Chapter II

The Uniform(ed) Self:

A Study of Military Literature

War is a quarrel between two thieves, too cowardly to fight their own battle; therefore they take boys from one village, and another village; stick them into uniforms, equip them with guns and let them loose like wild beasts against each other.

Thomas Carlyle

This chapter examines the largely insular discourse of military literature and considers it as a body of texts that negotiates a space within which notions of nation and nationalism are defined and redefined. So far, military literature has been the subject of very little systematic study. In his introduction to the “Military Affairs Series,” Maroof Raza notes, “Today, India’s media, as well as a number of intellectuals and academic institutions have started to debate issues of national security, and this is the start of a healthy tradition” (5). My own subject position while making an intervention in this area is somewhat ambivalent. As a non-military person, I do not qualify as an “insider”. Yet, having been the wife of an army officer, I am not entirely an “outsider”. It is in the interstitial spaces that are created by such overlapping identities that I take my position. The battlefront-homefront hiatus crucial to the gendered nature of military discourse would ensure my outsider status. As Jean Bethke Elshtain puts it, “Because women are exterior to war, men interior, men have long been the great war-story tellers, legitimated in the role because they have ‘been there’ or because they have greater entrée into what it ‘must be like’” (212 emphasis original).
Firstly, the term military literature needs explication. I mean by it all the literature that is written on war and military affairs by military officials and non-military writers like journalists, defence analysts and newspaper reporters. Literature coming from within the establishment (military officials) will be called "insider" literature and that from outside the establishment (journalists, defence analysts) as "outsider" literature. This dichotomy, although specious, will in my opinion enhance our understanding of military literature generally designated as "official" literature and the other as "unofficial" literature. The former as representative of the state carries the weight of authority, authenticity and truth or rather more significantly the burden of a rigorous censorship. The latter, free from constraints of the "official", enjoys relatively more freedom to analyse, critique and understand defence issues which are seen as crucial to the security and empowerment of a nation.

For purposes of analysis and critique and most importantly as artefacts that provide valuable insights into the notion of nation and nationalism, I examine a selection of texts belonging to various genres. My methodology involves reading memoirs, diaries, war accounts and newspaper reportage as narratives that construct a particular idea of nation and nationalism.

The period selected for this study is the nineties and the beginning of the new millennium. Contextually, the selected texts are not necessarily located in the nineties. Nevertheless, their publication in this period significantly reflects the political climate of the period under study. A growing interest in military matters is an outcome of the shift from centrist to rightist politics. This shift provokes new ways of constructing or imagining the nation. In an essay on the increasing role of the military from the eighties onward,
Sumona Dasgupta argues, "While the military has not been politicized in India there has been significant expansion of the role of the military since the 1980s, which may be regarded as symptomatic of what can be called the 'militarization of politics'" (qtd. in Raza 47). The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was the dominant party in the coalition that came to power in the nineties. Although three wars were fought during the previous regime of the Congress party, the BJP is ideologically closer to militarism than the Congress. Its propagation of militarism dates back to its association with Fascism in Europe. As already seen in Chapter I, Hindu nationalists allied themselves ideologically with leaders like Hitler and Mussolini. The move away from the Nehruvian non-alignment policy to the nineties' pro-active approach marks a clear paradigm shift in the way the nation imagines itself and projects itself in the global order. Also of importance is an increased visibility of the armed forces in the cultural landscape of the nation in this period. Whether it is in films, TV serials, or advertisements with soldiers as protagonists or the use of guns and cut-outs of uniformed soldiers that form the background to the Ganesh idols in the pandals of Ganesh Chaturthi festival or the camouflage dress as a fashion statement or the sight of army officers giving interviews on TV, the army has surely come out of its barracks and entered the cultural arena of the nation-space. It is this popularisation of the military man as the national hero through cultural artefacts that makes the nineties an apt choice for the periodization of this study.

II

I follow here a chronological classification of texts rather than a generic one. My aim is to study the historical evolution of the notion of nation and
nationalism through military literature. I begin this section with a reading of a pre-Independence Army officer's diary, published in 2000, with the idea of mapping out the historical origins of the idea of nation. More importantly, the purpose is to detect the origins of a national identity, if any.

The volume *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India* records a selected portion of the eighty-nine volumes of eight hundred pages each of Amar Singh's diary written between 1898 and 1942. The selections in this volume are from the year 1898 to 1905. Amar Singh was a Rajput from the royal family of Jodhpur. For this study, he is important so far as he was one of the first few King's Commissioned Officers of the Indian Army.¹ The selections I read from the book speak of his days in the pre-Independence army. It is a useful document for us as it reveals the genesis of the structures of dominance and subordination crucial to the organization of the armed forces. The editors call his position "liminal" as he was located between two societies, Rajput and British, "the first 'black', princely, and subordinate, the second 'white', colonial and dominant" (Rudolph et al 4). The British considered the royal personages as their allies and treated them differently from the common man. Although politically, the princely states did not come under British rule, there was much fraternization between the two groups. The royal family members sought to assimilate themselves into British society by adopting their manners and customs. The need to gain approval and be co-opted along with resentment at being treated as inferior is a central paradox in the British-princely state relations. Thus Amar Singh's Rajput identity becomes crucial to his military identity. As the editors put it, "the military career becomes the site of his
Amar Singh was part of one of the contingents that was sent to China to quell the Boxer Rebellion. He records the sight of corpses lying around in the town of Shai Hai Kwan in a journalistic style consciously eliminating feelings and sentiment. Amar Singh’s character reveals a thorough internalization of Rajput cultural stereotypes. He talks of death on the battlefields for a Rajput as an honourable, desirable death. In his account of the battle at Lijapoo, he notes with great acuity “Of the whole lot, these two acted like heroes” (Rudolph et al 173, emphasis mine). So, war is about acting like heroes, it is about enacting a pre-written script that valorizes heroism. His description of the battle is comic, almost quixotic in nature. The confusion that occurs in war, the resultant unnecessary deaths and the excessive glorification of soldiers’ gallantry, which at times is plain foolhardiness, is something that cannot be ordinarily found in Indian war memoirs. The following description would illustrate my comment:

Anyhow, it was a good day’s work and the retreat was quite light and full of talk. All were very excited and each said that he had killed some two, some three and some one. But they had only finished the wounded ones. (173)

We must also note that undeniably for us, reading a battle account of 1901, when Amar Singh went into battle on horseback with a spear in his hand, has a touch of the old, legendary mythic battles. It has the quality of a boy’s adventure story. Today we know even a street fight can be more dangerous. Killing then had a romantic edge to it. Speaking about the enemies he injured, he remarks:
They had an expression of great pain and horror or fear or whatever it may be called. It was also the same with the other two that were knocked with the revolver. I can safely say without exaggeration or boasting or self-praise that my temper and nerve seemed to be quite calm. Of course I was a little excited. (174)

Amar Singh writes candidly about the racial discrimination prevalent in the army. "I would not like to be treated like a coolie", he says. (Rudolph et al 183). At the same time, he is in awe of British culture. He is grateful to the British for inculcating in him the manners of a Victorian gentleman and is pleased that on many occasions the British did not find it difficult to accept him as one of them. The imperial cadet corps was formed in India to train Indians as army officers. Its agenda was to create battalions of Indian officers who would rule at home and serve the empire abroad. The "refining" of the native aristocrats helped the British to further their collaborative enterprise with the princely states in order to secure their rule in the colony. Lord Curzon who was instrumental in setting up the Imperial Cadet Corps was very clear about the kind of soldier that was to be trained by the Corps. The Indian aristocrat was trained to have a career "suitable to his rank, congenial to his tastes, and free from danger to our own military and political system" (Rudolph et al 236, emphasis mine). The denial of King's Commission to Indian princes trained for the army, sprang from the terrifying thought of "a black man commanding a white man" (Rudolph et al 236). Indian officers graduating from Sandhurst were posted to an all-Indian unit so that there was no chance of an Indian officer commanding British troops (Chaudhuri 178).
Amar Singh’s King’s Commission did not automatically mean that he would be treated on par with British officers. Racism was far too deeply entrenched for that to happen. The liberal policies of the British government were curtailed through rigid bureaucratic procedures that made the King’s Commissioned Officers (KCOs) lose their pension and seniority. Even as the first Indian to command a regiment as an acting Major, Amar Singh had to face dissent from the British officers who were technically under his command.

One would believe that being an Indian in the army during the pre-Independence period would be fraught with moral dilemmas. The diary records such a contradiction while narrating the episode of the civil disobedience movement during which the army was sent out to maintain law and order. Amar Singh, his sympathies suspect, was not sent to lead the troops. He states, “... though I had no sympathy with the rioters, I certainly am against the passing of the Rowlatt Bill for which all these troubles had taken place” (Rudolph et al 243). The Rowlatt Bill was inherently unjust and oppressive. The passing of the bill led to riots. The Army was called to maintain law and order. Amar Singh being an officer in the British Army, perceived the rioters as law breakers, not as nationalists. He was more worried about being penalized for manslaughter if he gave the orders for firing. As an Indian, he should have been concerned that the ones who would be fired upon would be his own countrymen. Clearly then, the feeling of oneness central to nationhood was yet to be fostered.

The diary reflects a period in history during which notions of nation and nationalism were dormant. The focus was on the region of Jodhpur in present
day Rajasthan. Feudalism was the dominant social structure, loyalty was sworn to individual princely states and nationalism manifested itself not as a strong group sentiment against colonial rule but as strong resentment against racial discrimination. The inclusion of the diary has helped us to get a historical perspective on the idea of nation. The diary's unrelenting focus on the local indicates the nascent stage of the nationalistic spirit. The foregrounding of the community, in this case, the Rajput, develops as we progress in time into the larger community of the nation. According to Sudhir Chandra, the nineteenth century was witness to a staunch regional consciousness, which was "in many parts of the country, projected as nationalism in its own right" (116). The next section deals with a text which gives us an idea of the early formulations of the nationalistic spirit in the diasporic community. Thus, from the local, we move to the transnational perspective of the "national question."

III

The characterization of the Indian independence movement as a peaceful one based on Gandhi's principle of *ahimsa* is central to nationalist historiography as well as to the collective national consciousness. However, the postmodernist engagement with the fragment rather than with the totalizing grand narrative has resulted in the recovery and circulation of marginal narratives. The history of the Rani of Jhansi regiment of Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army (INA) is one such narrative resurrected with the publication of the memoir of Capt. Lakshmi Sahgal, titled *A Revolutionary Life: Memoirs of a Political Activist*. The book, *Fidelity and Honour*, by Menezes on the history of the Indian army has a whole chapter on the INA without a word
on the Rani of Jhansi regiment (372-403). The publication of Sahgal's memoir in 1997 as part of the publishers' "Fifty Years of Freedom Specials" seeks to highlight such elisions in the histories written by male writers.

The book is a combination of memoir, oral history and essay, with historical, political and feminist implications. According to the publisher Ritu Menon, the idea behind this book is "restoring women to history and restoring their history to women" (qtd. in Sahgal: vi). In the Introduction, Geraldine Forbes says that the formation of the regiment was "one of the first conscious attempts in world history to integrate women into the military as a fighting force" (qtd. in Sahgal: xiii). In his address to the domiciled Indians in Malaya, Subhash Chandra Bose used the legend of Rani of Jhansi to affirm the heroic nature of women. He eulogized women by stating, "Our brave sisters ... have shown that when the need arises they could, like their brothers, shoot very well" (qtd. in Sahgal: xix). Sahgal realized in the course of recruiting women in the INA that this unique venture would also have far reaching socio-economic consequences and lead to the empowerment of women. Bose too believed that the experience in the women's regiment could, after it had served its purpose, be used to end women's oppression by men.

Displacement from the familiarity of one's homes can be liberating or is sometimes a necessary condition for liberation. This is evident in Sahgal's memoir when she talks about the Ranis joining the INA out of a desire to leave the oppressive confines of their homes. The nationalist indoctrinations came later.

However, it is my submission that the formation of the women's regiment had three functions. One, Capt. Mohun Singh of the INA had
announced the dissolution of the regiment in December 1942 before Bose came from Germany and took charge of it. At that time, the strength of the INA had dwindled to 12,000 (Menezes 383). Sheer exigency made Bose start a women's regiment even though women were not considered to be battle worthy. Two, the INA was accused of being a puppet army of the Japanese as it was formed by the officers and troops of the Indian army who had surrendered to the Japanese. The women's regiment would give it a semblance of dignity as it could be used as an example of the voluntary nature of the recruitments into the INA. Three, it served a symbolic purpose. Bose's government in exile worked towards producing a prototype of the Indian nation. Bose wanted to propagate the use of Roman Hindustani as he had done successfully with the recruits in INA. He wanted to spread the knowledge of English, which to him was the language of science and technology. He also had the rather impractical idea of evolving a uniform dress and eating habits in order to forge a national identity instead of plural regional identities. Thus the women's regiment would serve the purpose of showing to the world, the kind of egalitarian society that he envisaged for a free India. Women are invariably the bearers of modernity or tradition as befits the ruling powers. The Taliban in Afghanistan perhaps is best known for using women as sites of tradition. The impositions of the burqa, the sanctions on schooling and careers, etc, are believed to be in keeping with religious doctrines. As we will see in the following chapter, popular Hindi cinema also endorses the Hindu nationalist idea of women as repositories of authentic Indian culture. In the same vein, the granting of voting rights to women in most postcolonial societies is a marker of modernity. The
incorporation of women in the army thus carries a symbolic value. As Yuval-Davis notes, "Incorporating women into the military contains a double message: firstly, that women, at least, are equal members of the national collectivity; but secondly, and probably more importantly, that all members of the national collectivity are incorporated, at least symbolically, into the military" (98, emphasis original). Thus if Bose's government in exile was conceived as a microcosm of a future Indian government, then Yuval-Davis's observation would seem perfect. The INA being a revolutionary liberation army used women as symbols of modernity that promised equality between the sexes. Bose's gesture of inducting women in his INA, motives notwithstanding, was far ahead of its time.2

By June 1943, the INA was retreating and it was clear that the Ranis would never fight. Quite expectedly, the women were taken seriously neither by the British who thought of them as harmless nor by the Japanese who found the whole idea a ridiculous one. Ultimately the Ranis for all their excitement of being in the fighting forces ended up in the traditional roles assigned to women in the army, i.e., as nurses. The frustration that resulted was vented out through a petition to Bose signed in blood that read:

Why are we being treated thus? You gave us the name of the valiant Rani of Jhansi ... you assured us that we could fight in the thick of the battle like the Rani, that our presence in the armed forces would demoralize our enemies and retrieve the Indian soldiers from the British army (Sahgal xxii).
All the same, the women's regiment even when ordered to retreat was exposed to the danger and horror of war. Marginalizing their role due to their retreat is in itself a male standard of evaluation by which only those who engage in battle are worthy of glory. Even if they did not actually take part in an offensive, they were still subjected to heavy air raids, trench life, capture and interrogation. They took part in several skirmishes with the enemy and even lost two of their members. After all how many male soldiers really fight in a war? According to a study, during World War II only 15 per cent of soldiers ever fired a gun (Yuval-Davis 109).

Women have traditionally been ascribed the role of the peacemaker. The essentialist construction of the female as mother gives rise to the image of woman as pacifist (Ruddick qtd. in Yuval-Davis 113). Her nurturing role, which is "natural" to her sex, undermines the attempts to represent her as a warrior woman in the cultural arena. The memoir contests such a construction of the woman. Instead, it belongs to the virangana tradition, a parallel tradition in Indian literary and visual arts that celebrates the exploits of the warrior woman. Rani of Jhansi and Razia Sultan, for instance, constitute the Indian collective imagination of the woman-as-warrior. Shikhandi, the eunuch in The Mahabharata was not killed by Bhismā as it was considered cowardly to kill anyone but a man. Yet, women have seldom been outside a war. In the same epic, Madri is brought to Hastinapur by King Pandu as a war trophy. In The Ramayana, Kaikeyi draws the chariot of her husband King Dashrath on the battlefield.

The women who had served in the INA went back to their homes and
the dream of social empowerment remained unfulfilled. A similar dystopia is articulated by Sahar Khalifa, a Palestinian writer, when she asks:

What happened to Algerian women after independence?

Women returned to the rule of the harem and to covering their heads. They struggled, carried arms and were tortured in French prisons ... Then what? They went out into the light and the men left them in the dark. It was as though freedom was restricted to men alone. What about us? Where is our freedom and how can we get it? They shall not deceive us. (qtd. in Cooke and Woollacot 186)

Like military memoirs of male officers, Sahgal's work too eschews personal details. Except for the first chapter detailing Sahgal's childhood days and influences, the rest of the memoir narrates only her experiences with the INA. It is also marked by a lack of sentimentalism. While describing the condition of Malaya after the Japanese takeover, Sahgal relates with chilling objectivity about the Japanese who displayed the heads of a Malay and a Chinese. She says, "Needless to say this proved to be a most effective measure and prevented further looting" (29). Whether it is a conscious effort to react pragmatically "like a man" or whether it is the voice of a person who had seen the chaos and was relieved that the solution was found, even if inhuman, is difficult to say.

The INA raises the pertinent issue of what it means to be a soldier serving in the colonial army. As Indian soldiers of the British army, did they owe allegiance to the Crown or to the Indian nation, which was still under
colonial rule? The decision to court martial the officers who had joined the INA created a big controversy. Finally their sentence was remitted. The committee was sympathetic to the INA as it was natural to be nationalistic and join the INA instead of being POWs to the Japanese forces. Sahgal glosses over these issues in her memoir as for her the patriotism of the INA forces was beyond question and the antagonism of some of her countrymen was tragic. The memoir speaks glowingly of the patriotism of Indians abroad. It bears testimony to the notion of a nationalism that can cross physical boundaries. As the INA was formed outside India, the narrative contains perhaps one of the earliest accounts of the reactions of the diaspora to the freedom movement. As Sahgal puts it, “The three years under Japanese occupation were years of regeneration for the entire Indian community of East Asia, numbering over three million” (35). The diaspora was largely constituted of poor migrant labourers and they were given a new identity as freedom fighters of their motherland with which they still had emotional links. Sahgal’s memoir bears testimony to the idea of a transnational nationalism. The nation is invested with emotional content.

IV

In this section of the chapter, we analyze Lt. Gen. S.K. Sinha’s memoir, A Soldier Recalls, which seems to me more interesting than the rest (Gen. J.N. Chaudhuri, Lt. Gen. B.M. Kaul, etc.) because it raises a crucial question that has a bearing on the understanding of nation formation in India: can the military be completely apolitical? The memoir comes from a man who dared to question the superiority of the bureaucracy in a milieu in which quiescence is
the norm for the soldier.³ The rebellious streak should not however lead us to
believe that the memoir contests the category of nation in a radical manner.
While it questions the relationship of the military vis-à-vis the state, the
endorsement of the nation as a supreme entity remains intact.

Sinha relates an anecdote of his days in the British army. He often
entered into arguments with his British colleagues about the INA, which
according to the latter consisted of a bunch of traitors. Later, the second in
command gave an order that no discussion about the INA or any political
matters be conducted in the Mess. The army top brass and their political
masters have always been wary of officers who take a stand on political
issues. President Venkataraman also had gently chided Sinha when he had
expressed a desire to discuss the Akali issue in Punjab. General Chaudhuri
describes Major General Negrib of Egypt in 1964 in the following words:

He appeared to be very unsure of his position and made no
comments politically, militarily, or otherwise and like a sensible
soldier kept his mouth shut. (185)

At the same time, he is of the opinion that “some form of political
doctrination was necessary for a soldier to make sure he understood what he
was fighting for” (171). To Frantz Fanon, a soldier of an adult nation should
be aware that he is in the service of the nation and not of his commanding
officer. The national military must be used to detribalize and unify a nation
(165). Sinha too saw a close relationship between politics and the military
and realized that the military could not be entirely apolitical. The implausibility
of a fully apolitical army is thus made quite clear from within the army
establishment as well as from without.

The memoir contains many anecdotes that highlight the perennial tension between the army and the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy constantly keeps a check on the powers of the military so as to assuage an inherent fear in any country about the unchecked power of the army. Although in India the sheer size of the country, combined with the army's own disinterest in a takeover would make such fears unwarranted, they still persist. India's strong democratic tradition has guaranteed the supremacy of civilian over military institutions. With the removal of the post of Commander-in-chief and the appointment of the elected President as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the elected Union Government has full powers in policy decisions with regard to military matters. The military has a well-defined, limited role and is fully under the control of the bureaucracy. Although it enjoys complete operational freedom during war, it is strictly kept out of policy matters. In an essay on a comparative study of civil-military relations in India and Pakistan, Maroof Raza notes, "it [the Army] has often appeared to those contemplating social and political disorder in India, a staunch 'no-nonsense' defender of the legitimately elected government" (14). The Indian army's tradition of unquestioning obedience of orders from superiors has led to loss of lives of troops and officers in wars. In spite of it, the Indian army believes in staying out of the business of politicking. J.P. Dalvi's *Himalayan Blunder* illustrates the impact of non-interference in political affairs. An analysis of the book follows in the next section.

We have noted earlier in our reading of Amar Singh's diary that when they were part of the British army, Indian officers and troops found themselves
in discomfiting situations at times. Sinha’s memoir too dwells on the contradictory pulls of nationalism and loyalty to the army one serves in. For instance, they were sent to Indonesia to fight the revolutionaries. It was strange that Indians, who were themselves under colonial rule, were suppressing the freedom movement of an Asian country. But they were led to believe that the Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Auchinleck wanted the British officers to hand over a highly professional and disciplined army to the Indians. The Indian soldier through his participation in war in the South Asian theatres became aware of the declining supremacy of the British army. The mutinies in the army were also evidences of growing discontent. Sinha suggests:

We had seen Asian nationalism rising from the ashes of European colonialism. I am convinced that the realisation by the British that they could not rely on the Indian army to uphold their imperial rule over India, was a major factor which influence their decision to quit India. (80)

The pre-Independence army began getting communalised around 1946 as a result of Jinnah’s influence and the Calcutta communal riots. Sinha recalls, “I remember Colonel Nasar Ali Khan who later joined the Pakistan Army, once telling me, ‘Every time I think that you come from Bihar, my blood begins to boil’” (85). Indian Muslim officers had started visiting Jinnah and that according to the author was the genesis of the politicization of the Pakistan army. The memoir records the traumatic partitioning of the Indian Army after the creation of Pakistan. The Indian and Pakistani armies perhaps have faced the unique dilemma of fighting against their own brothers and
colleagues. Officers and troops who had been in the same regiment barely a few months ago had to aim their guns at each other in the Kashmir operations of 1948. The late Field Marshall Cariappa was even supposed to have gone to Lahore upon the invitation of General Iftikar Ahmed for a horse show during the Kashmir operations.

The desire to protect the organization and its personnel from disrepute results in a clever evasion of the issue of war crimes. War crimes in the Bangladesh operations are brushed aside in a single paragraph. Admitting that moral standards get eroded in war, Sinha reiterates the high standard of discipline in the Indian army and the war crimes committed are dismissed off as exceptions that were dealt with in "an exemplary manner" (229). He also gives an account of his experience of dealing with prisoners of war (POWs). Here he gives unstinted praise for the Indian army's treatment of POWs in spite of a firing incident in which some of them were killed. For the first time foreign correspondents were allowed permission to visit the POWs' camps. However, Sinha acknowledges that the visit was stage-managed. The army showed the Meerut camp to the foreign Press in spite of the inconvenience caused and not the Agra one as that was where the firing episode had occurred. The result was an impressive report on the Indian army in The Washington Post. Later at the convention on "Application of Humanitarian Rights to Warfare", organized by the UN and the International Red Cross Society in Italy, the writer uses this very report as proof of the exemplary treatment given to POWs by the Indians.

In his report on the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Sinha indulges in the denigration of the enemy which is a crucial element in war discourse.
Speaking about the moral laxity of Pakistani Generals, he remarks, “Yahya Khan with his girl friend ‘General Rani’ is reported to have stayed for some time in the Jaurian Inspection Bungalow” (261). The Hamoodur Rahman Report, instituted by President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan which probed the causes of the defeat of Pakistan in the Indo-Pak war of 1971 was published in a leading Indian weekly (Halarnkar 32-40). The elation at the victory in Kargil and the consistent campaign against “cross-border terrorism” has created an interest in the previous wars fought between India and Pakistan. The report mentioned Gen Yahya Khan among others as morally degenerate and professionally incompetent (Halarnkar 37). It is equally interesting to note that the weekly chose to publish such a report at a time of increasing hostilities between the two nations. The report aspired to feed the jingoistic spirit of the time. Such practices are significant components of the politics of hate that precedes and follows a war. J P Dutta, as we shall see in the next chapter, uses strong anti-Muslim sentiments in his film *Border*.

Sinha’s descriptions of war are like battle reports from a tactical point of view. War is not seen as a human tragedy that involves loss of life, displacement, hunger and so on. It comes across as an enactment of a sand model exercise. This may be attributed to Sinha’s extended tenures as a staff officer. Incidentally, during every war, he had held staff appointments. Sinha writes about his experience with insurgency in Nagaland. Instead of gaining insights on a sensitive issue like insurgency, we only get to know about the author’s self-interest. He says boastfully, “Of the six brigades in the Division, we managed to notch up the highest score in terms of clashes with hostiles, casualties inflicted on them and the weapons recovered from them” (209).
There is a school boyish delight of getting more points for his team in these lines. Further he states:

I had been emphasising on all my unit commanders that the real test of success in counter insurgency operations was the number of service weapons captured and the number of clashes with hostiles in which we got the better of them, I had been liberal in putting up officers and men who had done well, for gallantry awards. (214)

However, he confesses later the disastrous consequences of instilling a competitive sense of such puerile nature. The result was that young officers greedy for awards began harassing even the innocent people of Nagaland through interrogation involving third degree methods.

One's domestic life and other matters are considered trivial, mundane and extraneous to a reflective, artistic study. Nonetheless, unlike most military memoirs, the family occupies more space in this narrative. Sinha's grandfather and father served as police officers during the British days. He then talks of his marriage and birth of his four children and their marriages. A frequently elided part in military memoirs is the role of the wives of the officers in a cantonment. The women, always referred to as "ladies" or "lady-wives" (!) play a major role in the insular society of the army. With their identities derived purely on the basis of their husband's ranks, they are all the time conscious of the social stratification. Officially, wives of military personnel are classified as dependents. Their status derives from that of their husbands. The segregation of officers and troops at the social level filters down to the
level of the "ladies" too. Except in organised gatherings such as regimental functions, there is no interaction between the wives of officers and those of the troops. That further reduces the size of the social group within which the women in the army have to interact. The dynamics of this social group carries forward the rank structure of the officers. There are "senior ladies" and "junior ladies" in the social universe of the army. The former is entrusted with the task of caring for and shaping the latter into good army wives. This gives the former a responsibility and with it comes the inevitable power. As some critics have noted, "The military community provides a very clearly defined and highly structured role for women: "the military wife"" (Dobrofsky and Batterson 677). Sinha recounts how his wife had rightly decided to stay back in the cantonment during the war with China in 1962. Very approvingly, he writes, "I am glad that my wife took this decision because it had a good effect on the soldiers' families" (196). The women in the army have internalized their roles to such an extent that they are rarely contested. At the same time, it cannot be denied that a strong community feeling exists and the sense of bonding is crucial in times of war. If male camaraderie and bonding are essential for withstanding the horrors on the battlefield, then a corresponding female bonding is necessary on the home front. A war is a crisis that throws up leaders on the battlefront as well as the home front. If the commanding officer is to lead his troops from the front on the battlefield, his wife is expected to lead by example the women in her regiment whom she addresses with propriety as "my ladies". While male camaraderie has been widely written about, female solidarity has seldom been mentioned. For an example of the former, let us take a look at Mussolini's war diary which was published in
installments in *Il Popolo d'Italia* from 1915-17. It exalted war as a fusion of classes, a "people's war". He remarks, "I have noted with pleasure, with joy, that the most cordial camaraderie resides between officers and soldiers. The life of continual risk binds souls together" (qtd. in Forgacs and Nowell-Smith 132).

From the dormant nationalism of Amar Singh's diary to the transnational nationalism of Lakshmi Sahgal's memoir, we have with Sinha's memoir, finally arrived at the notion of political nationalism. *A Soldier Recalls* endorses the idea of a strong, independent, sovereign nation-state with a clearly demarcated territory. The problematic issue however is the author's plea for a closer relationship between the military and politics. This would be an undesirable development, harmful to the democratic tradition of the Indian nation. In fact, although Sinha makes such a plea, he disapproves, as we have noted, the politicization of the Pakistan army. The text fails to resolve this contradiction. The two contraries coexist in an irreconcilable, aporetic moment.

Sinha describes war from the staff officer's point of view and not from the field officer's. But he does not fail to indulge in creating the image of the hateful other. Such an image-building exercise is absent in accounts of the Chinese war, an example of which we shall see in the following section.

V

In this section, we take up two books for analysis. The selection of these memoirs does not adhere to the periodization of this study nor are they conventional memoirs. They are first person accounts of wars in which the
writers were participants. They do not trace the writers' life stories.

Brigadier J P Dalvi's *Himalayan Blunder* is a first person account of the Sino-Indian conflict. Dalvi had fought in the war and had been taken prisoner and held in captivity in Tibet by the Chinese for seven months. It is included in this study in order to have an "insider" point of view of the war. The Chinese war is the background to Chetan Anand's *Haqeeqat*, which we will deal with in detail in the next chapter. Maj Gen Lachhman Singh's *The Indian Sword Strikes in East Pakistan* is a participant's account of the Indo-Pak war in 1971, which also forms the background to J. P. Dutta's film, *Border* to be taken up for detailed analysis in the next chapter. A reading of the above war accounts therefore cannot be avoided. It would provide us with an opportunity to compare and contrast primary/secondary discourse and tertiary discourse, which frames the analysis of this study.

*Himalayan Blunder* is a long account of the ineptitude of the political class and the arrogance and inefficiency of some of the senior army officials. The book is an autopsy report of the 1962 war. The book is dedicated to all ranks of 7 Infantry Brigade who died in the Battle of the Namka Chu in October 1962. The Indian jawan is the unquestioned hero of the book. As Dalvi puts it, "the theme of the book is the steadfastness of the Indian soldier in the midst of political wavering and a military leadership which was influenced more by political than military consideration. The book records their valour, resolution and loyalty – qualities which are generally forgotten…" (xvii). Dalvi is appreciative of his troops for their valour, adaptability and cheerfulness in the face of adversity. The Sikh troops of Punjab regiment, used to eating *rotis* lived on rice and salt for five days without complaining.
Dalvi's deep and genuine concern for his troops comes across in the book.

The author laments the total lack of understanding of military affairs among the political class. Appointments to senior positions in the army were made arbitrarily. Favouritism rather than merit was the criterion. The appointment of Lt Gen B M Kaul to senior posts was made due to his closeness to Nehru. The author blames Kaul for the faulty policies (Forward Policy) on China which ultimately led to the debacle of 1962. He notes, "Kaul's advancement was symptomatic of India's half-hearted and limited preparations for war with China" (94).

The book details the political miscalculations that led to the Sino-Indian conflict. An over-trusting Prime Minister with his coterie consisting of V. K. Krishna Menon and General Kaul completely ignored the alarm bells that were sounded by formation commanders in the Northeast. Further, the description of war carries long explanations of the strategy used, the difficulties faced by the troops, the topography of the area and so on.

Dalvi's account of senior officers in the book is noteworthy for its candour. He does not hesitate writing about the weaknesses of officers whom he had observed closely in his career. He unleashes a diatribe against General Kaul for his ignorance regarding the ground realities of war, his political clout, his unwarranted influence on the Prime Minister in policy decisions and so on. Similarly, Gens. Thapar and Sen also come in for sharp criticism for their incompetence in handling the 1962 war.

The dominant sentiment in the discourse of the 1962 war is that of humiliation. Betrayal by China, lack of political sagacity, the consequent poor performance of the army, and its impact on international relations – all
contributed to a deep sense of shame in the army as well as in the entire nation. Most of the literature of the Chinese aggression carries this sentiment. The collective sense of shame establishes the fact that the nation is an affective category. Sentiments, whether of joy or sorrow, anger or frustration, heighten the sense of community feeling. The sentiment of anger and humiliation runs like an undercurrent throughout the narrative, even if the focus is on the logistics and strategy of the war. We shall see in the next chapter how films mobilize such sentiments through melodrama.

Military memoirs and war accounts are also unwitting travelogues. The peripatetic lifestyle of a soldier gives him access to remote places and cultures. Dalvi’s description of the Monpas in Tawang in erstwhile NEFA (present Arunachal Pradesh) could easily qualify as ethnography. The geographical/cultural/linguistic diversity of the nation comes across in most military narratives. Anderson’s functionaries created a sense of community and nationhood during their journeys. Similarly, the Indian soldier has the unique privilege of experiencing people and places, not merely as a tourist, but by being a part of different milieu. He experiences the diversity and oneness of the nation in the course of his travels. Thus Dalvi’s account encapsulates the territoriality, affectivity and cultural plurality of the Indian nation.

In stark contrast to Dalvi’s narrative, Lachhman Singh’s account of the Indo-Pak war has the superior air of the victor. It reflects unequivocally the state’s agenda of political and military support for the erstwhile East Pakistan’s (present Bangladesh) upsurge of nationalism.

From the point of view of Pakistan, the upsurge was a revolt against
the state. The army participated in it through mutiny. Indian foreign policy 
legitimized the uprising as a manifestation of nationalistic spirit. Lachhman Singh's vocabulary endorses Bangladeshi nationalism. Some examples are: daring and nationalist-minded, burning with the fire of patriotism, heroic deeds of patriotism and so on. He does not deal with the vexed issue of one nation's freedom fighter being another nation's terrorist. An engagement with this problem could have been enlightening but the issue is overshadowed by the total legitimacy granted to the **Mukti Bahini**, the guerrilla group raised with Indian support to fight West Pakistani hegemony. I am not here contesting the legitimacy of the revolt. I am merely submitting that an engagement with the issue would have resulted in a more nuanced war account.

One of the imperatives of war discourse is to create an image of the enemy as evil. Lachhman Singh, who had commanded 20 Mountain Division, which is a fighting formation, had the opportunity to see and understand war from close quarters. He writes about corpses on the battlefield that indicate the extent of savagery of the enemy. Yet, he too exercises restraint in portraying the full fury of war. As he admits, "I have not described the frightful atmosphere of a battlefield while writing the battle accounts" (x). He describes the moral laxity of the army officers in Pakistan. He gives evidences of their lack of discipline and cowardice. India as a nation in this war account is represented as "the big brother" who was able "to help millions of poor and oppressed men win their freedom ..." (177). The filial implications of "the big brother" image are manifested in an indulgent attitude for the weaknesses of the enemy, rather than a completely denigrative stance. By contrast the film *Border* as we shall see in the following chapter indulges in
the politics of hate far more vigourously.

VI

Let us now turn our attention to what I have described as “outsider” literature. The Kargil war prompted a number of journalists to write accounts of the war based on their experience as reporters. The BBC notes that Harinder Baweja’s book, *A Soldier's Diary*, contains an “eye-witness account” and “extensive interviews with Indian soldiers” and is “based on confidential defence documents” (qtd. in Baweja 3). As we can see, any literature on military matters is assessed by keeping in mind authenticity as the main criterion. As “eye-witness”, Baweja is the privileged “seer”. Such ocular-centrism valorizes the “eye” over other sense organs as a means to truth; seeing is believing. The centering of the viewer in war discourse is of course facilitated by technology. Covering a war “live” on TV, for instance, is a technological feat. This makes the war journalist a privileged “seer” of the war. The relationship between the “eye” and “I” is therefore not difficult to understand. Both bear the stamp of authority. A first person account of a life or an event is more believable and truthful than third person accounts usually dismissed off as “hearsay” or fiction. Compared to the BBC review, the review in *The Hindu* is more cautious. It says, “To give a degree of credibility to her account, Baweja chooses the diary format to present her version of Operation Vijay. (qtd. in Baweja 4, emphasis mine). The subtext is that Baweja presents only one version, her own, which could be one among several, accuracy notwithstanding.

In her “Acknowledgements”, Baweja says, “For my generation of journalists, Kargil was the first taste of war. Covering it was exciting, full of
adventure and very frightening. At all times, the adrenalin kept running" (11).

The connotation of war as exciting, adventurous, dramatic is made clear in the designation of a battlefield as "war theatre." All war narratives have this double-sidedness to them. The horror of war is common knowledge to all. Yet, everyone loves a war. It unites a nation, brings to the fore buried feelings of patriotism, creates excitement in boring, monotonous lives, makes martyrs out of ordinary people and in today's era of what Miriam Cooke calls "postmodern wars", the journalist gets a good story to cover.

What could be the possible reasons for Baweja's choice of the diary form in which she adopts the persona of a soldier in the thick of action? The gendering of war narratives with their inherent dichotomy of battlefront/home front makes this female journalist take on a male persona. Also, as a journalist she is not an "insider" even if she is within the bounds of the space designated as the battlefield. The privilege of the "insider" status belongs solely to the man in uniform. Further, the category of soldier is not a homogenous one as it is thought out to be. A doctor in the army is also a soldier but when it comes to narrating a war, only the land forces can attain the "insider" status. Every officer who dons a uniform is a soldier but when it comes to narrating a war it is the infantry soldier who seems to be the authority. It is he who comes face to face or, to use military jargon, is in eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the enemy. The enemy who is generally a fuzzy and blurred character to others is familiar to the infantry soldier. It is he who has actually waged an armed encounter with him on the ground, which at its simplest is the definition of war. Since he has fought the war by this definition it is his right to tell the story of the war. Therefore, Baweja
assumes the persona of a male infantry soldier. She would be a “participant” in the Kargil war by Ranajit Guha’s definition of the term as one “involved in the event either in action or indirectly as an onlooker” (4).

Baweja wishes to give credibility to her account of the Kargil war in this book by claiming special access to official reports. The underlying assumption here is the truth-value of official documents considered by Ranajit Guha as “primary discourse.” He calls official literature as “primary discourse” which “is almost without exception official in character – official in a broad sense of the term. That is it originated not only with bureaucrats, soldiers, sleuths … but also with those in the non-official sector who were symbiotically related to the Raj, such as planters, missionaries, traders …” (3). In the present context such a symbiotic relationship exists between the state and the media. The former needs the latter for ideological dissemination and the latter depends upon the former for its content and critique.

At the same time, Baweja’s text also contains a critique of official reports. The misjudgement regarding the gravity and scale of intrusions in Kargil was evident in army documents like patrol reports. Thus the truth claims of primary discourse are circumscribed by the inadequacy of official documents. For example, “The official word, even two days after our arrival was that ‘some militants have crossed over’” (Baweja 25). “We are all here because of a typical army-style briefing. In tones terse and cryptic, we were told: ‘Some rats have come in.’” (Baweja 21). The reliance thus on official reports combined with a critique of it is what makes this text particularly interesting for me. It also reflects how our access to truth is constrained by the ambiguities of primary discourse and our compulsion to rely on them.
Examples of the inadequacy of official reporting abound in military literature. During the 1857 uprising, what British officers describe as Mutiny, there was the wife of a British sergeant known to all as “Mees Dolly” who was sympathetic with the “rebels”. She was killed for treason by the British. Most records of the uprising evade this episode, except for Field Marshall Henry Norman's record which says, “By the way, I must mention that a European woman was hung at Meerut, being implicated in the arrangements for the first outbreak on 10 May. The truth was she was hanged without trial for ‘egging on the mutineers’” (qtd. in Menezes 162). Conflicting official histories render dubious any claims to truth.

There is a whole semantic field within which the word “enemy” operates in Baweja's diary. The word “enemy” in the official reports used in the diary evolves from “rats” (21) to “militants” (25) to “infiltrators” (25) to “mercenaries” (27) to “regular soldiers” (27) to “mujahideen” (27). The narrator calls them “fanatical soldiers” (24). The almost naturalized link of the “enemy” with Islam and Islam with fanaticism is obviously at work here. The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 have spawned several hate sites on the Internet. For instance, the website www.makempay.com had pictures of the chief suspect, Osama bin Laden on a roll of toilet paper with the words, “you look flushed.” “We had to give the people something tangible, and some relief through humour,” said the web designer justifying these pictures (Times of India, 18 October 2001).

Carrying on with the discussion on semantics, it is interesting to note that the army’s characterization of action as operations, skirmishes, wars, etc., can at times lead to gross underestimation of the situation on the ground.
Baweja's diary records an incident in which a General was inaugurating a golf championship in the midst of the Kargil war. In army officialese, the Kargil war was characterised as a conflict, a description that indicates that the operation was not as serious as a war. This could to some degree have had an impact on the General's callous act that could have been devastating for the morale of troops and officers. The diary brings this out effectively. As the narrator reflects, "Pal apparently felt that life should go on as normal but what is so normal about being trapped in mountains, about being killed, this is war, isn't it?" (66).

Of the various ways of portraying the character of a soldier, one is to show the soldier as a victim of the politician's ineptitude. Baweja uses this "soldier-as- victim" paradigm consistently in her narrative. In this case, the army brass is also under attack. The narrator complains, "Convoys are getting hit and Lt Gen Krishan Pal is still insisting it is a 'localised affair.'" Entire villages have emptied out and yet, even now, we hear on All India Radio that defence Minister George Fernandes has announced that the infiltrators will be thrown out in 48 hours. Is there no end to this madness?" (38). Personal details intensify the pathos of war. The episode of Maj Adhikari's wife's letter lying unopened in his pocket is one such instance (54). The technique of weaving personal aspects of a soldier's life into war narratives is also used in war films as we will note in the next chapter.

Baweja being a journalist herself and Kargil being the first war that received wide media coverage, the diary has frequent references to radio, newspapers and television. The technologizing of war through advanced equipment also encapsulates the penetration of the media into a highly
guarded zone, normally marked as “out of bounds”. The limitations of the media however are equally glaring. It played a major role in whipping up an ultra nationalism. The report of the General inaugurating a golf championship was not highlighted in the press of a “country [that] has wrapped itself in a patriotic blanket” (Baweja 67). The soldier perceives the media as a morale booster. Uniformed soldiers cloistered in their cantonments who are invariably asked, “What do you do when there is no war?” were made household names by the media. Suddenly the nation had on its lips names of Sqd. Ldr. Ajay Ahuja, Lt. Saurabh Kalia, Lt. Col. R. Viswanathan and so on. “Overnight, we are no longer faceless men fighting a nameless war. Such reports lift our morale and ease some of the overbearing sense of futility that has engulfed us” (Baweja 73). The elisions in the media are made up for in the diary. The episode of the Major who refused to lead his company by feigning illness is a disjuncture in the narrative of the brave soldier.

The reification of the soldier as brave is a process integral to war literature. Patriotism is a virtue thrust upon the soldier. In reality, the battalion is the object of loyalty. The narrator admits, “Our jawans perform acts of incredible heroism despite being grievously wounded. It has nothing to do with patriotism or nationalism” (105). War brings out the best and the worst in human nature. What is constructed as “willingness to die for the nation,” in reality, may be a situation forced upon the one who chose the Armed Forces as a career. The attribute of “patriotic" for a soldier is axiomatic to say the least. However, the real picture is quite different. A soldier, more often than not, enrolls in the Army for pension, rather than out of patriotic feelings. After recruitment, he is trained with the assumption that nationalism is a sentiment
which can be aroused and nurtured over a period of time. Nationalism is presumed to be, to use Hans Kohn's words, "first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness ... the individual's identification of himself with the 'we-group' to which he gives supreme loyalty" (qtd. in Synder 246). Loyalty is thus fostered for the immediate "we-group", the battalion. The primordial sentiment of patriotism is then channelized towards loyalty to the nation. Patriotism, which may exist in the form of a special feeling for the land of one's birth, is converted to nationalism, which demands unquestioned belief in the sanctity of the nation. It is an artificial process that involves indoctrination right from recruitment, through peacetime training, culminating in the maintenance of high motivation levels in war. War calls for a state of preparedness to face severe physical and mental stress and strain. The futility and meaninglessness of war, unarticulated for fear of punishment, manifests itself in the form of low morale. To overcome this, war is characterized as a noble task and soldiers as heroes who fulfill the grand task of restoring peace and justice. Such a justification becomes crucial to erase the contradictions immanent in war. Ancient Hindu scriptures, the Bhagvad Gita in particular, cast war as Dharmayudh, which meant that war was a duty to be performed in order to reaffirm the triumph of good over evil.

Nationalism, coupled with the righteousness of war, endures as a powerful psychological force, not simply as love for the homeland and the urge to protect it, but rather as an ideology that legitimizes the essential brutality and immorality of war.

Loyalty to the nation is combined with a deep feeling of vindictiveness towards the enemy. As the narrator in Baweja's diary observes, "We have
seen our comrades die. The thirst for revenge grows stronger..." (105). Intense feelings of camaraderie or male bonding are prime movers in the time of war. In his memoir, B. M. Kaul reflects, "What makes men to (sic) face dangerous situations willingly? Is it temptation for promotion, possibility for an award for gallantry, recognition of good work in some other way, tradition, discipline, vision of glory, personal loyalty and devotion between individuals, or just patriotism? Perhaps a little of everything" (431-432). Male camaraderie is a component of war discourse that cuts across cultural barriers. In his Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War, William Manchester explains:

I understand ... why I jumped hospital that Sunday thirty-five years ago and, in violation of orders, returned to the front and almost certain death. It was an act of love. Those men on the line were my family, my home. They were closer to me than I can say, closer than any friends had been or ever would be. They had never let me down, and I couldn't do it to them. (qtd. in Elshtain 206)

The brutality and inhumanity of one's own soldiers is seldom alluded to in war accounts. Baweja's diary is an exception to this rule; perhaps its fictional nature gives it the liberty. It records the act of a jawan of 18 Garhwal battalion who sliced the head of a Pakistani jawan, which was later sent to the brigade Headquarters and pinned onto a tree trunk. Visitors including the division commander treated this as a trophy.

Some events described in Baweja's diary were not reported by the
media. This indicates the selective process at work in news reportage on television. The media highlighted the Pakistanis' disregard for the dead and our soldiers' humaneness in burying their dead with prayers recited by a maulvi. But what was evaded by the media, was the fact that "many of them [the enemy corpses] still lie on our peaks, flung into valleys and gorges by angry Indian troops. Even after killing all the enemy, our troops would go on a rampage knifing dead bodies" (Baweja 146).

*A Soldier's Diary* can be seen as an addition to the corpus of "secondary discourse," within which is imbricated the official point of view albeit with some critique, yet without radicalising it in any way. Baweja's persona's discourse is "unable to extricate itself from the code of counter insurgency" (Guha 26). There is no searching internal monologue about the relevance of war, no trace of sympathy for the soldier on the other side of the border, nor any concern for the impact of the war on the local population. The critique is restricted to the conduct of the politicians and senior army officers. That is to say, if they were efficient, the soldiers could have caused more destruction on the battlefield.

*The Soldier's Diary*, written soon after the Kargil war, contains the passions that are associated with war. It contributed to the jingoism of the time, which was a culmination of the growth and consolidation of a strong Hindu identity. Unlike most military narratives, Baweja's book remained on the best-sellers list for several months.

Two important issues arise from this long discussion of *A Soldier's Diary*. One, the gendered nature of war literature and two, the privileged position accorded to the insider. Now we need to examine whether the two
issues together provide a productive interpretive grid.

The gendering of war discourse, which has been examined in some detail so far, is only a stepping stone to the idea of a gendered nation. War discourse and militarism in the national polity valorize the idea of male aggression and female pacifism. The consequent structures of representation shape the perspectives and attitudes in the material world.

The privileging of the insider increases the insularity of war discourse. It denies entry to the outsider as s/he could threaten the inviolability of insider discourse. Such an alienation of the outsider rules out the possibility of a holistic understanding of the nation. The outsider in turn has to necessarily take recourse to insider perspectives to gain authority. Thus we see interdependency between insider and outsider discourses.

VII

In Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, after the troops disembark and look for their contact, they first encounter a TV news crew led by the director Coppola himself getting mock footage for the evening US news. They are shouted at:

Don't look at the camera! Just go by like you're fighting. Like you're fighting. Don't look at the camera! This is for television.

Just go through, go through.

Coppola's film was based on the Vietnam War, the first to be brought live into American homes. The coverage helped to generate anti-war sentiment to the extent that it had an impact on policy decisions. Years after Vietnam, the US realised that one of the main reasons for losing the war was its inability to control the media (*Sunday Herald*, 10 September 2000).
end of the war came largely due to the lack of public support.

In India, the telecast of the Kargil war brought an altogether new dimension to a nation’s self-perception and its glorification of its soldiers. The entry of Barkha Dutt, the STAR TV correspondent into a bunker in Kargil, was a groundbreaking step towards spectacularizing war on Indian television. The live yet represented nature of the telecast was brought home through carefully edited visuals. Most of the channels concentrated on manufacturing consent for the war. A profusion of visuals detailing the return of body bags from the icy mountains to weeping, yet proud family members and the military funerals provided by the regiments, formed part of the strategy for generating public approval. In the process, uncomfortable issues like intelligence failure, operational unpreparedness and the like were eclipsed. As Partha Chatterjee pointed out in a short, bold write-up in a daily, only “a diabolical mind” could imagine the human tragedy on the other side of the border as well. He dared to ask, “How then do we define our nationalism as ‘good’ and theirs as ‘bad’?” *(Times of India, 20 August 1999).*

The telecast created wide public support for the war. The Army Headquarters was flooded with letters from officers requesting to be posted in Kargil. Many saw it as an opportunity to serve the nation. Extensive coverage of Kargil in the print media with pictures of weeping widows helped to mobilize nationalist sentiment. An otherwise insular organization like the army, physically separate from civilians, was brought into the public domain. Investiture ceremonies telecast on TV and given front-page coverage in newspapers relived the gallant deeds of soldiers through citations. As Elshtain puts it, “War cemeteries and monuments meant the dead got to be
actors in civic life, serving to integrate a sense of ‘peoplehood’” (105).

Newspapers use explicitly glowing terms while reporting about a soldier’s deeds. Print media describes a soldier’s deeds in war with as much drama as possible. It uses visual imagery to help the reader to see the action. For instance, reporting about the exploits of Sipahi Imliakum, the reporter writes, “At an altitude of 15,000 ft, he crawled alone ahead of his platoon to kill the two Pakistani sentries paving the way for a smooth attack” (Express News Service, 21 October 2000). Small, personal details are given to highlight the man behind the soldier. “Though Major Aima had been granted leave to attend his wedding anniversary on 2 August 1999, he stayed behind to lead an operation to nab terrorists in the dense forests of Poonch sector” (Express News Service, 21 October 2000). Such a description helps to create sympathy for the obvious absentee character in this report, viz. the wife, later, a widow.

Even official accounts of war find it hard to stay away from the trope of war as adventure, excitement, an adrenalin-raising event. The Indian Navy’s attack on a well-defended Karachi harbour by a small flotilla of missile boats is described as “an exploit” (Kumar, Times of India, 5 December 2000). It is interesting to note that newspapers carried official records of the 1971 Indo-Pak war in the year 2000. After Kargil, there was a tremendous interest shown by the media in military affairs and war.

The Press narratives through allusions to veteran war writers establish a cross-cultural link in war narratives. A photograph of civilian population driven out of their homes in Danchuk in Drass sector due to shelling is
captioned "Fodder for Hemingway." It is an obvious allusion to the American author whose war novels like *A Farewell to Arms* and *For whom the Bell Tolls* are now considered classics of war literature.

One year after Kargil, the relatives are less celebratory of the sacrifices of their dear ones and more critical of the government for not nailing the culprits (Mishra Pandey, *Times of India*, 26 July 2000). This shows the ephemeral quality of a martyr's glory as well as the people's ability to critique governments for their handling of the war. The image of the army too is less flamboyant. It is seen as an intruder into a pastoral setting. "Temporary army positions dotted the valleys, where shepherds once used to graze their cattle" (*Times of India*, 2 December 2000). It is also represented as a disrupter of normal life. "Most journalists covering Operation Vijay were holed up in Hotel Siachen where not even running water was available. The hotel owner told us that the water problem began a few days ago when a water tank in the town was hit by a shell" (*Times of India*, 2 December 2000). This anecdote captures perfectly the meaning of Hobsbawm's words, "War is a disruption and destruction of the order of life and labour" (128, emphasis original).

The print media has also to some extent played its role in anti-war campaign. The paradox is that often military people speak the language of peace on the assumption that no one knows the bitter truth of the brutality of war than them. Air Marshall Asghar Khan in the Pakistani paper, *The Nation*, says, "We realise that spending our meagre resources on the well being of our people and not on building a powerful war machine will bring strength and prosperity to Pakistan" (Reprinted in *Times of India*, 2 June 1999). Gen Musharraf in his press conference (extensively covered on TV and in print)
after his visit to India for the Agra summit in May 2000 also emphasized that as a soldier, he knew the horror of war far better than anyone else. A hard-hitting article by Suhel Seth castigated the politicians and the bureaucrats who play with the lives of soldiers (Times of India, 20 July 1999). The Intelligence failure leading to the Kargil conflict was highlighted by the Press but not pursued beyond a point as it was caught in the high-pitched patriotic fervour that the war had generated. The popular weekly India Today brought out a Kargil exclusive. The cover page had snow clad mountains with soldiers in snow gear trudging uphill. At the bottom of the cover page were the words, "On the Spot Report." The magazine sent two reporters to Kargil one year after the war in winter, as “the great thrill of journalism is to be part of an experience, to taste the moment” (Vinayak, India Today, 21 February 2000, emphasis mine). But they returned after discovering that there was far less thrill and adventure than they had imagined. Sometimes, war can also be a lonely, monotonous affair. Standing sentry on remote peaks in inhospitable terrains, both the mind and the body are in a state of distress. “Its like solitary confinement with a few perks thrown in, says a Major at a forward post” (Vinayak, India Today, 21 February 2001).

The quality of immediacy is the most important of all in print media. Topicality raises the market value of a newspaper. We have noted that newspapers reporting on the Kargil war resonated with stereotypical constructions of the soldier during the war. This was done to boost the morale of the troops in the forward areas and their families back home. The newspapers undertook to critique the war only a year after it was fought.

We have noted, in this chapter, the evolution of the idea of nation.
From Amar Singh's focus on the local/regional, the idea has evolved to India as a nation-state, as exemplified in the narratives of Sinha, Dalvi, Lachhman Singh and Baweja. In between, we have also noted one of the earliest narratives of transnationalism in Sahgal's memoir.

The phenomenon of war too has evolved from the medieval battles (Boxer Rebellion in Amar Singh's diary) to limited war (Sino-Indian and Indo-Pak conflicts in Dalvi and Lachhman Singh respectively) to postmodern war (Kargil conflict in Baweja). The link between the kind of war fought and the stage in the evolution of the nation can now be established. Medieval battles belong to the pre-national era when feudalism was the dominant social and political structure. Limited war may be equated with a mature sovereign nation-state. Postmodern wars inevitably relate to advances in technology and globalization.

In conjunction with a study of the evolution of the nation, we also tried to examine the representation of the soldier, war and its dynamics, and the construction of the nation. To do so, we divided military literature into insider and outsider literature. We have noted that insider literature with the benefit of hindsight (Dalvi and Sinha, especially) contest certain state policies. Outsider literature, on the other hand, has proved to be almost entirely a statist vehicle in the time of war. In the next chapter we will examine the representation of the nation in war films from popular Hindi cinema.
Notes

1 The British granted King’s Commission to Indians in the Army after a protracted debate between Lords Curzon and Kitchener. Before this, they were only given Viceroy’s Commission and these officers were called VCOs (Viceroy’s Commissioned Officers).

2 Women were inducted into the post-independence national army only as late as mid 1980s. As doctors and nurses, they have been in the army since independence. Gen. S.F. Rodrigues brought women into the army in the service branches. The army is divided into Arms and Services, i.e., combat and non-combat formations. For example, the infantry, artillery, armoured corps, etc. are arms and Ordnance Corps, Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, etc. are services. It is of interest to note that the entry of women in the army coincided with the sharp fall in men joining the army. Rather than being a progressive move, it was a clever ploy on the part of the army to make up for the shortfall of approximately 12,000 officers. This fact is corroborated by Sinha’s research. He says in his memoir, “Defence Services were very low down in their [the youth’s] choice for a career. I had also sent questionnaires to some of our senior serving and retired personnel, to enquire whether they would like their sons to follow them in the Defence Services … the bulk of them replied in the negative” (219). Women are inducted only in the officer cadre, not as troops unlike in some armies in other parts of the world. Women are still given only Short Service (SS) Commission (five years) and not Permanent Commission (PC) (fifteen years). The social construction of women as less committed than men to a career, unlikely to stand the
rigours of army life, more inclined to marry and start a family and so on are the assumptions underlying these differences. The phenomenon of women in the army is too recent in India for any serious studies to have been conducted on the impact of women's entry into the traditionally all-male world. Yuval-Davis observes that most women join the army "to empower themselves, both physically and emotionally" (102). Elizabetta Adis endorses this view by showing in her study of women in the army that women gain economically both individually and collectively by becoming soldiers (qtd. in Yuval-Davis 102).

3 Lt. Gen. S.K. Sinha was superceded by Gen. A.K. Vaidya in 1983. He was seen as having political connections with Jayaprakash Narayan, who was responsible for spearheading a nation-wide opposition to the Emergency imposed by the Prime minister, Indira Gandhi. Sinha resigned as Vice Chief of Army Staff. This issue had caused a national controversy, which was debated in Parliament. In bar gossip, officers used to say Sinha was not a "yesman." Parenthetically it may be added that there is a joke in the army that a good soldier is one who can say, "Yes Sir, Sir three bags full, Sir and all bags for you Sir" in an obvious parody of the nursery rhyme, "Baa Baa black sheep, have you any wool?"

4 "Forward Policy" entails the advancement of troops in order to evacuate them from territories they have wrongly occupied. This strategy can be employed in war only when there is a high level of operational preparedness. As this was lacking in 1962, Dalvi opposes the policy.

5 The Intelligence agencies had failed to provide vital information with regard
to the intrusion of enemy ranks even in 1947 when Pakistan invaded Kashmir. Unknown numbers of armed tribesmen were believed to be advancing into Kashmir. Pakistan, even before Kargil, had denied the involvement of regulars in the aggression. In 1947, Indian troops had captured two Pakistani regulars of 6/13 Frontier Force Rifles.
Works Cited


