's increasing importance in international energy trade has positioned Russia uniquely in post-collapse international balance of powers.

National identity for Russia became an even more important question after the collapse of Soviet Union. Debates surrounding the issue of Russia's true destiny and her role in the international arena predate October 1917 revolution. National identity in relation to the West and in relation to multiple ethnic minorities internally has been hotly debated for decades. Should Russia consider herself a part of European West or is she culturally different and unique with a history and path of her own have remained unresolved till now. Soviet Union undertook the complex and difficult task of accommodating different cultural aspirations in a diverse multiethnic setting and forging a pan national identity across all republics. This was accomplished by accommodation and compensation whereby the overarching Soviet identity became a melting pot and a marker of military might and a status of superpower. More than that Soviet citizens became a part of socialist Soviet challenge to neo-liberal imperialist Western capitalist order. On the other hand this necessitated subordinating ethnic identities to the national Soviet identity.

Two factors were strikingly observed in post-collapse situation. One was the rejection of Soviet socialist past and the conflation of Soviet identity with Russian identity therefore the rejection of dominant Russian identity in most republics that were a part of former USSR. The other was the Russian attempt to forge a Russian identity from the ancient idea of 'Russian greatness' rooted in her pre-Petrine glorious past, distinct from the West, distant from its immediate Soviet past and at the same time appropriation of the socialist legacy of superpower military might.

National identity, nationalist rhetoric and nation-building were all linked to the larger national project unfolding in newly independent nations of former Soviet Union. However, all three were not synonymous and are articulated by conflicting interests indicating competition and contradictions amongst the new emerging elites who were vying with each other for political and economic control. As we mentioned before, the patriarchal consensus between all the players is revealed in the way gender
hierarchies are deployed by all to disavow any continuity with the past and to posit themselves as the true defenders of the interest of the nation. So, for instance, in Latvia and Byelorussia the new national indigenous identity formation took place amidst clashes between a once dominant Russian nationality and the newly emerging dominant Latvian nationality (Novikova 2004). Gapova (2004) has analysed Byelorussian nationalism and explained how in Belarus during the Soviet era, Russians represented the highest authority and accordingly, the standard of “manhood”. In comparison to this true “manhood”, Belarus manhood was perceived as a feminized weaker manhood. The new Belarus nationalist project sought to reconstruct its own manhood against this old notion and through new/old gender stereotypes for the Belarus women. But, in this process of positioning itself in opposition to Russian domination, Belarus national project has had to reconcile itself with Western/European culture; a format in which again its national identity faces a potential risk of being subsumed under a larger European identity. Gender stereotypes have proved critical in these negotiations which have made their women borders and markers separating ‘us’ (Belarus) from ‘them’ (Russian/European).

Emergence and Political Presence of Russian Nationalists

In 1990 as the multi party system was ushered in replacing the communist party and paving the way for the dissolution of Soviet Union, it simultaneously also created a political vacuum which was accentuated in the years immediately following the disintegration of Soviet Union. Numerous democratic formations sprang up to fill the vacuum but they were scattered and still uncertain about their political and ideological orientation. The shock and turmoil unleashed by the ‘shock therapy economic reform programme’ rapidly changed an attraction for the West’s liberalism and consumerist choice into disenchantment and suspicion of the West. The role played by the Russian oligarchs in the transition overseen and virtually dictated by international monetary institutions bred an increasing sense in Russian citizens of being betrayed by their own political class and a hardening of a anti-west sentiment underwritten by a nostalgia for the Soviet past which had ascribed a national identity of a superpower to them. These were encouraging conditions for nationalist
formations to take root into the erstwhile secularized psyche of Russian citizens. Rejection of Soviet socialist past was the common theme uniting all opposition which called itself “radical opposition”. It included nationalists who offered policies that they claimed would place the expectations of Russians and Russia’s national interests above those small groups who profited while most of the population lost everything they had.

The scholar Starobin (Szakonyi 2007) has studied the conditions leading to the collapse of Soviet Union and emergence of nationalist force from the debris of Russia’s socialist secular past. His analysis also indicates that insecurity about the future, loss of status and the security that the Soviet Union had provided resulted in a severe identity crisis as their economy and national ideology completely and suddenly reversed itself. Most of the population resented and openly grieved for the loss of the Soviet Union which has always been a powerful element in the rising nationalism in Russia.

A few years after economic reforms were implemented; the people perceived anti-west sentiment as an “invasion” with the sole aim of taking advantage of temporarily weakened Russia. As Russian politicians encouraged cooperation with European and American interests as key to Russia’s revival in the world arena, NATO crept closer to Russia’s borders and reversed the tone and agenda of Russian nationalism from a pro-western lifestyle to confronting western aggression.

As globalisation diffused new forms of culture across Russia’s borders, Russians became, in the words of Tsygankov (2005: 57), acutely “aware of their cultural distinctiveness from the West.” With the rising numbers of new waves of immigrants, many of them ethnic minorities, into Russia’s major urban areas a new competition for new jobs in a worsening economy gave a new impetus to nationalist forces. Rise in xenophobia and growth of many extremist organizations, recruiting youth and channelizing popular anger and discontentment with the West towards the new waves of immigrants was another outcome in a steadily deteriorating economic situation. These factors created the grounds for the rise of ethno-nationalism which capitalised on the new born insecurity and fears of the Russian people. It kept its focus on minorities internally and the West externally. Ultra-nationalist strand of ethno-nationalism instead of citizenship and rights based civic nationalism took shape
in Russia. Also, as Chenoy (2002: 65) points that, "...With a weak civil society, absence of democratic culture and the principles for a law governed state yet to evolve the dependence on cultural institutions tended to increase. This atmosphere promoted cultural rather than civic nationalism. When cultural nationalism becomes the agent for political mobilisation its tendency is to focus on group/ethnic loyalty or difference. The differences between the 'in group' (patriots) and the 'outsiders' are sharpened and myths replace history. The ultra-nationalist and right-wing found this situation conducive to their growth."

The context of globalisation and imposition of neo-liberal economic reforms had important links with the revival of nationalists in the Russian political scene. Szakonyi (2007: 4) noted that several conditions which facilitate the growth of nationalist sentiment were present in post-collapse Russia. He remarked that, "...the expansive processes of globalisation may elicit strong reactions by ethnic nationalities which fear the eradication and subordination of their cultural identities. As promises of economic security and happiness remain unfulfilled by ineffective, selective, or uneven development and progress, individuals may blame groups or specific people that they see as responsible. Increases in movement and contact between states create both internal groups such as immigrants and external groups such as world powers, which can be seen as responsible for economic hardship or the destruction of traditional ways of life. Nationalist tendencies can re-emerge as a reaction to these "enemies." Thus, economic and cultural grievances play a large role in precipitating nationalist sentiment under globalisation." The political progress followed by the decline of ultra-nationalist political party 'LDPR' (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) suggested that if the socio-economic situation remained dire nationalist forces advocating ethno-nationalist sentiments can acquire stable and long term strength in Russia. Such sentiments can become 'normalized' in mainstream political discourse of Russia.

In a study of the transition and the new Russian nation into the making Chenoy (2001) observes that amongst the first few nationalist formations were political parties like 'Rukh' and 'Pamyt,' which were also scattered, as were more xenophobic right wing parties like National Salvation Front that openly advocated hate campaigns against non-Slavic groups. None of these parties could mobilise mass
support but what was significant was that they paved the way for a structured, centralized, articulate ultra-nationalist ‘LDPR’ whose leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky successfully caught the international and national attention by polling a reasonably high number of votes on an ethno-nationalist electoral plank in the first parliamentary elections of Russia. As noted by Chenoy (2001: 173), “...The first of these groups that received this legal status was Pamyat (memory). Pamyat functioned as a literary and a history society dedicated to the revival of nationalist Russian ideas...The newer groups incorporated other sets of ideas including support for the marketization of the Russian economy, and thus became more viable political parties than their predecessors...nationalist parties have been hierarchically organized and directed by single leaders...There were striking similarities in the draft of the LDPR with that presented by Yeltsin, since both drafts advocated strong presidential systems...weak parliaments and weak institutional structures that could not challenge executive powers.”

LDPR’s leader V. Zhirinovsky contested the first parliamentary elections held in the Russian Federation and “propagated an undiluted ethnic Russian appeal, with the usual trimmings of ‘Russian greatness’ and anti-communism associated with ultra-nationalist ideology...[He] polled 22.8 % of the national vote for 225 party list seats in the 450 seat Duma in 1993 parliamentary elections. Zhirinovsky himself won a seat in the Duma. LDPR promoted the myths of Russian cultural superiority, reclamation of the Russian empire up to the borders of the former Soviet Union, virulent anti-communism and anti-trade unionism, putting an end to the destruction of the Russian military industrial complex, end to organized crime and support to capitalist reform, despite their anti-capitalist rhetoric... Although by 1995 Duma elections, there was a considerable decline from 22.8 to 11.18 %, with the deputies reduced to 51” (Chenoy 2002: 66-67).

Nationalist discourse also reveals contest for power amongst the emerging elites for power. Szakony (2007: 35) comments that, “…a set of elites and policy makers set nationalist goals of autonomy, unity, and identity to appeal to this sentiment and achieve several aims. Nationalism can be used as a political instrument by elites attempting to concentrate their hold on political power and increase the global status of their nation-state. These elites identify economic prowess as an
effective means for protecting culture, promoting national power, and winning the support of citizens who feel disenfranchised and powerless as a result of the processes of globalisation.” The link between national identity and economic growth lays the foundation for the contemporary conception and implementation of economic nationalism which carries the tones of exclusionary ethno-nationalism. Another consequence of the upsurge in ultra-nationalist rhetoric combined with a much more significant fact of their electoral performance was a right wing shift in the entire political discourse of Russia. It not only included the democratic-centrist political parties who were explicitly supporting neo-liberal marketization but also found a common ground with the communists who articulated the idea of ‘Russianness’ in the economic context of being plundered by the West.

By 1995, most Russian politicians began to understand the political value of tying policies directly to “Russia’s interests.” Former President Vladimir Putin quickly understood and accommodated the value of socialist gestures and rhetoric in his political posturing while continuing to augment capitalist orientation of Russia’s economic policies. His popularity owed much to his perceptive mix of unyielding confrontational political posturing towards the West as much as his selective breaking of Russian oligarchs who were badly discredited in the eyes of the general population. This support not only developed organically within the population, but also was officially promoted by the government.

According to the arguments of Starobin, covered in some details by Szakonyi (2007: 39-40), Putin appealed “to Russians’ traditional sense of themselves and their country as self-reliant and indomitable to promote patriotism.” This strategy was accomplished by a series of symbolic gestures as Putin used language and culture to reassert the concept of the “Russian people,” largely according to the concept of the “Soviet people” with which most Russians were already familiar. The selective choosing of the past and reasserting Russian claim to the superpower status of the bygone era enabled Putin to accommodate and replace with it popular nostalgia for social securities of socialist time. In fact, in one state-of-the-nation addresses Putin described the Russian people as an “historical category, as an analog of the Soviet people, and as the contemporary ‘people of Russia’. He also restored the music of the Soviet anthem to the national song of Russia and publicly commented that “the
collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. It seems that most Russians would have agreed with this comment, at least in theory...about 84 percent of a sample of 1,500 Russians either regretted the disintegration of the Soviet Union 'very much' or 'to some extent'. This sentiment found a paradoxical home in current targeting of immigrants, who were posited as a threat and competition to Russian people’s economic security.” Putin supported legislations against giving work permits to immigrants if Russians could fill the positions for which they were being issued.

Groups were included and excluded from the definition of “Russian” as put forth by the Putin government which, at least officially, did not draw the definition along ethnic lines. The government recognized that there were hundreds of ethnic groups in Russia speaking different languages and cultural practices. They extended the definition to all those holding Russian citizenship blurring over other minorities who remained officially undeclared. However, in the public mind at large, the contemporary definition prioritizes only those individuals who possess Russian ethnicity, and whose Slavic roots and connection to the ancient “Rus” are generally evident in their physical features. Other ethnicities, such as darker-skinned groups from the Caucasuses, are considered “others.” According to some opinions, state-sponsored economic nationalism has, in Russia’s case, reinforced definitions of nationality based on ethnicity (Tikhomirov 2000).

Chenoy (2002: 70-71) points to this ambiguity in state policy and says, “...In May 1996, the RF government adopted the draft of a ‘nationality concept’. This document declares a “decisive war against the emergence of aggressive nationalism”, and focuses on prevention of ethnic conflicts. The document interestingly does not use the word ‘nation’ at all, but uses and explains concepts of ‘peoples’, ‘ethno-cultural’ and ‘nationalities’; the nationality concept document does not use the term ‘minority’. The explanation given is that all non-Russian people fall into this category, and that they are given all equal rights. There are many contradictions in this document, but it theoretically ensures equal rights and ensures federal principles for nationality development.” The anti-Western rhetoric of Putin’s speeches drew upon popular resentment of Western influence in Russia but did not result in pure protectionism, Instead, Putin adopted a selective approach to liberalization by
continuously keeping the augmentation of state power as the principal concern of economic policy (Tsygankov 2005). The new nationalist rhetoric emphasized the role of the state in economic planning as well as usurping financial power from the oligarchs who were Russians, but were not seen as acting with the interests of the state in mind (Fawn, 2003: 46). This was the variety of state sponsored economic nationalism in Russia with xenophobic and neo-liberal individualism as its constitutive elements.

The last decade of Russian politics has witnessed a revival of officially supported nationalist ideology. From Soviet citizenship, the journey to Russian citizenship was in a more formal and symbolic direction which looked towards managing the substantive exclusion of Russian people from citizenship rights by focusing on immigrants. From laws limiting employment opportunities for migrant workers to the creation of a “Day of National Unity,” the state has shown its support for renewed pride in Russian citizenship. However, these actions have opened up a political space for radical and xenophobic parties to capitalize on this upsurge in nationalist sentiment. In a recent poll by the independent Levada Center, for example, “half of the 1,880 respondents said they would support banning natives of the Caucasus from living in Russia” (Abdullaev 2005). It is important to note that the Caucasuses themselves are partly within the territory of Russia. Violence against ethnic minorities has increased dramatically over the last five years (Gasperini 2006). The definition of “Russianness” inserted an exclusive, ethnic component into this economic nationalism.

Gender and Russian Nationalism

Women’s autonomy and opportunities to make independent choices about fertility and family have been and continue to be embedded in social, political and economic agendas of the states and societies where they live, thus revealing the powerful link between gender politics and national politics. Kligman (Gal and Kligman 2000: 28) has made a significant remark that, “...the political ‘reconstruction of the family’ was a fundamental component of socialist transformation.” As we outlined above, Yuval-Davis and Floyas have listed the major ways in which women
are deployed in nationalist projects as a symbolic resource. Of these, the significant imagery involves representing women as reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; as reproducers of boundaries of ethnic/national groups; as transmitters of culture, participants in military, political, economic and national struggles and finally as signifiers of national/ethnic difference-as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories (Yuval-Davis and Floya 1989: 7). The emergence of ethno-nationalism in Russia is fraught with particular gender hierarchies and sexual imageries that are deployed in the construction of a nationalist discourse which is explicitly exclusive in marginalising other ethnicities. Gender imagery is crucial to the processes of exclusion, inclusion and differentiation and both gender and nationalist discourses tend to intersect and are constituted by each other.

In their appeal to define national identity in terms of “true” Russian essence, which has its origins in her ancient “golden age”, ultra-nationalists lay a claim of only ‘pure’, ‘genuine’ ‘slavic’ ethnic Russians on the nation and its resources. They are ‘the nation’ and all other ethnicities are outsiders, who might be citizens but are not and cannot be a part of the ‘genuine Russian essence’. Having first established the claim of only ‘pure Russians’ on the nation ‘Russia,’ it was only a logical next step of tying together this ‘natural’ claim with economic interests of the nation and the exclusive rights of Russians to political and economic power and resources. The other ethnic groups are not only excluded from this, they can be portrayed as a threat to the well being and prosperity of Russians and Russia.

Anthony Smith (1994) identifies several functions that this concept fulfils for individuals and communities. Smith believes that the “Golden Age” satisfies the search for authenticity, relocates the community in its historical territory, promotes a sense of continuity between the generations, boosts the community’s sense of self-worth by reminding its members of their glorious past, promises the near change from the present oppressed and humiliated position to a higher status, and directs the community toward its “ordained destiny” of spiritual renewal.

Historians observe that Russia’s “Golden Age” has several points of reference in the past. Two of the most notable are the Romanov’s Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. This unlikely comparison nevertheless shares certain commonalities
which are amenable to political, nationalist manipulation. Both accorded the status of
‘notable, distinct and great power’ to its citizens; imperial greatness in case of
Romanov Empire and military superpower in case of Soviet Union. Various hues of
nationalist forces drew upon such greatness and power as essentially Russian features
that have been temporarily lost or usurped by the west, immigrants and internal
‘others.’ ‘True Russian essence,’ had to relocate its roots in the far past and present
nostalgia of lost power.

Gendering the nationalist discourse in Russia Suspitsina (1999) analyses ultra­
nationalist xenophobic and misogynist imagery that has regularly featured in an
important Russian daily newspaper ‘Zavtra’ (meaning ‘tomorrow’). She recounts the
description by a journalist of his emotional state after visiting a newly restored
Orthodox cathedral. He was moved to tears by the “beauty, greatness, luxury and
spiritual power that were created by the Russian Empire.” At the same time, he was
also crying over “another greatness—the spiritual force and capacity to create beauty
that were characteristic of another empire called the USSR.” “Yes,” continued the
journalist, “that [empire] which, having to overcome great tortures, from a Bolshevik­
Marxist republic turned into an Empire, although of a different, Soviet kind; but the
Russian foundation in it was unquestionable.” Nationalists and revivalists have been
ingenious in their ability to generate the most credible oxymoron whereby
contradictory images can co-exist side by side as a part of a nationalist whole.

This was the profound resolution of the paradox that nationalists faced in
formulating an unbroken history of greatness. The necessity to reclaim the legacy of
not only the ‘golden age’ but also of ‘Soviet superpower’ was met by finding a
common ground in both, an element of what was deemed as true Russian essence i.e.
‘Russian might and greatness’. Two political and economic orders, totally in
opposition to each other, Romanov Empire and socialist Soviet Union are brought
together under the nationalist rubric of unbroken history and mythology to which only
‘true Russians’ can belong. The discontentment generated as a result of neo-liberal
economic order and resentment against the West was channelized by the ultra­
nationalists towards this nationalist utopia. It became no longer necessary to
interrogate the role that current economic and social policies were playing in affecting
the lives of Russian people.
Suspitsina (1999) traces the roots of this mythic past in Russia’s history. She describes how pre-Petrine Muscovy as a symbol of Orthodox faith, moral purity and spiritual strength (14th to 17th century) became a point of reference for the nationalists. This period was followed by Peter the Great’s reforms in the mid-seventeenth century that gave origin to the debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles regarding the destiny and role of Russia and her future. The pre-Petrine era was remarkable for its conflation of Christian religion with national belonging and by the fourteenth century, being Russian began to be equated with being Orthodox. As the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev wrote, the blending of ethnic and religious identity manifested itself in the idea of the messianic role of Russia in saving the Christian religion (in its Orthodox version) from pollution and destruction (1990). In the public consciousness of the time, Moscow acquired the mystic and sacred status of Third Rome.

One of the central unifying and recurring themes of the nationalists has been the sacredness of the Russian land being endangered by the blasphemous and corrupt internal and external enemies. It is also very useful since it is easier to combine the twin aims of confronting the West on an ethnic/religious axis and mobilising mass support of Russians at home against other ethnic groups. Gendering this nationalist rhetoric reveals not only the conservative, misogynist and exclusive core of their ideology; it also reveals the positioning of the Russian citizens in a rigid hierarchy of subordination to an authoritarian state and social order. It also reveals the differentiated rights and privileges accorded to women and men placed in an equally rigid patriarchal gender hierarchy. These hierarchies are constructed in popular nationalist discourse by deploying gender symbolically to perpetually draw and redraw national boundaries.

Suspitsina (1999), in a detailed analysis, has explored the sexual and gendered imagery that is used by Russian nationalists to weave their discourse. She points that, “...The femininity and religiousness of the images of Russia and Moscow have a long tradition in Russian history. They draw on the ancient imagery of Mother-Earth (Mat'-Zemlya) whose explicitly female characteristics are well expressed in an old Russian saying syra Mat'-Zemlya (Mother-Earth is damp), where the dampness of the dirt is metaphorically compared with the dampness of the mother's womb...This use of Mother-Earth and Motherland symbolism gave birth to another central symbol of...
nation-building imagery--Mother Russia. In addition to the Mother Earth/Mother Russia imagery, the feminine and religious images of Russia and Moscow acquire a distinct Orthodox coloring from the figure of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. The two images --Mother-Russia and Mother of God--merged in the collective consciousness in a curious way, creating a new symbolic relationship. Mother of God came to be perceived as the protector of Russia, while Russia acquired the epithet "holy" (svyataya Rus')."

As we noted previously, the deployment of women as a symbolic resource, particularly in the allegorical imagery of 'the mother' of the nation has real consequences for reproductive and sexual behaviour and choices of individual women. This imagery makes women the cultural markers of the ethnic group which then claims superior and distinct status in relation to external and internal 'other'. Her body is the site on which these differences are played out. It also makes the crucial linkage of women as reproducers with 'the nation'. An important component of the nationalist rhetoric which illustrates this linkage clearly is the demographic crises discourse. The threat of the 'dying nation' about to be overtaken numerically by other ethnic groups can invoke strong response, particularly in the context of a country like Russia facing an unprecedented and acute demographic crisis. Regardless of the social, economic and political contexts in which the demographic concern needs to be framed, nationalists represent it as a war against its enemies which are trying to annihilate Russia using the 'demographic bomb'.

Gal and Kligman (2000: 27) have pointed out this dimension in the larger context of Europe that, "...Fears about the "death of the nation," justified by reference to falling birthrates, are a recurrent theme of nationalist discourse all over Europe. They gain general political significance when the interests of states are assumed to be coterminous with the increase in a single or dominant national group inhabiting the state's territory. Such fears are invariably directed against other categories of people perceived as rivals for territory or for political and economic resources." Warnings about demographic decline are used as political stances by those trying to mobilize what Brubaker (1995) has termed 'nationalizing states against national minorities'. This connection between a 'dying nation' and women as reproducers of the nation enables the apportioning of responsibility of bearing healthy and patriotic sons of the
motherland fully on the women. It situates men and women differently in the national project. Women carry the burden of traditional and spiritual values in the private realm of the family leaving men unmarked to heroically fight the enemy in the political and public realm in the ‘natural’ division of sexual labour by the nationalists.

Chatterjee has pointed towards the connections and necessity of such a nationalist resolution of the women question and the imperatives of nation-building in post-colonial context. His analysis of the relationship between women and the state can be, to some measure, applied to post-collapse transition Russia and other independent post-socialist nations of that region. Gal and Kligman (2000: 32) argue along similar lines and have commented on the differential positioning of men and women in a gender hierarchy. They say that, "...Within most nationalist discourses, for instance, women and men are assumed into have quite different subjectivities. Women are understood to owe a special kind of patriotic duty and to have a different relation to time and space than men. As we have noted, women are often identified with spiritual values and are seen to safeguard the morally laden tradition of the past. Motherhood is often viewed as the primary form of female political agency, women’s major patriotic duty. In contrast, since the early Soviet period, the production of more workers through motherhood was only one of the duties that women owed to the communist state; wage work--'labour'--was always another”. The resilience of patriarchal assigning of motherhood as the ‘primary’ and in the case of nationalists, the only worthwhile duty of women to the nation has also been borne out by the revival of this imagery in Russia after seven decades of relatively secular history of Soviet socialism.

It is this gender order which informs the construction of aggressive masculinity and passive femininity. The female need the protection of her virile and strong sons and fathers from the threat of contamination by the external or internal enemy. Each social group within the said privileged, dominant ethnic group is fixed in a given hierarchy and is required to perform his/her given role and duty to ‘the Nation’. It can be seen in the sexual imagery in which the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them/the enemy’ is portrayed. The nationalists confront the external enemy i.e. USA/West and at the same time also stake a claim in domestic politic space. The
internal enemies are those who are competitive politically like the democrats and those that are of other ethnic origins.

In the list of ‘Others’ women occupy different places: the degree of their gender “other-ness” depends on their relation to the men who constitute “us.” According to the logic of nationalism, “our” women and land are pure and their bodies/boundaries need to be protected from the encroachments of “them”—Jews (other minority ethnic groups also), Democrats, Western powers. As we mentioned before this rhetoric of ‘purity’ or ‘chaste’ women functions as a prescriptive ideology to discipline all women.

As in many other cultures, the Russian land is often described through sexual metaphors, which imply the likeness of the landscape and the female body. As Mostov (1995: 517) writes about the patriotic rhetoric in which, “the nation is adored and adorned, made strong and bountiful or raped and defiled, its limbs torn apart, its womb invaded.” Verdery (1994: 249) examines how metaphorical representation of nation as a woman victimized by the enemy serves to “naturalize/gender the question of territorial boundaries . . . [and] establish . . . a set of sentiments to support [the] armed defence of the feminine motherland by her masculinized sons.” Furthermore, Verdery constructs a set of antinomies that are embedded in patriotic thinking. Suspitsina (1999) analyses the nationalist rhetoric and observes that, “The internal Other, in this case, the Democrats, is pictured as a hyperbolically powerful force that threatens “our” nation by dishonouring its political body (both literally and metaphorically) and it is the weak and cowardly men, “the slaves and compromisers,” who allowed the crime to happen. Thus, the appeal to fight against the enemy becomes more expressive when it challenges male bravery and honour.” She gives an example of a political joke made by Andrei Prokhanov, the ultra-nationalist editor of the newspaper ‘Zavtra’.

The joke is that, “Today we understand perfectly well that the last obstacle that prevents the NATO from bombing the Tretyakov [Art] Gallery, the launching site Plesetskii, Severomorsk and the market Kon’kovo is the tired Russian missiles that are capable of putting a lit cigar in America’s same very place where playful Clinton put it in Mermaid Monica during their amorous pranks.”

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Borenstien (2007) has also analysed the widespread phenomena of prostitution in post-collapse Russia by treating the prostitute and the female body as a metaphor of the Russian nation which is being consumed and contaminated by the West in her now weakened condition. Analysing the above-mentioned joke Suspitsina (1999) says, "...in this fragment, the author Prokhanov obviously refers to the notorious "cigar episode" of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. Creating the scene of immoral pleasure with the help of nouns suggesting enjoyment, the author symbolically equates "promiscuous" Lewinsky with the whole American nation. Consequentially, America is represented as an ultimate whore whose body is accessible not only to her master—Clinton—but also to any other man or state. Curiously enough, Russia as a country here loses its femininity and become a symbol of potent aggressive masculinity. The conflict between America and Russia is placed within the heterosexist framework where the weak, debased and despised part becomes feminized while the strong, aggressive and authoritative side is masculinized...The author of the article, however, does not simply fantasize about rape; the episode suggests that the penetration be done with a weapon—missile—placed as "a lit cigar" into the symbolic womb of America. Prokhanov’s fantasy of a symbolic destruction of the enemy through the rape of its nation/ woman is in fact analogous to the very real rapes committed during the war in Yugoslavia." The overall structure of defence institutions revels in a glorification of aggressive masculine control and victory over the enemy and the patriotic discourse is an extension of these gender hierarchies.

The analysis of political discourse reveals the sexualization of international and national political context along traditional patriarchal gender hierarchies. So, during the J. Carter administration, it was said that "under Jimmy Carter the United States is spreading its legs for the Soviet Union" (Cohn 1993, 236). In the time of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal that coincided with the US bombing of Serbia, the joke said by one Russian satirist was popular: "Clinton! The Slavs are not Monika. You will break your saxophone there" (Riabova and Riabov 2002). As Ivekovic perceptively notes that women "embody" ideas, thereby serving to justify them, doesn’t mean that what is embodied, the principle or mechanism is a "feminine" one. One has to distinguish between the carrier of an ideal and the ideal that is carried. What is symbolically "embodied" in the female figure can still remain a male ideal, activity, or experience (Ivekovic and Mostov 1993: 123).
The maleness of the activity and experience of Russian nationalism leaves women little political space for participation. With the revival of patriarchy and the growing influence of Orthodoxy, women are being forced, moved, and persuaded to return to their “most natural” place at the family hearth. Their symbolic participation in the nationalist project is also limited. Women’s femininity is alienated from them to be used as a weapon in masculine political battles. The ways in which the feminine is deployed suggests the deep contempt for women’s bodies, minds, feelings, needs and desires. Therefore, nationalist projects inherently have little progressive potential to accommodate the democratic aspirations of marginalized groups which are merely deployed as a symbolic resource in its imagery.

Einhorn (1993: 40) writes about the glorification of women’s self-sacrifice in the name of male individual autonomy in East/Central Europe. In the former Soviet Union the fear of emasculation echoes the idea that the root of all evil (‘feminization of males’: the popular term for the phenomenon in the media during the 1970s and 1980s) is in women forgetting their femininity, for whatever reason. So the male-gender self-esteem has to be reconstructed through making traditional gender roles clear. A man to be strong demands a woman be weak (Gapova 1998: 481). Gapova (1998: 482) has noted the same in her analysis of Belarusian nationalism and illustrates this through an instance that, “It was no slip of the tongue that Nikita Mikhalkov, a world-famous film producer (his ‘Burnt by the Sun’ got the Academy Award as the best foreign film of 1994) said in his televised speech of support during the presidential campaign in April 1996: ‘Yeltsin is such a manly male...and Russia is a noun of the feminine gender’. Contextualising this in the Orthodox tradition which preaches resignation and humility in the face of power and suffering willingly as the highest moral virtues would mean that the weak female Russia should kneel to the strong man Yeltsin. So male ‘strength’ is juxtaposed against female ‘weaknesses’ as an unquestioned value. Male strength was the desired symbol of the nation’s strength in the form of healthy, vigorous and patriotic sons of Mother Russia. This is the nationalist context for the assertion of women’s primary role as biological reproducers of the nation (‘Let’s start a son...’) and the debate on women’s reproductive rights.”

The reconfiguring of masculinity and femininity in which ‘the masculine’ is virile, strong, in control and aggressive and ‘the feminine’ is passive, weak, in need of
protection and is submissive has a common theme of inverting, rejecting and distancing itself from the Soviet socialist past. The new political and economic order brought in after collapse of socialism is based on neo-liberal open market economy whose current imperatives also tie in with the traditional gender roles and hierarchy sought to be restored by the nationalists. It is in this sense 'reconfiguration of the family' is the cornerstone of all post-socialist transformations. The political man and the political discourse are replete with 'manly' attributes and denigration of female participation in the political or public realm because in doing so she is being 'unfeminine'.

Gal and Kligman (2000: 29) brought to the notice the common theme in communist opposition and nationalist undertone in all political discourse. They said, "...a contrast between the morality of democracy as against the immorality of communism was often highlighted through debates about their contrasting approach to reproductive policies. Whereas communism, it was claimed, corruptly allowed the killing of foetuses, or equally corruptly cared only about increasing the labour force, post-communist states could and should make principled, moral decisions about such matters. Or again, if, as many insisted, communism went against nature in allowing women to circumvent motherhood, post-communist state forms and the governments in charge of them promised to uphold the unchanging forces of a natural gender order. They hoped to rectify the wrongs of the past and gain credibility and legitimacy."

Therefore, the notions of common origin or destiny, pure gene pool, exclusion and inclusion of people, natural gender roles and hierarchies are not just classifying features of ethno-nationalist thought but these ideas of cultural nationalism, civic or economic nationalism tie in with the entire democratic and liberal political discourse for apparently contradictory motives. The patriarchal consensus is not just about reconfiguring the gender identities and gender order but also the political and economic order. The contradictions between them are a result of political competitiveness and a contest for political power and economic resources.

This consensus is build along gender divisions and hierarchies. Alsop and Hockey (2001: 458) say, "...Paradoxically, therefore, the individualism of free market enterprise, central to the functioning of capitalist economies, did not permeate the area of reproductive rights where a collectivist stance was called for. Nationhood was
being realized through sets of values that were not only contradictory but in many respects divided along gender lines. While individualism informed men’s traditional role in the public sphere of paid work, collectivism marked the rhetoric and the policies that dominated the sphere of motherhood and reproduction.

Since the collapse of Communism, women’s access to state-provided abortion in many areas of Central and Eastern Europe has been further restricted; in some instances, even prohibited (Einhorn 1993). Economic restructuring has profoundly influenced the real potential for exercising choice in any meaningful way by vulnerable sections, particularly women in most post-socialist societies. Alsop and Hockey (2001: 459) point that, “The value attached to ‘choice’ within capitalist transformation has thus manifested itself primarily in the area of private health care and a consumerist approach to individual provision, with ‘choice’ confined predominantly to the well-off. Moreover, awareness of the cost of reproductive health care within Communist regimes has led post-Communist employers to a view of women as an expensive liability within the workforce. While the free market may favour some groups economically, for many women labour force participation remains a financial necessity”.

Numerous analysis of politics of reproduction and abortion debates in post-socialist countries like Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, former republics of USSR reveal a similar patriarchal consensus between the Orthodox church, market forces and the state which frames not just issues surrounding women’s reproductive roles, but also issues of their employment, health and political participation. Gal and Kligman (2000: 28) point that, “Many levels and aspects of state organization can be mobilized for the institutionalization of biologized national selves. All involve reproduction in some way: legal constraints on who may marry whom; regulations on what constitutes “normal” sexuality or the proper work of men and women; assumptions (often written into tax codes) about acceptable family forms, about who is expected to provide childcare and other caretaking support; the timing, rate, and ease of marriage and divorce. Clearly, not only ideas about nationhood, but also about health, respectability, sexuality, and idealized gender are often involved. These ideas, when legislated, enacted, and so institutionalized,
corporeally create the boundaries by which national selves, and ultimately national
groups, are systematically produced.”

As we noted before, the connection between national project and gender is
very crucial towards understanding the ideological underpinnings of nationalism and
gender order that emerges as a result of it. Both constitute and shape each other. The
processes of nation-building, nationalist rhetoric and patriarchal gender roles and
identities are linked but separate processes. That is why, Russian state, despite its
political distancing from variants of ethno-nationalist ultra agendas and articulation,
deploys exclusivist nationalist sentiments to facilitate the reorganization of its
political economy. Socialist rhetoric and an increased role of a centralized state
notwithstanding, the collaboration between market forces and the state policies is
underwritten by a patriarchal nationalist ideological framework that is often revealed
in political statements and in different spheres of popular culture. This neo-liberal
patriarchal nationalist consensus has had profound implication for the lives of
individual Russian women who have mostly lost out in the bargain. In such a
situation, questions have emerged anew whether women’s mobilization on the basis
of identity will enable them to forcefully demand their legitimate economic and
political rights. Instead, perhaps the basis of mobilization would have to be citizenship
rights and a meaningful and egalitarian participation of all women in the processes
that will be decisive in shaping Russia’s future.

The linkages between nationalism and immigration policies are a close one
and they reinforce each other. The processes of nation-building and defining national
identity are crucial not just in terms of what shape will the nation ‘Russia’ take in
future but also in terms of what the relationship will be between the state and the
citizens. One of the central organizing principals of these processes is gender ideology
which not only fundamentally determines the location of both men and women in the
nation but it also determines the state-subject relationship. Women are crucially
impacted by the policies taken up by the state drawing its borders and arranging the
gender hierarchies. The sexual stereotyping of women at home and abroad enables the
state to control its own women and immigrants. As the gender identities are fast being
recast into the traditional mould it is the women who have to formulate a response to
the emerging challenges.