CHAPTER III

METHOD OF SKIPPING:

THE POLITICS OF MAINSTREAM THEORIES ON INDIAN WOMEN AND NATION

The main objective of this chapter is to catalogue the intrinsic inadequacies of the mainstream theory produced by both feminists and post colonialists (PC from hereafter) on the subject of Indian woman and nation. The main problem usually emanates from their refusal to acknowledge the heterogeneous character of Indian women. Such a negation consequently results in highlighting the priorities and the realities of upper caste Hindu women. As a result only privileged women are projected as Indian women and all the theories as well as national policies and images get centered on them. Most of the celebrated theories and studies on the Indian woman suffer from this crucial limitation. Historically they have evolved various techniques to produce this kind of lopsided theories. One prominent among them is the 'method of skipping'. With this academic strategy they tend to skip various realities of Dalit women even when they make explicit appearances in the processes of culling the archives or in their itinerary of academic consciousness. Such a practice is painfully evident even from the times of the political processes of mainstream nationalist movement (this argument is elaborated in the next chapter). The present feminist and postcolonial scholarship are inclined to nurture most of their sophisticated theories from such epistemic legacy. As a result they remain repudiatory and empty for Dalit women.

The present chapter is designed to combat this academic practice by deconstructing some of the prominent texts, which make use of this method of skipping. The main aim is to uncover how upper caste scholarship has been denying a rightful place to Dalit women as a national subject both at the level of theory and politics. The core aim of this chapter is to prove that the main theoretical projects of postcolonial studies are untrustworthy. The prime concern of post colonialists has been to target the western theoretical equipment as essentially false and inadequate to address eastern
realities. They tend to exhume what they call native tools of historiography to come up with their own theories which they argue can better represent the Indian reality. The main aim of the Dalit feminist scholar is to explain how such native claims and academic strategies are predicated on excluding certain inessential others like Dalit women.

Mainstream Theories Existing on Indian women and Nation:

There are various feminist theories existing on nation produced from the PC angle. Nation for most of the authors implies an aftermath of the colonial phase. A basic feature of most of the mainstream writers on women and nation is that they essentially locate the problem in the so-called domestic sphere. Many have explored how the idea of family is extended to the idea of nation. In other words they tried to explain how the idea of home\nation are put together to achieve the purpose of stabilizing the family and also the dominant notion of the nation. Many of the mainstream feminists have tried to explain the politics of seeing nation and family as identical by the male nationalists. They have argued that this served the preliminary purpose of imagining the women of the nation as women of the family. Their main argument is that women were glimpsed as the reproducers of the nation.

Some have tried to look at the women's participation in nationalist movements. Some of these writers elaborated the participation of women in nationalist movement. But they include only upper caste women's struggle as women's and nationalist struggles. Jana Everett Mattson gave a comprehensive picture on the Indian women's movement where, she observes that it was led and dominated by the upper caste women. However, she does not look at the implications of such politics on the other women in any detail. Her work is more mostly a chronological compilation of the Hindu women's movement than a critique of it. Such preferences leave no room for other equally important dynamics of colonialism like its caste and class configurations. Such texts thus fail to take serious note of the absence of Dalit women in the nationalist historiography. This is much rampant in the literature produced by the Indian women. Such explicit
partialities have given rise to the most ironic features of the mainstream feminist literature in India. Crucial among such features is that even those women writers who express unequivocal faith in liberal theories of women’s emancipation first and foremost make it a point to acknowledge M.K. Gandhi as the forerunner of the Indian women’s rights, though, in fact he stood firmly against any such idea. He never entertained the idea of any rights for women in the modern liberal sense. Why and how a majority of the Indian writers on the subject of women, who express ardent faith in liberal values, acknowledge Gandhi as a champion of women’s rights defies comprehension. This is especially so because Gandhi not only never believed in women’s emancipation and rights but also time and again suggested to women that ‘home’ is their rightful place. Curiously these women never take note of Ambedkar’s contribution to the Indian upper caste women’s movement despite the fact that he went to the extent of resigning his ministerial post because the then cabinet was not passing the bill on women’s rights which was promised before independence. There is also another section of Indian women’s writers namely the Marxist feminists. They are very keen to prove that Gandhi was very much against women’s interests but they too do not acknowledge Ambedkar’s involvement. Because allowing such space for Ambedkar would be like giving centrality to the caste question instead of class. Thus both Ambedkar and the Dalit movement are denied due acknowledgement and gratitude from the upper caste feminist women community of India.

**Feminism and PC Theory:**

Collaborations that feminism makes with PC theory is very fluid since it happens at the level of theory, which is abstract. Recently upper caste feminist scholarship has agreed about the reality of this understanding. Santhosh Gupta thus writes that the Indian feminists are making a two fold strategic interventions. One is that they inspect PC theory that is being posed in universalist form and also scrutinize the universalist feminist conceptualization of the Euro-American brand that pushes postcolonial women into the western woman’s others. Though this article starts with Spivak’s meaningful rejection of West’s monolithic conception of a Third World, the essay fails to see the question of
heterogeneity of the third world in a detailed way. It has consciously focused on the dangers of the western feminists perceiving the third world woman as their object of study and consequently as their other. The second part of the essay deals with the feminist interventions, which explore the socio cultural concerns of women writers in terms of serious aesthetic principles. The final part of this small essay explains the use of postmodern frame for the PC feminist interventions. Thus nowhere in this essay do we find a criticism against the major assumptions that PC feminism transmit. Spivak warns against the production of a new object of knowledge- the third world woman in the western academy. She warns that the third world academicians should not be collaborative with the process of a new Orientalism. She focuses her attention on to the appeasing methods of the West, which allows the aspiring elites of the third world to have a pinch of the center. This is done in a novel way, by lending disciplinary support for the theories of the elites. This is a rather revolutionary and direct attack and confession that many PC intellectuals never would like to acknowledge openly. Sara Suleri reads the multiplying subjectivities of mothered women as inseparable from the mechanisms of metropolitan academy. She investigates the 'uneasy selfhood' accorded to postcolonial woman. She argues that postcolonial feminism recommends a substitute that is conceptually parochial and scales down the postcolonial condition in order to envelop it within North American academic terms. On the whole it is difficult to find a feminist theory that lists itself as particularly postcolonial. But it is also equally important to realize as argued above that, the contemporary mainstream feminist theory goes hand in glove with Indian PC theory, in the sense that they make use of almost the same conceptual baggage. Studies on nation became a major site of academic proclivity. Almost all of the recent feminist literature deals with the question of nation. Even so there is very little literature on Dalit woman in these stories of nation building as if she is recalcitrant to this nation\mother\inner sphere analogy (this is the analogy which most of the PC and feminist thinkers apply to analyze the women's question vis-a-vis the nation). Consequently it is almost settled as a norm to see the Dalit woman neither as a national subject nor as one who participated in nation building. What is more tragic about the mainstream feminists and post colonialists of India is that they, usually, establish their theories by nullifying certain truths regarding Dalit woman. The present chapter would be
focusing on some of these theories and how they construct the notion of Indian woman by posing truths in a neutral sense regarding the issue of caste. In other words this chapter tries to explain how the upper caste theories on theme of 'Indian women and nation' flushed the academia with theories built on the complete negligence of caste factors. When caste as a central system occupies a marginalized status in their theories, most of the truth claims that they make become largely predicated on the marginalisation of the Dalit communities or end up in being totally false. Deconstruction of the following texts would explain how the 'method of skipping' in the writings of PC and feminist texts deny the rightful status for Dalit women in their theories.

1. Women writing in India:

The editors start this introduction by explaining the problems that a woman face in bringing out a literary text in a male dominated world. The editors elucidated the case of Bangalore Nagaratnamma. They elaborately discussed her difficulties in bringing out a text called Radhika Swantanam. Nagaratnamma's case is neatly laced by various historical facts. But finally the main contradiction is located in the category of gender, in the discrimination between men and women, and thus in biology. One should have no objection to any of these arguments but the problem rises when the mainstream feminist ideology seeps into the texts as ultimate truths. They narrate it in a down-to-earth tone and take most academic notions for granted. Another very common point that most of the upper caste scholars on colonialism make is to depict colonialism as a harbinger of various unwanted changes in the traditional terrain. They emphasize the emergence of a new rigidity especially regarding certain practices with which people were earlier complacent. The demarcation between the wanted and unwanted women, they explain, emerged with the arrival of the Victorian purrincical ideology that accompanied colonialism. They do not try to focus simultaneous on the more serious and rooted problems like the heterogeneity and segregation that existed between the women of different communities in India. The grand myth, which was fed into the conscience of the Hindus, the infamous Sita Vs Surpanaka model, is forgotten forever by them.
The editors try to illustrate only the sad fall of versatile women like Muddupalani with the surfacing of redefined moral standards embellished with the economic plunder of the country by the colonialists. Their argument goes like this "Large numbers of women artists, mainly folk singers and dancers, who depended on wealthy households for patronage, but also court artists like Muddupalani were driven into penury and prostitution" (8). However, the remaining text proceeds to focus more on the tragedy of the demise of the rich (probably upper caste) devadasis than on the lower caste women artists (the editors do not explain to the reader about the caste backgrounds of these women). This is evident when they included the autobiography of Rasundari in the Bengali Literature section but not Binodini. Binodini’s case certainly craves for some space in these texts because it’s more direct and brutal testimony to Indian patriarchy (in the sense that she was subjected to more brutal form of patriarchy for being a woman from the lower class and a prostitute).

In the next paragraph they write on the politics of retrieving the golden-age myth unleashed by the Oriental scholarship. The editors agree that the Aryan golden age of India is a myth, which was deliberately manufactured by the empire and the nation. But the editors do not try to tell us that such changes did not result in altering positions of the women in the social hierarchy. Well, it does not mean that there were no remarkable changes at all during the British colonial period, which affected the Indian women. There took place all the natural changes that happen due to the occurrence of a totally different political regime. But the changes are not meant to be the same for all communities of women. More precisely the argument here is that British colonialism meant different things to different communities of women and any generalization premised on the denial of caste factor thus proves to be totally prejudiced and false.

Another point that they try to clarify is that though the Hindu women of that age were not exempt from the dominant ideologies of class and caste still these categories of women deserve separate attention. They explain, in a rather detached tone:

Middle-class women, white women, upper-caste Hindu women might find that their claims to "equality" or to the "full authority" of liberal individualism are at the expense of the working classes, the nonwhite races, dalits, or Muslims. For, as we shall see, given the specific practices and discourses through which individualism took historical shape in India, these groups had to be defined as other in order that the Self might gain identity (35).
Thus the problem is located by the editors in the inherent pitfalls of liberal individualism. Thus they evade the upper caste women’s responsibility for the constant resistance that they showed towards the Dalit woman in their politics and theories. The other feature of this academic project is the strategy of snatching away the banner ‘Indian women’ for them and still not bothering to include and make the realities of other women also central to their themes.

They editors also perceive Orientalism as a field by which the nation and the empire tried to produce some ideology. They reviewed the ideas of Max Muller, Clarisse Blader, James Mill and Katherine Mayo. They disclaimed both the romanticist views of the Ideologists (they prefer to call the Indian Orientalists as ideologists) and the incensed accounts of Indian culture given by ideologues like James Mill or Katherine Mayo. Both of the accounts are created to gratify western imaginations. They look at Only the historiographical prejudices, imperialists’ interests and patriarchal rivalries behind such accounts. Therefore the editors write, “[T]he women’s question remained fixed into remarkably similar schemes as one patriarchy confronted the other” (49). Thus the problem for them is again the problem resulted by situating the Indian women’s question as an issue of contestation between the Indian and the British imperial patriarchies. Their reading of the texts of Altekar, R.C.Dutt reveals that these editors’ ways of writing history can only remain untouched by the realities of Dalit woman. Otherwise they would not have been able to produce such huge volumes without considering the implications of the pejorative perspectives that these two male hindutva nationalist historians applied against the other women. The editors manage to exclude the painfully dominant notions that these nationalists expressed in their texts. They only care to point out the notion of the ‘golden age’ of Hindu women that the Hindu nationalists propound and the male politics underpinning it. For instance in the case of the text of Altekar they write, "Altekar traces a steady decline from this golden age to the shadowy valleys of the period before the Muslim invasions" (49). The editors have effectively skipped Altekar’s attack on Dalit women as the main reason behind the great fall of Hindu women. They had seen the Indian nationalists fight as a mere cultural contestation against the superior imperial
patriarchy. They failed to also see it as a *caste* fight launched against the *other* communities to curb their new attempts for liberation. But unfortunately instead of being faithful to their own feminist ideology the editors also very often are get lured by the sentiments of mainstream nationalism. Though such a tilt towards the sentiments of nationalism has saved them from being simply branded as reproducers of the western feminism, it made their theory float away from the Dalit women who have different versions to narrate about Indian nationalism and the ideologues mentioned here. Altekar and Katherine Mayo's views on *lower caste* women are deconstructed in the following chapter. It shows various crucial realities that these editors effectively skipped in their deconstruction of the same texts.

They continue their skillful exclusions of *other* women throughout the text by saying "we would have liked, had space permitted to introduce" (XXV, 1). The problem here is not of space. Seeing the issue of locating the Dalit women in the theory as a problem of space is to relegate her question and identity as additive to the women's question. It also supports a notion that the histories of *upper caste* women can be produced without touching the historic realities of Dalit women. But the historic facts present us with totally different realities, which very often situate these two communities in contradictory and clashing planes.

**Volume 2:**

The second volume focuses on the notion of the nation. The editors acknowledge that English education played a determining role during the British colonial period in liberating women. They wrote on the "doubly other" condition of the Hindu women faced during colonialism and the specific tensions that arise due to her ensnarement between public and private realms and the eventual effects of these tensions on their writings. According to them the overwhelming presence of Orientalism has resulted in marginalizing the most recent native literatures.
It is also not to be forgotten that most of the nationalists drew heavily upon Orientalists’ views for their arguments. Therefore one should suspect the hands of the upper caste not the imperialists behind it.

A great portion of the introductory part of this volume is again dedicated to the politics that surrounded the text Radhika Swantanam. They write. "Within the span of twenty years sadir and its lower-caste practitioners had been replaced by a sanitized, ancient, almost mystic dance-force, which provided the spiritual basis of Indian femininity and nationhood" (14). Are the rich devadasis and the lower caste practitioners mentioned here the same? Were the art practices of the lower caste women getting equal patronage and respect like their upper caste counterparts? Definitely no! It is impossible to imagine a respectable outlook and patronage for the Dalit women in a land, which is ruled by cheap politico-religious ordinances. If the editors had focused on the pre-colonial status of Dalit woman vis-à-vis the Hindu society then they would have escaped the lure of sounding nationalist here and there by putting all the responsibility for the degradation of Indian women on British colonialism. This would also have explained that colonialism not only plundered but also shuffled traditional boundaries causing some of its socio-political set ups to disappear not necessarily with bad results. The editors failed to connect the realities of the pre-British colonial India with that of British colonialism. Like the PC theorists these editors also start their narrations abruptly. They either totally ignore the pre-British colonial Indian realities or portray them as acquiring completely negative characteristics due to the negative impact of British colonialists. Though there are occasions where they could not escape mentioning oppressive pre-British colonial realities, they tend not to emphasize them much. This is where lies the most crucial difference between a Dalit feminist theory and the mainstream feminist or PC theory.

Lower caste women are brought here to explain the degree of deterioration but the actual story and the subjects of the story continue to be the upper caste women. The relative proportion of lower caste women (who had to degrade themselves into demeaning occupations) to those of upper caste women (in the same occupations) is still to be researched. Moreover, it is too hasty to compare the art forms and practices of the
lower caste women with the upper caste women for both categories did not share the same kind of respect and patronage. This argument is proved in the following deconstruction of the essay of Sumantho Banerjee on lower caste Vaishnava women. The deconstruction of this essay also proves that these practices were derogatory and that they were creations of the upper castes. Another important point that the deconstruction would try to prove is that they were created by the upper castes much before the British colonialists launched their cultural mission.

If the issues of upper caste women were different the treatment that they met with would also be different. For instance, both the categories of women would have witnessed the demise of the old patronages (however humiliating and demeaning these may have been for the Dalit women) but it did not automatically result in the same changes. The upper caste women would have shifted to the acceptable art fields like drama, movie or mystified dance forms or carefully treaded into domesticity. But the Dalit women did not necessarily meet with the same fate. Unlike the upper caste devadasis the Dalit devadasis were not as potent rivals to the monogamous and endogamous families of the middle classes. Therefore it is unlikely to believe that the Dalit women also faced the same amount of release or fall that the upper caste devadasis experienced.

What surprises a Dalit feminist is the way they started their chapter on nation without raising foundational questions like: 'Why the Indian nation is defined in the way it has been defined'? The second volumes contain a discussion on nation, which explain us how the editors proceed in their argument. They agreed with Ambedkar's view that nation defines both fellowship and anti-fellowship. Nation is always continuous imagined. In this process the state, the editors write, after independence selected anthropology as the language in which it set to sort out the problems of the people. They observe that due to this the nation shouldered the baggage of imperialism. In this process nation also re-empowered it, reproducing in its policies and authorities the same manipulative imperialist purposes. They conclude that, 'The politics of caste as well as the politics of gender were not only denied by the new dispensation; they were also
contained" (60). Though caste is treated on these lines it became inevitable for the Dalit communities to learn to negotiate within these boundaries. Impeccable political solutions were not available to the Dalits.

Usually most of the writings, which deal with the postcolonial state and the Dalits, argue that lower castes (read SCs or STs) were contained systematized by a policy of enumeration. Secondly they believe that Dalit movement is relegated to the politics of reservation (this attitude is evident at least in the texts that are mentioned in the present dissertation). This is what all they want to say about it. Apart from cheapening the Dalit movement's historic efforts to get even this small portion of rights (reservations) what they overlook is the Indian academia's failure to offer centrality to the Dalit movement. If the Indian nation-state has taken to anthropological language and attitude in order to attend to the lower caste question, how else could it have done so powerfully and fundamentally except through education and academics?

One can also come across a brief but detailed record of the Indian women's movement that was launched by the upper caste women during the British colonial period in this volume. But startlingly there is not a single line on the caste prejudices and the cheap comments that these women passed in their anxiety to secure privileges for themselves. There is no single line about how this movement and its notions of women's rights were premised on the ostracism of the Dalit women as political subjects in this volume. Such a cool reading of this movement looks more conspicuous since this volume is a recent one and there already exist a few texts, if not many, which had already proven that this movement was a particularly upper caste and class one. This text's overlook on the caste and class configuration of first first wave of Indian women's movement shows a total lack of introspection and self-critique of feminist politics in India.

In the concluding paragraph the editors write that they have taken up the study of this movement (women's movement) as one of the three strains in the cultural politics of 20th century India (the remaining two being the Swadeshi movement and the Progressive Writer's Association). They write that this configuration allowed them "to chart the
narrative and the symbolic prefiguring of what became a new executive centrality and its constituency" (116). By this time it has become clear from their inference that the women's texts/politics both fed the "course of dominance" (initiated by and through male-led nationalist politics). The editors try to claim that these upper class women apart from feeding the course of dominance through their texts/politics have also "deflected and refigured that course" (116). It is definitely a fascinating experience to learn that the upper caste women's movement was both a participant in the course of dominance and a force that operated to avert and redirect that very course. But the "domain of the Imaginary" that they have tried to sometimes "endorse" and some times "dismantle" is too blurring to understand. One will be able to understand their version of this "Imaginary" only when it is clear what they were standing for and what they were not standing for. It is very clear that some of them were standing for the upper caste women's rights (the group led by Ms.Subbarayan). But one is not able to grasp what they (both the groups of women who joined mainstream nationalist politics and the one, which bonded to women's rights politics) were not standing for in this text. Only the non-biased reading of the archival sources unfolds the dimensions of what they were not standing for. Such a question and enquiry occupies a decisive space in one of the chapters of this thesis, "Understanding Protective Discrimination". The attempt is to put to question the upper caste women movement's capacity to deflect the ascendant nationalism. The point is not that this movement did not enjoy any autonomy but that they employed this autonomy neither to deflect nor to resist but to collaborate with the upper caste imagination of the nation. Both the groups of women (led by Radhabai Subbarayan and Sarojini respectively) contributed almost the same versions of imagination, and never contradicted each other, at least regarding the issue of caste. For instance the Mrs.Subbarayan group resented and opposed the idea of the lower castes being entailed to the same right of reservation, which they were fighting for. It does not need reminding that the major bone of contention between the mainstream nationalists and the Dalit nationalist movement was over the issue of political rights. The editors failed to mention these prominent anti-Dalit tendencies displayed by this so-called first wave of Indian women's movement. The 'methods of skipping' that is adopted in these volumes thus finally lands these texts in unfair and abstract conclusions. The only solace
is that this excerpt of the Volume II is titled "Women's Organizations and Liberal Nationalist Feminism" by which a Dalit feminist can console herself that it carried all the natural limitations that any liberal politics perforce does, so why feel betrayed about it.


This text is another example of writing cultural history on the British colonial times from a mainstream feminist point of view. The contributors have concentrated on the exclusions of women in the cultural histories of India. They have analyzed to what extent patriarchal colonialism and anti-colonial struggles restricted women's entrance into politics, and how the dominant historiographies debarred women subject from their enterprise. They insist that they would produce feminist histories since every aspect of truth, they explain, is gendered.

Sumantho baneerjee:

Sumantho Baneerjee in his nostalgic essay, "Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal" writes how the rift appeared in the cultural homogeneity of Bengali women of lower and middle classes with the introduction of education in the colonial period. By the end of the 19th century a new generation of women emerged with education and cultivated new cultural norms and displaced the Bengali women's popular culture. Bengali men’s attempts to prove their sexual morality to the British had thus swept the popular cultural forms of common Bengali women, and pushed the upper class women into certain cultural bhadralok modules. In this way it affected the concept of women's emancipation. Baneerjee understands this popular cultural property of lower class women as a rich asset, which addressed women's problems. He elucidates how such a culture gradually came to be perceived as vulgar in the eyes of the bhadralok educated men and women. Baneerjee concentrates on this cultural realm to prove how colonialism and modernity had displaced them. Like many postcolonial studies thus Baneerjee also locates the problem of the extinction of certain cultural forms in modernity, which accompanied colonialism."
Though the author offered due acknowledgement to the reality of the heterogeneous nature of the Bengali women communities in the initial part of his article he soon diverts the article to insist more on the liberal essence of these cultural forms and how they bonded women of different classes. In his own words:

The old popular culture which had rested on the social ties binding together women from different classes was discarded, and retained only by women of the lower social strata who did not relinquish their commitment to it as rapidly as the others. But finally, even they had to grasp the logic of an altered social world, and the old forms of women's popular culture withered.

The women who found their occupations in this culture were the *vishnavite* women who included widows of *kulin* Brahmins, prostitutes to *outcastes*. We need not go further to search whether *lower caste* women were there or not. Naturally they were there! Before we attempt to know how these forms were withered it is important to know why only these categories of women were exercising such cultural forms? Widows of *kulin Brahmins*, *prostitutes* and other despised women were never respected in this land's history. Why did the *lower caste* women have to be bunched with women like widows of *kulin Brahmins* who would be immediately cursed the moment they were seen, or the sex workers who were scared by the *householders* or the otherwise despised women? Why did the *outcaste* women have to choose their livelihoods along with the women of these much-hated categories? By definition *lower caste* women are not widows or prostitutes. Then how can one see their presence in such occupations as natural? Some more realities beg further examination in this essay.

First of all the author ought to problematise the overwhelming enumeration of *outcaste* women in such demeaning occupations. Let us assume that this degree of humiliation was attributed only with the advent of western Christian modernity and that these pre-modern cultural forms were rich forms in which these women took resort to castigate the sexual hypocrisies and male domination in the society of their times. Then why did not the non-widowed, non-prostituting hindu women also take to such occupations? If the author has to answer this question he has to shift the crux of the essay from how these forms disappeared to the question of internal fissures, which always
existed among the women of the land from the pre-British colonial period. He has then to proceed to know that all these pre-British socio, economic and political forms had powerful and violent intentions and dynamics attached to them. When we observe the nature of these cultural forms we can understand that such occupations were made available only to those inessential women who were less privileged than those who were allowed to enact only those roles, which were apt for essential women. That means there was already a negative and demeaning signification structured into such occupations even well before colonial Victorian values crept in. It could also be argued that such humiliations are encoded into these occupations since they are left for the lower caste women to perform.

Another level of enquiry should be how the vulgarity implicit in these art forms became a point of hatred for the upper castes in this particular moment of history. This was because the Hindu ruling class men became accountable to the colonial masters. They were in need to prove their moral credentials that they were capable to rule the land. They could thus gradually withdraw their support for these cultural practices. Since they were the deciders who left such jobs to lower caste women, they could have, when they banished it from their corridors, also extinguished these forms. This change was not genuine but a lopsided and carefully selected choice. They were careful in determining what was to be changed and what not, which people to be changed and which people not to be changed, which occupations to be reformed and which not. Still one more question peeps out here. Why were only such occupations left for the people who took to Vaishnavism? The answer is obviously that Vaishnavism too was an abandoned one.

Perhaps Baneerjee could not have written this article in any other fashion. The intellectual project of this book does not allow writing in the fashion that a Dalit feminist longs for. In the introduction of the book the editors have inserted a humble statement:

The essays are confined to the dominant Hindu community, largely in the north of India, and deal mainly with the middle classes. We feel that the exclusion of all other religious communities and of marginalized groups (dalit and tribal, agricultural and bonded labour) and the slender representation of women belonging to peasant and working class groups is a serious limitation because it is not possible to understand a dominant class or religious community without locating its relationship to other strata and religious groups (4).
As they have themselves accepted, it is definitely a serious limitation. It couldn't allow the lower caste woman to assume a central subject role in this intellectual writing—even when it is her own history or about her, as is the case of this specific essay.\textsuperscript{12} Even if they try to excuse themselves by taking resort of a generalization that "no anthology or even generalization about Indian women could hope to be representative"\textsuperscript{13}, it is evident that dalit woman could not have been represented in any other way than this in such lopsided versions.\textsuperscript{14} Any way the realization that no generalization about Indian women could be representative enough does not hinder them from committing certain generalizations always present in upper caste women's scholarship on Indian women.

Coming back to the question of internal fissures there is a more serious critique that Benarjee's essay has to face. It is Partha Chatterjee's article "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness"\textsuperscript{15} which has an illustration on Vaishnava women. Most of the minor sects in Bengal are called Vaishnava or semi-Vaishnava sects and the followers were predominantly from the lower castes. Partha Chatterjee gives a detailed time period of when all these sects got systematized as orthodox Vaishnavism. He writes, "Ramakrishna Chakrabarty suggests that caste rules began to be strictly applied after the historic festival held in Kheturi (Rajshahi) sometime between 1576 and 1582, which was attended by representatives of nearly a hundred Vaisnava groups from all over Bengal" (187). Soon after this festival this religious sect received the devotion of upper castes. The upper caste religionists grew angry about the deviant ways existing within it. They sought to reformulate it to suit their cultural practices. There appeared, as a result two groups, one, the Gaudiya Vaisnavas and the other, the low-caste J at Vaisnav (Vaisnava by caste). Partha Chatterjee examines the result of such segregation:

Indeed, a whole series of stereotypes of the jat vaisnav, combining the familiar prejudices of caste impurity with aspersions on their sexual morality, emerged to condemn the lower-caste converts beyond the pale of the orthodox Gaudiya Vaisnava sampraday. The sexual aspersions, in particular, derived from the simplicity of the marriage ceremony practised by the followers of most minor sects which explicitly rejected the injunctions of the Smritis; upper-caste Vaisnavas refused to regard these as proper weddings. Further, the sects were looked down upon for the refuge they often provided to widows (upper caste) and
abandoned women; it was believed that the women were engaged in illicit liaisons with cult-followers and used in orgiastic rituals, and the ranks of the sect were swelled by the children of such unsanctified unions” (188).

A footnote from the same essay goes on like this. "The slurs on the sexual reputation of the women followers of Vaisnava sects are legion. A popular saying has a Vaisnava woman declaring; ‘I was a prostitute first, a maid-servant later, and a procuress in between; now at last I am a Vaisnavi.’” (188).

According to this particular document it was between 1576 and 1582 that this religion got acceptance by the upper castes. A typical social process of separating these two streams of vaishnavism was launched immediately after this. This historical account thus explains that the resentment of the upper caste households against the lower caste Vasinava women was an explicit result of casteism of the upper castes. Many horrifying myths about the nature of the lower caste women got life as an integral strategy of this demarcation of women on caste lines as “moral” and “immoral”. Therefore, cheapening of these women started much earlier than the British cultural mission. It is not colonial feminine values impinging on the upper caste minds or the upper caste middle classes realizing the need to prove themselves as good boys fit to rule that was responsible for the demeaning of lower caste women. Thus Beneerjee's hypothesis and observations are not only inaccurate and mismatched with historic realities but his conclusions also lead to a myth that before the advent of British colonialists everything went well between the upper and lower caste women and that caste made no big skirmishes.

Uma Chakravarthy:

In the same book Uma Chakravarthy also writes a brilliant article on how the project of inventing tradition took place during the mainstream nationalist period. She argues that Indian nationalism had taken the role of religion and gave only a permitted role to upper caste women. They relegated their women to traditional roles. They were insensitive to the causes of all other women and even the identity of new women was predicated on the exclusion of other women. She hints at a crucial gap:
Vast sections of women did not exist for the nineteenth century nationalists. No one tried to read the ancient texts to see what rights the Vedic dasi and others like her had in the Vedic golden age. Recognizing her existence would have been an embarrassment to the nationalists. The twentieth century has continued to reproduce, in all essentials, the same kind of womanhood that the nineteenth century has so carefully, and so successfully constructed as an enduring legacy for us.\textsuperscript{16}

This reminder is definitely a powerful one but she also does not try to probe what indeed happened to the dasi in this essay. She only succeeds in strongly insisting upon the vitality of this question in the nationalist context. A reality that this dasi woman is still struggling to find a place in the Indian academy, as a subject is not noted in this essay. Unfortunately the dasi acquires only a footnotes status in this work though the title is oriented more towards her. But it definitely is an appreciable thing that Chakravarthy was able to at least mention it.

Partha Chatarjee:

Chatterjee's essay is a response to the self-posed question of the author: 'Why did the women's question get diminished in the last decade of 19th century?' Chatterjee explains that the nationalists (like the question of nationalism) too resolved the women's question by posing it as a question of difference than a question of identity with the West. He writes:

1 will argue, therefore, that the relative unimportance of the women's question in the last decades of the nineteenth century is to be explained not by the fact that it had been censored out of the reform agenda or overtaken by the more pressing and emotive issues of political struggle. The reason lies in nationalism's success in situating the "women's question," in an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state.\textsuperscript{17}

This question is also resolved like the question of autonomy of nationalist thought, by putting it in the inner domain. Thus the ideology of inner domain is the "sieve" through which the nationalists filtered western ideas. The colonialists perceived this as a problem of the backwardness and therefore the white man's burden or civilizing mission.
Chatterjee explains Hindu men’s response to such colonialists’ claim, “Indian nationalism, in demarcating a political position opposed to colonial rule, took up the women’s question as a problem already constituted for it: namely, as a problem of Indian tradition” (119). In this sphere of tradition\inner domain the nationalists declared their sovereign area. In the materiaAoutside domain they had to fight and imitate. But at the same time they had to preserve the inner core of the national culture, its spiritual essence. Chatterjee says that it was not a total rejection of the West or modernity, but “an attempt to make modernity consistent with the nationalist project” (121).

Thus, according to the author, the Indian women’s question was a question positioned between the competing patriarchies of the colonized and the colonizers. So, here again the Hindus (the author does not use the term Indians here but he uses Hindus) were the victims of the colonialists’ Reason as they were in the case of the discourse and politics of nationalism. The ‘women’s problem’ thus became a problem of Indian tradition. Subjecting this tradition/inner domain to a certain degree of reform could liberate Indian women. Thus the subject of women's liberation was totally transferred into the hands of the Hindus (the Hindu male community) themselves. Since it is a matter of Indian tradition/inner domain, the hindu men declared their sovereignty with great ease and thus confined the question of hindu women's liberation within the fringes of the tradition/inner domain. Finally, they had to come up with an agenda, which looked, at least superficially, to be new though at the core it remained one that did not challenge the old system of patriarchy. The new woman, which was the creation of the new patriarchy, thus should be in constant contrast with not only the western woman but also with the native lower class-caste woman. The authorities to formulate his argument around this hypothesis.

Thus after confining the Hindu woman to the inner domain she is subjected to a new patriarchy. This 'new woman' was not only contrasted with the western but also to the indigenous lower class woman. He writes:

The new patriarchy was also sharply distinguished from the immediate social and cultural condition in which the majority of the people lived, for the "new" woman was quite the reverse of the
"common" woman, who was coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males (127).

He continues:

It was precisely this degenerate condition of women that nationalism claimed it would reform, and it was through these contrasts that the new woman of nationalist ideology was accorded a status of cultural superiority to the Western women of the wealthy parvenu families spawned by the colonial connection as well as to common women of the lower classes. Attainment by her own efforts of a superior national culture was the mark of woman's newly acquired freedom. This was the central ideological strength of the nationalist resolution of the women's question (127).

Thus Chatterjee tries to locate the question of Hindu women's liberation as a bone of contestation between the British and Hindu men. The more unfortunate result of this author's argument is that the hindu male community has won the game and this victory is unambiguous. First of all it is wrong to put the upper caste women’ question as a question of Indian woman. Though he recognizes the element of heterogeneity present in the Indian women population, he does not give it due importance through out the text. As a result, he fails to take note of how the other women’s question of liberation was addressed in the other discourses. Apart from preserving and reassigning the banner of 'Indian woman' to the upper caste women the present essay carries various other limitations. One has to keep in mind while understanding this phenomenon that all these limitations are very intimately attached to each other and it is not feasible to pull one out of the web and understand it in isolation. Thus the author's occasional acceptance of the imposition of segregation between the upper caste and lower class women by the new patriarchy could not do more than token justice to the other women.

Portraying "tradition" as a result of the cunning manipulation of the colonialist discourse is another major limitation of the essay. What Partha Chatterjee poses as the new patriarchy (which was a culmination of British colonialism) was not actually new (though in his tone he implies that it was not totally new the article also hints at such results which were new). These kind of differentiation between the Hindu and the dalit women were definitely prevalent even before the colonial encounter. More fundamentally the women of all communities were carefully guarded since they are the frontiers through which contamination of caste could happen. After elaborating on the dichotomy that was
reinforced between upper caste and lower caste women he writes that the nationalists promised to change this state of women. But the reformation of the lower caste woman was never part of the nationalist’ manifesto. One thing anybody who deals with Indian patriarchy should keep in mind is that the Indian nationalists never promised to change the status of lower caste women. It was never, part of their agenda. Right from the days of Rajarammohan Roy to Gandhi what was time and again promised was the liberation of the upper caste women (the terms of liberation always depending on the particular perception of the ideologue) not the lower caste women. From the issues of Sati to child marriage, female infanticide and devadasi system, every issue that they took up was absolutely the upper caste women’s.

Chatterjee also writes that in the field of education she was given a chance to prove her autonomous subjectivity. The last sentence he makes on upper caste women is that she should prove herself by attaining this culture. Such a statement contradicts his entire analysis. His argument has been that the careful reconstruction of the demarcation of women took place during this period and that there was a simultaneous pushing of women’s issue into the inner domain. All these safeguards were made to separate the women on community lines. Therefore no upper caste woman needed to exert herself to attain that culture. It was, on the other hand, offered to her. She will only inherit it if she belongs to a legitimate social category. When she is already fixed into that elevation what is there for her to attain? Thus the statement that the “attainment by her own efforts of a superior national culture was the mark of woman’s newly acquired freedom” is paradoxical to his hypothesis.

In order to save upper caste women from proselytization new educational institutions were opened. Formal education occupied a significant place in the nationalist construction of reform regarding women. Chatterjee observes, “It was this particular nationalist construction of reform as a project of both emancipation and self-emancipation of women ...that also explains why the early generation of educated women so keenly propagated the nationalist idea of the “new woman.”” Such an explanation simplifies the fact of collusion of hindu women with their men in nationalist
politics. Education is definitely a small motivation to make them collude with their men. But exclusive focus on this undermines the caste motivation, which has historically played a greater role in hierarchising the women of this land. Education definitely played a considerable role in making her appear as a new woman. It is true, as Chatterjee has written, that the "new" patriarchy advocated by nationalism awarded upon women the honor of a new social responsibility, and by connecting the task of female emancipation with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, tied them to a novel, and yet entirely legitimate subordination. But this subordination is a graded one. Chatterjee seems to agree that this emancipation is graded according to the castes. But the problem is that this gradation of women, or conferring of honor to this new woman was a heritage of caste and thus became an integral part in the reconstitution of nationalism and new patriarchy.

Among the new features, which this new patriarchy acquired, it is the emergence of the new dress code that occupied a prominent position. The dress code is one of many things, which underwent changes during this time. The new badramahila came up with new ways of attire. Chatterjee writes, “Here too the necessary differences were signified in terms of national identity, social emancipation, and cultural refinement- differences, that is to say, with the memsahib, with women of earlier generations, and with the women of the lower classes” (130). This is again a too simplistic generalization. It could be true that such new dress codes for the new women were introduced and accepted and also that they were designed in ways to differentiate this new respectable women from the memsahib and also the women of older generations. But it should be clear that such differences at the level of dress codes always existed between the upper caste and the lower caste women even prior to this innovation. Whether it is the new women or the women of the older generations, they culturally differentiated themselves very particularly and emphatically from the women of the lower castes. And the dress code had a very hegemonic and symbolic relevance in this context. The dress code was one area that upper caste communities were very keen to maintain since it would keep the women visibly (therefore immediately) also different. Cloyhing was a caste signifier both in the pre-British colonial period and during it. Producing an upper caste woman
according to the new nationalist needs has deep ideological similarities with British colonialism. Himani Bannerji for instance writes:

The virtuous attire designed for the gentlewoman of Bengal is a reworking of existing and incoming social and cultural forms. This convergence, negotiation and fusion on grounds of cultural common sense and ideology between colonial and indigenous patriarchal class values can only happen because the European forms and norms are not dissimilar to those prevailing in Bengal...The pre-existing social organization thus provides enough ground for weaving in or reworking colonial misogyny, elitism and racism. Fundamentally patriarchal, brahminical rationalism and ascetism is also characterized by a basic hatred and contempt towards women (as natural, physical entities) and the lower castes/ classes as unreconstructed body or nature, and thus collapse; the woman and the sudra (low caste) (127).

Though the above statement makes a problematic analogy between the lower caste and women (such an analogy blurs the realities of lower caste women and her existence as a specific category) it also carries a powerful argument that the pre-British colonial Indian social conditions very much mirror the social ideology of British colonialism. More than this, what the article hints at is the difference that the Brahman classes tried to reimpose especially in the area of attire. The 'unreconstructed body' here is neither that of the upper caste women of the older generations nor of the memsahibs but of the lower caste women. Himani Bannerjee bunches upper caste women along with lower caste people in the category of what she calls the 'unreconstructed body'. But the problem is that she tries to explain the changes that took place in the attire of the upper caste women not that of the lower caste people. The lower castes were not expected to change their modes of attire. Thus it is wrong to assume both these categories of people as equally unreconstructed. For instance, this article starts with an epilogue of a Bengali bhadramahila Rasundari (whose works have now been extensively exposed in the contemporary writings of feminism) which explains the bhadramahila's painful experiences with purdha. Such a veil was not recommended for the lower caste women nor was this the new dress code. Though the new dress code differentiated the women of older generations from the new badramahilas, they nevertheless did not make the differences that existed in the dress codes of the lower caste women and the Bengali upper caste women of the older generations disappear. Thus it is not the difference between the old and new woman but the upper and lower caste women which deserves real scrutiny. Thus it is totally wrong on the part of Partha Chatterjee to make a
generalization on the conditions of the new upper caste woman without feeling the same responsibility towards the unreconstituted category called the lower caste woman.

The upper caste woman is also imagined as an exaltation of woman as goddess. She is also adulated as an embodiment of nation. These two metaphors are often used interchangeably. Such images also served to wipe off the sexuality of this category of women. The upper caste thus becomes an asexual and predominantly spiritual being. Chatterjee proceeds to explain important implications of such constructs. Unlike middle class employment which is a major field of competition between the various cultural groups, "in the entire period of nationalists and postcolonial politics in India, gender has never been an issue of political contention" (131). Without addressing this gap properly or giving any historical account, he moves to point out how suffrage rights were readily given to women after 1947. This he shows as an example to point that the upper caste men efficiently managed to relegate the Indian women’s question to the inner domain and that neither the upper caste women’s participation or their resistance counted much in the process. In the following chapter "Women and the Nation" he in fact tries to argue that women did resist to confine themselves to the inner domain. But he denies any autonomy to such resistances because finally he locates this resistances again in the realm of the inner domain. The moral domain of this inner sphere rejects the instance of Binodini’s resistance as illegitimate. Thus it cannot be lined up along with the resistances of the upper caste women). It is not true that gender has never been an issue of political contention during the nationalist period. Apart from Sarojini Naidu’s sudden jump into the Gandhi led Congress, there were women like Subbarayan etc; who tried to keep the women’s rights movement an autonomous one. It was during the time of constitutional debates in the Constituent Assembly that a few educated upper caste women with the complete support of Ambedkar tried to cany this legacy forward. The chapter "The Politics of Protective Discrimination and the Postcolonial Theory" would explain how energetically gender stood as an issue of political contention and also operated as a powerful force in blocking the political contentions of the other cultural groups. Mainstream gender politics during nationalist period (especially in the field of political rights) does not look as vehement as the politics of the Muslims or Dalits. This because
the mainstream women's movement sharing the political agendas and sentiments of the mainstream nationalist movement.

How did the women's question succumb to nationalist tactics so easily? It is because this "new" patriarchy was not so new after all. The only thing that happened was the adjustment of the existing hindu patriarchy to the needs of modernized patriarchy. The other more interesting point that the Chatterjee makes, is that the reform of the *inner domain* could only be carried out by the concerned community and that the state would not take up this task. The nation thus fails to represent the minorities since "the formation of a hegemonic “national culture,” was in turn defined by a system of exclusions" (134). This in turn excluded a vast masses of people from the new life of the nation. Therefore when the "new" patriarchy was built as a cultural construct, the author finally repeats that the nationalist discourse not only differentiated its cultural essence as distinct from that of the West but also from that of the mass of the people. During the nationalist construction of the 'new woman' a competition between the colonialist and the nationalist discourses took place and the dichotomies of spiritual/material, *home/world*, feminine/masculine etc; remained ensnared within its framework of bogus essentialisms. The story of false essentialisms is doubtless true. But did not gender struggle take place outside the domain of the dominant *inner domain*? They did taken place. After all it was not only the Hindu woman who had participated in anti-colonial fights. Sangari and Vaid focus on the participation of other women in political movements: "Democratising movements were potentially more revolutionary not only because they brought women of the most oppressed strata, who constitute the majority, into a struggle for their rights, but also because in fighting for their class rights women did attain an enhanced sense of self-respect..."18

In the following essay "Women and the Nation" Chatterjee sees *inner domain* as the main archival source to inscribe the history of struggles of women. As the above observation clarifies various tribal, Dalit and lower class women have participated in these struggle and to register their participation one needs to move away from the narrow *inner domain* hypothesis. Such a move also demands the very dismantling of the inner domain as a legitimate sphere for politico-historical investigations. Therefore,
Chatterjee's idea of *inner domain* as the main archival source to write the history of struggles of women cannot be suggested to those scholars who decide to write about the struggles of *other* women.

In another of his essays, "Women and the Nation" Chatteerjee affirms that the inner domain provides the best sources to understand the women's issue therefore he presents five autobiographies of women. Through these he hopes to trace the history of struggles and subordination that these women have undertaken. Chatteerjee has treated mainstream nationalism as the only type of nationalists struggle, which has operated and succeeded in bringing independence. He has analyzed the various betrayals that it is guilty of while doing this kind of nationalism. Even so he fails to consider the other types of nationalisms and nationalist struggles that were operating during that time. If he had taken them also into consideration he would have had to include how *other* women responded to the nationalist false essentialisms and also their brand of nationalism.

He explains that education made the *upper caste* women "new". Partha Chatterjee writes of Bankim Chatterjee's ideas of women, "In the past, women were uneducated, and therefore coarse, vulgar, and quarrelsome" (135). However, the "new" *upper caste* women did not easily succumb to this new patriarchy. Partha Chatteerjee writes that it is a *history of struggle*. All the archives that deal with women depict them as contributors to nationalist politics (not as doers). Thus Partha explains that it is in the inner space of middle class *upper caste* homes that one can find sources of autonomous subjectivity of "women". Thus he looks into five autobiographies of such educated women. Shanta Nag, Rasundari Debi, Saradasundari Debi, Kailasasini Debi, Prasannamayi Debi were the five *badramahilas* whose autobiographies Partha Chatteerjee has included for study. He explains that the *upper caste* home is the original site in which the hegemonic project of nationalism was launched. But their complicity with the nationalist project carried public implications.

The insertion of the autobiography of Binodini, a prostitute and a theatre artist is very crucial here (she is most likely to be from a lower caste, for she hailed from a slum
and her mother had hired her to the theatre). He writes, betrayal was the "...central theme of Binodini’s autobiography". (152). However much she tried she could not get respectability like the badramahila.

A pessimistic Afterword:

In this concluding part of the essay Chatteerjee refers to Said’s focus on an unresolved tension between the fixed identity as it is provided by affirmative agencies like nationality, education, tradition etc and the anti-systemic forces on the other hand. In the Middle East a great range of violence took place in the name of patriotic affirmation of identity. Therefore it is important on the part of the intellectuals to maintain some amount of suspicion, and distance from such projects. Chatterjee finds a kind of liberal paradox in Said’s suggestion and therefore denies it.

But in trying to avoid such a paradox what Partha Chatterjee does is to negate the possibility of any such 'all-too-easy identification' claimed by every nation-state. According to Partha this 'easy identification' is not a reliable task. This is because for him most of the historical achievements of nationalism were achieved outside the realm of the state. Moreover, this was completed much before the actual transfer of power took place. He also suggests that such a realization involves the act of re-writing the history with new actors, new chronology and so on.

It is here he explains that the cultural history of nationalism held many possibilities for genuine, creative and plural growth of social identities. He argues that these identities were violently dislocated by the political history of the postcolonial state that was trying to duplicate the modular forms of the modern nation-state. Official liberalality of the new domain of the postcolonial state easily appropriates the marginalized voices/identities like Binodini’s. But still she enjoys no respectable space within the ethical domain of the national community. So, he concludes that the ethical domain of the nation is still a contested area. This conclusion is also a replica of postcolonial theory’s general tendency to draw controversial conclusions without any concrete theoretical
possibility and solution. If Binodini is unacceptable in the national community it is the ethical standards of it, which need to be looked at. As Partha Chatteerjee himself has suggested this ethical domain is not where the ideology of the new state (which always tries to follow the modular forms of the West) rules. But this ethical domain is kept intact by establishing the sovereignty of the upper castes. When the inner domain is already immune to the interferences of the state then how can the state's pursuit of modular forms of ruling becomes a point of intellectual scrutiny here? The real emphasis should be on upper caste's prejudiced code of morality, which enclosed the ethical domain of the nation. Therefore the point of contest here is more than the liberal paradox that emanates due to the appropriation of marginalized identities by the state in its haste to imitate the western modular forms of ruling. Re-writing the history of the inner domain in more inclusive ways is desirable but such a project does not lead us anywhere when one is not ready to acknowledge the real decisive actors behind it. This is because the problem here is not with an 'all-too-easy identification' but with the meaning-making mechanism that structures the parlance of identities. Here it is this mechanism structured in the inner domain, which denied any respectable place for Binodini.

What the scholar tries to argue is that this 'all-too-easy identification' in itself does not carry any ideological mission. Its prominence relies on how one uses it. For instance, Binodini has found a place at least as a veteran artist in the public domain due to this mechanism of 'easy identification'. The state should be praised for its tactics of appropriations, because such honorable appropriations are unimaginable in a state, which does not follow the modular forms (set by the west) and also an apparatus of readymade identification. In other words, resisting historic voices like Binodini’s has got a place of acclaim in the realms of public domain simply because the state was able to at least seek the modular form of the west. As the inner domain of the nation restricted the state's intervention, the state also at least superficially restricted the nation to intervene in its outer domain. This was in order to maintain that it (the state) is not prone to be effected by the nation (the upper castes). Binodini got a place of reverence especially due to this state's attempts to seek the modular forms set by the west and its determination to maintain a democratic face vis-à-vis the marginalized communities. But such a plain
inclination towards the state's ways of managing the marginalized identities from the researcher's side should not be understood as her unequivocal support of the state. Such a plain preference of the state blurs the amicable correspondence that exists between the inner domain of the nation and the state. What the researcher is trying to point out is that the denial of all the aids of the state in preference to the loosely constituted nation (with an intention of producing a more authentic, indigenous history) is itself an upper caste academic luxury.

Other limitations of the text includes an overemphasis on the undaunted victories of the inner domain. For instance, in this text all the times the upper castes appear as the winners over the others. Though Partha Chatteerjee agrees about all the politics behind its composition, his repeated suggestion is that all history of the nation and nationalism lurks in this domain. This, as has been demonstrated, is highly contestable. Such excessive highlighting of the inner domain denies the autonomous role that the other women have played in Indian history. Though he tries to record the stories of betrayal as embodied in Binodini, there are other histories, which unlike Binodini, are denied space even in the neutral public domain of the state. If the state is situated to maintain a liberal outer domain which can appropriate supposedly disreputable identities like that of Binodini’s, it is not due to its love for marginalized identities. Such appropriations, on the other hand marks the success of the fights of others in forcing the state to divulge such possibilities. Another fundamental feature of the politics of the other, besides the fact that they quit the standards set by the sneaky inner domain, is that they continuously negotiate with the outer domain. The measures of these fights are not set by either the inner or the outer domains of the land, which are structured by the caste logic but by the rational logic developed by centuries of human struggle against oppressive sections. It matters very little whether such rational logic for human liberation is developed in the East or the West.

It is also to be noted that the generic use of the term "subaltern" and "masses" by the postcolonial scholars is as problematic as the 'all-too-easy identification' that they allege of the modern nation-state. It is a wrong hypothesis to believe that the masses were
carried away by the charisma or the intellectual fake moral leadership of the hindu nationalist elite. It must then be the same case with the other women as well. The other women too have resisted being ostracized by the fake essentialist dichotomies that were being regularly reproduced by the hindu male nationalists. If, the history of the subjection of women to this new patriarchy must be a history struggle as Chatteerjee explains, then the struggle of the other women must also be counted as an equally vital issue. If the elevated hindu women were able to grasp the fakeness of the resolution offered to their question, the other women must also have been keen to register their politics of resistance. The author has tried to record this by exemplifying Binodini's case. But for Binodini the upper caste morals and merits (in the art field) were the standards. As explained above her case endorses Chatterjee's version of upper castes as the sole winners of the nation. It is because of that that Binodini's story of resistance or subordination finally remains a story of utter betrayal. The question of the other women was solved outside the inner domain of the Hindus. Unlike Binodini, for them acceptance in the inner domain was not the final destination, conversely their liberation was visualized on the very destruction of it.

Well, more than the problem of liberating Indian nationalism from the modular forms given by the west what troubles the Dalit feminist is whether the author himself has really re-problematized the all-too-easy identification so openly claimed by the Indian hindutva state? As the above-analyzed articles show it is clear that Chatterjee did not problematize their identification. What is worse is that he has applied these identities as they were and gone on to justify them. He has only liberated the conservative nationalist thought of the upper castes from the grand narratives of western Reason like liberal, Marxist etc. He has taken almost a decade to include the others like peasants, Dalits, and upper caste women as some quarters where the nationalist activity have taken place. Nevertheless, the text reveals that he has not made use of the epistemological tool of re-problematizing the all-too-easy-identification that he had raised when studying the modern nation's rush to appropriate certain marginalized voices.
Such a deliberate identification of upper caste people as full-pledged national subjects has performed more than one purpose. First, as the text itself reveals, Indian nationalism is freed from any modern rational examination. By liberating their activity from the frames of western modern knowledge they are also saved from any possible sense of guilt for being anti-others. A critique that is raised by the dalits that native thought only rejuvenates parochial traditional practices is rubbished as a critique coming from western liberal thought or as an argument, which lacks 'commonsense'.\(^\text{19}\) Such a criticism would also face the danger of being labeled as anti-autonomous nationalist thought. Consequently, Dalit nationalist thought, which draws its criticism both from its own knowledge system and also from western Reason would become an anti-nationalist thought. Once the oppressive traditional thought system is relieved of critiques from a counter epistemology, any critique against it becomes impossible. In other words hindu nationalist thought does not leave its critique any epistemological ground to prepare a criticism against it. A criticism ought to come only from the total negation of it. Thus it is impossible to consider the proposal of re-problematizing the all-loo-easy identification within the terrain of the inner domain as preferred by this author.

Chaterjee’s views have resonance with Franz Fannon’s idea of how Algerian nationalism veiled and unveiled the Algerian women.\(^\text{20}\) The difference is that Fannon’s Algerian woman was asked to unveil herself to launch a warfare on the colonialists. But in the case of Chatterjee’s analysis the upper caste woman was unveiled to prove to the colonialists that the inner domain was already under reform in its own terms and that it was beyond the reach of the colonialists. Like Franz Fannon, Chatterjee also sees gender as a nationalist question and both of the writers resolved it only as a nationalist problem. In the analysis of both these writers the nation overpowers gender by embracing it. As in the case of Indian nationalist thought, in the case of ‘Indian women’ also Chatterjee has followed the postcolonial tradition of writing only the selective history of the dominant sections. For instance, unlike the case of hindu women, the dalit woman as a category is not merely overpowered but completely consumed in his analysis of the nation and its women.
In the essay "Nationalist Resolution of Women's Question" Partha Chatteerjee incorporated only direct, and easily yielding national categories. Hindu gender was considered as the prime category that dissolves into the nation, whereas the category Dalit does not. If he had taken caste instead of gender to show that the imagination of nation in India followed true indigenous lines, this work would have been self-defeating for him. When Chatteerjee was following this mode of framing history it was obvious that Dalit as a category of analysis would be omitted. The Hindu gender was one consisting of the non-resisting constituents of the *inner domain* (even when it resisted radically it did not reject the caste logic of the inner domain entirely) whereas the Dalit was a resisting autonomous sphere whose politics was aimed at the dismantling of the *inner domain*. For Partha Chatterjee, to proceed with his scheme of the inner domain needed a humble and loyal or a readily yielding constituent of the inner domain. The Hindu women became handy for this purpose.

It is in the illustration of the partial liberation of this readily yielding element of the Hindu *inner domain*, namely the Hindu woman, that the *other woman* finds a place. She comes to perform a role as a glaring contrast to the Hindu woman. When he wanted to indicate the false liberation of the Hindu woman, he needed a contrasting background upon which to highlight the oppressive liberation and re-ensnarement of the Hindu woman within the boundaries of the "new" patriarchy. The *other woman* enters here as a dark background against which the oppression of the *upper caste* women could be measured and tallied. It is difficult to criticize Chatteerjee for not placing the lower caste women in his analysis, for he did place her in mainstream academic literature. But she comes as a maidservant, as a *background* to make the portrayal of the Hindu women complete and perfect and gloriously visible. Partha Chatteerjee acknowledges that the Hindu woman was made to stand on a pedestal. When he had to portray how she ascended that pedestal he had to inevitably mention the footstool, which came *handy* for the Hindu woman's ascendancy. Here, in the context of portraying the Hindu women's ascendancy as a legitimate, female subject, the Dalit woman's role as footstool comes into the scene. This ascendancy was a renewal and re-confirmation of the old ascendancy. Conspicuously Chatteerjee has not used the phrase "lower caste" as much as he has used
"lower class". Thus we don’t come across a term "caste patriarchy", it obtains only a
generic title 'indigenous patriarchy'. In Partha Chatterjee’s theory the reality of caste
patriarchy is overshadowed by the intersection of supremacist notions of nation and
dominant accounts of gender. Thus though the lower caste woman makes her entry into
the academic analysis, she has to content herself with being in the fringes of its texts.

As Dalit woman could not be addressed as a 'pure' inner domain, she could not be
also addressed as a 'national' item. She is not connate to the national culture, therefore
she cannot be addressed as a national question. Like many post-colonial theories, which
eclipse the category Dalit, Chatteerjee’s articles on gender and nation consume the
category called Dalit woman. Also it should be equally noted that the dubious usage of
'class' to denote this specific phenomenon of women and nation should be dropped.
Unless and, until the postcolonial scholars decide to consider these epistemological
issues, the Dalit woman would be kept aloof from appearing in their theory. It is precisely
due to this inaccuracy that the Dalit woman is present as not more than a footnote in the
postcolonial text of nation and its women.

Hindu women, as illustrated in the chapter "Understanding the Protective Discrimination", became willing partners to the extension of hindutva rule in India during
the nationalist period. Though Gandhi in later years tried to absorb Dalits as he has done
the women, the already politicized Dalit community did not succumb. Chatterjee does not
mention that Hindu nationalists tried and failed to absorb the Dalits. His texts narrate
only the heroic victories of the Hindu nationalists. Colonizers had seen women and also
Dalits in the colonized lands as oppressed. They were readymade proof of the
degeneration of upper caste rule on the land. Whenever the British wanted to prick the
ruling class of the natives, the caste question along with the gender question used to be
deployed by them. Chatteerjee has partially responded to the myth of the white man’s
burden when he poses Hindu woman as those who were in the list of the white man’s
burden. It would have been fatal for his PC theory to deal with the Dalit in the same way
as he dealt with the Indian woman. Also his willful negligence to address how the upper
caste have responded\not responded to the Dalit question from a pragmatic point of view
(not from the usual mystical or spiritual point of view) makes one doubt the veracity of his theory. For instance, nowhere does he take up other axis of analysis like class or the violent nature of caste ordinances etc. in his theory.

If the nation is an imagined community, that imagination is also intensely gendered...on caste lines. Caste patriarchy is central to the imagination, conceptualization and expression of nationalist fights and relations that brought it into being. Hindu nationalist fantasies were predicated on the expulsion of Dalit women from the counters of legitimate femininity. At the level of analysis Dalit women sometimes appear as a setting for the demonstration of the more real nationalist forces like Hindus and their women. It is finally soothing to the dominant Hindu woman to understand that even when she is re-'caste'd, she is never e-'caste'd.

Partha Chatteerjee takes a celebrative tone in these texts. This is unsurprising for him, since after all his aim was to declare to the West that Indian nationalism was not totally an imitative imagination of the west. Since he has already taken the position of resistance to western knowledge frames, he cannot now accuse Indian nationalism of having reproduced indigenous patriarchies without jeopardizing his basic argument that the national imagination took place in the inner domain in an autonomous scale and that it was democratic enough. Either the West's modernity/colonialism or India's tradition/autonomous nationalist thought/the ideology of inner domain have to be retained and Partha Chatteerjee decides to keep the latter. Thus the collusion of this postcolonial text with the dominant entities of gender and caste has chased out Dalit women from the academic sphere of today.

Dirks argues:

If, as Partha Chatterjee has suggested, the "women's question" thus disappeared from nationalist discussion, the same was true of the "caste question." Indeed, in some ways caste was an extension of the "women's question," given the extent to which caste values—in particular upper-caste values—were implicated in the issues that were targeted by social reformers concerning the treatment of women, such as sati, widow remarriage, and the age of consent. By the early twentieth century, a growing number of nationalist figures were less concerned that caste might be antipathetic to nationalism than they were with the possibility that a preoccupation with caste reform would retard nationalist mobilization, or give moral support to Britain. Either nationalism would transcend caste identities, they thought, or caste problems would be addressed later, after independence (232).
Though, apparently Dirks argument looks convincing in its conclusion that caste disappeared like gender from the nationalist quarters, the idea that caste is an extension of the gender question is a mistaken one. *Caste/dalit,* as the above analysis tries to prove, (Dirks unfortunately uses *caste* for Dalit. Therefore read Dalit for *caste* here) is unlike the category of *upper caste* women who did not readily yield to the inner domain. The greatest victory of the Dalit movement lies here, that it did not succumb to the idea that it was one of the categories of the inner domain. Such a rejection registers two resistances. One is that it demands us to treat this inner domain as a public one and therefore a potently political domain. Secondly, that the dalit movement is capable of defying its conspiracies of assimilations and despicable patronization. Moreover the steering wheel of the *caste/Dalit* question or movement was not in the hands of *upper caste* nationalists. It rather operated and continued independent of the nationalist's strategies for *independence.* The very beauty of the Dalit movement in fact lies in its ceaseless fight against the *upper caste* nationalist tactics of snubbing or deferring the question of the Dalits as well as in its resistance to be absorbed by the hindutva elements. Thus Dirks argument that the "caste question" disappeared from nationalist discussions just as the "women's question" did, confer only a passive status on Dalit politics which is not true.

The other major limitation of Dirks analysis lies in his idea that the caste question was an extension of women's question. This is also an absolutely problematic proposition since as the present thesis has been trying to prove; women (*upper caste*) never entertained the *caste/Dalit* question to operate as a continuation of itself. This is because their movements were constituted separately and directed against the Dalits. Chronologically also it is the Dalit movement and its assertions that appeared first not the *upper caste* women's movement. More fundamentally it is the Dalit movement under the leadership of Ambedkar, which tried to give life to the women's rights movement after independence. It is appropriate to include an observation of Aloysius here, "The society and history of pre-modern India cannot be reduced to the dialectics of castes; several other contradictions such as gender, class, ethnic-region, etc were operational throughout its long history. However the overarching form of contradiction, providing a scaffold for
all others, suffusing both base and superstructure of society was *caste*. Within this framework the different contradictions aligned and jostled for primacy. Gender oppression appeared as a function of *caste-patriarchy*...Conversely, attempts to rescue these different contradictions—gender, class and ethnic-region—were invariably part and parcel of most anti-caste movements.” (p. 30). Therefore, to see the Dalit question as simply surrendered to the inner domain or as a continuation of the ‘women’s question’ is to put the cart before the horse.

**Himani Bannerjee:**

Himani Bannerjee explains that Bengali *upper caste* women participated in the creation of the "new woman".21 Such a view contradicts with the positions taken by Partha Chatterjee and Sumantho Bannerjee (Himani Banerjee inserts a critique to Sumantho Banerjee's book "The Parlour and the Streets"and this criticism can be extended as well to his article "Women’s Popular Culture in 19th Century Bengal", which is deconstructed in this chapter), She interprets various social reform projects of the 19th century as moments in the battle of hegemony. Thus she calls this dominant Hindu castes' attitude to take control of the rest of society through the reformatory efforts as passive revolution which attempts at the changing of the commonsense of classes. This idea of attributing the Gramscian concept of passive revolution to this phenomenon can be thoroughly problematized as done in the previous chapter titled "Critique on the Postcolonial theory of Caste and Dalit Politics". But apart from this, her text can be seen to be making more meaningful and deeper inroads into the concept of women's liberation in the 19th century unlike the two authors discussed above. She explains that the issue of *upper caste* women's liberation was taken up by the *upper castes* as part of changing morals. This was necessary, the scholar explains, because the hegemonic agenda was necessarily a moral one. Education of women thus acquired a status of the chief moral ideological tool. She rightly explicates that these women were seeking a leadership role in the larger society "as ‘women’ members of propertied classes" (137). Consequently, she sees the upper caste women of Bengal's predilection for education "as one of the hegemonic agendas advanced by competing agents for their roles and places within
nationalist politics" (144). Himani Bennerji rejects the notion of the *badramahila* as one that was meekly absorbed into the inner domain set by the upper caste as Partha Chatterjee has argued. Such a conception confining the women's question to the raise, growth and development of nationalist development is a serious fallacy of Chatterjee's theory.

Bannerjee explains that new typologies had been formed in the political process of sorting out the Hindu women's question. But she too does not spare space for examining how the images of the *other* woman were reproduced in the construction of these new typologies. The major outcome of this typology, she perceives, is the mother figure. She continues to examine how women's education was sought in the same dominant structure of emergent nationalism. The *upper caste woman* was caught in ideologically interpellated forms of subjectivities. However, the Hindu women's dependence on the colonialists for emancipation posed a threat to Bengali masculinity. The author explains:

> The point of conflict rages not around the fact that women 'come out', or that they are literate and so on, but against the very terms and conditions for their own emancipation...The fragile masculinity of Bengali middle class males, 'feminized' by the colonial relations and discourse, felt fundamentally threatened by the epistemologies, social views and demands of such women, and saw them as emasculators (171).

The author makes note here of another important dimension that *upper caste* women's emancipation was carried by these women beyond the limits of control of the *upper caste* male and also of nationalism. But this subjectivity, partly borrowed from the modes of the colonizers is both motivating and circumscribing. Thus finally this category has to come back to the moral cultural code of class-caste hegemony set by nationalism.

What this essay shares with the other writings of PC scholars is a general, passing comment on the existence of *internal fissures*. Like most of the texts (deconstructed in this chapter), this article also does not spare space for what these fissures are. To reiterate, Bannerji does not include even a mention of the *other woman* even when she
explains that the objective of women’s education was to construct typologies and socialize women (through the strategy of commonsense).

Ashis Nandy:

Ashis Nandy is mainly responsible for setting an apolitical psychoanalytical trend in the study of Indian nation and sexuality. He excuses himself for his irresponsible, apolitical writing by using the strangely specific alibi of being a psychologist. According to him power, activism and, aggression, in India are not so particularly associated with masculinity. In the folklore and mythologies of India these powerful qualities are very often associated with women. Nandy thus unproblematically bunches together all hindu nationalists like Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Gandhi together as a nationalist group which was trying to give a new sacredness to the concept of national woman in an essentially apolitical society like India. In his words “Even Gandhi tried to give a new dignity to women by making a new equation between womanliness and political potency”. Ashis Nandy was one of the first in modern times to celebrate ‘the homology between sexual and political dominance’ (4), which he says western colonialism has used invariably. Some of the contemporary writers have later developed their theories based mainly on this hypothesis. Nandy argues that Indian nationalists had developed an alternative definition of masculinity, which related in a way to the western stereotype of the feminised Indian man. It borrowed its elements from masculinity, femininity and androgyny, which he considers intrinsic to Hindu culture. This emphasis of Nandy on androgeneity becomes possible only by labeling western sexual culture as culturally and morally inferior to that of colonized India. Such a notion essentializes the sexual typologies of the East and the West besides also setting up an unsustainable binary of the East and the West. According to Nandy, Gandhi was the one who most successfully took up the task of forging an alternate masculinity. He did it by drawing resources from native gendered cultural forms. Gandhi brought psychology as a means of agency for anti-colonial political practice. He took up feminine strategies like Satyagraha, inspired on the principle of shakthi. According to Nandy, Gandhi is almost a divine person who was able to become an embodiment of incompatible sexual forms like
femininity, masculinity and androgenity. He displayed various realities to various communities, to the western people he was a feminised person, to the Indians he was a saint. But considering woman as inferior to man/political world is new to this land. It was much prevalent even before the British launched its hegemonic mission. Elaboration of this point can be seen in the next chapter, "Hindu Religious Nationalist Ideology and the Dalit Woman".

**Sudhir Kakar:**

Sudhir Kakar in his article “Feminine Identity in India” argues for a singular feminine identity in India based on the prescriptions lay out in the Hindu scriptures. He writes “Whether her family is poor or wealthy, whatever her caste, class or region ...an Indian woman knows that motherhood confers upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her culture can.” By prioritizing biologically determined motherhood to culture Kakar refuses to understand the caste and class specificity of motherhood. He further writes, " Her identity as a Hindu woman has evolved out of the dailiness of her relationships as daughter to her parents’ family, as wife and daughter-in-law in her husband's family, out of the universals of the traditional ideals of womanhood absorbed by her from childhood onwards"(44). Perhaps Kakar could explicate what the universals of the traditional ideals of the Dalit woman are. Though Kakar spares one and half pages for his “rural sisters” what he immediately takes up for examination are the upper caste mythical images of Sita, Damayanthi, Savitri, Satyabhama, Sandhya, Shakunthala, Parvathi etc. Kakar sees motherhood as empowering to the Hindu woman. He writes, "...it is through their children's instrumentality that the injustice done to the mothers is redressed and they assumed their rightful positions." What happened to the mothers of Ekalavya, Sambhuka, Surpanaka and Thataki? Why did these mythological characters fail to be instrumental in doing justice to their mothers? Why did only sons like Lava, Kusa, or Dushyantha "succeed" in being instrumental for their mothers assuming "rightful" positions like becoming queens? Is it not because the author had taken examples of mythological Hindu women who belonged to the winning community?
Conclusion:
The above analysis explains the various spillovers in the mainstream literature on 'Indian women', written by postcolonial writers and mainstream feminists who share more or less the same academic sentiments. The entire nationalist debate on woman was concerned with the re-definitions of Hindu woman and her tradition. What was at stake was not Dalit woman but a generic Indian woman, that is Hindu woman. There is only a silence and absence where the Dalit women should be. How does one theorise this? Her subjectivity has never been put to discussion, she has never been represented. Thus, nobody knows how they lived, what they thought, how they suffered, how they labored and how and in what all ways they were humiliated. This silence and absence of Dalit woman in the nationalist discourse, then and now, in post-colonial debates is particularly emblematic of the uninterrupted continuation of caste patriarchy. In self-styled post-colonial studies, identities like that of the Dalit failed to assume even a place of reference, leave alone that of subject.

All the dimensions of colonialism whether economic or political definitely touched the Dalit woman. The fact is simple: she is also a subject in this land. Moreover she, was more victimized by colonialism and casteism than any other community. Their subservience and free appropriation of their labour was decisive to the most lumpenised upper caste community and the Hindu society which fed on the labour of the Dalits for ages. Thus, despite other clashes and contests, Hindu men and women often colluded to keep the Dalit woman in her place throughout history and specifically during the British colonial period. The phantom of her real liberation haunted them. The complicity of Hindu women with their men was fundamental to the making of the politics related to nation and caste. When Hindu women were called upon to play the symbolic role of mother to the nation, Dalit women were recalled for their old role of dasi-the inessential woman. Any attempt of liberation from their side was signified as an encroachment whereas the upper caste women came to mark the boundaries of the nation. Thus Dalit women became objects of extreme hostility. They were not asked to act on behalf of the nation. Their names were not enrolled in the nationalist script. The Hindu nationalist leadership, be it male or female, never showed any ambiguity to the Dalit women's
question. They were very clear. They never theorized their relation with the Dalit women since such an act would have acknowledged the existence of Dalit woman as an academic and political subject. The principle of universal equality explicit in their theories did not offer her any specific rights based on her most oppressed status. Their language and script was inclusive and liberal to a limited extent but their real politics have been completely exclusionary and hierarchical.

The concept of third world woman is always employed by the mainstream Indian women writers to effectively shut the western white women's ethnocentric arguments. Why did they invent this generic term the 'Third world women' when social categories like caste and religion operate so relentlessly in India? Chandra Talpade Mohanty comments on western feminist writings notes that they "discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/ re-presenting a composite, singular "Third World Woman" - an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse." Asian women and African women are depicted in stereotypical ways. bell hooks (she writes her name in small letters) notes this; “I became fascinated by how a lot of the stereotypes for the Asian women ("passive," "nonassertive," "quiet") are just the opposite of the stereotypes that plague black women ("aggressive", "loud", "mean"). It’s like we exist in two radically different poles in the economy of racism. And it’s those positioning that make it hard for Asian women and black women to come together...” bell hooks would be able to find the equivalent of black woman in the Asian Dalit woman not in the Asian Hindu woman.

Another limitation of PC theory is that it portrays sexual and colonial relationships in analogous terms. They develop their theories on how the colonized women and the colony can be seen as identical. But there is a difference. There is also a subversion of the logic, some women are not seen eligible to be possessed but only are seen as objects of sheer ravishment. The next chapter on "Hindu Religious Nationalist Ideology and Dalit woman" explains how Dalit women were seen as unfit to be essential orientals. Unlike the upper caste woman the Dalit woman was not an enigma. She is a labourer handy for any kind of labour. Clearly then, caste and gender are not distinct but
mutually intensifying categories. These crucibles of caste, class and gender are not additive but serve and intensify each other. As the case of indentured labour suggests, it is not merely that the Dalit women were sexually subjected but that their labour and sexual services were used to feed the very economic system of colonialism. Swasthi Mitter explains that colour and sex are “the main principles behind the most recent international division of labour.” In the Indian case it is the Dalit woman who is the source of this labour. But it is very difficult to find Indian theories on the nation focusing their main premise on this dimension.
Notes:


3 An article written by Nanditha Gandhi and Nanditha Shah is a good example of this. While tracing the lineage of the movement they write that by the 1930s many women participated in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Rights movement launched by Gandhi. They write "many leaders forged strong links between the two movements." They cite no background for the major shifts that took place due to this involvement in the Gandhi-led movements. And there is no mention of Ambedkar’s support to this movement in their essay. See, Nandita Gandhi and Nanditha Shah, The Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993, pp. 15-16; also see "Introduction" in Nanditha Gandhi, When the Rolling Pins Hit the Streets: Women in the Anti-Price Rise Movement in Maharashtra, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996. There are numerous examples like this.


7 Sara Suleri, Critical Inquiry, 18, Summer 1992, pp. 75-69.
Even a radical liberal like Jawaharlal Nehru was not exception to this. Despite his apparent faith in modernity he was motivated by a sense of an essential India in his nationalist foundational fiction *Discovery of India*.

Almost similar accounts on the demise of devadasi system during the British colonial period can be found in—Janaki Nair, "The Devadasi, Dharma and the State", EPW, Dec 10, 1994, pp. 3157-3167.


An essay on "Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi" is another one, which falls into this category.

ibid, pp.4.

There is a sentence in this book where Banerjee describes how many of the female writers came from "respectable homes". See pp.160. Indian intellectuals should stop writing in this manner at least in these 'deconstructed' days if only to respect the women who don't hail from such respectable domains.


In his essay "Nation and its Outcastes" Partha Chatterjee portrays the reservation struggles of dalits as fights for artha and not for dharma. Therefore, he suggests that the 'universal dharma' be raised by the common sense of the masses. What this means is that he considers the dalit intellect that was invested in making the fight for reservation as lacking in commonsense.


23 For instance see Mrinalini Sinha’s 'Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effimate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995.


