

VIOLENCE, RELIGION, AND
MASCULINISM IN CONTEMPORARY
INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS
OF VIVEKANANDA, GOLWALKAR, AND
GANDHI

ARPITA CHAKRABORTY

VIOLENCE, RELIGION, AND MASCULINISM IN CONTEMPORARY
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GOLWALKAR, AND GANDHI

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BY

ARPITA CHAKRABORTY, B.A, M.A

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

PROF. MAURA CONWAY

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Signed:_____

Arpita Chakraborty

ID No: 14211962

1 October, 2018

Dedicated to my late grandmother Gita Hazra – the first feminist in my life, and my brother Krishnendu Chakraborty, who have always been more enthusiastic about my academic achievements than anyone else.

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List of Abbreviations

- AFSPA – Armed Forces Special Powers Act
BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party
CSMM – Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities
CWBA – Collected Works of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar
CWMG – Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi
CWSV – Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda
DST – Dalit Standpoint Theory
NCRB – National Crime Records Bureau
QDA – Qualitative Data Analysis
RSS – RashtriyaSwayamsevak Sangh
SANC – South African Native Congress
SGS – Sri Guruji Samagra
UP – Uttar Pradesh
VHP – Vishwa Hindu Parishad

List of Terms

Ahimsa – Nonviolence.

Akhand Bharat – Undivided India.

Atman – The highest state of being according to Hindu philosophy.

Backward castes – Those whose ritual rank and occupational status are above "untouchables" but who themselves remain socially and economically depressed. Also referred to as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) or Shudras (who constitute the fourth major caste category in the caste system).

Brahmacharya – The first of the four stages of life according to Hinduism, where men are expected to maintain celibacy and devote themselves to self-improvement.

Dalits – Literally meaning "broken" people, a term employed by rights activists to refer to "untouchables."

Deeksha – Acceptance as a spiritual follower by the Guru and initiation into the brotherhood.

Desh–Nation.

Dharma – Sacred duty, or religiously ordained code of conduct.

Karma – Ethics of work.

Karma yoga – Hindu philosophy of work as a path of spiritual upliftment.

Kshatriya – Warrior caste.

Kshatra-virya – Warrior strength

Mleccha – Derogatory term used to denote Muslims and those who did not observe the cultural rules of Hindus.

Pourush – Manliness.

Pracharak– Full time worker and organiser of RashtriyaSwayamsevak Sangh.

Reservations – quotas for various lower castes allowing for increased representation in education, government jobs, and political bodies (provided as compensation for past mistreatment).

Samaj- Society/community.

Sarsanghchalak– Supreme chief of RashtriyaSwayamsevak Sangh

Satyagraha – Gandhi's political philosophy of non-violent resistance.

Scheduled castes – A list of socially deprived ("untouchable") castes prepared by the British Government in 1935. The schedule of castes was intended to increase representation of scheduled-caste members in the legislature, in government employment, and in university placement. The term is also used in the constitution and various laws.

Scheduled tribes – A list of indigenous tribal populations who are entitled to much of the same compensatory treatment as scheduled castes.

Seva– Organised service to humanity.

Shakhas – Branches of RSS.

Untouchability – The imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes.

Untouchables – Those at the bottom of or falling outside the caste system. Administrative parlance now employs the term "scheduled castes" while rights activists and the population more generally employ the term "Dalits."

Upper castes – Technically those occupying the first three major caste categories (thereby excluding the backward castes).

Abstract

Arpita Chakraborty

This thesis enquires into the process of normalisation of violent masculinity and masculinism in India through the use of religion. Masculinism is defined as the presence of excessive masculine values, male-centred view of social relationships and symbolisation of masculine hegemony (Kriesky 2014). This thesis shows the pervasive existence of masculinism across the Indian political spectrum through analysis of the major works of three leaders from different ideological positions – Swami Vivekananda, M. S. Golwalkar, and M. K. Gandhi. These three leaders had very different visions of the future of India; however, this thesis found recurrent connections between masculinity and violence in the works of all three.

This link is shown to have been bolstered in the works of all three – even in the ‘non-violent’ teachings of Gandhi – through the use of religion. Religious texts like the Bhagavad Gita, and ideas like karma, dharma, and karma yoga are used to link ideas of masculinity with structural, symbolic violence in the form of caste, class, and racial discrimination. This research found three different forms of religion-influenced masculinity in the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi – ascetic masculinity, culinary masculinity and violent masculinity. A feminist rhetorical analysis of the written works of these leaders shows how these religion-sanctioned masculinities result in Bourdieusian symbolic violence against women, dalits, and other minority communities in India. All these leaders subscribed to a hegemonic idea of masculinity – virile, upper caste, and heteronormative – with its forms of violence practiced to this day.

Vivekananda espoused a spiritual, ascetic form of masculinity, distinctly religious in its aspiration of Hindu conquest. Golwalkar’s political violent masculinity also aimed to re-establish Hindu supremacy in India. The ‘Othering’ of Muslims in Golwalkar’s writings was also a response to Gandhi’s alleged effeminate influence on Hindu masculinity. Ironically, this work shows how despite these allegations, masculinism in Gandhi’s writings resulted in his supporting honour killings and structural forms of violence, like the caste system. The continued relevance of the ideas of these three leaders and the allied prevalence of masculinism is underlined through an analysis of contemporary Indian politics, which shows that all these three forms of masculinities remain relevant. The beef lynchings by Gau Raksha committees, the growing political capital ascribed to celibacy, increasing violence against women and the rising nationalist othering of minority communities are evidence of religiously motivated violent masculinities gaining ground in contemporary India.

1. Introduction

Correlations between men and violence in India have been established for several decades now. In 1992, Philip Oldenberg showed that there was a significant statistical relationship between sex ratio and murder rates in districts of Uttar Pradesh; he used the crime statistics from 1981 to show that the lesser the female to male ratio in a district, the higher the murder rate (Oldenberg 1991). This finding was confirmed in later research by Dreze and Khera (2000), as well as Hudson and den Boer (2002). Dreze and Khera (2000, p 342) concluded:

What seems clear is that there is a strong link of some kind between gender relations and criminal violence (not just violence against women, but violence in the society as a whole)...This issue may be crucial in understanding criminal violence in many societies.

This reported correlation seems to be reconfirmed by more recent statistics. According to a *New York Times* report (Trivedi and Timmons 2013), India has 37 million more men than women per 2011 census data, and about 17 million excess men in the age group that commits most crimes, up from 7 million in 1991. Among all those arrested for rape, according to India's 2011 crime statistics, 60 per cent were men between the age of 30 to 60 years. Violent crime rose nearly 19 per cent from 2007 to 2011, while the kidnapping of women (much of which is related to forced marriage) increased 74 per cent in that time (ibid). In Uttar Pradesh, 132 of 424 members of the Vidhan Sabha are "suspected criminals" (Ahmed and Mishra 1997). The existence of a connection between violence, masculinity, and men is proven. Violence may be more visible among men, but masculinism is not. Masculinism – the belief in 'excessive masculine values, symbolisation of masculine hegemony, and male-centred view of social relationships' (Kriesky 2014, p 16) – exists among Indians regardless of their gender identity. Women believe in masculinism as much as men. Over 50 per cent of Indian men *and women* believe that sometimes women deserve a beating (Narayan 2018). According to 2015 National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data, 95 per cent of rapists are family, friends or neighbours¹ (Sharma 2017); however, only 1 per cent of victims of sexual crimes actually

¹ "27 percent of rapes are committed by neighbours, 22 percent involves the promise of marriage and 9 percent are committed by immediate family members and relatives. The data further stated that at least two percent of

report the incident to the police (Raj and McDougal 2014). Most sexual violence incidences in India happen within marriages (IIPS and Macro International 2007); however, marital rape is yet to be considered a criminal offence. In other words, masculinism is a socio-political problem not only affecting men – it is the normative view in society. In order to challenge such a gendered view, it is this very process of normalisation that needs to be better understood.

Masculinism in Indian politics has mostly been explored through the study of exclusion of women, with the masculinist tendencies that mark the space remaining unexamined. The intersection of masculinism and religion in Indian politics is crucial in the continuation of structural forms of gendered violence. Through an analysis of masculinism in the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi, I examine the role of religious ideas in the historical reproduction of masculinism in Indian politics and the resultant symbolic violence. It is important to point out that despite their different approaches, political philosophies and aspirations, Vivekananda, Golwalkar and Gandhi all subscribed to symbolic violence by masculine forces in one form or another. The objects of such violence included dalits, Muslims, and women, but the reality of violent masculinity was ever present. The process of normalisation of masculinism in India through religion is the core focus of this thesis.

Masculinism continues through the use of religious ideas and this masculinism has embedded symbolic violence in Indian politics. This research also shows the contribution of individual biographies and politics in that process. Gandhi, even with his famous espousal of non-violence, had contributed to it with his positions on sexual violence and honour killings. Golwalkar envisaged violent masculinity as a necessity for the Hindu masculine identity. Vivekananda repeatedly reaffirmed the political subject as male, and only women who embodied ascetic masculinity were acceptable. I interrogate the ideas around race, caste, and gender of these three political leaders to show how their ideas of masculinity were connected to Hindu religious ideas, and how symbolic violence was the consequence of such ideation. All these leaders subscribed to a hegemonic idea of masculinity – virile, upper caste, and heteronormative – with the resultant forms of violence practiced to this day.

all rape cases involves live-in partners or husbands (former partners or separated husbands — rape within marriage is not recorded), 1.6 percent are committed by employers or co-workers and 33 percent are committed by other known associates” (Sharma 2017, np).

I have applied feminist standpoint theory in contextualising Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' for the field of Indian politics. Dalit feminist standpoint theory provides strategic understanding of the 'dominant' from the perspective of the 'dominated' in the context of Indian society. My own subjective position of being an upper caste researcher is thus also brought into introspection through this framework. The intricate bond between religion and masculinity upholds the caste system, contributes to the glorification of violence – symbolic and material – and is a decisive characteristic of the field of Indian politics. As Kearn (2015) has suggested, 'deconstructing the dominant' is the political aspiration of this thesis. I state that even while hegemonic masculinity changes in form as it responds to cultural, social and political moments, this process does not take place in historical amnesia. Even when the social definitions of manhood and womanhood vary, they are still being formulated in reference to and remembrance of past such constructions. In order to elicit past socio-political situations, the hegemonic masculine practices of those times might be brought back into current political habitus. This is how the core beliefs of hegemonic masculinity are maintained and reproduced.

What does it mean to be violent for a man? What does performing a violent act entail? What makes violence comprehensible, acceptable, legitimate? How does one make a violent act justifiable to oneself? This thesis attempts to understand these questions in the context of India. This research was started with the aim of understanding the links between masculinity and violence in Indian society, and to do so in a way that broadens our understanding of the various influencing factors in the twentieth century beyond colonisation.

Even in theorisation, the female body is the one subjected to scrutiny. Historically, the importance given to women's reform partly necessitated that. However, what remains under-examined is the concurrent discourse on masculinity. Gendered political interpretations of religious traditions, whether revivalist or continued over the ages, reflect on the social expectations of behaviour from both men and women. The nature of women's reform in nineteenth century colonial India has been extensively studied and theorised. Chatterjee's (1993) theorisation of the segregation of the home and the world, the pure and the impure by the colonised men in evaluating their experience of colonisation has been intensely popularised and debated in the last two decades². As O'Hanlon (1997, p 1) said:

² The work of Joseph Alter (1994, 2000) on the understanding of masculinity in late colonial and postcolonial India, however, provides some serious critique of Chatterjee's understanding of sexuality and gender.

A proper understanding of the field of power in which women have lived their lives demands that we look at men as gendered beings too: at what psychic and social investments sustain their sense of themselves as men, at what networks and commonalities bring men together on the basis of shared gender identity, and what hierarchies and exclusions set them apart.

Any attempt at understanding Indian masculinity cannot be undertaken without scrutinising the idea of 'India' itself. There was no original identification of the term India with 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism' (Ludden 1996, Thapar 1989, von Stietencron 1995). Pandey (1993, p. 244) has pointed out how debates around nation, nationalism, and religion evolved in nineteenth century India:

Writers and thinkers of the nineteenth century... were quite evidently struggling with the question of how the 'we' of a possible Indian nationhood might be constituted. It was only towards the end of the century that some sort of consensus developed that this 'we' referred to all the people who lived in the territory called India, a consensus that would itself become challenged in time by the proponents of the Hindu and the Muslim Rashtra.

This consensus about 'we' is being re-questioned in contemporary Indian politics. And while this interrogation primarily revisits the position of minority Muslims in contemporary India, it is also recasting ideas of masculinity in a violent form. Pandey (1993) showed how both Bharatendu Harishchandra and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan use the term Hindu to mean the 'inhabitants of Hindustan' in the year 1884 (p. 245). The meaning of the term has since underwent transformation to reach the current religion-based identity formation. The influence of colonialism and industrialisation meant that emergence of a colonised masculinity took place in both the Hindu and the Muslim community (Daiya 2008).

This revivalism includes a multifaceted understanding of a broad spectrum of religious traditions as Hindu within the political sphere of the subcontinent. There is continuity between Aryan race theory, caste, gender, and sexuality, which forms the backbone of the present generation of Hindu political activists. This is more pronounced in the works of revivalist theorists like Golwalkar and Savarkar, and their use of underlying revivalist symbolism in late colonial India (Bayly 1999, Sen 1993, Dalmia 1997). However, this research shows that similar comprehension of at least some aspects of the Hindu tradition also finds its way into the political ideology of Gandhi. William Gould (2004, p 24), while discussing the presence of nationalist expressions of Hinduism and Hindu traditions in the Congress,

connects the party with appropriation of several Indic traditions as ‘Hindu’, which were later adopted by the Hindu right:

The attractions of an ancient, essentially ‘Hindu’, traditional Indian secularism were clear: its flexible conceptual frameworks allowed a whole range of anti-colonial messages to be conveyed. Because the notion of ‘Hindu’ could be flexible and catholic, a diverse range of political languages, manipulating often very different traditions, were considered by observers to be essentially ‘Hindu’. These languages and ideologies were part of a nationalist project, and so Congress agents were party to a process whereby complex and differentiated voices were homogenized into an overriding concept of ‘Hindu’ traditions.

While Gould undertakes research into how this overriding practice found its place within Congress in late colonial India, he focuses mainly on its influence on the political ideology of the party. But what he describes as ‘flexible conceptual framework’ had broad socio-political repercussions not only from a communal but also a gendered perspective. Use of religious symbolism and ideologies helped Congress leaders in party organisation at local levels - however, these symbolisms were intensely gendered. McKim (1963) has shown how Congress used the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata – adapted to local customs and traditions – to this end. Gould argues that the political nature of the use of this symbolism differs from that of Savarkar and RSS. However, the present research shows that a feminist reading of Hindu religious symbolism shows overarching similarities in their underlying notions of sexuality and gender. The political possibilities in religious concepts were never gender-neutral. They could never be when politics and religion both imagined definitive binary gender roles for the population. As unimaginative and restrictive as the binary of genders are, they played their role in upholding a social system, which is surprising in its applicability across temporal and spatial barriers. These possibilities in religion have been put into use in the construction and continuance of masculinity and femininity, as well as androgyny.

It is also essential to look at the understanding of the concept of violence and its use in Hindu right wing ideology if one is to understand violent masculinity in India. The Hindu right wing uses the ideology of domination and fear and the insecurity of being dominated among Hindus (Kovacs 2004, Anand 2005, Chatterjee 2012). Irrational as it may sound, it is put more into perspective when one considers the fragmentation within the Hindu community. What is considered an 80 per cent majority is constituted of Hindus from

various castes, as well as ex-untouchables. Many of these lower castes and ex-untouchables have historically disassociated themselves from Hinduism and its oppressive Brahminism, as is evident in the works of dalit scholars (Chopra 2006, Gupta 2014, 2010, Guru and Geetha 2000, Thorat 2009, Zelliott 2010). Crushed by Brahmins and a few other upper castes in social as well as economic terms for thousands of years, the assertion of dalit identity and the rise of dalit politics has given rise to an upper caste Hindu backlash (Govinda, 2006; Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016a). A sense of insecurity is bred in the group who are at the helm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other such organisations (Kelkar 2011, Islam 2015).

This can also be connected to the gendered roles played during violence (Zurbriggen 2010). In trying to find an answer for why women are raped, feminist scholars have talked again and again about power located in the larger scheme of one community's control over the other's source of birth and regeneration. Violence against dalit women at the hands of upper caste men has become normalised (Rege 1995b, Rao 2011). Violence is justified either as a form of reclaiming masculinity, or to protect perceived weaker subjects who are unable to be violent. In other words, the non-violence or the inability to become violent of certain sections of society, such as women and children, makes violence on their behalf an acceptable claim to masculinity as well as the superiority of masculinity over femininity. Such a circular argument is visible in many colonial as well as contemporary situations. Performance of masculinity continues to be informed with this idea that equates violence with power. The concept of othering and emasculation also goes hand in hand, examples of which can be seen in instances of communal violence and in rhetoric and proverbs about emasculation (Bacchetta 1999, Chatterjee 2012, Singh 2016).

This project interrogates the ways in which religion has influenced the conceptualisation of heteronormative violent masculinity in India. I focus on the written works of three early twentieth century Indian politico-religious leaders – Swami Vivekananda, M. S. Golwalkar, and M. K. Gandhi. Works on masculinity in India until now mostly focused on the influence of Protestant Christian ideas of masculinity brought by the British – and this influence has been perceived as the central constitutive factor for the emphasis on martial qualities, physical valour, and celibacy in Indian masculinity (Alter 1994, Banerjee 2012, Sinha 1995). Communal and casteist tensions in Indian society have also fed on this conflation between manliness and the ability to be violent as evidence of masculinity. It is precisely this process of conflation that is the focus of my research.

Much has been written about masculinity in the field of gender and sexuality studies. Masculinity studies has emerged as a field of its own, and extensive work has been done in India in the last three decades on the study of the discourse of violent masculinity. There are three large groups of scholarship that I have studied while trying to answer the questions: how has the connection between masculinity and religion in India been studied? And how exactly did connecting religion with masculinity serve the purpose of colonial politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth century? Similar questions have been taken up by many scholars, and as Sanjay Srivastava (2004) has pointed out, a disproportionate amount of focus in masculinity studies in India has been on the concept of celibacy and asceticism. The latter's influence on masculinity and the role religion has played in gendering the field of politics has remained largely unexplored however. While it is justified to say that celibacy has preoccupied a large part of Hindu nationalist discourse, at the same time, there has been a lack of attention to how other religious concepts have found their way into present imaginations of manliness via the embedding and persistence of nineteenth and early twentieth century politics and ideas.

About 35 years ago, Ashis Nandy (1983, p.xiv) wrote: 'Hinduism is Indianness the way V. S. Naipaul speaks of it; and Hindusim could be Indianness the way Tagore actualized it. At one time these could be ignored as trivialities. Today, these differences have become clues to survival'. In the last few years, these trivial differences have become even more urgent to address, and their influence on us an immediate concern. This is my defence in choosing the influence of Hinduism on Indian masculinity – it is a threat contemporary India is grappling with. The urgency of gendering these differences is a project that has been undertaken before by the likes of Nandy (1983), Sikata Banerjee (2012), and Chandrima Chakraborty (2014) – three works that been a major influence on this dissertation. While Nandy, Banerjee and Chakraborty looks at the origins of the ideas of masculinity during the nineteenth century, this thesis shows how conceptualisations of masculinity during that time continue to resonate in Indian politics till date.

Organisation and Structure

The next chapter explores the theoretical framework that underlies this project. For the purposes of the project, I have extended the understanding of what constitutes violence and

used Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence. By 'symbolic violence', Bourdieu meant the systems of meanings of the social order that are imposed by the dominant and are 'misrecognised' by the dominated as somehow un-arbitrary and natural, or that form of violence that 'can be exercised only with that sort of complicity . . . via the effect of misrecognition encouraged by denial, by those on whom that violence is exercised' (Bourdieu 1991, p 210). This form of violence, imposed through social structures, may sometimes lead to visible forms of actual violence. However, whether that is the case or not, the role of symbolic violence in the continuation of oppression (i.e. in various racial, casteist, sexual and gendered forms) is the central Bourdieusian preoccupation in his theory of practice. Symbolic violence is the everyday, naturalised practices that make inequality and oppression not only acceptable, but often agreed upon by the oppressed. The dominating classes continue this form of violence in two ways: by creating distinctions between classes, and then naturalising these distinctions to the extent that they are accepted as laws of nature. Hence, symbolic systems categorise social groups and then legitimise such categorisations (e.g. caste and gender hierarchies in India). Field and habitus helps perpetuate the illusion which is the material condition necessary for the continuation of symbolic violence in society.

But who are the women I talk about here? It is clear that Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is not equally applicable to contemporary struggles of Irish women fighting for abortion rights and dalit women fighting for their right to life. As feminist standpoint theory argues, experiences are contingent on lived experiences. Joanna Bourke (2017) is right to say that not all violence is the same, and neither is the experience of it. Bourdieu's conceptualisation runs the risk of flattening multiple hierarchies and socio-political realities experienced in life into one gender frame, as the arguments put forth by his many critiques, discussed in Chapter 2 convincingly shows. This is why feminist standpoint theory is crucial if one is to use Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence – in giving voice to subjective experiences, it puts forth the reality of unequal effects of symbolic violence. Standpoint theory in the context of India has, for example, shown the uneven influences of caste and gender politics in the lives of upper caste women and dalit women.

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field, symbolic capital and symbolic violence is crucial, but not sufficient for an emancipatory feminist project. It envisions gender equality as a near impossibility, and masculine domination as the status quo of the foreseeable future. Feminist

standpoint theory, on the other hand, can benefit from the conceptual tools in Bourdieu's theory – symbolic power, symbolic violence, and habitus all prove to be significant tools in the attempt to reveal structural hidden forms of violence and reasons behind their continuation. The political possibilities of changing the symbolic capital through individual as well as organisational efforts– denounced by Bourdieu– has been successfully put into praxis by the dalit feminist movement in India, and dalit feminist standpoint theory can thus provide the contextualisation of marginalised positions in India that is lacking in Bourdieu's theory. The political and social changes accomplished by the dalit women's movement is ample evidence of the ability of the marginalised to usher in sustainable long-term societal changes, unlike the limited political agency of the dominated that Bourdieu predicted. Shifts in the symbolic field of gender have indeed, brought forth changes in the fields of caste and politics.

The link between social hierarchy (e.g. gender- or caste-based) and masculinity is palpable. In a heteronormative patriarchal society, the universally accepted role of a person of prominence is male. This is not only of an individual nature. The organisation or the community, which is being portrayed as the one with claims to leadership, is always shown as one with 'manliness' (Srivastava 1998, Mandair 2005, George 2006). Lest this seem ridiculous to someone in 2018, one only needs to take a cursory look at the election campaign of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the national elections of India in 2014, and how they fielded their Prime Ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi as the '*lauba purush*' (iron man) (Srivastava 2015). Political claims to power, even decades after colonisation has formally ended, continue to be modelled around the need of hypermasculinity. And this hypermasculinity, as I show in this research, is modelled not only on Protestant Christian ideas imported from Europe, but also indigenous religious sources. In the third chapter, therefore, I discuss existing scholarly literature to understand the socio-political specificities of gender relations in India and the place masculinity occupied in the political and religious spheres.

I have divided the literature reviewed for this thesis into three sections. The first block of literature reviewed in the third chapter establishes the theoretical frameworks on masculinity established by scholars globally, focussing specifically on conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity and masculinism. The second section of literature I review builds upon these concepts and discusses works on masculinity in other postcolonial contexts, both in the form of nation-states like Ireland and Iran, and in Latin America, and national imaginations in

ideologies like Zionism. In doing so, I draw attention to similarities in the mechanisms of masculinity in various post-colonial societies that have been pointed out by many scholars. The third body of literature reviewed here consists of formative research on concepts of masculinity in India during the colonial period, by the likes of Charu Gupta (2016, 2014, 2010, 2001), Mrinalini Sinha (1995, 1999) and Sikata Banerjee (2012, 2007, 2006, 2005). Exploring such conceptualisations in detail also highlighted a gap in the literature in terms of the continued influence of religion in imagining the ideal Hindu man and, by implication, the imagination of the Indian man as inherently Hindu. While this body of scholarship has brilliantly exposed the connections between colonialism, nationalism and masculinity, the influence of other fields – in the Bourdieusian sense – in the normalisation of heteropatriarchal masculinity remains unexplored. Specifically, the influence of religion on the normalisation of violence as an acceptable expression of masculinity – as exposed by a large body of literature on communalism – has remained neglected.

The fourth chapter gives a detailed description of my methodology. Feminist rhetorical analysis is the method used in this research. In order to look at how normalisation of violent masculinity for political ends took place in India, I analysed the written works of three politico-religious leaders of the early twentieth century: Swami Vivekananda, M. S. Golwalkar, and M. K. Gandhi. All three of them were voluminous writers and used writing as the primary mode of communication with their followers. Hence, through a feminist rhetorical analysis of the newspaper articles, books, and letters of these leaders, I illustrate how their religious discourses intersected with their political ideologies with masculinity as a major connector. The interrelation between gendered roles in society and violence also come up regularly in their writings. Another reason for choosing these three leaders was due to the period of history in which they were writing. They were active during a period of intense anti-colonial struggle and social reform in India, as the brief biographies supplied in this chapter elucidate. It was a period where political struggle and ways to overcome the oppressive colonisers was one of the most significant themes of public discourse. Hence, these leaders wrote not only on religious issues, but also on what needed to be done for India to regain its independence. Use of violence, and the means to become ‘a man’ again, featured repeatedly in such treatises. Thus, their works are, in a way, archives of how the use of violence for political purposes was theorised and practiced, how it was associated with the fear of emasculation among the colonised people, and how using violence became a means to recover the claim of masculinity among the colonised.

The fifth chapter shows connections between spiritual, virile masculinity and Vedanta philosophy in the works of Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda's aspiration for a rejuvenated Hinduism and Hindu society was based on the social services of his group of sanyasis – signifying an ascetic form of masculinity dedicated towards religious revival. Unlike later Hindu traditionalists like Golwalkar, he affirmed beef eating as an essential path towards muscular regeneration of Hindu youth. In relation to this, I examine in detail the curious position he took up in relation to violence against human and non-human forms. The aspiration of supremacy over other religions, his studied silence on the condition of lower castes, and the heteronormative, upper caste Hindu nature of his proposed ideal masculinity continues to be relevant in today's politics through reaffirming social hierarchies. This chapter also points out the central contradiction in his conceptualisation of celibacy and motherhood. The inherent assumption of women as sexual threats and hence their imagined role within the home contributed to the heteronormative patriarchal society he imagined for future India, but at the same time created sexual anxieties for the ideal masculine figure of sanyasi that he proposed. In celebrating his birthday as World Youth Day, the Indian government is reconfirming the imagination of a similar masculinity for its young generation, which brings together the racism of Aryan lineage, caste supremacy, and gender hierarchy.

M. S. Golwalkar's vision of Hindu masculinity differed from Vivekananda's. Though inspired by Vivekananda, Golwalkar believed in a professed muscular strength and aspired to political supremacy of Hindus and their practice of Brahmanical Hinduism. Also, like Vivekananda, a believer in Aryan race theory, Golwalkar envisioned the Hindu community as in urgent need of physical strength to protect itself against the threats of Islam and Gandhian non-violence. Yet, meat-eating is not seen by him as a requirement for gaining muscular strength, and the ideal beef-eating strong Hindu of Vivekananda turns into a cow-protector in Golwalkar's writings. The sixth chapter elucidates how Golwalkar used the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to bring his ideation of Hindu masculinity into realisation. Using the concepts of dharma and karma from Hindu philosophy, he strived to create an army of muscular Hindus led by the celibate *pracharak*. Muslims occupied the central position of 'Other' in his ideology, and the anxiety of Muslims gaining political power was channelized into a perceived sexual threat towards Hindu women. This perceived sexual threat is still relevant in the creation of Hindutva groups across India, and evident in the discourse of Love Jihad (Sarkar 2018). There is also a decisive shift from the *Mahabharata* to

Ramayana from Vivekananda to Golwalkar – and the imagery of warrior Rama protecting Sita finds repetition in contemporary political imagery of the ideal political state of Ramrajya and the real contest over Babri Masjid.

Golwalkar's understanding of masculinity was in firm contradiction with that of Gandhi; in fact, Gandhian politics was the principal motivator behind the creation of RSS. Gandhi was a figure of non-violence, of an alleged soft femininity whose sexuality has often been interpreted quite contradictorily by scholars. Chapter seven focuses on three different aspects of Gandhi's political teachings in understanding the presence of masculinism in his writings and his position on violent masculinity: his ideas on vegetarianism, the caste system, and sexual violence during the period of Partition. While the position of the caste system in Gandhi's politics evolved over time, Partition took place at the very end of Gandhi's life and political career. It was a time when a Gandhian philosophy of non-violence had reached full evolution. Connecting gastronomy and libido, his vegetarianism called for control of sexual virility through dietary restrictions – the Hindu religious concept of abrogation of desire. Thus, even while imagining ideal masculinity as somatic embodiment, he proposed vegetarianism as an essential aspect of brahmacharya. Through his reactions to these two forms of violence, casteism and sexual violence, I show how the subject of non-violence in Gandhian politics remained masculinist: the sexual violence survivors during Partition were not perceived as subjects capable of decision-making. The masculine, patriarchal role of the State and the community was approved to decide the futures of these survivors on their behalf. Gandhi clearly professed his preference of death for these women rather than surviving sexual violence. He lauded the masculine bravado of men who killed women in their family before they could be sexually violated; in fact, in Gandhi's words, 'I think it is really great, because I know such things make India brave' (CWMG V96: p388–389). Even non-violence could not steer Gandhi away from the dreams of a virile masculine nation whose violence on women and marginal communities were proof of its metier.

The Bhagavad Gita is a crucial religious thread binding all these varying conceptualisations of masculinity together. Discussions on karma and violence in the Gita find repeated mention in the works of all three leaders, perhaps in reflection of the sudden rise of this text into eminence on the global stage in the nineteenth century (Kapila and Devji 2013). Apart from contributing to the growing political capital of the text, these leaders also used it for variable interpretations of ideal Indian masculinity. It is not accidental that Narendra Modi

is hailed as a karma yogi. Hence, it is the Gita which acts as the common thread in the analysis of the works of these leaders and binds them together to show the recurring influence of religious concepts.

In the eighth and concluding chapter, I bring the focus back to contemporary India and the visible effects of violent masculine practices in promoting symbolic forms of oppression. Through discussions of beef lynchings, the rise of ascetic figures like Yogi Adityanath in the political sphere, the controversy on Love Jihad related to the marriage of Hadiya and such seemingly disparate events across India in the last few years, I show how manifestations of three forms of masculinity are evident – ascetic masculinity, culinary masculinity, and violent masculinity. They reinforce and reinstall each other in the popular psyche, and the violence caused by the first two are no less, even if not always physically evident like the third. The continuing relevance of masculinist ideas visible in the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi in the projection of contemporary masculinity in Indian politics is evident in such events.

Notes from the researcher

Every researcher goes through their own journey to reach their research interest. Influenced by the subjects we are exposed to, the teachers who make those subjects interesting (or not), the personal ambitions we keep in mind while making career choices all influence our path. For me, this research has not been the end to that path. I sought to understand my own experiences, of why certain things happened to me, of why people around me reacted to those incidences in the way that they did, and whether there was any way I could have avoided it. It was due to personal experiences of sexual violence that I took initial interest in violence. My starting point of research were exposure to incidences of political violence in India like Khairlanji and Bathinotla. But the more I read feminist readings of violence, the more I realised that the idea of reading violence as political or sexual or every day is merely differentiating its various forms, without going into the question of ‘why?’. Political violence is understood to happen due to political adversity and struggles over power, or sexual violence due to the masculinist nature of society. To think of violence in such separate forms keeps us from questioning whether such a commonality exists, or from an understanding of its commonality.

I utilised Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic violence from a feminist perspective, in order to understand how religion and politics have come together to maintain and propel violent masculinities and masculinism in contemporary India since the times of anticolonial struggles. The central role of religion in the creation of hegemonic masculinity in India can hardly be overstated. This hegemonic masculinity – Hindu, upper caste, and imagined in contradiction to Muslim masculinity – and symbolic violence are intricately connected in praxis in the form of embodiment at a personal level as well as institutional praxis in the field of politics.

While examining the impact of religion-influenced masculinity in the political sphere, I had to narrow down the spectrum of political ideologies I focused on, due to constraints of time and space, as well as intellectual unfamiliarity. Admittedly, the omission of leftist political thought especially in light of their position on violence is a lacuna here that I would like to address in later research. B. R. Ambedkar's position on this intersection is a crucial part of this exploration, which after long consideration I had to decide not to attempt in this project. Ambedkar's writings and his influence on present dalit political activism in unmasking Hinduism-influenced masculinity is a project that needs urgent attention, and one that I aspire to undertake in future.

My analysis in this thesis shows how, despite occupying different ends of the political spectrum, Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi all subscribed to a similar idea of masculinity and its role in politics. Their conceptualisation of masculinity also meant a gendered vision of the political future of India; a vision which was also Hindu-centric. The current political supremacy of the right wing in India and its violent masculinist aspirations can thus be traced back not only to right-wing ideologues, but also political figures like Gandhi. This is a crucial realisation if we are to forge a strong resistance to the continuation of Hindutva ideologies in India. A comprehensive understanding of the race-caste-gender continuum, which is at the crux of structural symbolic violence in Indian society is the first step towards creating meaningful, inclusive resistance. In unmasking Brahmanical masculinism, the epistemological position of dalit women is crucial. Because I do not share their socio-political reality ontologically, standpoint theory as a theoretical underpinning acts as a reminder both of my position as an upper caste researcher removed from the lived reality of the field, as well as the violence perpetrated by this structure on those who occupy lower positions than me in the masculinist hierarchy of exploitation.

2.

Bringing Bourdieu and Feminist Standpoint Together: Theoretical Challenges

In this chapter, the theoretical framework which informs this project is detailed. Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the continuation of social systems – especially their gendered hierarchy – and feminist standpoint theory are the two principle epistemological sites that have assisted me in reaching an enabling theoretical position for the purposes of this thesis. Bourdieu's ideas about the formation of gender and class, especially in the books *Masculine Domination* (2001) and *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), is the major theoretical framework I have used in order to understand and locate the importance of the three politico-religious leaders' works in framing masculinity and its relation to violence in contemporary India. In order to engage with the research questions, a suitable methodology was needed, 'an approach capable of grasping the specifically symbolic dimension of male domination' (Bourdieu 2001, p 3); Bourdieu's work helped in the analysis as well as the determination of such a methodology.

In the next section, I will briefly discuss some of the seminal concepts that have emerged from Bourdieu's work over several decades, and have also been useful for his theory of practice. I will then move on to the concept of symbolic violence and place it within the context of Indian society, specifically the struggle against prevalent masculinism. I will locate the necessity to revisit the conceptual tools provided by Bourdieu through a feminist lens, enriched methodologically by dalit standpoint theory. A dalit standpoint utilisation of the concept of symbolic violence is the theoretical prism through which I understand the structural masculinism apparent in the works of Gandhi, Golwalkar, and Vivekananda.

Bourdieu: A brief overview

Bourdieu (2001, p 1) uses the concept of symbolic violence to understand the reasons behind the continuation of masculine domination in society and defines it thus:

I have also seen masculine domination, and the way it is imposed and suffered, as the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I call symbolic violence, a gentle violence imperceptible and invisible even to its victims exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling.

This symbolic violence is reaffirmed and reproduced not only in the domestic sphere but also in the public - the school, the political and legal systems, the state, not to mention through religion and various religious and spiritual performative rituals over time. In an earlier text, he defined symbolic violence as ‘the *violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p 167, original emphasis). Gender violence is a form of symbolic violence because as Chambers (2005) explains the term, ‘women (and men) comply willingly, with no need for coercion, and because its effect is to create symbolic normative images of ideal gendered behaviour’. This complying behaviour, explained as ‘habitus’, or disposition as he calls it (2001, p 42) is one of the principle grounds of this research. Habitus can be crudely understood as a set of complying behaviour mechanisms developed in men as well as women due to social conditioning. This compliance is what maintains the male-dominant status quo. As Loïc Wacquant (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p 14) once said, ‘the whole of Bourdieu’s work may be interpreted as a materialist anthropology of the specific contribution that various forms of symbolic violence make to the reproduction and transformation of structures of domination’.

If one wants to question how the structure of gender is continued in society – not only in the sense of hierarchy between heterosexuality and homosexuality, men and women, but also in terms of the preference for masculinist ideas inherent in socio-political systems – Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* provides a crucial entry into the act of its comprehension. Briefly worth introducing here also are his concepts of *field* (dealt with in detail in his book *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993)), *doxa*, and *habitus*. Having supplied an overview of these, I will then go to show how they contribute to the theoretical conceptualisation for a study of Indian masculinity.

Skeggs (1997) points out that in his various works, Bourdieu used an economic approach to analysing society and identified four different types of capital: economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. Through his materialist interpretation of social relations – heavily influenced by the Marxist school of thought – Bourdieu attempts to put

material value on resources that had not traditionally been looked upon as capital. In doing so, he is able to locate two major forms of deprivation that the gender hierarchy successfully achieves. Firstly, making certain forms of labour, emotions, and sources of knowledge traditionally associated with women less valuable. Putting them in a materialist context brings forth the hierarchy that has rendered those forms of social participation invisible or delegitimised. A prime example of this is the material value of emotion. Both emotion as an expression of self, and being emotional as an act are considered effeminate. Traditionally, it has at best been assigned no material value, and at worst given a negative value in the context of lack of manliness, hysteria, or simply unprofessionalism. Any show of emotion in a workplace is considered not as humane, but as unsuitable behaviour. Secondly, putting a materialist interpretation on what Bourdieu calls cultural capital or symbolic capital illuminates on multiple shapes and forms of exclusion practiced in diverse spheres of life to reinforce gendered hierarchies, forms which are not always visible through mere economic or social analysis. These conceptual additions thus add value in understanding the persistence of these hierarchies across generations and societies.

Inscribing material value to cultural and symbolic products also alters the conception of 'class' in Bourdieu's work. As el-Malik (2013, p 4) explains, 'For him, class is a social grouping of people around forms of resources or capital that can be economic, cultural and/or symbolic'. Society is thus divided into different groups of people based on principles of inclusion/exclusion, which are not only dependent on economic, but also cultural and symbolic factors. The symbolic power of these principles is based not on the principles per se, but peoples' belief in them. It is the belief, or in other words the ideologies, among both the dominant and the dominated that provide these symbolic systems with their power. Hence, masculinity and femininity might not be real but constructed gender roles, as Butler (1990) shows, however their importance in society lies in the concepts' cultural and symbolic value and the belief that people have in it. Both men and women believe in and comply with this symbolic system, and that is the source of the power for this system, as well as the reason why it is impossible to get rid of (Bourdieu 1977). Bourdieu's materialist interpretation of cultural and symbolic capital is what makes his work so valuable for this research. In the next subsection, I will briefly introduce the concepts of doxa, field, and habitus, before discussing symbolic violence – which is the principal Bourdieusian concept I have used for this thesis – in greater detail.

The Bourdieusian concepts of *Field*, *Habitus*, *Doxa*

According to Bourdieu, power is entrenched in society, and it works through symbolic systems. These symbolic systems operate as instruments of domination in two ways: first, through their use by the dominant groups to distinguish themselves as culturally distinct; and second, by communicating with the dominated groups this cultural distinction as hierarchy and making them accept it. Hence, symbolic systems categorise social groups and then legitimises such categorisations. These systems are crucial not because they represent social reality as it is, but because they represent what the social reality is believed to be. Thus, the consequences of such beliefs make symbolic systems critical (Swartz 1997). This is where symbolic power lies, in the fact that these cognitive tools (re-established and reaffirmed through everyday social interactions) used by social groups can determine their real lived experiences. As el-Malik (2013, p 4) points out, ‘... power exists, not in the specific words or symbols, but in the legitimizing belief in those words or symbols’.

The principle Bourdieusian concepts of *doxa*, *field* and *habitus* have contributed significantly in identifying structural factors contributing to the societal rubric, and has since been extensively used in sociology. In his book *Distinction* (1984, p 101), Bourdieu provided the following formula:

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

So practice can be interpreted as the final product of a person’s engagement with the capital s/he has with her/his habitus, in the field in which s/he is embedded. *Field* is a concept used by Bourdieu extensively in his works to explain the sites of struggle and legitimisation of economic, cultural and symbolic resources that a group of people share. Inspired by Marxian idea of class, he theorises the field as a space of power struggle, where the centre is held by those who are dominant in acquiring power, and the periphery by those who are marginalised. Those who control the centre of the field determine meaning (economic, cultural, or symbolic). However, as Brubaker (2004, p 46–47) explained, Bourdieu moved beyond the economic in his definition of class: “[t]he conceptual space within which Bourdieu defines class is not that of relations of production, but that of social relations in general. . . . Class thus defined is treated by Bourdieu as a *universal explanatory principle*” (emphasis in original).

The struggle for maintaining positions or challenging the position of others to capture the centre of the field causes mobilization among various social groups. These forms of mobilization, according to Bourdieu (1984), determine many everyday practices, as well as political action. Symbolic power is to be found precisely in this interaction between habitus and field, because if one is to challenge the field in its present shape and form, one needs to acknowledge its effect on social reality at first. This effect on social reality is, in other words, *habitus*. The symbolic nature of power provides it the consent of the dominated as well, legitimising the continuation of structures such as gender, which are often unequal. Swartz (1997, p 47) discusses Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power as a theoretical extension of Durkheim's ideas of sacred and profane beyond the realm of religion into other fields in society:

Bourdieu extends Durkheim's sacred/profane opposition to an analysis of contemporary cultural forms. . . . More generally, Bourdieu believes that the religious sacred is but a particular case of the more general idea that social distinctions, whether applied to individuals, groups, or institutions, assume a taken-for-granted quality that elicits acceptance and respect. Symbolic power is a power 'to consecrate', to render sacred. He thus associates the concept of the sacred with legitimation, particularly in high culture and art where boundaries are particularly strong. In this sense, he can declare that his sociology of culture is in reality a 'science of the sacred'. In other words, for Bourdieu (in Monod 2002, 245) '[a]ll that is sacred has its complementary profane, and all distinction produces its vulgarity'. It is in this light, moreover, that we are to understand Bourdieu's (1994, 132) assertion that 'the sociology of culture is the sociology of religion of our day'.

For this project, a closer look at the role of understanding society through understanding the workings of religion is of particular interest. I will return to it after a brief discussion of some of the other central concepts used by Bourdieu.

'*Habitus*' can be defined as the disposition a subject achieves due to the cultural capital they embody. It can be understood as the physical embodiment or collective socialisation of cultural capital. It is the physical, intellectual and psychological adaptations we inculcate in order to successfully navigate through the environments we are exposed to. These surroundings or environments, which influence our cognitive dispositions and shape them in decisive ways, are the 'fields'. Habitus is thus socially and culturally ingrained through the fields a subject is part of. Through long periods of socialisation, subjects internalise their disposition towards social and cultural systems, and this habitus then acquires a quasi-natural

legitimacy. It determines the thought processes and possibilities that are imagined by a person – it determines what they imagine are their limits. It becomes so ingrained that, as Bourdieu noted, people often mistake their habitus as natural rather than culturally developed. Habitus, such as women being less physically adapted than men for manual labour, are cultural habitus that continue in the society until they seem to look natural and biological. And since they are accepted as biological, the circular argument that nature meant women to be different than men is used to reinforce gender differences. Thus, the field of influence continues, and so does the habitus. The field and the habitus work together to maintain what Bourdieu calls the *illusio*. It is the status quo that maintains domination of the class in control.

According to Bourdieu, then, the only way this vicious cycle can be broken is if the habitus is taken away from the field. In the absence of a field that constantly reconfirms the habitus, the subject might come to question the nature of both the field and the habitus, leading to a transformation in the habitus or an attempted change in the field the subject is part of. This is a difficult project, as no doubt the pessimistic tone of Bourdieu's work shows (see for example, Fowler 2003). However, it continues to be relevant in understanding the how and why of the continuation of gender hierarchy. Bourdieu's work thus remains one of the important sites of feminist engagement and reinterpretation.

Lovell (2000) and Chambers (2005) try to grapple with the question of how the concept of field can be used to explain gender hierarchy. Lovell attempts to use the Bourdieusian framework by considering women as 'capital', in the sense of both 'objects' of value to others and 'capital-accumulating subjects', though it remains to be explained how gendered norms become 'habitus'. In the light of Lovell's argument, Chambers (2005) suggests that gendered habitus develops in response to all fields. Different fields have different norms, some of which might be specific to that field and some general norms applicable across fields (she gives the example of acceptable dress codes). The fields are not in isolation and their continuous interactions contribute to development of norms which interact and influence each other. All these norms across various fields influence individuals to create a gendered habitus. This would also explain why gendered norms continue to exist obstinately despite decades of feminist struggle. Since gendered norms continue to influence through multiple fields simultaneously, it is almost an impossibility to take habitus out of its reinforcing field, an act which might lead the subject to question the consistency of their own habitus. This continuation ultimately leads to its reification into what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence.

Symbolic violence

By 'symbolic violence', Bourdieu meant the systems of meanings of the social order imposed by the dominant that are 'misrecognized' by the dominated as somehow un-arbitrary and natural, or that form of violence that 'can be exercised only with that sort of complicity . . . via the effect of misrecognition encouraged by denial, by those on whom that violence is exercised' (Bourdieu 1991, p 210). This form of violence, imposed through social structures, may sometimes lead to visible forms of actual violence. However, whether that is the case or not, the role of symbolic violence in continuation of oppression (in various racial, casteist, sexist and gendered forms) is the central Bourdieusian preoccupation in his theory of practice. Symbolic violence is the everyday, naturalised practices that make inequality and oppression not only acceptable, but often agreed to by the oppressed. The dominating classes continue this form of violence in two ways: by creating distinctions between classes and then naturalizing these distinctions to an extent that they can be accepted as laws of nature¹. It is a process that is ever-continuing, always at work.

Field and habitus help perpetuate the material condition necessary for the continuation of symbolic violence in society. Bourdieu developed these concepts to a large extent through his observations of the particular field of religion. While discussing habitus and field Erwan Dianteill (2004, p 66) notes:

In Bourdieu's work, 'the notions of 'belief', 'field' or 'habitus' always result from the social sciences of religion (sociology, anthropology, history). From this point of view, Bourdieu's work is almost a 'generalized' sociology of religion (with religion representing in paradigmatic fashion properties common to all spheres of symbolic activity).

This influence of religion on Bourdieu's theory has largely remained unexplored in the feminist works using Bourdieu, like Chambers (2005). He considered the influence of religion pervasive in other social fields, as can be discerned from his definition of *religious habitus* as 'the principal generator of all thoughts, perceptions and actions consistent with the norms of a religious representation of the natural and supernatural worlds' (Bourdieu 1971,

¹ Anthropologist and political scientist James Scott (1990, p 133) arrives at a similar conclusion: 'As an integral part of their claim to superiority, ruling castes are at pain to elaborate styles of speech, dress, consumption, gesture, carriage, and etiquette that distinguish them as sharply as possible from the lower orders', all with the implicit aim of perpetuating the social order. Scott suggestively refers to such effects of symbolic violence as 'cultural segregation'.

p 319). Most of the scholarship on gender using Bourdieu's work (Chamber 2005, Lovell 2000, Malik 2013, among others) have used his concepts on masculine domination or his ideas on class. The concepts of habitus, symbolic violence and doxa have found much currency among feminist researchers and activists in recent years. The interaction of religion, gender and politics from the perspective of Bourdieusian theory of practice, however, has seldom been attempted, with an exception in Joan Martin's (2000) work.

Terry Rey (2007) provides a detailed analysis of the influence of religion on Bourdieu and in turn, his influence on the study of religion². He details specifically Bourdieu's observations on the religious field and its influence on maintaining the *illusio*. Out of the vast body of Bourdieu's work, only a very small segment of around ten essays are directly related to religion. However, religion comprises an important component of the theory of practice that is the summation of all his works. His most important contribution, along the lines of Marx and Weber, is to point out the economic dimension of the religious field, and the influence of religious capital on other social fields. Rey talks at some length about the interdependency of the various social fields on one another, and how the field of religion in particular influences the fields of politics, class and race. However, his analysis of the Bourdieusian field of religion remains silent on the role and effect of gendering and gendered relations, and how the interactions of these two fields influence symbolic capital.

Transferability of symbolic capital from the field of religion to other fields like politics and economics, as proposed by Bourdieu opens up new possibilities for intersectional research on the influence of religious capital on politics and gender and how they influence each other simultaneously. As John B. Thompson notes (1991, p 6):

those who occupy dominant positions in the political field will be identical with, or in some way closely linked to, those who occupy dominant positions in the field of economic

² An interesting observation made by Rey is Bourdieu's probable knowledge of the existence of the Cagots community that once existed outside of Denguin, the town in France where Bourdieu spent his early years. Comparing the condition of the Cagots with that of dalits (Rey refers to them as 'untouchables') in India, Rey (2007, p 16) speculates about the extent of the influence the existence of this community had on Bourdieu's theories:

Consisting chiefly of lepers, but in some cases also of religious heretics, the Cagots were the social outcasts of medieval France, comparable to the 'untouchables' of India, who suffered persecution and ostracism on par with some of the worst forms of racist oppression in the modern world. They were the 'wretched of the earth' in medieval Béarn, victims of the most extreme instances of what Bourdieu calls 'symbolic violence', which sometimes took Catholic forms, like receiving the Eucharist on the end of a long stick and having a separate receptacle of holy water for their exclusive use.

production'. The possession of large sums of capital in one field usually translates for an individual into advantageous positions in other fields.

This observation is particularly relevant for this project, since all three leaders that are the subjects of this research had/have significantly influential religious capital, which transformed into political capital. Bourdieu's theory of practice is thus applied to see how they use their religious capital in the political field, how they transform the religious capital into political capital and how this process reinforces masculinist practices in Indian society. In ascertaining the transformation of their religious capital into political capital, I also study the use of the Bhagavad Gita – one of the most popularised Hindu religious books – in their works. It is important to note here that spiritual capital has been differentiated by Bourdieu from religious capital. But in the case of a polytheistic religion like Hinduism, this border is blurred. This cross section of fields in their works is important in two senses: first, to examine how their works contribute in building the political and religious habitus of their followers, and also to find in contemporary practices the reflection of their own habitus. The impossibility of charting the complete terrain of any habitus makes the nature of this project fragmentary, but nonetheless vital. My research interrogates one specific aspect of how religious markers and texts are used to eternalise heteronormative masculinity in Indian society at the cusp of the twentieth century in multiple social fields. But how will this process of eternalisation be seen from standpoint theory? My personal position as a researcher is reinforced through standpoint as a method as well as a theoretical framework, and Bourdieu provides the underlying philosophy.

Feminist Standpoint Theory: A brief introduction

While Bourdieu was formulating his theory of practice, feminist researchers were simultaneously attempting to explain the naturalization of gender inequality, the different social positions of gendered subjects and the implications of such positions on their social experiences. Many of them, like Bourdieu, were influenced by Marxist ideas of class differences, but took it beyond its scope in search of a theoretical framework that takes into consideration the participation of women (Smith 1987, Harding 1991). This research has been influenced by feminist standpoint theory in positioning its theoretical base, its philosophical aspirations as well as its aim of contributing to current gender studies discourses in India. Originating in the early 1980s through the works of Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Dorothy Smith, Donna Haraway and others in the United States, it aimed

to look at the gaps and biases 'between actual and ideal relations between knowledge and power' (Harding 2007) through using the perspective of the marginalised. Annica Kronsell (2005, p 283), while arguing for the use of feminist standpoint theory in the study of hegemonic masculine institutions such as the military, puts forth the argument that feminist standpoint provides us a unique position to critique what is considered 'normal'. Since the masculine is the normative in a patriarchal social structure, the standpoint of the dominated – women, queer, or dalit as it may – will be able to question it from their experience of the habitual. Standpoint is variously defined as an achieved collective identity or consciousness. A standpoint is not simply a perspective gained due to one's own socio-historical position, but earned and imbibed through political struggle. This perspective can then be utilised to investigate the social structures and hierarchies in place. This is a crucial point in terms of its epistemological and methodological utilities.

Principle concepts of feminist standpoint theory

Feminist standpoint theory emerged in the 1980s, mainly as a critique of scientific objectivity by sociologists of science. There are four principal goals put forth by feminist standpoint theorists in their early writings, as Harding (2007, p 47) states:

... (1) To explain in a more accurate way relations between androcentric institutional power and the production of sexist and androcentric knowledge claims, (2) to account for the surprising successes of research in the social sciences and biology that were overtly guided by feminist politics, (3) to provide guidelines for future research, and (4) to provide a resource for the empowerment of oppressed groups.

With these goals in mind, standpoint theorists like Sandra Harding (1983, 2003), Donna Haraway (1988, 1989), Nancy Hartsock (1983, 1998), Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999), and Alison Jagger (1983) critiqued the blind pursuit of 'objectivity' in science, which were reinforcing gendered and hierarchical stereotypes normative in the society, naturalised to the extent of being considered 'objective' and thus producing sexist and androcentric results in research in biology and other branches of science. Cultural values and social interests influence the research process and results in ways which are not always obvious. This was pervasive across disciplines and theoretical frameworks. If research findings were subject to existent social ideologies, even the most abstract of concepts and theorisations were not immune to such biases. In the words of Bourdieu, one can say that the habitus of

the scientists has an influence on their research which, in the name of objectivity and value neutrality, was furthering androcentric biases. Feminist standpoint theorists suggested starting research from the concerns and practices of women in their everyday life, since this would be able to provide a perspective that can throw up unexpected questions, observations and answers about the subject of research, which would otherwise remain unexplored. In a way, my observation is that feminist standpoint theorists were exploring the effects of what Bourdieu calls 'field' on the scientific 'habitus' and production of androcentric knowledge, much before Bourdieu himself used these concepts in *Masculine Domination* (2001).

Standpoint theorists believe that the world can be experienced and explained from multiple positionalities. While on the one hand it led to epistemologically questioning the existing forms of knowledge and their origin, this concept of situated knowledge was also brought forth to emphasise that the contribution of those marginalised in the social hierarchy can be crucial sources of knowledge about society. Because for those oppressed, as Lukacs (1968, p 171) says, recognising the dialectical nature of their existence, is 'a matter of life and death'.

Dorothy Smith (1987, p 231) takes this idea forward from the perspective of the experiences of women which 'make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point that can ground a powerful critic of the phallogocentric institutions and ideology that constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy'. Donna Haraway (1988) further developed and pluralised the concept in recognition of the multiplicity of women's experiences to 'situated knowledges'. In a way, the fruition of this concept of 'situated knowledges' can be seen in the multiple forms and versions standpoint theory has taken in recent times, as for example aboriginal standpoint theory in Australia or dalit standpoint theory in India. In effect, standpoint theory posits that marginalised groups are situated in a way that makes them more aware about the social systems they inhabit and question them. Thus, Harding (1993, p. 56) made an important observation for research on men: 'Starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order'.

Critiques of feminist standpoint theory

Standpoint theorists critiqued the idea of objectivity in science as an attempt to find one truth, which is more often than not the truth of the oppressor. Harding (1986) showed how

this has led to androcentrism in the objective sciences, and stressed the need to stop ‘telling one true story’. As Cynthia Cockburn (2015, p 5) succinctly put it:

A stronger version of objectivity could be achieved by combining the standpoint from below with enquiry that was reflexive, by actors who named and clearly situated themselves, coming clean about power, interests and values, as informative about the subject and source of knowledge as about the objects of which they spoke.

If standpoint theory entails that social positions of being marginalised gives a unique insight into how the system of oppression works, it does not address the fact that at a particular point in time, a person holds multiple social roles, in a hierarchical domain in which they are more often than not being able to access the role of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Though the logic of enquiry of standpoint leads one to an intersectional point of view, the treatment of such an intersectionality in the research process remains somewhat vague. Taking forward the critique of feminist standpoint theorists, if ‘objectivity’ was furthering androcentric biases, then these researchers were not immune from other forms of bias as well. The habitus of researchers inculcate in them a habitus which might further such biases. Eurocentrism is the first of such biases that comes to mind from a global perspective, as does racism. In the context of Indian society, class, caste, and gender are the three axes around which these roles can be seen to be revolving. To situate one’s experience only along one axis (that of the most oppressed) will be at the expense of the others. The dynamics and constant interplay of these multiple axes (in other words, the concept of intersectionality) is the essence that is being lost. Can a feminist standpoint address such biases?

One of the most famous critiques of standpoint theory came from postmodernism by Susan Hekman (1997) in an article called ‘Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited’. The problem of situating theorisation solely on experience is the risk of invisibilisation of certain subjective positions, which lack adequate representation in the process of theorisation or politicisation. Feminists coming from non-Western positions like Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies (in Harding 2004), have also pointed out that by focusing on the common experiences of most women, feminist standpoint theory fails to bring into focus the experiences of those who are further marginalised. Thus, some differences are accentuated while others are occluded in different social realities, and the challenge for standpoint theory was to create a position that would not erase these multiple and often

conflicting realities. This is where Bourdieu's theorisation of the constant interaction of habitus and field is advantageous.

Another critique of standpoint theory's earlier focus on the economic subjugation of women came from Mary O'Brien (1981) and Anna Jonasdottir (1994), who showed that two other ways that are equally significant in the control of women are the control of the process of reproduction and progeny. The experience of sexual labour, as analysed by previous standpoint theorists, had discounted the perspective of emotion. The emotional labour and struggle that women face while producing new human beings, they both emphasised, required emotion, care, human love. It was in the new born that man and woman literally 'produce (and reproduce) themselves and each other as active, emotional and reasoning people' (Jonasdottier 1994, p 63) – and it is in this process the masculinism is reproduced. This brings us back again to the vitality of Bourdieu's idea of symbolic capital. Understanding emotion as a form of symbolic capital can strengthen the standpoint theoretical understanding of gender discrimination.

Thus, at least in two different conundrums, we find Bourdieu useful in expanding the theoretical boundaries of feminist standpoint theory. However, in the specific context of Indian society, FST has been adapted as the dalit feminist standpoint theory, and in this we find a particularly useful theoretical example of how the ideas of symbolic violence and standpoint can find successful political interpretation. It is this example that I turn to now in the next section.

Dalit Standpoint Theory in India

Coming to the context of India, the Indian women's movement was largely led by either the middle class led autonomous women's groups or the women's wings of leftist political parties. The first focussed on the experiences of all women as their subjective basis, while the second looked at the gender question primarily from a class perspective. Dalit organisations, like the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra, focussed on the 'dalit' experience, which heavily reflected the male perspective and only a representative inclusion of women in the organisation. As Rege (2005, p 91) put it in the context of the Indian women's movement: "There was a masculinization of dalithood and a savarnization of womanhood, leading to a classical exclusion of dalit womanhood". This is not simply a lacuna in terms of

theorisation, the experience of the dalit woman has been rendered invisible throughout the history of the feminist movement. While lower caste women continue to face a much higher risk of “collective and public threat of rape, sexual assault and physical violence at the workplace and in public”, these issues continue to be couched in terms of women’s victimisation without further exploration of the social and political causes (caste practices) which lead to this considerably higher risk (Rege 2005, p 92). What had been invisibilised was not only the experience of dalit womanhood, but also the agency of oppression historically practised by upper caste men and the refuge that such epistemological blind spots continued to provide them. Without emergence of a rigorous caste-based critique, forms of caste violence practiced by upper caste men (of which dalit women were the subject) continued to be targeted by the state and the women’s movement under the blanket cover of violence against women. They were, however, not only violence against women, but a particular section of women with a particular identity. These interlinkages between gender and caste could be made visible through dalit feminist standpoint, both as an epistemology and as a methodological tool. What I also argue in the context of this research is that these interlinkages will be able to cast light on ideas of masculinity beyond that of the hegemonic ideas of masculinity of nineteenth century India.

Who are the dalits? *Dalit Studies*, a recent volume edited by Rawat and Satyanarayana (2016) with incisive pieces on the dalit experience in India and the need for a separate school of thought, describes in its Introduction how “the term ‘dalit’ is today widely used to describe India’s former untouchables. Beginning with the Dalit Panthers movement in the 1970s, the term acquired a radical new meaning of self-identification and signified a new oppositional consciousness” (p 2). In listing the important factors that made the rise of Dalit Studies possible in India, the editors mention the rise of dalit feminism in India as a principal one. Dalit feminism came to take shape in India due to the blind spot suffered by issues of dalit women in both the dalit movement and the broader women’s movement. Marginalised by both these movements, issues of importance for dalit women remained at the margins until the 1990s, when The National Federation of Dalit Women was formed in 1995³.

My introduction to feminist standpoint theory was through the work of Sharmila Rege (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1998, 2006). Dalit standpoint theory uses feminist standpoint theory,

³ Post Mandal Commission agitations in the early 1990s against caste-based reservations in India clearly brought forth the divisive lines among women on the basis of caste identities.

but applies it particularly to situate the experiences of dalit women as a specific standpoint, aloof from both women's standpoint generally and dalit standpoint broadly. In locating a separate standpoint for dalit women's lived reality, the political articulation of a dalit woman's identity is given a niche space, a space which is conscious of a dalit woman's everyday negotiations with a) the larger society as a woman, b) the struggle with the upper caste men as a lower caste woman exposed to various forms of casteist and sexual violence, and c) the site of domestic struggle with dalit men. These standpoints when applied exclusively to reflect the lived experience of dalits (the normative being the male dalit experience) or that of women (the normative being that of the middle class urban experience) lead to certain stratifications, as Rege (1998, p 48) explained:

It may be argued that since the categories of experience and personal politics were at the core of the epistemology and politics of the Dalit Panther and the women's movement, this resulted in a universalisation of what in reality was the middle class, upper caste women's experience or alternatively the dalit male experience.

Here one has to note the contribution of colonial knowledge systems in further entrenching the notion of caste, similar to the critique of colonial epistemological legacies that Harding (2007) was responding to with feminist standpoint theory. Indian nationalist historiography has for the larger part of the twentieth century worked through the nationalism-versus-imperialism approach of writing pre-independence history, with the result that movements that rose against other forms of oppression – and were not necessarily responding directly to British colonisation – remained marginalised in the historical narrative until very recently. The rise of the discipline of Dalit Studies at large, and the use of dalit feminist standpoint has in recent years endeavoured to recover this history in the context of India. Dalit feminist standpoint provides us an excellent example of the theoretical applications of standpoint theory. In the next section, I will discuss how the politics of standpoint can contribute to Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic violence when applied to Indian society.

Confluence of Bourdieu and Feminist Standpoint Theory

While talking about the misinterpretation of his use of the term 'symbolic' Bourdieu (2001, p 34) writes:

Understanding 'symbolic' as the opposite of 'real, actual', people suppose that symbolic

violence is a purely 'spiritual' violence which ultimately has no real effects. It is this naive distinction, characteristic of a crude materialism, that the materialist theory of the economy of symbolic goods, which I have been trying to build up over many years, seeks to destroy, by giving its proper place in theory to the objectivity of the subjective experience of relations of domination.

The location of the subjective experience that standpoint theorists believe can contribute to a unique understanding of social orders, is also the site of methodological enquiry for Bourdieu. What he wants is not only to redeem the subjective experience of the dominated, but to invert the current social order and make their experience 'objective'.

This approach of Bourdieu towards challenging masculine domination has led to an interest in using his work among feminists in recent times. An important intervention in this pursuit is that of Clare Chambers (2005), who shows in her article 'Masculine Domination, Radical Feminism and Change' how the theoretical conceptualisation of Bourdieu is critically reminiscent of the works of Catherine MacKinnon. Bourdieu joins the position already articulated by MacKinnon that positing any form of sexual difference is a result of gender power at work⁴. However, while standpoint theorists are of the opinion that the dominated have a unique perspective about the structure of the system, Bourdieu argues that while they offer resistances – even though weak – to the order, 'the dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural' (p 35). The ramifications of such a difference is huge in terms of the political aspirations Bourdieu's work and those of standpoint theorists lean towards. Since both the standpoint theory and Bourdieu's idea of symbolic violence aim to contribute to a larger political goal, the merger of these theories in the benefit of such a broader politics is the hopeful contribution of this chapter.

A discussion about the possibilities arising out of a confluence of Bourdieu's work with that of feminist standpoint theory remains incomplete without the mention of McCall's article (1992). In her article, McCall uses the further division of gender relations into gender symbolism, gender organization, and gender identity – as proposed by Sandra Harding (1986) and Joan Scott (1986). She analyses the interaction between gendered individuals and gendered jobs – two separate but interconnected fields – using Bourdieu's concepts. She

⁴ Thus, Veronique Mottier's (2002) critique of Bourdieu's work for its lack of differentiation between sex and gender stands refuted.

argues that ‘the predominantly public and unconscious aspects’ of habitus, as explained by Bourdieu, are evidence of his ‘male-gendered conception of social structure’. In other words, his theorisation of social structure is useful to locate some of the central symbolic systems which sustain hierarchical oppression, but is in itself subject to a male-oriented view of that very society. In describing masculine domination, he continues to use the binary heteronormative gender divisions as given, without questioning the existence of such a binary. Hence, to unpack the ‘male-gendered aspect’ from Bourdieu’s concepts, feminist standpoint theory seems not only useful but crucial.

In the context of Indian society, feminist standpoint constitutes a critical analytical tool to politically question Brahmanical masculinism, and has been successful in challenging the masculine apparatus that Bourdieu considered unsurmountable. The political possibilities of changing the symbolic capital through individual as well as organisational efforts—denounced by Bourdieu—has been successfully put into praxis by the feminist movement in India, and feminist standpoint theory will thus provide the contextual understanding of marginalised positions in India that is lacking in Bourdieu’s theory. The political and social changes brought forth by the women’s movement is ample evidence of the ability of the marginalised to usher in sustainable long-term societal changes, unlike what Bourdieu predicted. Shifts in the symbolic field of gender have indeed, brought forth changes in the fields of caste and politics.

An example of such a shift is the anti-arrack movement in Andhra Pradesh in India in the 1990s (Frese 2012). Arrack was a local alcoholic drink for the poor, heavily promoted by the government. Arrack drinking was most popular among the poorest of the poor, who belonged either to the scheduled caste or the scheduled tribes (Reddy and Patnaik 1993). It was among the women in these marginalized sections of society that the movement found its shape. It was started by a group of rural women from predominantly agricultural, landless, lower castes to protest against rising domestic violence and financial struggles that they were facing due to alcohol consumption among men. Arrack consumption had increased in the state from 54 million litres in 1975-76 to 111 million litres in 1990-91 (Reddy and Patnaik 1993, p 1063). The state government of Andhra Pradesh increased its excise duty in absolute terms from Rs 35 crore in 1971-72 to Rs 839 crore by 1991-92, 70–80 per cent of which was accounted for by revenue from arrack. This was accompanied by a structural investment and active promotion of arrack across the state by the government, with schemes like *Varun*

Vahini delivering liquor in pouches directly to people (Brughubanda nd). But the increase of revenue came at the cost of violence, poverty and increasing financial hardships for these men, specially the women who were left in charge.

In the village of Dubagunta, 80km from Nellore, some women who had been brought together by a government literacy program started the movement with their decision to close the village arrack shop. The rural origins of this movement from the districts of Nellore, Chittoor and Kurnool has been elaborated in detail by Rekha Pande (2002) in this journal earlier, and others (*ibid*; Larsson 2006). The movement saw success when ‘the government had to bow down to the pressure and took the bold decision of banning arrack from 1 October 1993, even bearing a revenue loss of more than Rs.600 crores’ (Pande 2002, p 359).

The success of this movement – though faced with complex negotiations at later times (*ibid*) – has been a crucial example of the political possibilities of challenging symbolic violence from marginal positions, as manifested by these dalit women. They challenged the structural root cause of domestic violence by striking at the heart of the masculinist government policies. These women were not, in Bourdeusian terms, taken out of their field in order to be able to consciously question their habitus. Their marginal lived experience provided them the theoretical tool as well as the political praxis to subvert symbolic violence. The anti-arrack movement is the political culmination of a dalit feminist standpoint understanding of symbolic violence in action.

The dalit woman’s need to ‘talk’ (critique/engage/analyse) differently, according to Guru (2002), stems from dissent against the middle class women’s movement, the dalit male movement and the moral economy of the peasant movements. The erasure of caste in the understanding of masculinity is also visible in the obsession of Indian scholars with nationalism and colonial influence while trying to situate Indian masculinity. A considerable volume of work is available which describes and discusses physical prowess, martial valour, and strength as significant part of the understanding of Indian masculinity gleaned from European Christian masculinity but the influences of caste system on masculinity has been explored only by a few scholars like Gupta (2016). While the concept of Christian masculinity, introduced in India through Christian missionaries as well as colonial administrators, had an undeniably strong influence, one has to only look at the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata to see how these were qualities associated with masculinity

long before the British influence. The Kshatriyas – subdivided into multiple warrior castes and sub-castes like the Rajputs – to this day situate their social position on the basis of such valour and masculine prowess. Jarrod Whittaker's (2011) work, *Strong Arms and Drinking Strength: Masculinity, Violence and the Body in Ancient India*, is worth mentioning in this context. His book takes a look at the ideas of masculinity and violence in the Vedas, and the role that the Vedas have played over the ages to make androcentric societal practices normative. In the nineteenth century, there was a shift from the Vedic conceptions of what constitutes masculine superiority to an aligning with Christian ideas of manliness; from intellect to social prowess - in other words, from what was understood as Brahman qualities towards what were broadly understood as Shudra qualities. It should be pointed out here that this did not bring in any change in the material condition of the lower castes and untouchables - they continued to be subjugated and exploited by the upper castes. What the Christian ideas of virile masculinity brought in was the change in conceptual value of physical strength and labour - what was considered menial and lowly before, those very qualities which were decreed as lowly by Manu - was now hailed by spiritual and political leaders as seminal in the reconstruction of the nation into a great one again. This aspect of the casteist understanding of masculinity has not been reflected upon in prevalent scholarship.

In the context of the theoretical influence of Bourdieu's theory of practice and feminist standpoint theory on this project, it is of importance to point out that religion as a field has been a historical site of influence on defining gender structures in contemporary Indian society. The use of Hindu religious scriptures to condition the behaviour of men and women in terms of casteist and gendered practices is an everyday reality as Chapter 8 will show. Religion is also one of the two primary social fields in which the three leaders focused upon here have been active participants, the other one being politics. Hence, it is the fields of religion and politics in which I attempt to locate the interplay of masculinity and violence (symbolic and physical) in the habitus of the marginalised.

Conclusion

If symbolic violence is institutionalised to such an extent, where does the possibility of changing the habitus lie? If the idea feminism aspires to realise is one of equality, how can it be made possible? The application of Bourdieu's work on gender by feminists remains limited due to the bleak nature of hope he puts in such an aspiration. According to Bourdieu,

the impossibility of taking the dominated out of their field goads him to suggest that only a radical change – institutional or economic – can provide a way forward, away from the continuing sway of masculine domination. I agree with Chambers (2005, p 336) in her reading of Bourdieu's forceful Marxist solution of revolutionary change as limiting in many aspects.

Although symbolic violence is perpetuated through social and state institutions, and thus cannot be completely overthrown without institutional change, its symbolic nature isolates it to some degree from the larger economic order. As Nancy Fraser (1997) persuasively argues, it would be mistaken to attempt to remedy recognitional disadvantage with (purely) redistributive measures. At times, it seems as though Bourdieu is prey to such confusion.

While Bourdieu raises doubts about the efficacy of everyday events and their central position in some feminist movements, his own solution of women finding 'symbolic weapons' cannot but be started from the everyday. The everyday is the location of both the banal and the weapons. The banal can become the weapon, a revolutionary possibility that Bourdieu (2001, p viii) doubts:

...individual acts or the endlessly recommenced discursive 'happenings' that are recommended by some feminist theoreticians - these heroic breaks in the everyday routine, such as the 'parodic performances' favoured by Judith Butler, probably expect too much for the meagre and uncertain results they obtain.

The Bourdieusian analysis of the modes of perpetuation of masculine domination can be used to imagine a future of changed social reality, but that change can surely be brought in through resistance, through confidence building and through consciousness-raising, as suggested by MacKinnon (1989). Like the anti-arrack movement mentioned earlier, the history of Indian society in the last two centuries can provide ample evidence to prove that radical change is surely not the only hope, and the struggle fought inch by inch and day by day has surely been able to break the vicious grasp of the field of gendered habitus building in society. It is in this context that Bourdieu's theory proves to be insufficient as a theoretical edifice. Most feminists have found that Bourdieu provides us an explanation of how we are where we are, only to negate any immanent freedom as a distant possibility. el-Malik (2013) is of the opinion that Bourdieu's is not an emancipatory project, and what he provides the project of women's liberation is not hope but rationalisation of their subordination. This hope is what I borrow from the standpoint theorists – the hope that the structure of

masculine domination is not eternal, and that there are ways for it to be brought down, one brick at a time. The concept of symbolic violence interpreted from a feminist standpoint acts as a broader theoretical framework for this project. Bourdieu's work on class and gender, particularly his work on how gendering and sexualisation as practices and concepts are transferred across generations (Bourdieu 2001) shows that in order to understand how gender continues to act as a dominant structural factor in our societies, we need to focus on the ways in which it is made hegemonic. In this sense, both masculinity and femininity as concepts about how human beings should determine their life choices through societal rules laid down according to arbitrary assigned roles, cease to become arbitrary through reinforcement by multiple sources, whether social, political, or cultural.

The political and social changes steered in by the women's movement is ample evidence of the ability of the marginalised to bring in sustainable long-term societal changes, unlike what Bourdieu predicted. Shifts in the symbolic field of gender have indeed led to changes in the fields of caste and politics. Thus, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field, symbolic capital, and symbolic violence is crucial, but not sufficient for an emancipatory feminist project. It envisions gender equality as a near impossibility, and masculine domination as the status quo of the foreseeable future. Feminist standpoint theory, on the other hand, can benefit from the conceptual tools in Bourdieu's theory – symbolic power, symbolic violence, and habitus all prove to be significant tools in the attempt to reveal structural hidden forms of violence and reasons behind their continuation. The political possibilities of changing the symbolic capital through individual as well as organisational efforts– denounced by Bourdieu– has been established by the dalit feminist movement in India, the #metoo movement, and by the progress that these movements have achieved in the last centuries. The cis, hetero, and male-centric theorisation thus needs feminist standpoint theory if it is to be of continued relevance. Thus, in this research, I use Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence from a feminist standpoint in order to understand the upper caste masculinism prevalent in Indian politics. In doing so, feminist standpoint also keeps me aware of my own biases from the subjective position of an upper caste woman. This thesis is thus a reflexive analysis of masculinism in Indian politics, and the structural mechanisms that has ensured its continuance. In the next chapter, I will discuss the method I used to create the symbolic weapon of analysis through a reflexive reading of my own subjective position and that of the three leaders in question.

3.

Violence and Masculinity

In this chapter, I will show how masculinity has been interrogated and studied, both around the world and in the specific context of India. I will show how we are yet to question the role of religion in the normalisation of violent heteronormative masculinity – and why such a query is central to understanding masculinism in contemporary India.

The literature I have reviewed were selected with the following questions in mind: how has the connection between masculinity and religion in India been studied? And what purpose did connecting politics with masculinity serve in the nineteenth and early twentieth century? As it turned out, similar questions have been taken up by many scholars. In the next section, I explore some of the most prominent works on masculinity by scholars across the world, focussing especially on the ideas of hegemonic masculinity and masculinism, which are of relevance for this thesis. The second section discusses works on masculinity in postcolonial contexts globally, in the form of nation-states like Ireland and Iran, and in Latin America, and nationalist imaginations in ideologies like Zionism. In doing so, I draw attention to the similarities between the conceptualisation of masculinity in various (post-)colonial societies that have been pointed out by many scholars. Anand (2009), for example, shows how Hindu nationalism shares similarities with ‘Han chauvinism in China, Hutu supremacy in Rwanda, White supremacism in the USA, neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism in many Central and East European countries, radical Islamism in Egypt or extremist Zionism in Israel’. Exploring such conceptualisations in detail also highlights a gap in the literature in terms of the continued influence of religion in imagining the ideal Hindu man and, by imposition, the imagination of Indian men as inherently Hindu. The third block of literature, therefore, consists of formative research on concepts of masculinity in India during the colonial period, by the likes of Charu Gupta (2001, 2010, 2014, 2016), Mrinalini Sinha (1995, 1999), and Sikata Banerjee (2012, 2006, 2005). While this body of scholarship has brilliantly exposed the connections between colonialism, nationalism, and masculinity, the influence of other fields – in the Bourdieusian sense – in the normalisation of heteropatriarchal masculinity remains unexplored. Specifically, the influence of religious concepts on the normalisation of violence – as exposed by a large body of literature on communalism – has remained understudied. We need to understand the various factors giving shape to Indian masculinity

today, in all its diversity and complexity. I show why an alternate reading of violence and masculinity is thus necessary, for exploring not only the colonial influence, but also the religious and pre-colonial influences on masculinised violence and its spreading tentacles.

It is also important here to briefly mention why I focus on the connection between masculinity and violence. There are two principle reasons for this: first, in the limited physical sense, violence and masculinity are indubitably connected in both popular imagination and theorisations around gender. This connection can be traced back to not only the influence of Protestant ideas of masculinity during the colonial period, but also Hindu religious discourses and right wing Hindutva ideologies. Existing literature has however failed to connect the influence of religion on understandings of symbolic violence and hegemonic masculinity and its perpetuation in Indian society. Secondly, understanding this connection is integral to countering violence faced by women. As Gardiner (2002, p 9) says,

This is also an argument that feminists need to engage masculinity studies now, because feminism can produce only partial explanations of society if it does not understand how men are shaped by masculinity. Reducing men's resistance to feminism, moreover, is a necessary goal of a masculinity studies that responds to feminism's crisis of frustrated progress toward equality.

For the purpose of this project, I have limited myself to the three broad areas: theoretical scholarship on masculinity, studies specifically on masculinity and its connection to colonisation globally, and lastly scholarship on masculinity in India. Through reviewing the major works done in these areas, I make clear why a study of this nature is crucial. Thus, my reading of concepts of masculinity and its interaction with concepts of violence in India as well as abroad lies at the intersection of masculinity studies, political science, and gender studies in India.

Theorising masculinity

To start with, one has to see how the gender performativity that Butler (Butler 2008, Gedalof 1999) talks about takes place in the context of symbolic violence. Do certain gender roles necessitate more violence than others? What factors influence the performance of such roles? For example, it is a common assumption in much scientific research that men are biologically more violent than women (Krakowski and Czobor 2004, Yang and Coid 2007).

This is not an observation sensitive to the goal of feminist politics; it does not take into account the social conditioning both men and women are subjected to in their response to violence. In her book on how to decrease men's propensity to violence, bell hooks (2004, p 18) revisits her childhood social conditioning:

When my older brother and I were born with a year separating us in age, patriarchy determined how we would each be regarded by our parents. Both our parents believed in patriarchy; they had been taught patriarchal thinking through religion.

At church they had learned that God created man to rule the world and everything in it and that it was the work of women to help men perform these tasks, to obey, and to always assume a subordinate role in relation to a powerful man. They were taught that God was male. These teachings were reinforced in every institution they encountered—schools, courthouses, clubs, sports arenas, as well as churches. Embracing patriarchal thinking, like everyone else around them, they taught it to their children because it seemed like a “natural” way to organize life.

I was taught that it was not proper for a female to be violent, that it was “unnatural.” My brother was taught that his value would be determined by his will to do violence (albeit in appropriate settings). He was taught that for a boy, enjoying violence was a good thing (albeit in appropriate settings).

hooks shows how the propensity to violence was normalised through continuous social conditioning of both men and women and in American society where she was growing up, patriarchal gendering was reinforced through churches. This intersection of religion, masculinity, and masculine violence is not explored further in her book.

Much has been written about masculinity in the field of gender and sexuality studies. Masculinity studies has emerged as a field of its own, and extensive work has been done in India in the last three decades on the study of the discourse of masculinity. R. W. Connell (1993), among other eminent theorists, gives a comprehensive accounting of its various forms and changes from a global perspective. Her book *Gender and Power* (1987) gave us for the first time a historically based understanding of hegemonic masculinity – the normative heterosexual form of masculinity acceptable in most societies (see also Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). He described masculinity as broadly studied from three different perspectives: masculinity as a psychological essence (Stoller 1968, 1976), masculinity as firmly embedded in the social experience, and masculinity as the result of a cultural discourse

(Connell 1993). Each of these perspectives has faced extensive criticism over the years, due to their race and class blindness arising from their almost exclusive focus on the experiences of European and North American men. The sub-discipline of masculinity studies has travelled a long distance since¹. The use of feminist theories in understanding masculinity has created a rich body of literature on the creation and sustenance of such gender roles in various parts of the world. One such laudable work is the *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory Reader* edited by Judith Gardiner (2002). In her introduction to this rich volume of diverse research influenced by feminist theories, she (*ibid* p 12) describes masculinity as:

... not monolithic, not one static thing, but the confluence of multiple processes and relationships with variable results for differing individuals, groups, institutions, and societies. Although dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity work constantly to maintain an appearance of permanence, stability, and naturalness, the numerous masculinities in every society are contingent, fluid, socially and historically constructed, changeable and constantly changing, variously institutionalized, and recreated through media representations and individual and collective performances.

It is in the context of this idea of multiple masculinities, that the question arises – what effect do these masculinities have on each other and on society? Are these effects similar at global, national, and local levels? Can there be similarities on the basis of which we can read the influence and relationships of these masculinities? In order to do so, this thesis uses the concepts of hegemonic masculinities and masculinism.

Hegemonic masculinity

Influenced by Gramsci's idea of hegemony, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p 832) described hegemonic masculinity as 'the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue'. It was not normal in a statistical sense – though it was the norm that most men aspired to, very few actually practiced it. Connell (1987) described hegemonic masculinities as the normative, most 'honoured' way of being a man in a social setting. A hegemonic masculinity remains hegemonic as long as it is successful in providing solutions for gendered tensions in society. This idea of hegemonic masculinity was subsequently used to analyse gender

¹ To understand the trajectory of masculinity studies at a global level, see Buchbinder (2013), Mosse (1998), and Parapet and Zalewski (2008).

relations and men's position in various societies, but has also been subjected to criticisms on the basis of its limitations. Connell (1995, p 77) defined hegemonic masculinity as the configuration of gender practice that embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

Ann-Dorte Christensen and Jorgen Elm Larsen (2008 p 56) suggested that '(t)he concept of intersectionality compliments the concept of hegemonic masculinities, in that it stresses the interaction between gender, class, and other differentiating categories, and at the same time articulates different power structures and their reciprocating construction'. Thus, in the context of this research, hegemonic masculinity understood from a feminist standpoint can provide a crucial insight into Indian masculinity. This work shows how in the context of Indian society, hegemonic masculinity is upheld by religion. Caste is, in turn, upheld by hegemonic masculinity. Brahmanical hegemonic masculinity maintains dominance through exercising symbolic violence over marginalised masculinities of homosexual men, lower caste men, and women. These are often intersecting identities, but the maintenance of the structure depends on the religious sanction of symbolic as well as actual violence.

Hearn (2004) has critiqued the concept of hegemonic masculinity for its lack of clarity and attention to the dominance of men throughout society. He called for a refocusing on the hegemony of men in all their real power and dominance. There are four main critiques of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity –

- a) Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.
- b) Martin (1998) criticises the concept for leading to inconsistent applications, sometimes referring to a fixed type of masculinity and on other occasions referring to whatever type is dominant at a particular time and place.
- c) Holter (1997, 2003) argues that the concept constructs masculine power from the direct experience of women rather than from the structural basis of women's subordination.
- d) Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest that men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently, 'masculinity' represents not

a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices.

In response, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p 849) envisaged three levels in which empirically hegemonic masculinities can be analysed:

1. Local: constructed in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations, and immediate communities, as typically found in ethnographic and life-history research;
2. Regional: constructed at the level of the culture or the nation-state, as typically found in discursive, political, and demographic research; and
3. Global: constructed in transnational arenas such as world politics and transnational business and media, as studied in the emerging research on masculinities and globalization.

These three levels are interrelated, and often the specifics of a hegemonic masculinity in a society at a particular level can be relational in nature. Ratele (2014) has shown in his work how nationally hegemonic masculinities can often be subordinated at a global level. Hence, the positionality of masculinity is not static, but relational both horizontally as well as vertically. For example, Connell (1998) proposed a model of ‘transnational business masculinity’ among corporate executives that was connected with neoliberal agendas of globalisation. In this thesis, I have undertaken the analysis of masculinism practiced at the regional level and its influence as well as interactions with the local as well as the global.

Pease and Pringle (2001) and Kimmel (2005) have argued for a continued focus on understanding masculinities regionally and comparatively. Regional constructions of hegemonic masculinity are shaped by the articulation of these gender systems with global processes. Kimmel (2005) has examined how the effects of a global hegemonic masculinity are embedded in the emergence of regional (e.g. white supremacists in the United States and Sweden) and global (e.g. al Qaeda from the Middle East) ‘protest’ masculinities. Existing research by the likes of Mittelman (2004) and Hooper (2001) has suggested how the influence of the global in discussions on globalisation is often overestimated. In continuation with this body of work, this research also focuses on the construction of regional masculinity in the south Asian subcontinent.

Masculinism

The idea of masculinism has gained credence in recent times in the sub-area of gender studies called Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM). CSMM presents critical, explicitly gendered accounts, descriptions and explanations of men in their social contexts (Hearn 2015). It has its roots in feminist, gay and queer scholarship, and pro-feminist men's responses to feminism and gender relations. In establishing it in an almost oppositional position to Men's Studies with respect to its feminist ideological roots, CSMM has brought together scholars from across the world in researching men, manliness and masculinism. Masculinism is defined as the social or cultural trend that contributes towards the domination of women by men. In recent decades, the success of feminist movements and women's progress has led to a perceived crisis of masculinity – a discourse popularised in media (Faludi 1992). In response, masculinism works towards the defence of the endangered masculine identity. Some scholars have defined masculinism as an idea that promotes anti-feminism, and progress of women is often seen as one of the factors threatening traditional hegemonic masculinity. Blais and Dupuis-Deri (2012, p 22), for example, have defined masculinism as inherently anti-feminist in its conception in the context of countries like the USA, UK and Canada: "Masculinism asserts that since men are in crisis and suffering because of women in general and feminists in particular, the solution to their problems involves curbing the influence of feminism and revalorizing masculinity". However, the definition of masculinism used in this work is from Eva Kreisky's (2014) work on political masculinities. In differentiating it from the concept of *Mannerbund* (or male bonding), Kreisky (ibid., p 16) defined masculinism as 'ideological expression of excessive masculine values, symbolisation of masculine hegemony, and male-centred view of social relationships'. It is not related to anti-feminist movements specifically, though masculinism is averse to gender equality in its essence. This term was first introduced by Arthur Brittan (2001) to explain the contradiction between change in perception of masculinities on the one hand, and the continuation of male power on the other. He writes (ibid, p 53):

Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private sphere.

Blaise and Dupuis-Deri (2012, p 22) also make a crucial observation that the rhetoric of 'crisis of masculinity' makes regular return to the political discourse, for example during the

French Revolution or in North America and Europe during the late nineteenth century (Kimmel 2006). The rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the US (Pinar 2001) or the Nazi movement in Germany, both used the crisis of masculinity or emasculation of the 'Other' as political strategies. In the later sections of this chapter, it will be shown how this aspect of masculinity was also visible in colonised societies during the same time. This thesis will show how masculinity continues to reintroduce its rhetoric of 'crisis of masculinity' at various historical junctures in post-colonial Indian society; a rhetoric that is made historically relevant by the use of religious references. Griffin (2015, p 55) supplies examples of masculinist practices in politics particularly in the wake of the global financial crisis, though one can see their relevance in global economic and political fields in general:

[G]overnance responses that centralise women's 'essential' domesticity or fiscal prudence, prevailing representations of men as public figures of authority and responsibility, and techniques of governance that exploit these (such as gender quota systems, for example, that presume that the presence of women's bodies balances out hypermasculine behaviour, or austerity measures that are instituted on the foundational assumption of women's reproductive work as inferred but unpaid).

This is the form of masculinity that takes variable and complex forms across different societies, even while globalisation makes certain features discernible everywhere. Masculinism can range from gender-blindness to gender apathy to gender bias towards men and masculine practices. Sandra Holton (2011) has shown how the pervasive nature of masculinism mean that even histories of the twentieth century women's suffragist movement can be seen as masculinist.

Gardiner (2002, p 10) has also pointed out an aspect of masculinity crucially important to understand is its easy propensity for violence in a communal, 'othering' environment:

Masculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp. Its myth is that effacing new forms can restore a natural, original male grounding.

This 'ideal form located in the past' is to be achieved, to be fought for against the 'constantly changing' social reality. And violence, 'othering', and the process of violent othering that takes place, both in episodic and structural ways, are attempts to achieve the ideal form in

the present. In his small treatise on violence, Žižek (2008, p 1) separates these processes into subjective and objective violence:

At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible “subjective” violence, violence performed by a dearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance.... The catch is that subjective and objective violence cannot be perceived on the same standpoint: subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the “normal,” peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this “normal” state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. Systemic violence is thus something like the notorious “dark matter” of physics, the counterpart to an all-too visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be “irrational” explosions of subjective violence.

This violence, ‘subjective’ in the words of Žižek or ‘symbolic’ in the words of Bourdieu, needs continuous engagement if one is to locate the sociocultural matrices sustaining it. This has to also include its myriad forms and forces; its different faces in the lives of transgenders and lesbians, for example. Maya Ganesh’s (2010) essay on suicides of lesbian lovers in India shows how communal and familial forms of violence are constantly taking new shapes.

Three forms of globalising masculinities have been pointed out by Connell (1998, p 118): ‘conquest and settlement’, ‘empire’, and ‘postcolonialism and neoliberalism’. In the next section, the discourse on masculinities arising from postcolonial societies as a result of empires and their practices of ‘conquest and settlement’ is treated in detail in order to ascertain how the complex global realities of the nineteenth century worked to create colonised masculinities, which became distinct through their religious and social habitus.

The global discourse of masculinity in colonies

“What did the British ever do for India? Almost everything.”

- *The Times*, 20 March, 2016

There is a rich body of work, from various disciplines of postcolonial studies, cultural studies, history, and women's studies among others, on the influences of colonisation in various parts of the world. They reflect on diverse aspects of it - economic, social reform, and the condition of women, among others². A sizeable amount of work has also been done on how the process of colonisation has shaped ideas around gender performativity, expectations from the binary gender roles ascribed to the colonised bodies, and how such conceptions continue to affect social interactions, experiences of racialised sexism, sexualised racism, and discriminatory international politics (Nandy 1983, Anagol 2008, Gupta 2010, McClintock 1995).

‘Said (1978) and Inden (1993) both imply that the feminization of the Orient encompassed a disparagement of Arab and Indian men who were conquered because they were effeminate and seen as effeminate because they were conquered’, Banerjee (2005, p 22) writes. This was true for not only Arabs and Indians, but the histories of many other colonies (see, for instance, Dyer 2009 in relation to Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula). The perceived lack of masculinity of colonised men made the process of colonisation not only explicable, but morally essential. Traditionally, these post-colonial studies came from India, Algeria, the Caribbean; from the Orient, as Said would point out. It is interesting to note that while geographically located within Europe, recent works on post-colonial masculinity have also focussed on the impact of colonisation on masculinity among colonised populations within Europe, like that of Ireland (Said 1988; Moore 1998; Thapar-Björkert and Ryan 2002). Beatty's (2016) comparative work on the similarities between Irish masculinity and Jewish masculinity in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century is one such contribution. It points to the connection between racial identity and masculinity of both communities. Thus, ‘national power was conceived of as male potency, and the recovery of one would

² Apart from classic historical works by the likes of Hobsbawm (1987), Said (1988) and others, a recent work worth mentioning is Sanjay Subramanyam's *Europe's India* (2017). This archival history of breath-taking sweep looks at the development of ideas about India in Europe from the early days of colonisation, in a refreshing reversal of the singular focus on the colonised as the subject of colonial history.

supposedly parallel the recovery of another' (ibid p.1). The recovery of this national power is also the recovery of the mythical national history (Beatty 2016, p 25):

Zionism also promised a return to history as part of its return to masculine sovereignty... Zionism, like Irish nationalism, was invested in creating what Partha Chatterjee labels 'the past as it will be'... The 'New Jew', a much promoted Zionist archetype from the 1900s onward, would be a return to Bar Kochba and other 'noble Jewish heroes of antiquity'. These muscular martyrs will be defined not by their faith in God but as the personification of a militarised and self-sacrificial Jewish honour.

The figure of the 'New Jew' is not unique. It finds repeated expression in different colonial settings with essentially the same characteristics: a historical portrayal, muscular physique, bodily strength, with the singular aim of rejuvenation of the nation from its current state of emasculation. The Irish, the Jew, the Indian, the Algerian all strive to achieve masculinity, the ticket to the wonderland of sovereignty. The historical moment of colonisation thus gives birth to the gendered masculine identity of sovereignty, permanently inscribed on history as it was, and the future as it should be.

Here, one must mention the work of Dorothy Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority Through Myths of Identity* (2015). Figuera (2015) says, 'The aryan myth has given historical value to ancient Indian history and has contributed to Indian nationalism during the colonial period and after the departure of the British'. This is true not only for Indian nationalism as a movement, but also for Indian masculinity as a discourse. Both the movement and the discourse went through shifts in the nineteenth century the contours of which were shaped by colonialism, racism and anti-Semitism in nineteenth century Europe. The course of this shift took place over a long period, and various factors, both national and international shaped it. For example, the loud acceptance that Swami Vivekananda received for his claim of Aryan spiritual supremacy found takers in Europe and America at a time when India was being hailed as the counter to the Jewish claim of being the most ancient civilisation, as Figuera made clear in her book painstakingly. In fact, whether it was Gandhi's proven belief in the superiority of Indians over native South Africans (Desai and Vahed 2016) or Savarkar's (1989) unabashed claim to Aryan ancestry in his ideological writings, there are recurring intersections of race, caste, and masculinity in twentieth century Indian history.

When the superior nature of the Aryan race, a myth devoid of historical backing, is accepted

as fact rather than myth, then adaptation of what become known as Aryan features and habits and ways of living are aspired to. Sanskritisation (Jaffrelot 2010; Srinivas 1956) can thus be seen as one version of such Aryanisation. The caste system has long been seen as a distinction made between the indigenous people of India and the Aryans (Jaffrelot 2010). The promotion of the caste system with its obsession with purity can be understood as an effort to retain that difference. Racism and casteism become an intricately connected social reality not only in their inhumanity and denial of human rights, but also in their shared historical nature (Zelliot 2010).

The colonisers were thus superior in two ways: their inherent claim to superiority by virtue of being rulers, but also by their claim to Aryan lineage. The nineteenth century craving for a mythic Aryan past was no accident then. It was an effort by the likes of Savarkar and Golwalkar to claim equality with the colonisers, a shared past through a claim to a shared myth. The colonisers lent value to such claims due to political aspirations to discard the Jewish historical claims. This claim was reflected in the many ways in which nineteenth century Indologists, Indian social reformers and religious leaders connected the contemporary society with the golden Aryan past. One such dimension was Hindu masculinity. The Hindu masculinity discussed here drew extensively from the ideas of the warrior Aryan male, who succeeded in travelling all the way from Europe to India. The image of the Aryan male thus became the image to aspire to for nineteenth century Hindu men: because in this image lay their claim to the Aryan legacy as Hindus, their sole connection with the colonisers as equals and 'brothers', and their chance at redemption from a life as colonised subjects. The Aryan myth gave rise to the possibility of equality, but its realisation lay in the hands of men alone. Women in nineteenth century India were just being acknowledged as subjects of reform, so dreams of standing shoulder to shoulder with English women fighting for universal suffrage seemed distant, if not impossible. It was also unwanted, since the place of women was decidedly at home³. The burden of proving to be equals with the Aryan brothers fell on the men. The roles this masculinity played in colonised Indian society were multiple, as pointed by Chattopadhyay (2011, p 272) in his discussion of nineteenth century Bengali masculinity:

Such discourses about constructing the ideal masculinity by evoking a mythic, glorious, more masculine past seem to have had fourfold implications: (a) they established the notion of

³ The home and the world debate has been discussed too often to be detailed here again; see Chatterjee (1993).

militant Hinduism, against ‘other’ religions, which later took an undesirable shape in the postcolonial Indian political sphere, with strong reverberations today; (b) they reinforced hypermasculinity as a form of colonial masculinity. The term, explained inter alia by Ashis Nandy (1983), refers to a reactionary, distorted and exaggerated expression of traditionally masculine traits that led to open sanction of new forms of institutionalised violence and a false sense of cultural homogeneity. Ultimately, this generated violence in the name of nationalism, turning different Indians against each other; (c) this meant that the Hindu middle-class, upper-caste, educated urban elite became (or at least came to believe that it was) the dominant form of hegemonic masculinity; (d) given the constant process of renegotiation noted earlier, this also meant that there was always a search for sites where these contesting masculinities could prove their respective superiority. These sites ranged from gymnasiums (*akharas*) and secret *swadeshi* terrorist groups to the game of football (Alter, 1994b; Dimeo, 2002).

Another important theorisation comes from the study of masculinity among men in the Latin American colonies. Latin American ‘machismo’ (Adolph 1971, Pearlman 1984) is considered to be a product of the interaction between native cultures and the colonising authorities. However, as scholars working on this topic have shown, this interaction might not have translated into a definitive change in gender relations among the men and women of the colonised communities. One such example is that of the Mazatec people, who practiced a subsistent form of agriculture and among whom gender relations were much more egalitarian. Even though younger Mazatec men were exposed to more hyper-masculine Mexican cultures, they had to conform to a more gender-equal atmosphere at home due to the dominant norms of the community (de la Cancela 1986, Pearlman 1984).

The presence of a more gender fluid and non-binary society before colonisation is also evidenced in pre-colonial Iranian society. In her ground-breaking work on how colonisation transformed the public imagination of gender in Iran, Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005) gives us a glimpse into a society that perceived beauty in a much less constricted and gendered way before colonisation. She shows how thinking of the binary of man/woman was a modern colonisation-influenced concept in Iran: ‘Simply put, the taken-for-granted man/woman binary has screened out other nineteenth-century gender positionalities and has ignored the interrelated transfigurations of sexuality in the same period’. (p 3) One is reminded of the enforced dress codes of the Hijra community in British India and the attempts to enforce the gender binary forcefully (Hinchy, 2013, 2014). Such non-conformations were received

with suspicion and attempts were made to erase their presence in public discourse. Najmabadi's work (2005, p 3–8) brings out one such erased location of desire:

Our contemporary binary of gender translates any fractures of masculinity into effeminization. Nineteenth-century Iranian culture, however, had other ways of naming, such as *amrad* (young adolescent male) and *mukhannas* (an adult man desiring to be an object of desire for adult men), that were not equated with effeminacy.... Issues of gender and sexuality were central to the formation of modernist and countermodernist discourses, and these contestations continue to be central to contemporary politics of Iran and many other Islamic societies of the Middle East (Paidar 1995). Yet the centrality of this marker of difference, and its current prized place in the revisionist historiography of modernity, has come to screen away the other category of difference: the figure of the *ghilman* (the young male object of desire) and the historical memory of male homoeroticism and same-sex practices.

However, while non-conformation to the hegemonic ideas of masculinity of the coloniser was equated with effeminacy and hence inability to rule themselves, conformation did not lead to acceptance as an equal in the masculine hierarchy. A foreign culture that showed the same martial prowess, discipline, and sportsmanlike qualities⁴ can be looked upon with fear and criticised for their propensity to violence. Dyer (2009) shows this in how nineteenth century travelogues featuring Arab Bedouins represented these communities. One such author, Burton (1964 as quoted in Dyer (2009)), brings out the comparison made between the practice of sending boys to boarding schools in England and a similar practice among the Sharifs of Meccah who sent their male children to the Bedouin to learn the discipline of the desert: 'manly angry boys, who punched one another like Anglo-Saxons in the house... And they examined our weapons... as if eighteen instead of five had been the general age.'

Similar observations were made about dalit masculinities in nineteenth century colonial India. Gupta (2016) shows how dalit men, while considered indispensable by the British due to their ability to take up strenuous physical labour⁵, were also considered 'as violent and as a social menace', almost as dangerous as Muslim men for chaste upper caste women (Gupta

⁴ The role of sportsmanship and martial skills as promoted in boarding schools in nineteenth century England are said to have shaped the concept of British Christian masculinity in decisive ways. These qualities were seen as markers of a true gentleman. For more on this, see Mangan and McKenzie (2006), Tosh and Roper (1991), and Adams (1995).

⁵ Basham (1980) and Constable (2001), among other military historians, have shown the important role played by dalits in the army. This helped in the dalit reclamation of masculinity, and many dalit leaders like Tamta welcomed the British presence in India as improving their social position (see Gupta 2016, p 132).

2016, p 122). While extensive research has been conducted to determine the effect of colonisation on the reform of women's condition in nineteenth century India, we are yet to comprehend as comprehensively how the gendered behaviour of men was affected during the same period. By taking men as the neutral or the norm, the picture created is one of unchanged male behaviour while they were taking their women through a period of reform (Anagol 2010, Mani 1987, Rao 1999).

Research done on Indian masculinity to-date has mostly concerned itself with its portrayal through the eyes of the colonisers and how this initiated the urge for a reformed version of Indian masculinity among the colonised subjects. However, though majorly influential, this relationship has been mostly seen as a solitary influence, and the global context in which such a conversation between the coloniser and the colonised was taking place is largely missing. The fundamental aspect of the colonised masculinity of Fanon, which is as 'raced' (Newell 2009) as it is gendered, is constitutively different from that of the Irish, where, though the experience of subjugation definitely shaped the striving for a regained masculinity (formation of the GAA) (Roy 2006), yet it aimed for an equality with Europeans that the raced masculinity of the Black body never did. The blackness of their body etched their whole racial history and stereotype, as Fanon points out in the famous incident of a white child being terrified by simply looking at him (Fanon 1952, p 84). The white body in comparison remains unmarked as a site (Baber 2004). Thus, occupying a body with a specific skin colour had repercussions in the nineteenth century colonies and in the psyche of the nineteenth century colonised; it determined the subjective location through which one interpreted the world and one's position within it.

The nineteenth century redefining of Indian masculinity, as mentioned earlier, was not secluded from this racial spectrum. Here, once again, it is important to attend to the differences in nationalist movements within and outside Europe. Racial superiority and masculinity continued to be interlocked, but the racial aspirations differed. Beatty (2016, p 4) writes,

Michael de Nie argues that in Victorian Britain, the Irish were seen as inferior on grounds of race, religion and class: 'In British eyes, the eternal Paddy was forever a Celt, a Catholic, and a peasant'... Irish nationalism was a concerted effort to disprove such stereotypes and create a more prideful self-image of a 'white' nation. Crafting an image of strong and racially redeemed Irish men was a key part of this.

Surely, this reinstatement of whiteness differs from the Indian nationalist project of social reformation in the nineteenth century. Where did the brown skin place itself? In what ways did race influence the colonised subject's positioning of himself and his masculinity? What role did religious practices play in substantiating and reinforcing such claims? The race-religion-masculinity trident had a vociferous presence in the Indian subcontinent through the Hindu nationalist projects of Golwalkar and Savarkar and their claim to Aryan descent (Banerjee 2012, p 32):

The effeminization of the Bengali along with the denigration of Maratha martiality within the British discourse present important implications for the construction of Hindu nationalism. The popularly recognized figures implicated in both the colonial and postcolonial imaginings of masculine Hinduism examined in this study came from within these two regions—Sister Nivedita, Sarala Ghosal, Swami Vivekananda, and Bankimchandra Chatterjee from Bengal; Savarkar, Hegdewar, Golwalkar, and Madam Cama from Maharashtra.

The idea of race, of superiority on the basis of skin colour and physical features, has in many ways been a crucial part of Indian society since Aryan times. Brahmins and Kshatriyas have traditionally associated themselves with Aryan features and their ideas of masculinity include ideas like *Tejaswi* (i.e. powerful, strong, high-spirited) and *Viryavaan* (i.e. virile). Dalits and bahunas have, on the other hand, been traditionally looked down upon by virtue of their caste status determined by birth, their religiously sanctioned socio-economically deprived position, as well as their physical features, which were denied of such Aryan qualities. They are shown as hyper virile, hyper masculine, capable only of menial manual labour and in need of strict societal control (Gupta 2016). There are strong associations between the treatment of the colonised subjects by their coloniser, the treatment of the 'negro' by the white Christian men seeking to bring modernity to these 'savage' masses, and the treatment of dalits by brahmins and other upper castes. This association is not only one of social deprivation or centuries of prejudiced exploitation, but rather at a fundamental level of looking upon them as 'sub-human', or lacking a part of the essence which makes people human. Similarly, communalism is also shown to have been racialised to a large extent (Baber 2004). The justification of colonisation or the justification of casteism thus becomes the need to provide the absent essence to these populations: while Christianity promised an elevation to that complete humanity in this life through colonisation, the caste system promises it in future lives contingent upon one's complete subordination to exploitation in this life.

The caste system thus has a distinctly racial aspect to it (Boucher 2006, Butler, 2008, Cadwallader 2009, Gregson and Rose 2000, Salih 2002) as was voiced by even the then Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh, who in 2006 compared the experience of the caste system in India to that of apartheid in South Africa (Rahman 2006). The issue was also raised in the 2001 UN Racism Conference in Durban by many dalit and human rights activists who demanded that caste discrimination be included and recognised as racism. However, the influence of racism evident in the scholarship on masculinity in postcolonial societies like the Caribbean, for example, has not been explored in the case of India⁶. Where did the Indian man position himself in this spectrum of racial identity? Nor has there been research exploring the links between religion, race, caste and masculinity in India. How have these links influenced ideas and practices of violence? Can existing conceptualisations of violence adequately reflect these links in a way consistent with the present day practices of violence? This is the area that this research aims to contribute towards.

One of the most important efforts in understanding the practice of violence and its connection with religion in India has been made by American philosopher Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum's book, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (2008) seeks to understand the Gujarat riots by going back to pre-independence days and the intellectual and political legacy of Gandhi, Nehru, and Tagore. Given that she states the primary aim of her book is introducing democratic pluralism as practiced in India to America, it is understandable that she focuses on providing historical background that is more sweeping than it is comprehensive and in depth. However, one of the major lacunae of her project is that in its failure to include in this picture the vast social turmoil around issues like caste and women's progress, the narrative provides only a partial understanding of the origins and sustenance of communal violence in a democratic space like India. The problem, however, is not simply one of inclusion. When Nussbaum calls Kashmir a genuine insurgency problem with terrorists and Pakistan involved, or when she fails to mention B. R. Ambedkar's seminal role in twentieth century politics, the almost laudatory focus on Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru is along the lines of a statist version of India's history that is intensely debated today across various social groups.

⁶ Especially its connections with casteism and religion in shaping ideas around hegemonic masculinity in contemporary India (see more in Chapter 8).

In Nussbaum's book (2008), we see the juxtaposition of two different schools of thought related to violence in India. Both of these schools of thought have been traced back to ancient Hindu texts. The first one is Gandhi's approach to nonviolence, which was famously used by the Congress party during the freedom struggle. The second is the justification of the use of violence as a legitimate tool for the reestablishment of Hindu superiority. The irony of the constant insecurity bred by this school of thought is about Hindu political supremacy being in danger, though Nussbaum points out Hindus constitute 80 per cent of the population (Nussbaum 2008). The intricacies of these two schools of thought and their clash during the later years of the freedom struggle can lead us to a comprehension of how political violence has been understood in post-independence India. It also shows the deep connection political use of violence has had with Hindu philosophy (Chatterjee 2012, Hinnells and King 2007, Israel 2005, Klausen 2014). Hence exploration of the politics of Golwalkar and Gandhi who gleaned their ideas from these schools of thought provided insights into connections between masculinism, religion, and symbolic violence in Indian politics (see more in Chapters 6 and 7).

In order to understand the roots of political violence as it is practiced in India, it is essential to look at the primary understanding of the concept of violence and its use in Hindu right wing ideology. The Hindu right wing uses the ideology of domination and the fear and insecurity of being dominated among the population (Anand 2005, Chatterjee 2012, Kovacs 2004). Irrational as it may sound, it might be put more into perspective if one considers the fragmentation within the Hindu community. What is considered an 80 per cent majority is actually constituted of Hindus from various castes, as well as ex-untouchables. Many of these lower castes and ex-untouchables have historically disassociated themselves from Hinduism and its oppressive Brahminism, as is evident in the works of dalit scholars (Chopra 2006, Gupta 2014, 2010, Guru and Geetha 2000, Thorat 2009, Zelliott 2010). Historically, crushed by the Brahmins and a few other upper castes in social as well as economic terms, the assertion of dalit identity and the rise of dalit politics has given rise to an upper caste Hindu backlash (Govinda 2006, Sarkar and Sarkar 2016). A sense of insecurity is bred in the group who are also at the helm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other such organisations (Islam 2015, Kelkar 2011).

This sense of insecurity bottled with the fear of domination and colonisation that has been the experience of the last few centuries is constantly used to create an ambience of imminent

threat of destruction if it remains unchallenged. Calls for the protection of the motherland and the holy land (the twin ideas of Savarkar) are thus calls for domination and hence, retribution (Savarkar 1989). The sense of justice that is invoked here is spread across a mythical past of centuries and often extends beyond real time and space. Invocations of episodes from epics like Ramayana, or to recent episodes of violence blamed on Muslims (like that of 9/11) cut across boundaries of time, space, and socio-political reality (Puniyani 2005, van der Veer 1994).

Images of the desired Indian masculinity are intimately connected to aggression, and violence is seen as the only path to redemption and justice. This can also be connected to the gendered roles played during violence (Zurbriggen 2010). In trying to find an answer for why women are raped, feminist scholars have repeatedly brought attention to power plays, which can be located in the larger scheme of one community's control over the other's source of birth and regeneration. Rape and killing of women can thus be seen as an expression of the desire to completely annihilate the other by attacking their wombs, their source of birth (Brownmiller 1975, Kirby 2013, Sellers 2008). Park (2012) talks about how violence against black women and other racialised communities is interpreted differently. She especially focuses on interracial violence, which is often masked under other issues. Can this observation be relevant in the case of various castes in India as well? Violence against dalit women at the hands of upper caste men has become a regularity in recent times (Rege 1995b, Rao 2011). Here, one has to keep in mind the complex interrelationship and innumerable stages in the caste hierarchy, which asks for a much more nuanced analysis. When it comes to caste, one is not simply considering the Brahmins in opposition to the 'others', the relation between the multiple castes at various levels of hierarchy are also simultaneously in play. In such a socially complex situation, how can one read the practices of violence against women?

Refashioning the images of Rama, Hanuman, and Godse into more militant and physically robust ones is another way of reconfirming the images of an ideal heteropatriarchal masculinity in Hindu nationalist ideology. Hindu men are encouraged to refashion themselves in the same way. As Paula Bacchetta (1999, p 141) puts it,

Hindu nationalism is an extremist religious micronationalism of elites, in which elites make strategic political use of elements drawn from one religion to construct an exclusive, homogenized, Other-repressive, "cultural" nationalist ideology and practice to retain and

increase elite power. Unlike their territorial nationalist counterparts (from the Congress Party to the Communist Party), Hindu nationalists ultimately propose to eliminate all non-Hindus from the citizen-body: Indian Muslims primarily, but also Indian Christians, Parsis, Buddhists, Jews, and Hindus (including other elites) who do not conform to the Hindu nationalist definition of Hinduism. Historically, Hindu nationalists have proposed multiple means to do this: from physical expulsion of its Others to their assimilation through “religious” recruitment.

The justification of the necessity of violence happens in two ways: to reclaim masculinity, and to protect the weaker subjects unable to be violent. In other words, the non-violence or the inability to become violent of certain sections of society, such as dalit women, makes violence on their behalf a necessary feature to claim masculinity as well as superiority of masculinity over femininity. Such a form of circular argument is visible in many colonial as well as contemporary situations (performativity of the masculine gender was thus informed with this need). A crucial practical aspect of this argument is actualised (Roy 2012, p 63) in the way the performance of violence necessitates the division of labour:

The stringent ideological divide between the two spheres is further complicated by the fact that it is women’s invisible labour in the private domain that is critical to sustaining the activity of male soldiering and the practice of warfare. (Hamilton 2007; see also Enloe 1989, 2004).

Here Roy is talking about forms of physical violence and warfare, though it is applicable for symbolic violence as well. Women’s labour provides the capital (as explained in Chapter 2) in order to sustain masculine domination. The concept of othering and emasculation goes hand in hand, examples of which can be seen in instances of communal violence and in the rhetoric and proverbs about emasculation (Bacchetta 1999, Chatterjee 2012, Tripathi and Singh 2016). The same rhetoric was also accepted to some extent in the 1960s Naxalite struggle, despite their leftist ideology (Roy 2008).

The link between social hierarchy (gender- or caste-based) and masculinity is palpable. In a heteronormative patriarchal society, the universally accepted role of a person of prominence is male. This is not only of an individual nature. The organisation or the community with claims to leadership is always shown as one with ‘manliness’ (George 2006, Mandair 2005, Srivastava 1998). Lest this seem ridiculous to someone in 2018, one only needs to take a short look at the election campaign of the BJP in the national elections of India in 2014, and

how they fielded their Prime Ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, as the '*lauha purush*' (iron man) (Srivastava, 2015). Political claims to power, even decades after colonisation has formally ended, continue to be modelled around the need of hypermasculinity. And this hypermasculinity, I show in this research, is modelled not only on Protestant Christian ideas imported from Europe, but also indigenous religious sources. A look at the understanding of violence in India, especially within the women's movement (discussed in Chapter 9) further brings forth the urgent need to revise our misplaced focus solely on colonialism.

Women have historically not been participants in political processes; rather, they have been the subjects of these political processes. The process had been a domain of men while the effects of these processes were on every member of the society. Studying masculinity thus helps in understanding what characteristics were thought to be necessary for these processes, characteristics which were thought to be found only in men. Masculinity is thus also a reflection of the characteristics necessary to become an active political participant in a colonial patriarchal society of nineteenth century and twentieth century India (Kapila 2005, Patil 2009, Sinha 1995). Of course many segments of Indian society did not fall within the ambit of such a definition, notably among whom was dalit men (Gupta 2010). Connell (1993, p 606) observes in his paper on the historical evolution of globally dominant forms of masculinity:

I argue that European imperialism and contemporary world capitalism are gendered social orders with gender dynamics as powerful as their class dynamics. The history of how European/American culture, economy, and states became so dominant and so dangerous is inherently a history of gender relations (as well as, interwoven with class relations and race relations). Since the agents of global domination were, and are, predominantly men, the historical analysis of masculinity must be a leading theme in our understanding of the contemporary world order.

Indian masculinity and emasculation in colonial times

Scholarly works done in the field of sexuality studies and Indian historiography largely dealing with the effect of colonisation on various aspects of Indian culture have already established how colonisation as a process decisively shaped conceptions of masculinity or the lack of it among colonised subjects (Gupta 1997, Sinha 1999, Banerjee 2003, 2006). Indian men were largely portrayed as effeminate and emasculated, and their inability to

protect themselves from colonisation was seen as proof of their inferiority (Alter 1994, Chakravarti 1989, Pandian 1996). The need for such a representation was twofold, as Bacchetta (1999, p 147) shows in her analysis:

...to sustain their rule the British had to discredit Brahmins (who held symbolic power), co-opt *rajās* of princely states (who held material power), and form a class of Indian collaborators for the army and civil service. To this effect, the British constructed Brahmin men as effeminate and created a category of Indian “martial races” as the ideal of Hindu masculinity based on *kshatriya* (warrior and princely caste) manhood. To justify colonialism to their own countrymen in England, the British framed their colonial presence in terms of a civilizing mission, a notion that rested in part on the construction of Indian men as sexually promiscuous. The construction was part of a wider colonial grid in which the colonizers conceptualized the colonies as what Anne McClintock has called the “porno-tropics,” or “a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears”.

Nineteenth century European literature is rife with ideas of Christian masculinity, posed as a counter to the effeminate colonised male identity that needed guidance from its superior British counterpart. The same logic of inferiority was extended and used for the spread of the Christian word in colonised spaces across Asia and the Americas. Thus, the idea of spreading Christianity was also connected to projects of colonialism and Christian masculinisation among the populations considered to be inferior. Conceiving of men as gendered beings, as Sinha (1995) puts it, is an integral part of exploring how gender relations have been constructed and how the roles men and women have been assigned have shaped up.

Sikata Banerjee’s works, *Make me a Man!* (2005) and *Muscular Nationalism* (2012) concentrate on the concept of nationalism and how the Hindutva version of nationalism is effected by ideas of masculinity. However, the concepts around masculinity have far reaching implications in the politics of the nation beyond nationalism. Gender roles are a reality in every aspect of Indian society, and hence, what constitutes our ideas of masculinity affects in many ways our ideas about various other socio-political issues, in obvious as well as insidious ways. Banerjee’s works take us through the links of the discourses of nationalism and masculinity, but while looking at political violence, one comes to apprehend the reality that nationalism is the major factor that contributes to the use of violence. However, many

of the ideas discussed by her, like cultural nationalism, are not restricted to the discourse of nationalism. Casteism and communalism, for example, share the idea of ‘othering’ extensively.

One is led to question here the nation being taken as the unit of analysis in most of these works, especially in such an extremely diverse socio-political context as India. The ideas that feed such hegemonic masculine nationalism are not coterminous with its geographical boundaries. While Banerjee herself stipulates that communities can involve ‘us’ and ‘them’ tensions in a hierarchy of cultures, she addresses it from the broader context of nationalism (Banerjee 2012, p 47). However, exploring this tension from the perspective of nationalism blinds her to the multiple tensions that exist among and within various communities at the same time. This flattening of the complex social relationship into that of a coloniser-colonised dyad has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, specially by scholars like Charu Gupta (2016) and Constable (2001), who have been able to bring forth the multiple hierarchical forms of masculinity at work in colonial times at an intranational level. This is not to say that the solution is to add a caste or a gender angle in this reading of the workings of society’s political tensions. These tensions work in tandem, often complementing or contradicting each other to bring forth the various societal forces influencing discourses and decision making processes of various pressure groups and the political structure at large. Hence, analysing how we came to the definition of hegemonic masculinity that is largely accepted in Indian society today, we need to explore not only the influence of the colonial idea of Christian masculinity and the native response to such an influence but also the tensions within the core values of the communities regarding such ideas. Religion is only one such influence. Since the readings of Vivekananda’s or Savarkar’s work has largely been through the prism of nationalism and masculinity, they fail to reveal how relations between various castes were reflected upon in such an understanding of masculinity.

The argument put forward for such a reading is the pre-eminence of the idea of the nation in colonial times, and since most of the research on Indian masculinity emerged from this age, such a preoccupation is understandable. The reading of masculinity has been, in other words, the understanding of the colonial conception of masculinity and the reaction to it. If this discourse is to be decolonised, and masculinity is to be understood as the confluence of myriad social, economic and cultural factors – of which colonisation and the introduction of

Protestant masculinity are but one – masculinity studies in India has to be re-evaluated to include multiple other factors.

What was, for example, Vivekananda's vision for the role of the caste system in the nationalist recovery of manliness? Were all 'manly' men, by such a definition, thought of as equals? Here, Mayer's (2000, p 10) observation also comes to mind:

...when a nation is constructed in opposition to the Other there emerges a profound distinction not only between us and them but also more pointedly, between our women and theirs. Our women are always "pure" and "moral" while their women are "deviant" and "immoral".

Mayer's observation reflects the truth only partially. As the sections above have shown, the process of othering did not only comprise 'our women' and 'theirs', but it also included a hierarchical comparison of the men of the colonised and the colonising societies. There is an existing body of research on South Asian masculinity by scholars like Osella and Osella (2006) and Dasgupta (2014), that undertakes intersectional enquiry into masculinity; however, their focus is on contemporary India. In the following section, I will use existing literature on the discourse on religion, race and masculinity to show that this hierarchisation was not only between British and Indian men – it also existed between upper caste and dalit men within Indian society. This points to a further fragmentation and complication of the history of masculinity in India.

Colonialism, Religion, and Masculinity

This research looks at one of the many social spheres of influence on the process of gendering – religion. To what extent does religion play a role in gendering of social roles? How did religion and politics intersect in early twentieth century India? How did this intersection effect popular notions of masculinity? The influence of religion both on the colonial venture and on the rise of Indian nationalism has been well documented (Dalmia 1997, Nandy 1983, Prakash 1995). The influence of colonialism on religion has also been investigated – what it is, how we define it, and how the project of understanding and studying religion shaped itself, particularly with regard to the changing demands of colonialism in the nineteenth century and globalisation in the twentieth century.

The understanding of religion in its plurality – as ‘religions’⁷ – is a relatively recent phenomenon. Postcolonial influences on religious studies has brought forth works such as that of Masuzawa (2005) and King (1999) who have shown that the origin of the concept of world religions is a product of the imperial knowledge building process. This understanding of religion divested religion of its role in the public sphere and its connection with social and political issues of the times. There has now originated a rich body of work that has unmasked the colonial Christian origins of the concepts of religion and secularism. Talal Asad (1993, p 116), whose work features among the foremost of this genre, has denounced the attempt to define religion precisely because of such a historical origin: “there cannot be a universal definition of religion not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes”.

While discussing this colonial origin of the modern conceptualisation of religions, specifically the scholarship around religions originating from the non-West, King (1999, p 3) makes an observation regarding the characteristics that were associated with the ‘Orient’:

Since the Enlightenment, it would seem, dominant representations of Western culture have tended to subordinate what one might call the ‘Dionysian’ (as opposed to the Apollonian) aspects of its own culture and traditions (that is, those trends that have been conceived as ‘poetic’, ‘mystical’, irrational, uncivilized and feminine). These characteristics represent precisely those qualities that have been ‘discovered’ in the imaginary realm of ‘the Orient’.

This is an important observation, because we immediately find connections between such a differentiation between the West and the Orient and that of the Protestant male body and the effeminate colonised Hindu body, as discussed earlier. Vial (2016) in his work on the genealogy of modern race and religion, has shown how race and religion share a common genealogy, and that religion is always a racialised category in the modern world. These observations point towards a link between colonialism, race and religion that significantly influenced nineteenth century conceptualisations of masculinity. Most works on colonial masculinity in India discussed earlier limited themselves to the coloniser/colonised comparison to this Apollonian/Dionysian duality. However, the recent work of Charu

⁷ There are eleven religions recognised in modern times, according to Masuzawa (2005) – Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto.

Gupta on dalit masculinity (2016) has used popular Hindi print archives to show the existence of such a binary between the upper castes and dalits in colonial north India.

The public/private, purity/pollution duality has been further explored by King (1999, p 13) to include religion as follows:

If one examines the dichotomies of Enlightenment thought (and hence of modern Western society), one can see the following oppositional model at work:

Public	Private
Society	Individual
Science	Religion
Institutional Religion	Personal Religion (Mysticism?)
Secular	Sacred
Rational	Irrational/Non-rational
Male	Female

However, I argue that though inclusive in its attempt to incorporate a critical idea of religion, nonetheless it limits itself to a European Christian model. Religion in post-Enlightenment Western society has been relegated to the realm of the private, and the influence of institutionalised religion in the public sphere is perceived to have decreased, as King portrays. However, in nineteenth century India, this public/private, home/world divide was not so clear-cut. Religion and politics were powerfully embedded into each other (Bose and Jalal 2004).

The most recent work illuminating the interlinkages between religion and social politics with the process of manufacturing masculinity in India is Charu Gupta's *The Gender of Caste* (2016). While analysing popular print culture in colonial north India as a site of dalit identity formation and resistance to stereotypes, Gupta dedicates an entire chapter to the formation of dalit masculinity. She shows that religious justification of the caste system was necessary for both upper castes and the British colonisers to justify the continued objectification of dalit men as a source of manual labour (*ibid* p. 113). In the process of doing so, dalit men

were often portrayed as having feminine characteristics, even when they were seen as dangerous due to their alleged criminal tendencies: 'Binaries of men/women reverberated in the relationship between upper-caste and dalit men: intellect/body, rational/irrational, reason/emotion... Dalit men were often visualized in terms used to define women and femininity: small, frail, and docile' (*ibid* p. 116). Thus, we see that the neat oppositional model of King (2001) where only women were related to 'religion', 'personal religion', 'sacred' and 'irrational' does not work for the colonial Indian politics of masculinity.

What is even more interesting is that a religious nature was seen as further proof of dalit men's feminisation. Even accounts sympathetic to the plight of dalits described them as possessing feminine characteristics like 'being more religious, more artful, and more inclined to music' (Gupta 2016, p 117). This is ironic, since a large part of reformist Hindu politics in the nineteenth century shared concern and anxiety over conversion of dalits to Islam and Christianity. Gupta's work clearly shows that a reading of connections between religion, masculinity, and its contributions to masculinist symbolic violence in colonial India is called for.

Conclusion

Politics and religion were intricately connected in the colonial subcontinent, and decisively shaped gendering of all bodies – even though political discourse focussed on the female body. Though the female body and the politics of women's reform might have been in the foreground of nationalism and anticolonial expressions (Sarkar 2001, Chatterjee 1993, Mani 1998, Anagol 2008, Ghosh 2004), these were not the only forms of gendering that occurred. Masculinity was a site of constant demarcation, intervention, and contestation during this period, and the role of religion in this has only begun to be explored. We remember here again the work of Talal Asad (2013 p. 18), and his timely reminder regarding the implications of dissociation of religion from politics:

[T]he insistence that religion has an autonomous essence ... invites us to define religion (like any essence) as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon. It may be a happy accident that this effort of defining religion converges with the liberal demand in our time that it be kept quite separate from politics, law and science – spaces in which varieties of power and reason articulate our distinctively modern life. This definition is at once part of a strategy

(for secular liberals) of the confinement, and (for liberal Christians) of the defense of religion.

The works discussed in this chapter are crucial in understanding the current discourse on the issue of masculinity, and how, as Sanjay Srivastava (2004) has pointed out, a disproportionate amount of focus in masculinity studies in India has been on the concept of celibacy and asceticism⁸. I disagree with Srivastava because in his argument he risks a conflation of religion and asceticism. Though there is a rich body of work on celibacy and asceticism and their influence on masculinity, the role religion has played in politicising gender and normalising masculinism has remained largely unexplored. While it is justified to say that celibacy preoccupies a large part of Hindu nationalist discourse, at the same time there has been a lack of attention given to how other religious concepts have found their way into present imaginations of manliness through nineteenth century re-imaginings for political purposes. Thus, it is urgently necessary to look at the influence of religion in sub-continental politics and, as Gupta's (2016) work on dalit masculinity has shown, the establishment of upper caste hegemonic masculinity and the counter resistance from dalit masculinity provides an important site to analyse it.

In this chapter, I have discussed the prominent theorisations on masculinity globally, focussing specially on the ideas of masculinism and hegemonic masculinity. Masculinism helps to understand masculine domination in Indian politics in a way not attempted before, while hegemonic masculinity provides a theoretical tool towards understanding the dominance of Brahmanical upper castes within this structure. The sections on colonised societies then shows variations of masculinities across cultures, even while pointing out similar effects of colonisation on the creation of hegemonic masculinities in these societies. I then focus on the particular case of India. The interlinkages of racial and religious ideas are seen as constantly reinforcing conceptualisations of masculinity in the subcontinent. I explored the literature available on the intersection of colonisation, religion and masculinity in India and showed how violence was established as a 'dalit masculine' character in the early twentieth century. As apparent from this review of existing literature, the role of religion in sustaining and propagating this myth of gendered violence in politics needs to be delved into

⁸ Post-secular works by the likes of Talal Asad (1993) and Saba Mahmood (2005) have provided ample evidence of the influence of religion in the public sphere. For more, see Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Chattopadhyay (2011).

in more detail. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology undertaken in this thesis in order to probe masculinism in Indian politics.

4.

Feminist Rhetorical Analysis As a Method: Rhetoric and Politics in Texts

This project looks at how the concept of masculinity continues to thrive through political and religious ideas, and how violence and masculinism continue to be intertwined with each other in the public realm. I also intend to look at how this amalgamation of masculinity and violence takes place through religious and spiritual ideas as the harbingers. In order to do so, I have chosen to focus on the written works of three late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indian leaders whose ideas continue to influence the religious and political lives of Indians. The reason for choosing these particular leaders, rather than particular religious works or political works, were several. Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi did not restrain their activities to either the religious or political spheres – the appeal of their works to this day, for many, lies in their amalgamation of both. Their works were written at a moment in history that holds great interest for scholars of masculinity – colonialism and the anti-colonial struggle, interactions with and reactions to Christian masculinity, a debate around the position of women since the early nineteenth century, continued economic drainage of wealth due to foreign occupation – all these acted as contributing factors in determining the colonised minds' ideas about the position of their colonised bodies in the world. The effect of colonisation was being felt in every aspect of Indian society, across caste, class, and gender barriers. While on the one hand, the saviour syndrome of the Europeans compelled Indian men to reflect on the position of women in their own society, on the other hand the relations between different religions were also a matter for introspection. In fact, the concept of religion itself came to be shaped in many parts of the world as a by-product of the project of imperialism (Masuzawa 2005, Josephson 2012).

In the Indian subcontinent, Islam was the religion of Mughals who ruled a significant part of the subcontinent for centuries, followed by the British, who were Christians. The religious identity of Muslims and Christians became the 'other': the physical characteristics of these groups were at once condemned and valorised. And where else could these ideas be manifested better than the words of the men looked up to as leaders? Their role as leaders and the acceptance of their leadership by a large part of the population meant that the ideas

they espoused gained currency. No religious or spiritual idea coming from upper caste Hindu leaders like Vivekananda or Golwalkar or Gandhi could escape responding to such conflicting notions of who and what constituted ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the nation-building process. Their visions of the future of the nation were diverse and at times contrasting, yet, from a postcolonial feminist perspective, the underlying recurrent gendered structure of those visions provide exactly the same form of masculine symbolic capital that Bourdieu (1989) emphasised. The works analysed here were authored by Hindu upper caste men in a divided society constantly evolving its notion of self, and they were primarily addressed to the men of their religion. This is the principal factor that made their works important to study in the context of masculinity and violence. While on the one hand they were responding to colonisation and socio economic exploitation, they were also attempting to consolidate the identity of their own community – and in the process of doing so, their works laid down in detail the role of men in the imagined future and expectations about their masculinity. By looking at how masculinity was ingrained in their vision of the future of the nation and the religious community, and its relation to symbolic and actualised violence, this work aims to create a historical account of masculinism in their Indian political sphere which remains scarcely explored to-date.

While the links between masculinity and violence as a manifestation of masculinity has been researched with respect to LGBTQ politics, how this relation came into being with respect to the specifics of symbolic violence as practiced in the Indian society needs to be explored further. In the words of O’Hanlon (1997, p 1),

A proper understanding of the field of power in which women have lived their lives demands that we look at men as gendered beings too: at what psychic and social investments sustain their sense of themselves as men, at what networks and commonalities bring men together on the basis of shared gender identity, and what hierarchies and exclusions set them apart.

It is in the formation of these ‘social investments’, ‘shared gender identity’ and ‘hierarchy’ that these leaders played a part at a particular period in time. By looking at their use of religion and spirituality in the fields of contemporary politics and society, I seek to understand how the ‘shared gender identity’ and ‘hierarchy’ is continued.

Methodology

This research is based on a selection of political and ideological texts written by Gandhi, Vivekananda and Golwalkar during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Vivekananda's complete works comprise of 9 volumes, Golwalkar's 12 volumes in Hindi¹, and that of Gandhi 98 volumes. These volumes contain their published books, journal articles, personal letters and various other documents. Documents, as May (2001) describes, 'read as the sedimentations of social practices, have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and longer-term basis: they also constitute particular readings of social events'. Published writing was the main form of mass media in India in the nineteenth century, and these leaders used this medium unsparingly to reach out to their followers, influence their thoughts, and assert social and political influence. Indeed, as Coffey (2014, p 369) aptly describes while talking about different forms of documentary data and their importance in analysing social realities, "textual communicative practices are a vital way in which organizations constitute "reality" and the forms of knowledge appropriate to it". The influence of these texts on the formation of the gender system and the naturalised connections between masculinity and violence is a fragment of the total Bourdieusian field of politics. However, the possibility to analyse them and understand the process of naturalisation makes an effort like this an important contribution. The three leaders' need to reach the people in a language understandable for the majority compelled them to use popular discourses and rhetoric². These discursive and rhetorical devices used by the authors are performative acts that react with – if not reinforce – the symbolic systems at work.

Textual analysis: Feminist rhetorical analysis as a method

The material historical conditions giving rise to a widely accepted idea of hegemonic heteronormative masculinity in colonised Indian society and the material historical conditions in the life of the researcher directing her towards this field of enquiry are both decisive influences on this research. Standpoint theory helps to locate and situate both. It is both a methodology and a method for this research, in the sense that it provides the broad methodological and philosophical situatedness from which the three politico-religious

¹ Quotes from Golwalkar's volumes in Hindi utilised herein were translated by the author unless stated otherwise.

² One can hardly afford to forget that these writings were a creation of larger political necessities of the times, though the immediate inspirations might have been in response to different events.

leaders are looked at, but also *how* their works are looked at. My own socio-cultural position of course informed the query and the answers that were sought, but it also brought with it contradictions in terms of engagement and personal investment in caste politics which form a major academic and political discourse in Indian society.

According to Bourdieu, masculine domination through accumulation of ‘symbolic capital’ can be understood through a materialist analysis. In a micro form of the same attempt, I look at the texts written at a particular juncture in history to analyse how they work to reproduce the same masculine domination, even though from different political positions. The object of analysis is not androcentric society as a whole – like Bourdieu attempted with the Kabyle society (Bourdieu 1977) – but rather texts that are the loci of political, social and religious naturalisation. All the authors of these texts work with some underlying concepts of honour and gender code – in other words, symbolic capitals – which remain unchallenged even though their ideas on the use of violence as an anti-colonial weapon vary greatly. The understanding of the concept of violence in relation to symbolic capitals of masculinity thus sheds a unique light on how perpetuation of domination takes place. The ground of analysis here is the concept of violence and its relation to masculinity, and how such relations are associated with religious concepts. The texts of these authors serve as the focal points of these varying positions.

To find a method to analyse such an enormous volume of text in a productive way so as to engage with the research question efficiently was hugely challenging. This study brings together feminist standpoint methodology with textual analysis³ as a method. Though the interpretive form of textual analysis has proven to be useful in successfully analysing texts from a socio-historical perspective, it proved to be insufficient on its own for this project due to the tendency of this method to subsume gender as one of the many categories of social analysis. Interpretative textual analysis can take four forms: semiotics, rhetorical analysis, ideological analysis, psychoanalytic approaches. In this research, the method of feminist rhetorical analysis was chosen to analyse the representation of masculinity, gender norms, and violence in the works of the three leaders.

³ The history of textual and rhetorical analysis is long and beyond the scope of this work, except to say that it has been used extensively in religious and theological studies. For more, see Bizzell and Herzberg (1990), Foss, Foss and Trapp (2002), and Kennedy (1999) among others.

Feminist rhetorical analysis, used mainly in literary research, was selected as the method most suited for addressing the research questions raised. It arises from the tradition of rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism is a systematic method for describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the persuasive force of messages embedded within texts (Frey, Botan and Krepps 1999). It has been extensively used by researchers for analysis of texts as varied as policy documents, films, feminist documents, television shows and online content, among others. The process aids understanding of the purposes of a persuasive message; its historical, social, and cultural contexts; social criticism to evaluate society; contribute to theory building by showing how theories apply to persuasive discourse; and how persuasion works and what constitutes effective persuasion. The method of rhetorical analysis serves important purposes (Andrew 1983) like clarifying the purposes of a message, providing historical, cultural, and social context, and in applying and building theories as social criticism.

Feminist rhetorical analysis is a conscious attempt at unpacking the gendered nature of texts. If, as Lehtonen (2000, p 72) says, 'Texts are human produced instruments of communication', then both what is communicated and how are important. In the nineteenth century, print was the only major form of public communication. For political leaders like Gandhi and Golwalkar, or religious spiritual leaders like Vivekananda, the only way to reach their followers was either direct face-to-face communication or print. Hence, the immense importance of the ideas they communicated through journal articles, speeches and letters. Analysis of their written words entails analysing which ideas they emphasised, who they addressed as their subjects, and also the rhetorical devices they used to convey the messages. This is where feminist rhetorical analysis becomes a useful method. It points out not only what a message actually says, but also the symbolic and cultural capital that it makes use of in its rhetorical devices. In other words, feminist rhetorical analysis helps to locate how concepts of gender are produced and furthered in a particular text (Frey, Botan and Kreps 1999). In this study, rhetorical analysis highlights the variation in the significance and usefulness of the concepts of masculinity, violence, and nationalism in the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi. Analysing the social symbolic systems that have been used in these works and evoked for contemporary political purposes, I attempt to understand whether there is any commonality or underlying common rubric present between such symbolic representations.

Feminist rhetorical analysis has been used recently by researchers to reconsider ‘traditional rhetorical categories, and along with them the relationships between past and present’ (Jarrett 2002, p 11). It has proved to be useful in recent efforts to recover women’s rhetorical practices and theories as well. Examples of such works are Molly Meijer Wertheimer’s *Listening to Their Voices: Essays on the Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women* (1997), Shirley Wilson Logan’s *Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African American Women* (1995), and *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender, and Culture* (2005) edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster and Ann Marie Mann Simpkins, among others. However, the use of feminist rhetorical analysis as a method is not limited to women’s rhetoric. From an intersectional perspective, it is a useful methodology to raise queries about rhetors as ‘not only gendered, but also raced and classed’ (Schell and Rawson 2010, p 14). This is the form of feminist rhetorical analysis this thesis undertakes – however, I focus on the political rhetoric of men and masculinism in their writings.

There are three ways in which such a textual analysis can be attempted: analysing the language and form of these documents, analysing their purpose or function, and how they relate to each other, or their intertextuality (Coffey 2014). Coffey borrows the concept of intertextuality from contemporary literary criticism to highlight the dependence of a single text on existing symbolic signs and signifiers – to use the Saussurian concepts – in order to create meaning. This intertextuality of the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi are a core focus of this research. The system of signs and symbols, or as Bourdieu calls it, the symbolic system, that all three of their works refer to – their relational aspect – can indicate the relational field of religion and masculinity. In order to understand this field through their large body of work, this research locates as its starting point the influence of one major Hindu religious text – the Bhagavad Gita. Vivekananda, Golwalkar and Gandhi repeatedly acknowledged the influence of this text on their thought processes, their political and spiritual ideologies and their motivations. While they often provide multiple and conflicting interpretations of the concepts of karma, brahmacharya and masculinity as they are present in the Gita, the text proves to be one of the principal focal points of the intersection of Hinduism and masculinity in nineteenth century Indian society. I will discuss the significance of this text in more detail in the last section of this chapter, but it suffices here to say that this text not only attests to the religious link between the ideations of the three leaders, but has played a seminal role in the nineteenth century European politics of

orientalization⁴ of India on the one hand, and religion-inspired masculine regeneration of the colonised on the other.

NVivo Data Mining Tool

One of the biggest methodological challenges of this project was to undertake analysis of such large volumes of textual data as contained in the collected works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi. In consultation with my supervisor, we reached the conclusion that in order to conclude this project within the necessary timeline, I needed to do two things: a) find a way to narrow down the material I would be focussing on, and b) once that had been done, find a tool that made the analysis easier to manage. In other words, it was necessary to use a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software package both for managing time and for easy data mining. I attended a number of training courses on various QDA software packages (e.g. Evernote, Atlas/ti) and decided on NVivo, since it seemed to be the easiest one for large volumes of data, and the software helped handle such a database quite efficiently. It was also technically able to handle databases in multiple languages, though after consultation with Ben Meehan, my NVivo Trainer, I decided against using this feature.

QDA software is designed to carry out administrative tasks of organising the data more efficiently and should therefore be exploited to the full on this basis (Welsh 2002). NVivo is a QDA software that helps to organise, store, and retrieve data in an easily accessible way for researchers. Smith and Hesse-Biber (1996) found that it was used mainly as an organising tool by social science researchers, and in this research as well, the primary utility of this software was to organise the large volume of data and identify patterns within it. NVivo assisted in identifying those parts of the leaders' texts that were of particular relevance for me (i.e. those related to violence, masculinity, womanhood, etc.).

There are seven types of analyses that can be undertaken with NVivo, according to the purpose of analysis of the researcher (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011). In order to comprehend the utility of all these and choosing the most efficient one for my data analysis, I decided to use the QDA software initially for my literature review, before delving into the analysis of the main data. All the literature that I had collected for the purpose of literature

⁴ This politics of fetishization of Hindu religious texts has been discussed in more detail in Patel (2007), and Kapila and Devji (2013).

review were continuously fed into NVivo as 'Internal' files. This was an ongoing process and continued from the second year of PhD till the very end. The NVivo software interface was used both as a reading as well as an analysing software.

As I read through the various articles, book chapters and book fed into the software as my Literature Review Project, I marked relevant parts of the texts as 'Nodes' and marked the texts themselves into three different sections on the basis of their main arguments. This method helped me methodically analyse the available secondary literature on the one hand, while on the other hand it also helped me formulate my own analysis in the context of the analysis of other authors who had also worked on the writings of Vivekananda, Gandhi, or Golwalkar (I have discussed these three sections in more detail in the previous chapter already). Chapter 4, 5, and 6 were thus written in a way that helped weave my analysis with the existing literature and the seminal arguments of influential authors of the field. The large volume of data which were involved in making such an interweaving would have been much more difficult and time-consuming without the use of NVivo.

I decided to undertake the keyword-in-context form of analysis for the collected works, since it helped me quickly find the texts, letters, or speeches that were of relevance to this work, but not separate them from the context in which they were written. Keyword-in-context is a form of analysis that helps to understand the use of language as data. As regards that data, digital archives of the works of Vivekananda and Gandhi were available; however, the written works of Golwalkar were neither digitised nor available in English. As mentioned above, I decided to use NVivo for only the two English texts of Golwalkar available in translation – *Bunch of Thoughts*, and *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. For his collected works in Hindi, the analysis was done manually and NVivo was not used. These digital archives were then fed into NVivo as 'Internals' (see Table 1 below). The next step was organisation of the data.

Keywords and their synonyms were then identified. The identified keywords were used to run Queries with each of these keywords, and the results were then saved as the Nodes appearing in Table 1 – Aryan/Race, Body, Brahmacharya, Caste, Celibacy, Colonisation, Cow or Beef Politics, Critiques of Gandhi, Culinary Masculinity, Dharma, Disability, Emasculation, Emotional Violence, Gita, Hindu, Karma, Krishna, Man, Manliness, Martial or Martiality, Mother, Muslims, Non-Violence, On other religions, Sexual practices,

Tolerance, Upanishads, Vedas, Violence, War, West, and Women. Retaining context was crucial, so while using keywords to locate essays or speeches that discussed an issue of interest, the whole text was then coded and read. The software thus helped in navigating the large volume of data while the analysis was done manually. Major texts, like *Bunch of Thoughts*, *Karma Yoga*, and *Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi* were also analysed manually using hard copies of the texts, to maintain contextual accuracy of quoted texts and citations. These nodes were then used to compare and analyse the positions of these leaders on violence, masculinity and the position of women in politics and society.

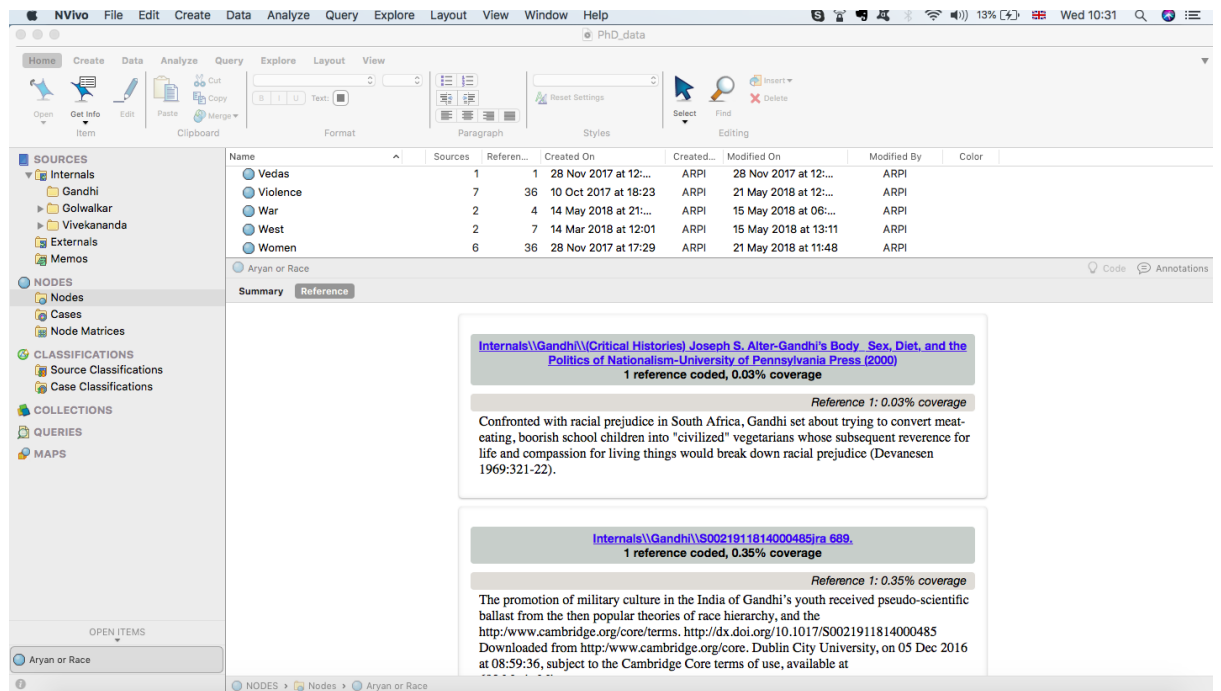


Table 1: The NVivo interface with Internals (top left) which included the archive, Nodes (top middle), and examples of reference codes.

The trio: Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi

Swami Vivekananda, Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar, and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi are the three leaders whose written works have been analysed for this project. All three of them were influential thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and still continue to influence the social and political space of the country in a formidable way. The three leaders occupy three different positions in the spectrum of political ideas in the early twentieth century on their conceptions around violence and colonisation. This is of critical importance in terms of assessing their contemporary relevance to the current research

theme. These three leaders political ideologies were intricately related to their religious beliefs and practices, modifying, influencing and often reshaping one another throughout the course of their lives. However, for research that explores the links between ideas of masculinity and violence in Indian politics, their influence is crucial because they are still of relevance to multiple political belief systems. They appealed to millions of disciples/followers/admirers through their teachings, and their varying positions on violence makes the popularity of these positions worth observation. Gandhi is well known across the world for his philosophy of non-violence, its use in the Indian freedom struggle and the inspiration his ideas continue to provide to struggles across the world. In the national political scenario, Gandhi has been seen as a Congress legacy, admired by the liberals and intensely critiqued by dalits for the lack of consistency in his views with regard to the caste system. On the other hand, Golwalkar is considered as *Guruji* (i.e. spiritual leader) by more than six million Indian Hindu men and women; his positions on the use of violence to achieve political and religious supremacy of Hinduism is infamous. The assassination of Gandhi on 30 January 1948 by Nathuram Godse, a former member of Golwalkar's organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS, led to its banning and Golwalkar being jailed (Guha 2006). While these two leaders occupy two different ends of the spectrum in terms of their position on violence, Swami Vivekananda's position on violence can be considered as intermediate. The influence of Christian Protestant ideas of masculinity on him was irrefutable, as he himself once described to one of his most famous disciples, Sister Nivedita, "For patriotism, the Japanese! For purity, the Hindu! And for manliness, the European! There is no other in the world", he added with emphasis, "who understands as does the Englishman, what should be the glory of a man!" (Nivedita 1910, p 196).

On the one hand, Vivekananda admired Hindu society for its inclination towards non-violence, and on the other, he considered the lack of martial spirit to be the very reason behind the deplorable condition of Hindu society in nineteenth century India. Hence, in his trip to Kashmir in the summer of 1898, Sister Nivedita reports him as saying that the aim of his whole life was "to make Hinduism aggressive, like Christianity and Islam" (Nivedita 1910, p 132). His works show a continuity between his ideas of nationalism and masculinity, and masculinity and aggression. The extent to which he considered this aggression as potential for violence, a violence necessary for the project of emancipation and globalisation of Hinduism, is explored in Chapter 5. But it suffices to say that his ideas on masculinity

continue to have a potent impact on mainstream expectations about masculinity and the presence of masculinism in Indian society to this day.

All three leaders published works that give us direct and unmediated access to their ideas in written form, which was also an important factor in choosing them as the cases for this research. Print was the most popular form of mass communication in their times, and thus their ideas have been preserved extensively in their writings. Their collected works consist of not only books and essays, but also personal letters, interactions and exchange of ideas with other prominent social thinkers as well as their disciples. Swami Vivekananda's *Collected Works* constituted a series of nine volumes, available both in English and in Bengali, both languages in which the researcher is conversant. However, since his most impactful writings were written in English in the form of books written for his followers in Europe and America, I decided to follow the English version for analysis purposes. M. S. Golwalkar's collected works compose twelve volumes in Hindi, as well as translated works published by the RSS.

M. K. Gandhi used the publication form extensively during his lifetime in order to communicate his ideas to his countrymen, and his written works, published by the Government of India, are spread over 98 volumes. This huge volume of work posed a methodological problem in terms of how to approach the analysis. Time and space constraints made it impossible for all 98 volumes to be studied, and I had to choose certain critical texts deemed to be important in the context of this research. Since the main objective of this research is to look at the influence of the works of these leaders on the prevalent popular ideas of masculinity and violence, I decided to choose the most popular works by Gandhi – his autobiography, *My Experiments With Truth* (1925) being the most prominent among them, in addition to the books *Hind Swaraj* (1909), *Conquest of Self* (1943), *All Men are Brothers* (1958) and *India of My Dreams* (1947). I have also consulted existing critiques of Gandhi by other scholars like Faisal Devji (2011), Desai and Vahed (2016) and Ramachandra Guha (2012) in order to locate other works of his that proved relevant for this research.

This is in no way a comprehensive list of Gandhi's entire works pertinent to the topics of masculinity or violence. I am aware that this choice brings with it limitations and the risk of missing a relevant document from the vast collection, which might be of importance in this context. The aim is to base the analysis on some of his more popular and representative

works and those that can be located as relevant for this research, based on the work of other scholars. Though the large amount of work produced by Gandhi over his lifetime posed a methodological challenge in terms of whether he was an appropriate case to be taken up for a comparative project, two reasons led to my decision to include him. First was the colossal influence of Gandhi in early twentieth century Indian politics, and, secondly, made his position on non-violence, which created tensions within the freedom movement, and also made him critical for understanding the links between masculinism and violence in Indian politics continued since pre-Independence.

The sections below provide a brief introduction to each of the leaders, the importance of their ideas in the context of nineteenth century India and their written works which are subjected to feminist rhetorical analysis in this project.

The Global Hindu Missionary: Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda was born as Narendra Nath Dutta on 12 January 1863 in Kolkata, six years after India's first war of Independence. Coming from an upper middle class family in urban Calcutta, then the capital of British India, he had exposure to contemporary western philosophical ideas very early in his life. Another early but lasting influence was that of the Brahmo movement, under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen⁵. Socio-political issues were discussed deeply in the Brahmo meetings Narendra attended in his youth. This was a time when India had been passed on to direct rule by Queen Victoria from the East India Company, and the social reform movement in Bengal, also known as the Renaissance, had started. The Brahmo movement spearheaded the move towards a society that strived for equal participation of men and women, with an emphasis on women's education in order to enable their equality. It was through the Brahmo Samaj that Vivekananda was first introduced to Vedanta, and though it satiated his spiritual thirst for a while, he was soon looking for answers again.

⁵ The Brahmo Samaj, followers of the monotheistic tenets of Hinduism, critiqued and discarded aspects of Hinduism like polytheism and image worship strongly. It did not believe in the hereditary caste system, and recognised all human beings as equal, and especially worked towards improvement of the condition of women. The rise of this movement was seen as part of the Bengal Renaissance, the reform movement in Bengal in response to the colonial critique of 'backward' Indian society, and was heavily influenced by Western ideas of Enlightenment.

He met his spiritual guru, Sri Ramakrishna as he has been known among his disciples, in a state of tormented spiritual longing. The long sessions of knowledge exchange on philosophical and theological issues between the guru and his disciple gave way to Vivekananda taking up the oath of brahmacharya. After the passing of his guru in 1886, Vivekananda lived with his brother disciples for the next two years, while deciding his future course of action. In 1888, Swami Vivekananda left Calcutta to travel around India, a journey which continued on and off until 1893. These travels in colonised British areas, the princely states, and pilgrimage sites were a major influence in developing his position on the urgent need of reform of the Indian social and political scene through spiritual reformation. As he himself explained (Swami Tejasananda 1995, p 78):

Social reform has to be preached in India by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring, and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants is spirituality. Therefore before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas the land should first be deluged with spiritual ideas.

This viewpoint is seminal in understanding why his teachings still continue to enjoy huge popularity, especially in recent years among the pro-Hindutva section of the population. Spirituality was the path through which Swami Vivekananda - much like Golwalkar as well as Gandhi - chose to spread his message. Their influence on the masses, on the freedom movement, and the continued use of their ideas to the present day therefore can only be understood by his spiritual appeal to the masses. In a country which was torn between tradition and modernity introduced by European colonialism, the appeal to spirituality worked in two ways: firstly, it was the meeting point of the religious and the non-religious within the larger fold of the Hindu religion. Secondly, by positioning social and political activity as a way to reach personal spiritual goal, he made the prospect of socio-political involvement more appealing for Hindus.

Vivekananda was first recognised internationally when he represented Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, and stories about the effect of his speech at the convention has reached mythical dimensions in India. It was just before he left for Chicago that he changed his name to Swami Vivekananda. He became a celebrity in a very short period of time, so much so that his face even appeared on a packet of Ceylon tea (Roy and Hammers 2014). His speech also fuelled interest in Hinduism in the West, and for the next few years, Swami Vivekananda travelled across North America and Europe, giving

lectures and collecting disciples in various parts of the continents. This was deemed to be of crucial value for the reinstatement of Hinduism to its previous glory by the Swami, and ‘over time, several prominent Western intellectuals such as Leo Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, William James, J. D. Salinger, Christopher Isherwood, Henry Miller, Sarah Bernhardt, and Aldous Huxley, to name a few, were influenced by Vivekananda’s teachings about Vedanta philosophy’ (*ibid*). During the course of these years, he accumulated various disciples from these parts of the world, some of whom followed him back to India in order to work towards its regeneration⁶. Arvind Sharma (2011) considered him as one of modern India’s most prominent Hindu missionaries.

He returned to India in 1897, and on 1 May of the same year, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission, ‘in which monks and lay people would jointly undertake propagation of Practical Vedanta, and various forms of social service, such as running hospitals, schools, colleges, hostels, rural development centres, etc, and conducting massive relief and rehabilitation work for victims of earthquakes, cyclones and other calamities, in different parts of India and other countries’ (belurmath.org, nd). The last few years of his life was spent in nurturing the mission, giving lectures on Vedanta across the world – in cities as diverse as New York, Vienna, Paris, Constantinople, Cairo, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and London. He died on 4 July , 1902 at Belur Math in Calcutta.

There is a renewed political interest in Vivekananda in recent years, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 5 and 8. His role in Indian politics and society has been studied by sociologists (Nandy 1973), historians (Sarkar 2009), and philosophers (Raghuramaraju 2015). In these critiques, masculinity and his amalgamation of masculinity, nationalism and spiritualism comes up repeatedly, but they are only part of a broader investigation into other aspects of Vivekananda’s philosophy. One of the earliest works came from Nandy (1973), whose analysis of Vivekananda’s position with respect to nineteenth century social reformation was put thus: “To him, therefore, the real threat was the West within, particularly the attractiveness of Christianity and Brahmoism to the young *babus*, rather than the colonial system. Vivekananda in this sense was dealing with more divided men and was perhaps himself a more divided man”. It is this idea of ‘divided men’ that will be explored in more

⁶ Sister Nivedita, or Margaret Noble as she was known, was among the most famous woman disciples who came to India and played a prominent role in the social reformation movements of that period. Her book *The Master as I Saw Him* (1910) is one of the principal textual sources for this work.

detail in subsequent chapters. For now, it is worth underlining that Vivekananda inspired multiple Hindu religious and/or nationalist leaders and movements over the past century, and his ideas loom large in the works of the other two leaders discussed in this thesis.

Sarsanghchalak Golwalkar: The Ideologue and His influence on the RSS

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS, is the largest voluntary organization of Hindu men created in the pre-independence days to serve the nation. Currently estimated to have more than six million members⁷ spread among 40,000-50,000 *Shakhas* (i.e. branches) and more than a 100 affiliated bodies (Gandhi 2014), the RSS is one of the principle forces of Hindu religion-centred politics in India. With its parental control over the workings of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is currently in government, the influence of this body has spread to every aspect of Indian society. The second politico-religious leader I chose for this project is Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar, the second *Sarsanghchalak* (Chief) of this organisation. The organisation was formed by the first Sarsanghchalak, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur on 27 September 1925, and is claimed to be the largest non-governmental organization in the world today (Gandhi 2014). With the schools and colleges it runs, the hospitals it funds and the volunteer work it undertakes in the wake of natural disasters, along with its indefinite number of affiliated organisations, it is increasingly difficult to ascertain its exact membership or spheres of influence. All these bodies work under the same political and religious philosophy, broadly called Hindutva. This political thought envisages a future for India where Hindus will be able to retrieve their prominence in society, lost allegedly during the Mughal and British periods of domination. A theory broadly contested by historians like Thapar (2016), it has been enjoying growing popularity. Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar, the second chief of RSS, played a crucial role in the propagation and popularisation of this theory. With almost three decades of being Sarsanghchalak (1940-1973), it was under his leadership that RSS built up its organisational framework, after the setback caused by the accusation of being involved in Gandhi's death⁸. From an organisation with 50 shakhas and 100,000 members when he became Sarsanghchalak, the RSS grew to

⁷ According to the website of its media centre, Samvada, membership is not formal and any Hindu male is invited to voluntarily join the nearest Shakha (Samvada 2012). Hindu women are invited to join the sister organisation, Rashtriya Sevika Samiti. Bacchetta (2004), among others, has thrown light on the workings of the Sevika Samiti.

⁸ RSS was banned in 1948 after it was accused of being involved in the planning of Gandhi's assassination. Nathuram Godse, the assassin, had been a member of the organisation. Golwalkar was jailed along with other RSS workers, and though he was released after a year, the accusation has continued to haunt RSS to this day.

10,000 shakhas and more than a million members under his tutelage (Hoda 2006). Golwalkar's vision has become the vision of the RSS; and hence, his works have considerable social influence in contemporary Indian society with regard not just to matters communal and political, but as this project shows, also gender and sexualisation.

Golwalkar was born in 1906 in Nagpur, to Sadashivrao Golwalkar and Lakshmibai. Growing up in a religious home, he had a penchant for science and joined the Banares Hindu University in 1924, getting a BSc in 1926 and an MSc in Zoology in 1928 (Hoda 2006). It was while teaching there that he first came into contact with Hedgewar, the first chief of RSS, through Bhaiyyaji Dani (Sheshadri, nd). What is interesting in terms of this project is that he had moved to Bengal from Nagpur in 1937, and lived in the Sargachi Ashram of the Ramakrishna Mission⁹ until Hedgewar's death a few months later. So it is safe to propose that in his early days, Golwalkar was deeply influenced by the ideology propagated by Swami Vivekananda. In fact, as India's current Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2014, np) quotes in his biographical essay on Golwalkar, when asked why he left the Sargachi Ashram of Ramakrishna Mission and joined RSS, he said,

I was always inclined to spiritualism along with the task of nation building. That I would be better able to do this in the Sangh I learned from my visits to Banaras, Nagpur and Calcutta. And so I have devoted myself to the Sangh. I think this is in line with Swami Vivekanand's message. I'm more influenced by him than anyone else. I think I can only take forward his goals by remaining in the Sangh.

Hedgewar's death forced Golwalkar to come back to Pune, where he took charge of the organisation and headed it until his death in 1973. From 1940 to 1973, the RSS's expansion was exceptional, and Golwalkar's organisational skills and extensive travels (Modi 2014) surely contributed significantly. During intense periods of the freedom struggle in the first half of the twentieth century, Golwalkar decided the RSS should avoid joining the movements to avoid the 'wrath of the British', a decision that has continued to be criticised even up to this day (Andersen 1972). As one of his biographers, Sheshadri (nd), points out, 'Shri Guruji concluded that instead of involving the entire Sangh, it would be better to encourage the Swayamsevak on an individual basis'.

⁹ The same Ramakrishna Mission formed by Swami Vivekananda already discussed earlier in this chapter. This proves Golwalkar's interaction with Vivekananda's work and its influence on him in his formative years.

Golwalkar died on 5 June 1973, after heading RSS for more than three decades and decisively shaping its future as an organisation. As Deepa Reddy (2011) points out in her article, crucially ‘Golwalkar located the RSS and its work emphatically in the realm of the “cultural, non-political”’. Going back to Bourdieu’s concepts of field and habitus, it is this movement of capital from one field (political) to another (cultural) that helps in sustaining the habitus. In the later chapters, I will show how the habitus of masculinism is being sustained. Influenced by Vivekananda’s ideas, he stressed militant skills and cultural rejuvenation as the way to revive Hinduism and strengthen it.

Vivekananda and Golwalkar have their names associated with Ramakrishna Mission and RSS, organisations that embody the intersection of Indian masculinism and nationalism. There is nevertheless a stark contrast in their positions on violence – while Ramakrishna Mission has celibate monks and household followers working towards social uplift, any form of rigorous physical training is absent. However, under the guidance of Golwalkar, RSS built its own paramilitary group as early as 1930, and stresses physical prowess and discipline (Andersen 1972), in line with Protestant ideas of heteronormative masculinity. Violence is being actively supported as a show of strength by the RSS, as can be seen in their position on communal riots. These contradictions will be further discussed in the next two chapters; however, it is important here to note that while Vivekananda espoused fighting against colonialism through social advancement, Golwalkar decided RSS should not involve itself with the freedom struggle, even though it had an organised paramilitary group with military skills available at its disposal. The use of violence by RSS was not discarded as a theoretical possibility (e.g. against other social groups), but the question of using violence to challenge the oppressive colonial structures remained firmly resolved – the British could not be irked.

The Father to Only a Fragment of the Nation: Gandhi

Another leader firmly against the use of violence against the British was Gandhi. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October, 1869 in Porbandar, a small princely state in western India, currently in Gujarat. The province in general had a large group of followers of Jainism, and many of his father’s friends were Jain as well. Jainism preaches non-violence, vegetarianism and self-discipline very rigorously, and it is believed that these early influences played a decisive role in shaping Gandhi’s political ideas at a later stage of his life. His parents

were very devoted Vaishnavites¹⁰, and this resulted in Gandhi growing up in a very religious environment. The family was vegetarian, and his mother observed religious vows and fasts devotedly all her life (Parekh 2001).

Married off at the age of 13 to Kasturbai, Gandhi's schooling was halted for a year before finishing with average grades. Gandhi left for England in 1888 to study law. Leaving the country and crossing the sea was considered sacrilege in his religious community, and before leaving he had to promise his mother that he would avoid wine, meat, and women. This categorisation of women as one of the vices from the early days of his life is important, and will be discussed in detail, in conjunction with his ideas on celibacy in Chapter 7. It was in England that Gandhi was exposed to various Western thinkers and philosophers and, as Devji (2011) observes, it would not be inaccurate to assume that a large part of Gandhi's ideological training was influenced by his Western education. He met thinkers like George Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant and Edward Carpenter during this time (Nanda, nd). It was also in London that Gandhi first read the Bhagavad Gita¹¹ in its English translation. He was called to the bar in 1891, and he left for India to pursue his legal career shortly thereafter. However, the life of a lawyer in India turned out to be disappointing, and Gandhi thus readily took up the offer to serve as a lawyer for a firm in South Africa in 1893. The next 21 years of his life were spent there, and it was in South Africa that he first became identified as an activist fighting against racism.

There are varied and conflicting accounts of both Gandhi's position on racism as practiced in South Africa and his role in the Boer War¹². Indians had been migrating to South Africa since the 1860s, mainly to work as labourers in the sugar and coffee plantations. There was a clearly hierarchy in South Africa at that time, with the Afrikaners and the British fighting for supremacy and control, while extreme forms of segregation were practiced against Indians and South Africans. Gandhi started organising Natal Indian Congress and fought

¹⁰ A Hindu sect that worships the God Vishnu, and promotes devotion and love (Bhakti) as the spiritual way to salvation.

¹¹ The Gita, as it is commonly known, is part of the epic Mahabharata, and deals with moral dilemmas envisaged as a dialogue between two central characters in the epic, Krishna and Arjuna. The Gita was a considerable influence on the ideas of both Golwalkar and Vivekananda.

¹² Gandhi raised an ambulance corps of 1,100 volunteers in support of the British during the South African (Boer) War in 1899, reasoning that since Indians were claiming full citizenship of the British colony, they should provide support to the Empire (Nanda nd).

against the Indian Franchise Bill, intended to disenfranchise Indians¹³ and was introduced in 1894 in Natal. In 1907, he used *satyagraha* for the first time as a non-violent form of resistance to fight a law passed in Transvaal that gave police the power to enter the houses of Indians to ensure their registration and fingerprinting (Parekh 2001). Non-violent protests in the form of picketing, courting arrest and accepting punishments led to a huge success in 1914 when the Indian Relief Act – which abolished a three pound tax on Indians who had not renewed their indentures, and also recognized the validity of Indian customary marriages – was passed.

Many academic works (Gandhi 2008) on Gandhi tend to depict his role in South Africa as the precursor to the struggle for black rights. Desai (2015) has vehemently argued against this, and criticises the tendency of Gandhian studies to decontextualize Gandhi's role in South Africa, thereby rendering the extreme forms of repression faced by the African population and their subsequent resistance invisible. Scholars like Arundhati Roy (2014b) have pointed out how Gandhi was not opposed to racial segregation and, in fact, was only demanding better treatment than that meted out to the 'raw kaffirs', as he called the Africans. His role in the Anglo-Boer War, where he sent up an ambulance service for the British has been widely scrutinised both for the support rendered to the latter and the questions it raised with respect to his ideas of non-violence (Desai 2015). However, it would not be wrong to say that Gandhi's activism in South Africa provided him with readymade recognition and political space on his return to India. In the course of the next few years, he led *satyagrahas* to various degrees of success in Champaran in 1917 and in Kaira and in Ahmedabad (textile workers) in 1918.

Satyagraha, Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance, was the basis of all these movements. It used certain actions like picketing, fasting, and spinning for multiple purposes: first and foremost was the spiritual regeneration of the country, but these actions were also aimed at appealing to the emotions of Gandhi's countrymen to resist the British symbolically and create an alternative social and political space. These carefully chosen symbols – the spinning wheel, the *khadi* (i.e. homespun clothes), the cow and the white cotton cap, which came to be known as the 'Gandhi cap' – were directed to affirm the Indian

¹³ "The Bill above referred to has for its object the disqualification of all the persons of Asiatic extraction, who have settled in the Colony, to vote at the Parliamentary elections. It, however, excepts those who are already rightly placed on the Voters' Lists." CWMG 1, p 164.

way of life that would cut across class boundaries and the rural-urban divide to create unity. The idea of satyagraha was to defy unjust laws by inviting suffering on oneself - rather than inflicting it on others - as a form of protest, and peacefully accepting punishment (Nanda, nd). The Christian idea of suffering love and the Hindu idea of *tapas* in the use of fasting as a political tool (Parekh 2001) are seen as major influences. Fasting was seen as a self-imposed form of purification, which served two purposes: it purified the person fasting and appealed to the conscience of those addressed by it.

The first few years after Gandhi's return to India saw him both supporting the British and recruiting for their army, and criticising them for their oppressive laws. He did not join any political party and made his aim the regeneration of Indian society through the Constructive Programme. However, the introduction of the Rowlatt Act¹⁴ finally led him to call a satyagraha, which resulted in widespread political unrest. The brutal massacre carried out by the British at Jallianwala Bagh¹⁵ further increased his disillusionment with the British, and what followed for the next two decades was a systematic nonviolent resistance to the British occupation. Gandhi's non-cooperation movement consisted of boycotting British manufactured goods, legislatures, offices, schools – everything that could render British control over India questionable. He himself was imprisoned in 1922, and upon his release in 1924 was declared the President of the Congress party for a year. Upon the declaration of the Simon Commission¹⁶ in 1927, Gandhi called on the British government to declare India's dominion status within a year, which if not met, would be followed by a yearlong non-cooperation movement across the country for complete independence. Soon to follow was the Salt Satyagraha. Organised in protest against the salt tax, which affected the poorest in the country, this campaign drew huge support from the masses, leading to the imprisonment of more than 60,000 people. The Salt Satyagraha forced the British government to enter into an agreement to organise a Round Table Conference in London in order to review the

¹⁴ The Rowlatt Act, passed by the Imperial Legislative Council in 1919, allowed for political cases to be tried without juries and internment of suspects without trial. Seen as a colonial tool of repression, it led to wide scale protests across India.

¹⁵ In protest against the Rowlatt act, a peaceful demonstration was organized at the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on 13 April, 1919. Colonel Dyer gave an order to shoot these unarmed civilians, killing several hundreds and injuring many more. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest against this barbaric incident.

¹⁶ The Simon Commission, named after its chairman Sir John Simon, was made up of seven UK Members of Parliament who were sent to India in 1928 to study its constitutional reform. The exclusion of any Indian members created a huge political controversy and rejection by the Indian National Congress.

situation in India, at which Gandhi was the sole representative of the Indian National Congress.

The Round Table Conference failed, and on return to India, Gandhi was imprisoned again. In 1932, while in prison, he started a fast unto death against the separate electorate provided by the British to the untouchables known as the Poona Pact. Under pressure due to his deteriorating health on the one hand and escalating violence against the dalits on the other, the Pact was withdrawn. While Gandhi ensured that the scheme for the separate electorate was not realised, it led to continuation of exploitation and oppression of untouchables in the hands of Hindu upper castes. Gandhi's attempts to stop separation of electorates put the importance of Hindu unity above the need to change the severe realities of dalit lives. This led to the alienation of a large section of the lower caste population from his politics, who viewed him as sacrificing their interests in favour of those of upper castes (Mountain 2006, Roy 2014a)¹⁷.

By that time however, Gandhi had started to feel that even the senior leaders of his own party had failed to embrace non-violence as the fundamental spiritual path, and this led him to renounce his membership of the Indian National Congress in 1934. He started concentrating solely on the 'Construction Programme', which aimed at spiritual regeneration of the nation through educating the rural population. Gandhi nevertheless became politically active again in 1942, when the Cripps Mission sent to India by the British for transfer of power failed. He called for immediate withdrawal of the British from India, which became the Quit India Movement. This movement, which flowered in the midst of the World War II, led to severe initial repression by the British; however, once the Labour Party came to power in Britain in 1945, negotiations were initiated. Finally, according to the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June 1947, the subcontinent was divided into two separate countries, India and Pakistan, and declared independent on 15 August 1947. The years immediately before and after independence saw large scale riots in various parts of the subcontinent, and Gandhi travelled tirelessly in his efforts to reclaim the lost communal harmony. Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January, 1948 by Nathuram Godse. Godse was a member of the Hindu Mahasabha, and a former member of RSS, and in the course of investigation, RSS was

¹⁷ This is a long running historical critique of Gandhi's political position and scholars such as Mridula Mukherjee (in Burke 2014) have responded to such critique by suggesting that though Gandhi and Ambedkar had very different approaches to the abolition of caste system, they were equally sincere.

banned. Often called ‘the father of the nation’, Gandhi’s religiously-influenced role in India’s society and politics had a lasting impact.

From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi constitute the intersectional points for discourses around colonialism, racism, casteism and gender through the prism of religion. All three of them were addressing one basic question: the path towards regeneration for a nation that had been colonised and oppressed for centuries. The texts written by these leaders provide unique insight into the process of continuation of masculinism during a period of Indian history which saw discursive changes in normative gendering. Gandhi was seen as effeminate and faced criticism from all quarters because of his propensity towards non-violence, while Golwalkar had more followers than ever before. This raises the question as to how their views on violence influenced their ideas of masculinity, and to what extent their views reflect upon contemporary masculinity – answered in the next three chapters.

The Bhagavad Gita as the Conceptual Intersection

The Bhagavad Gita has not only played an important religious, but also political role in the history of India. An exposition forming part of the sixth book of the epic Mahabharata¹⁸, the Gita is a philosophical treatise in which just before the commencement of the great War, Lord Krishna and Arjun discuss the dilemma of declaring a war against one’s own relatives. Centred around this moral dilemma, it discusses the ideas of karma (ethics of work), dharma (sacred duty) and violence in detail and is often read as an independent text, believed to have emerged around first century AD (Miller 1986). The Gita has been referred to for its elaboration of the religiously ordained code of conduct or dharma¹⁹. These codes of conduct are to be decided according to categories of social rank, kinship, and stages of life. The Bourdieusian frame of understanding social practices would place this as the framework around which the field constitutes itself. The site of the Gita is the very battle field on which the war for the throne among the Kauravas and the Pandavas – the cousins both aiming for the throne – is about to take place. Brodbeck (2011, Para 1) succinctly summarises the place

¹⁸ The Mahabharata, along with the epic Ramayana, are two Indian epics created between 400 BC and 400 AD when the nomadic Indo-Aryan tribes first settled in the valleys of the rivers Indus and Ganges. Their sacrificial cults developed into religious traditions of Hinduism (Miller 1986).

¹⁹ Dharma in Sanskrit means sacred duty, the moral order that sustains the cosmos, society, and the individual (Miller 1986, p 2-3).

of the Bhagavad Gita in Hinduism:

The Bhagavad Gita's popularity is due to the universality of Arjuna's predicament, one in which different imperatives conflict, and of its solution, the method of acting without ego, without attachment to results, with awareness of the true, inactive self (*atman*), and in a spirit of devotion. The text is beautiful poetry but also conveys core Hindu teachings that have been refreshed through new interpretations time and time again in the centuries since it was composed. The Bhagavad Gita's importance is such that, for those with religio-philosophical ambitions, composing a commentary upon it has often seemed to be a required milestone accomplishment, and in modern times this has not just been the case within India. In many ways the Bhagavad Gita is as famous for the ways it has been interpreted as for its own sake; its champions have included Gandhi, Aurobindo, and Mandela.

It is of interest here to note that Gandhi first read the Bhagavad Gita in its English translation while on a trip to London. In fact, it was his discussions with Jewish intellectuals like Hyslop, and Western followers like Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott, that caused Gandhi to start reading the Gita (Desai and Vahed 2016, p 79). As he himself wrote in 1925 (Gandhi 1925b, p 385–86),

My first acquaintance with the Gita was in 1889, when I was almost twenty. I had not then much of an inkling of the principle of Ahimsa . . . Now whilst in England my contact with two English friends made me read the Gita . . . My knowledge of Sanskrit was not enough to enable me to understand all the verses of the Gita unaided . . . They placed before me Sir Edwin Arnold's magnificent rendering of the Gita. I devoured the contents from cover to cover and was entranced by it. The last nineteen verses of the second chapter have since been inscribed on the tablet of my heart. They contain for me all knowledge . . . I have since read many translations and many commentaries, have argued and reasoned to my heart's content but the impression that first reading gave me has never been effaced . . .

What is of particular interest in this text is its martial nature, the importance of violence--war is the central focus – and the legitimization of certain forms of violence as argued by Lord Krishna. It places violence within the context of one's duty or dharma, and this dharma is ascertained through a complex signification of one's place in the broader society, again reminding one of the Bourdieusian concept of habitus. In his short introduction to Alex Cherniak's translation of *Mahabharata*, Ranajit Guha (2009, p. 534) wrote about the appeal of the Gita,

...it addresses some of the common confusions between ends and means so familiar in everyday life. Its universalist pretension is just a mythic conceit thanks to which a village dispute has been rhetorically blown up into subcontinental proportions. Nonetheless, it does make the point that violence helps to elucidate moral dilemmas.

Violence is the site of politics chosen in the Gita, as Kapila and Devji (2013a) mention in their introduction to the *Political Thought in Action: The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*. Including some of the most thought provoking essays on the influence of this text on nineteenth century sub-continental politics, it provides us a comprehensive picture of the reasons behind the rise of interest in the Gita and its uptake in the Western world. Since about 1880, the number of translations of the Gita has increased, in English as well as in other European languages, accompanied by a paradigm shift in its interpretations (Sinha 2013). These interpretations came from both nationalist leaders as well as from Western scholars. Kapila and Devji (2013a, p. xii) summarize the importance of Gita:

In commenting upon the Gita, as they increasingly did from the nineteenth century, India's literary and political leaders were participating in a transnational conversation, one that detached India from its own neighbourhood to link it with a community of readers and writers in America and Europe... Indeed, it is remarkable how many of India's political and intellectual leaders of the last century and a half wrote detailed and extensive commentaries on the Gita, which they saw not simply in a romantic way as some authentic source of statecraft, but as a book that allowed them to reconsider the nature of politics itself.

This reconsideration of politics, as will be illustrated, had ramifications on all aspects of Indian society, including gender roles and gendered imaginations of the future.

The Gita was also important as a religious text at the core of colonial politics in nineteenth century India. In the wake of the Western interest in Sanskrit and the translation of a number of Hindu religious texts²⁰, the Bhagavad Gita came to be celebrated not only in the West as an ancient text of wisdom from the Orient, but was also rediscovered in India (Devji and Kapila 2013b). Guha (2009, p 537), while discussing the fluidity of various interpretations of

²⁰ There were German (by scholars like Max Muller) and English translations of a number of Sanskrit texts, often through Hindu priests whose interpretations then went on to be popularised and mainstreamed. A French translation was produced in 1861 by Emile Burnouf, though the first translation into a European language dated back to an 1823 Latin version by August von Schlegel (Sinha 2013).

the texts in the commentaries written since the ninth century CE, mentions:

An equally emphatic testimony to the dynamism of such adaptability comes from the history of Indian nationalism. Each of its three great leaders, Tilak, Aurobindo, and Gandhi, who helped to transform it from its anaemic beginning as a demonstration of loyalty to the British Raj into a mighty anti-imperialist mass movement, wrote commentaries to the 'Gita'. This is a remarkable fact that highlights the importance of the text as a philosophy of self-questioning. For, to ask, as Arjuna does, what his duty should be under the given circumstances, is indeed to echo *Everyman's* dilemma in the face of any difficult choice and its metonymies – 'What should I do now?', 'What am I to do with my life?', 'Who am I?' (emphasis added).

C A Bayly (2013, p. 16) mentions how

...the text became a field of battle between colonial officials and missionaries and Indian political radicals who used Krishna's advice to Arjuna to legitimize the use of violence in the freedom struggle. As Farquhar put it, "Even the Gita was used to teach murder. Lies, deceit, murder, everything it was argued may be rightly used" in the political struggle. Bipan Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose both appeared to support this radical interpretation in their statements on the Gita and the nature of Krishna.

These numerous translations and interpretations means the text earned the dubious distinction of being open to often contradictory readings. Researchers like Sartori (2013) have proposed that for leaders like Aurobindo, appeal to religious discourse did not entail an attachment to Hinduism, but rather cynical appeal to traditional religious discourse for nationalist aims.

However, my interest in locating the Gita as a focal point of this research does not solely stem from its historical role in becoming the site of intersection of nationalist and religious discourses. The teachings of the Gita were increasingly criticised over the years, and with good reasons. Ambedkar, one of the greatest political minds of modern India and a vehement critique of the grip of Hinduism on all aspects of Indian society, pointed out the inherent casteism and encouragement of the Varna system in Gita in his essay 'Krishna and His Gita' (Ambedkar 1979, np): 'A Shudra however great he may be as a devotee could not get salvation if he transgressed his duty to live and die in the service of the higher classes?' He further critiques the espousal of violence in the Bhagavad Gita:

Arjuna had declared himself against the war, against killing people for the sake of property. Krishna offers a philosophic defence of war and killing in war. This philosophic defence of war will be found in Chapter II verses II to 28. The philosophic defence of war offered by the Bhagvat Gita proceeds along two lines of argument. One line of argument is that anyhow the world is perishable and man is mortal. Things are bound to come to an end. Man is bound to die. Why should it make any difference to the wise whether man dies a natural death or whether he is done to death as a result of violence? Life is unreal, why shed tears because it has ceased to be? Death is inevitable, why bother how it has resulted? The second line of argument in justification of war is that it is a mistake to think that the body and the soul are one. They are separate. Not only are the two quite distinct but they differ in-as-much as the body is perishable while the soul is eternal and imperishable. When death occurs it is the body that dies. The soul never dies. Not only does it never die but air cannot dry it, fire cannot burn it, and a weapon cannot cut it. It is therefore wrong to say that when a man is killed his soul is killed. What happens is that his body dies. His soul discards the dead body as a person discards his old clothes—wears new ones and carries on. As the soul is never killed, killing a person can never be a matter of any movement. War and killing need therefore give no ground to remorse or to shame, so argues the Bhagvat Gita.

And, in the same text,

The philosophic defence offered by the Bhagvat Gita of the Kshtriya's duty to kill is to say the least puerile. To say that killing is no killing because what is killed is the body and not the soul is an unheard of defence of murder. This is one of the doctrines which make some people say that the doctrines make one's hair stand on their end. If Krishna were to appear as a lawyer acting for a client who is being tried for murder and pleaded the defence set out by him in the Bhagvat Gita there is not the slightest doubt that he would be sent to the lunatic asylum. Similarly childish is the defence of the Bhagvat Gita of the dogma of chaturvarnya. Krishna defends it on the basis of the Guna theory of the Sankhya. But Krishna does not seem to have realized what a fool he has made of himself. In the chaturvarnya there are four Varnas. But the gunas according to the Sankhyas are only three. How can a system of four varnas be defended on the basis of a philosophy which does not recognise more than three varnas?

Nanda (2016) writes in her essay on Ambedkar's position on the Gita that the mainstream

reading of today explains the *Chaturvarna*²¹ system in the Gita as based upon worth and not birth, and that the caste system was only a much later introduction caused by outsiders in different historical moments. As Nanda convincingly shows in her essay, “This story is a massive misreading of the Gita which ties worth to birth in the clearest possible terms, invoking both nature and God” (ibid, p 41). These socio-political implications make it evident that interpretation of the Gita is influenced by one’s position on caste and communal issues. After all, if the Gita is used to advocate for or refrain from violence, the question always remains as to who is imagined as the subject of such possibilities – who does Vivekananda or Golwalkar or Gandhi prescribe or constrain violence against? These questions can lead to some interesting answers about the religious sanction of political and social stratification.

Conclusion

In the next chapters, I explore how the Gita has appeared in the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi, particularly how it influenced their political ideologies and their gendering of concepts such as duty and violence. I will also look at how the same text has been subject to varied interpretations around these concepts and their actualisations in contemporary society. I will use the Gita as the starting point of the rhetorical analysis, and then delve further into how these interconnections develop an idea of martial masculinity with a mythical religious masculine past that needs to be reinvigorated, both physically and communally. The Gita, along with other religious texts, has been repeatedly used to define the nature of duty (dharma), work ethic (karma), and the ways to achieve them in the wake of the nationalist call. In other words, masculinity and the project of regaining masculinity has been guided by religious texts and concepts through the works of these leaders. Religious texts and concepts – both in their original and translated versions – played a crucial role in defining duties the nation was deemed to expect from its people. The nature of these duties, just like the nature of the religious mandates that dictated them were heavily gendered, for both men and women. The next three chapters will, therefore, take up the works of each of these leaders in order to illustrate how exactly this gendering appears in their works.

²¹ The varna system is practiced since ancient times in India, according to which the population is divided into four broad groups based on birth. These four groups are Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (the lowest rank subjected to menial work). It is an exploitative hereditary system comparable in its inhumanity to the American racial segregation.

Sanjay Srivastava (2012, p 1) has pointed out the specific sites where masculinism has consequences for women:

The discourse of masculinity as a dominant and 'superior' gender position is produced at a number of sites and has specific consequences for women as well as those men who may not fit into the dominant and valorised models of masculinity. These sites include: customary laws and regulations, the state and its mechanisms, the family, religious norms and sanctions, popular culture, and the media.

These categories are, unfortunately not as neatly packed into separate parts of society. They influence each other, interact with each other, and are often embodied by the same person or organisational structure. The lives and texts of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi are sites of such interaction. Unpacking these interactions at multiple points of their written works through textual analysis is the aim of the next three chapters of this project. This analysis is unavoidably partial. What it does however is provide a glimpse into how gender constructs were maintained and furthered in certain ways and how violence and non-violence were related to such a gender binary. It provides us clues as to the ways masculinism exists in the symbolic system or habitus – a habitus Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi both maintained and furthered – thereby also supplying insight into the role that these conceptions of masculinity continue to play in today's world.

5.

Spiritual Masculinity and Reproductive Tension in the Works of Vivekananda

In her article dealing with the historical roots of connections between masculinity and religion in India, Charu Gupta (2011) says, “Masculinity was expressed in various ways: from Vivekananda to Gandhi, from Sanatan Dharmists to Arya Samajists, from notions of brahmacharya (celibacy) to the images of warrior Krishna. All these images overwhelmingly constructed national manhood as Hindu and that too upper caste”. The influence of colonisers and colonisation on these expressions have been explored in some detail already (Banerjee 2012, Chatterjee 1993, Sarkar 2001, Sinha 1995), and Vivekananda holds a prominent position in most works on colonial masculinity (Banerjee 2012, Chowdhury 1998, Sarkar 1997). However, a detailed assessment of his works is still needed to further explore the religious inspirations behind the constructions of ideal masculinities. These religious inspirations were not only limited to religious practices – like the Shuddhi and Sangathan movements Gupta (2011) discusses – but also texts like the Bhagavad Gita and religious concepts, like karma, dharma, and purusharthas (Sharma 2013). These textual and conceptual inspirations from Hinduism played an immense role in the masculinism evident in the works of Vivekananda.

It was in the nineteenth century, that the term Hinduism started denoting ‘the entire complex of beliefs of those denizens of India who were not Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or Zoroastrian’ (Subrahmanyam 2017)¹. Essentially, a reformed projection of monotheistic Hinduism emerged during the nineteenth century among nationalists as a response to the colonial critique (Thapar 1985, 1989, 1996)². It has now been established that the first known usage of the word Hinduism in English was by one such reformer – Rammohan Roy in 1816 (Lorenzen 1999). In Masuzawa’s influential work (2005) on the establishment of modern lateral understandings of world religions, he mentions nineteenth century Neo-Hinduism or

¹ For more on the debate on how Hinduism became established within the category of religion and the influence of colonisation on such a process, see Lorenzen (1999), Dalmia (1995), Frykenberg (1989) and Sweetman (2003).

² Creation of Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and other such religious organisations have been interpreted as attempts to counter such Christian colonial critiques and popularise a monotheistic version of Hinduism.

Hindu Modernism³. In discussing the role played by Indian intellectuals in creating a new image of India, he remarks that a part of this project was the revival and selective representation of the history of Hinduism as a religion. Among the leaders who find mention here is also Swami Vivekananda (*ibid*, p 23), for his popularization of Hinduism in the United States and Europe as:

...a religion that was originally and essentially monotheistic, and whose ancient wisdom is encapsulated in certain select but voluminous canonical texts, which were beginning to be known in the West as early as the eighteenth century: the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita constituting an especially prominent part of the latter.

Thus, the importance of these texts in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda went on to play a significant role on the world stage: his long trips to the United States and various European countries after the World Parliament of Religions (1893) (see Figure 1) contributed to the broader trend of propagation of the ‘reification’ of the idea of ‘Hinduism’ as a religion (Masuzawa 2005, p 282) or the discovery of Hinduism (Marshall 1970). I extend Masuzawa’s argument towards a gendered reading, and propose that these lectures also led to a reification of the Western imagination of the ‘Hindu man’ and the ‘Hindu woman’ – both in terms of their social positions and their religious roles in their society.

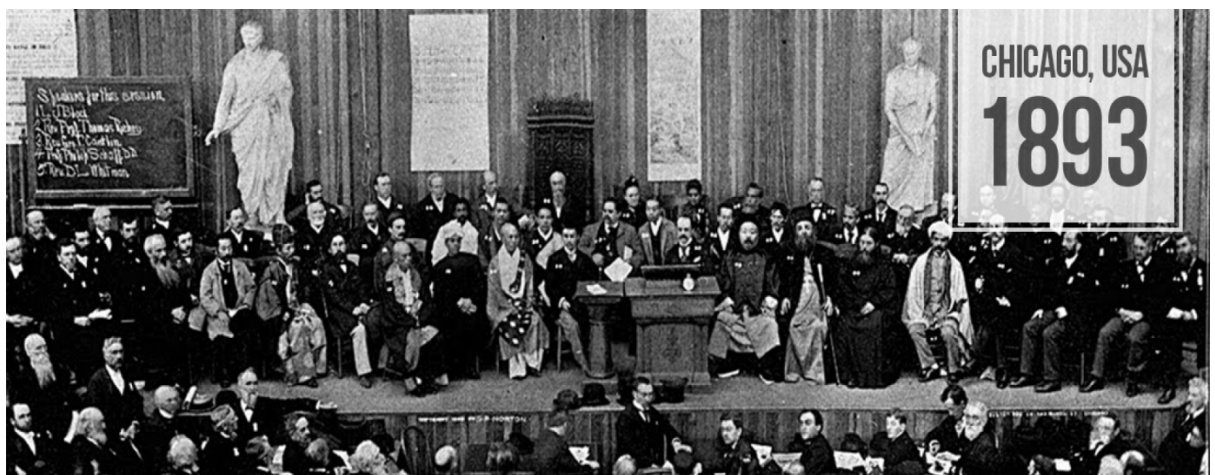


Figure 1: World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, 1893. Source: www.parliamentofreligions.org.

³ See also Prakash (1999) and King (1999) for extensive discussions on the historical 'construction' and 're-imagining' of Hinduism in the nineteenth century.

Vivekananda was one of the first Indians to internalise the category of Hinduism as a religion on the world stage and, in the process, provide validation to the large body of orientalist works that originated in the West on religious practices in India since the sixteenth century (Subrahmanyam 2017). Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2016) considers Vivekananda as “the most famous ambassador of Indian spirituality, culture, Yoga and Indian ideals in the West, and you really can’t think of any other figure apart from Gandhi being so central to both the East-West conversation and the conversation within and across India”. His extensive personal and intellectual familiarity with Western intellectual scholarship⁴ on Hinduism, combined with his stature as the first Hindu missionary to have international influence⁵ confirmed his sway over the discourse on Hinduism as a religion on par with the Abrahamic religions. It is crucial to note the importance of this recognition for the creation of his spiritual nation (CWSV3, p 287–88):

...the first plank in making of a future India, the first step that is to be hewn out of that rock of ages, is this unification of religion. All of us have to be taught that we are Hindus – Dualists, qualified Monists, or Monists, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, or Pashupatas, - to whatever denomination they may belong, have certain common ideas behind us, and that the time has come when for the well-being of our race, we must give up all our little quarrels and differences.

In this chapter, I focus on the constructions of Hindu masculinity by Swami Vivekananda through his heteronormative, masculine, gendered interpretations of Hindu religious concepts⁶. Through a detailed textual and feminist rhetorical analysis of his written works, letters, public lectures and discourses, I explore how the religious ideas are gendered, and ideas around masculinity are in turn religiously built. The next section will explore Vivekananda’s interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, and how his ideas on masculinity evolved from the multiple interpretations of the discourse around karma and violence in the

⁴ It is of importance to note that not only was Vivekananda acquainted with the Orientalist works of the likes of James Todd and Max Muller, but had also personally met Muller (CWSV8: Epistles Fourth Series LXXVI):

I had a beautiful visit with Prof. Max Müller. He is a saint — a Vedantist through and through. What think you? He has been a devoted admirer of my old Master for years. He has written an article on my Master in *The Nineteenth Century*, which will soon come out. We had long talk on Indian things. I wish I had half his love for India.

⁵ International newspapers that reported on Vivekananda’s lectures included *The New York Times*, *New York Herald*, *Washington Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *London Morning Post*, *The Queen*, and *Daily Chronicle*, among others (CWSV, Arora 2016).

⁶ A small note on the body of work by Swami Vivekananda cited here. Most of his works mentioned are sourced from the online repository of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (CWSV) maintained by his organization, the Belur Math, on the website www.belurmath.org. However, a few citations are from the published *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, in which case the relevant page numbers are given.

Gita. Karma repeatedly presents itself as a crucial justification of not only masculinity, but also racial and casteist claims of superiority that found voice in his speeches delivered in the West. Thus, the third section will look at the appeals to monotheism in the works of Vivekananda, based on claims of Aryan lineage and its corresponding political and intellectual assertions of masculinity in the twentieth century. The fourth section follows the discussion on masculinity to focus on the conceptual tension between celibacy and motherhood in Vivekananda's theorisations. The chapter concludes with a discussion on violence in the Bhagavad Gita as interpreted by Vivekananda. I follow existing debates on the various forms of violence in Hindu scriptures, and Vivekananda's position vis-à-vis violence on human and non-human forms.

Vivekananda's interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita: Karma and masculinity

The Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita occupied a central place in Vivekananda's philosophy, as he himself voiced (CWSV 6, CXXIV, Letter to Pramada Das Mitra):

The Smritis and the Puranas are productions of men of limited intelligence and are full of fallacies, errors, the feelings of class and malice. Only parts of them breathing broadness of spirit and love are acceptable, the rest are to be rejected. The Upanishads and the Gita are the true scriptures.

It was through the Upanishads that the dual paths of life were first proposed in Hindu philosophy: one of family and recreation, and the other of renunciation. Doniger (2014, p 398-399) has posited that these two paths of life were of two opposing realms:

...the Upanishads also introduced into India the concept of two paths, one the path of family life, society and children, the other the path of renunciation, solitary meditation and ascetism. The tension between the two paths, the violent (sacrificial), materialistic, sensual and potentially addictive path of worldliness on the one hand, and the non-violent (vegetarian), ascetic, spiritual and controlled path of renunciation on the other, was sometimes expressed as the balance between bourgeois householders and homeless seekers, or between traditions that regarded karma – the accumulated record of good and bad deeds – as a good or a bad thing, respectively.

Doniger's above analysis begs some attention. The two paths of life for a longer period of history have had different interpretations based on gender. For women, the two paths were not alternatives but two separate stages of life – the first the marital life, followed by the second in widowhood. The evasion of marital life and widowhood was a possibility through either spinsterhood or a religious disavowal of marital life marked by a devoted, religious and definitely asexual life. These two were not frequent occurrences and the absence of sexuality removed them from the reproductive political economy of the familial sphere. Those women who remained active outside the realm of matrimony were, quite similarly, outside the sphere of familial and reproductive politics⁷.

However, for nineteenth century Hindu men, these two paths are not two stages, but choices – in the absence of the compulsion of widowhood, masculinity's relation with these paths was in the choice made, not in the rigor with which these paths were conformed to. Thus, what Doniger interprets as the Upanishad's advisory for spiritual life choices, in fact, had profound gendered implications for most of the centuries that followed. These are also the two paths that establish a dichotomy in Vivekananda's philosophy of rejuvenation of the Hindu nation. In advocating domesticity and celibacy as the two choices for his disciples, the gendered ideology was continued in his philosophy as well.

Karma may be conceptualised as the accumulated record of good or bad deeds – the ethical consequences of which determine lived experience of individuals. These concepts continue to influence social and political spheres of life in India on a daily basis. Karma was one of the central elements through which Vivekananda urged the young generation of India to devote themselves to the spiritual regeneration of the country and community. The conceptualisation of Karma in the Gita is undertaken by Krishna when he assuages Arjuna's doubts about taking up arms against his own relatives. As Kapila and Devji (2013, p. xiv) argued, the Gita took such a crucial place in the nineteenth century political thought in India because:

It is striking that Western canonical thinking on the political took the state as its central point of reference concerning issues of violence, sovereignty and authority. Precisely because the realm of the state in India was at once alien and also the source of colonization, the Gita, with its focus on fratricidal violence, became the point of departure for questions

⁷ This in turn, had profound implications on family inheritances.

both political and ethical. In short, the political, by definition, existed beyond the state in these formulations. And this meant that freedom could be thought about in terms of sacrifice rather than survival, and justice envisaged beyond the language of contract⁸.

By building on this ethics of work, Vivekananda imagined the colonised ‘self as a historicized agent of action and change’ (Kapila 2013, p 184). This focus on the self through the concept of karma returned agency to the colonised individual and at the same time, authenticated the Christian values of violent-virile strength as Hindu religious concepts. In a conversation with his disciple Sharat Chandra Chakravarty⁹, Vivekananda answered his query (CWSV 7, *Conversations and Dialogues XIII*) about the difference of Sanyasins of his Math from those of earlier times, focussing on the ethics of work:

Now it won’t do to merely quote the authority of our ancient books. The tidal wave of Western civilisation is now rushing over the length and breadth of the country. It won’t do now simply to sit in meditation on mountain tops without realising in the least its usefulness. Now is wanted — as said in the Gita by the Lord — intense Karma-Yoga, with unbounded courage and indomitable strength in the heart. Then only will the people of the country be roused, otherwise they will continue to be as much in the dark as you are.

The agent of such regeneration was the young Hindu youth, as made clear in his repeated calls to the youth of the nation. The imagined regeneration was muscular (Banerjee 2005, 2012), and the muscular was also masculine. The youth of the nation were mocked for their ‘feminine’ nature, and the aspired-to masculinity was constructed in contradiction to such femininity. The feminine posed a threat to the ideal celibate spiritual masculinity devoted to social upliftment that Vivekananda desired as the bulwark of ‘a European society with India’s religion’ (Sharma 2013, p 118, 123, 159). His definition of karma was masculine, and his call to the youth was a ‘call of virilization’ (Banerjee 2005, p 59):

Make your nerves strong. What we want [are] muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. Strength, manhood, *Kshatra-virya* [warrior-strength]... We have wept long enough. No more weeping,

⁸ See CA Bayly’s *India, the Bhagavad Gita, and the World* in Kapila and Devji (2013) for a detailed account of the role played by this text in the intellectual and social history of nineteenth century India.

⁹ Sharat Chandra Chakravarty (1868–1944), a Sanskrit Scholar and postmaster by profession, wrote the *Diary of a Disciple* (nd) (Bengali: *স্বামী শিষ্য সংবাদ*), which went on to become one of the few first-hand accounts about Vivekananda.

but stand on your feet and be men. It is man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories we want. It is man-making education that we want... anything that makes you weak, physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison.

Influenced by the Western ideas of Christian masculinity, as well as the traditional ideas of sperm retention or ‘spermatic economy’ (Bramen 2001) as a way towards garnering masculine prowess (*Kshatra-virya*), Vivekananda’s central aim was to create a generation of young men who would dedicate their lives to service of the community and their spiritual upliftment through a focus on the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita. The ultimate goal of realization of Atman (the highest state of being) is to be achieved through karma yoga. And in doing so, he also masculinised and Hinduised the idea of future India. His vision for women was, however, far from what can be described as muscular: “‘woman-making education’ was to be kept separate from ‘man-making’ education and was to include only a rudimentary introduction to religion, arts, and science, with an emphasis on ‘housekeeping, cooking, sewing, hygiene... It is good to not let them touch novels and fictions’”. (as quoted in Banerjee 2012, p 63).

It was during the nineteenth century that constant attacks by the colonial government against ‘pagan’ Hinduism and its ‘Gentoo’ followers were also contributing to a sense of religious attack, even while Western scholars were rediscovering Hinduism’s philosophical teachings. In 1862, for example, a Supreme Court ruling stated that, ‘Krishna... the love hero... the husband of 16,000 princesses... tinges the whole system (of Hinduism) with the strain of carnal sensualism, of strange, transcendental lewdness’ (Doniger 2014, p 403). The reclamation of the figure of Krishna and his teachings in the Gita can also be interpreted as an aspect of this opposition to the tide of Western civilisation. Focusing on the spiritual message of the Gita helped project the image of Krishna beyond carnal sensationalism into one of masculine karma – the premise of war and violence on which the Bhagavad Gita is based retrieves the image of Krishna from sensualism to the masculine world of violence, sacrifice and karma. This can be interpreted as an attempt to retrieve Krishna from the Vaishnavite Bhakti tradition – held in much contempt by Vivekananda as a reason for emasculation of Bengali men – and reinstating the God as a warrior figure (Banerjee 2012)¹⁰. In her memoir, Sister Nivedita remembers a conversation with Vivekananda on the Gita:

¹⁰ Similar efforts of revalorising have been witnessed with the figure of Rama in contemporary right wing Indian politics. For more, see Davis (2007), Ludden (2007), and Pollock (1993) among others.

“Every now and then there would be long talks about the Gita — ‘that wonderful poem, without one note in it of weakness or unmanliness’” (CWSV 9, Excerpt from Sister Nivedita’s book).

The subject of karma yoga, the means of becoming a karma yogi and the objectives behind doing so are gendered in their imagination as well as implementation in the works of Vivekananda. Even when the subject of social reform is women, Vivekananda focuses on the necessity of male celibacy and the role of male educators if they were to embark on their mission of educating women (CWSV7, *Conversations and Dialogues XVIII*):

...female education is to be spread with religion as its centre. All other training should be secondary to religion. Religious training, the formation of character and observance of the vow of celibacy — these should be attended to. In the female education which has obtained up till now in India, it is religion that has been made a secondary concern, hence those defects you were speaking of have crept in. But no blame attaches therefore to the women. Reformers having proceeded to start female education without being Brahmacharins themselves have stumbled like that.

It is curious to notice the emphasis on celibacy and religious training among reformers for women’s education. This suggests the association of women with sexual temptation that is evident in most of the written works of Vivekananda. The physical proximity of women risking not only sexual acts but also sexual thoughts were considered as endangering the Kshatra-virya, which is dependent on semen retention. Hence, the vow of celibacy becomes an essential deterrent and aid in the path of spiritual masculinity. The assumption of women as sexual threats also lays bare the heteronormative nature of Vivekananda’s political imagination¹¹.

The Aryan appeal of Monotheism: Race, Caste, and Masculinity

Manliness and the aspiration for manliness, or pourush, was an important part of Vivekananda’s doctrine. But how did he envision this manliness? Basu and Banerjee (2006, p 482) writes:

¹¹ As evident from his personal letters, Vivekananda would often address his female followers as ‘Mother’ or ‘Sister’, in what can be interpreted as an attempt to desexualise their relationship, which is a common practice in the Ramakrishna Mission to this day.

He bemoaned the effeminacy of Indians and urged Indians to overcome their “woman-like” nature and become men: “No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men.” His writings moved beyond ideas of physical strength and martial prowess to include notions of “muscular” spirituality. The warrior monk embodied his particular fusion of hegemonic masculinity and spiritual vigor.

Construction of Hindu manhood as a ‘combination of Western manliness and Hindu ideals of spiritual power’ (Roy and Hammers 2014, p 545) was his path towards a resurgent India – a country which will definitely derive its political aspirations from its religious abstractions. However, this projection of spiritual masculinity was always located in a tension with the western masculine project of colonisation.



Figure 2: Swami Vivekananda, third from left, at the Parliament of Religions. Chicago, 1893.

A September 29, 1893 report in the *Times* alludes to this tension in the position voiced by Vivekananda in the World Parliament of Religions (see Figure 2) (CWSV3, *At the Parliament of Religions*):

Swami Vivekananda...wore an orange robe and a pale yellow turban and dashed at once into a savage attack on Christian nations in these words: “We who have come from the east have sat here day after day and have been told in a patronizing way that we ought to accept

Christianity because Christian nations are the most prosperous. We look about us and we see England the most prosperous Christian nation in the world, with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellow men. At such a price the Hindoo will not have prosperity.

This can be interpreted as his attempt to separate the aspirations of Hindus from colonising Christian Europe. It is also through this very attempt to differentiate Hindu regeneration from Western colonial aspirations that Vivekananda rejected the notion of violence celebrated by both the Christian and the Kshatriya model of masculinity (CWSV3, *The Work Before Us*):

...from the point of view of the Englishman, the brave, the heroic, the Kshatriya — conquest is the greatest glory that one man can have over another. That is true from his point of view, but from ours it is quite the opposite. If I ask myself what has been the cause of India's greatness, I answer, because we have never conquered. That is our glory.

Does that mean that conquest is not an aim of Hindu regeneration? On the contrary, Vivekananda's view is that 'Spirituality must conquer the West' (*ibid*). This spirituality is decisively Hindu in nature. His idea of masculinity thus posits spirituality and Hindu scriptural knowledge above martial masculinity as a way of countering the colonial accusations of effeminacy. Though the Hindu will regenerate his virile masculinity, he will conquer through his spirituality – a spirituality which was limited in access to upper caste men, and out of bounds for women, lower castes and dalits, not to mention followers of other religions in India. It also masked other forms of Hinduism like Vaishnavism (Sharma 2013, Sarkar 1997). Aspirations of both racial equality and religious equality could thus be voiced in this claim of restrained practice of spirituality: "I am an imaginative man, and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by the Hindu race... The story of our conquest... [is]... the conquest of religion" (as quoted in Banerjee 2012, p 59). Using Bourdieusian terminology, it can be said that Vivekananda aimed to use the field of religion and change the symbolic capital garnered through masculinity in order to secure Hindu domination. There should be no doubt as to the nature of the community¹² on behalf of whom he was

¹² Vivekananda's use of the words *desb* (nation), *Hindu* (religion), and *samaj* (society/community) interchangeably in his Bengali writings reflected his subconscious conflation of all three.

making this clarion call – it was Hindu, male, upper caste and decidedly hetero-sexual in nature. In such a claim for masculine symbolic capital, what remained unaddressed was the symbolic violence on those identities that remained outside the purview of the field of spiritual Hinduism.

This claim was equally furthered by reviving the monotheistic image of Hinduism. While discussing the nineteenth century Neo-Hinduism of Rammohun Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore and Vivekananda, Masuzawa (2005, p 285) notes pointedly the allure of racial superiority that came with the claim to monotheism.

What is noteworthy here is the claim that true Hinduism was the beneficent, dignified, monotheistic religion of classical India, and not what was generally observable throughout India in modern times. If, therefore, an earlier generation of Europeans had fostered a malignant image and judged that the religion of non-Islamic India was nothing but depraved idolatry and polytheism, this was an inference drawn from the observations of its present corrupted state, not as assessment of its original, essential nature.

This claim of monotheism, on the one hand, strengthened the assertion of Hinduism as a religion of global stature from the East, while on the other hand, reinforced the Aryan origins of Hindus. Vivekananda's lectures delivered in London, Boston, San Francisco and other Western cities can thus be seen as attempts to solidify the common Aryan origin shared by Indo-Europeans (Urban 2003):

To the great tablelands of the high Himalaya mountains first came the Aryans and there to this day abides the pure type of Brahman, a people which [the Westerners] can but dream of. Pure in thought, deed and action. . . . Their features are regular, their eyes dark and the skin the color which would be produced by the drops which fell from a pricked finger into a glass of milk.

Clearly, the quest for racial and religious equality created a visible tension in Vivekananda's ideology when it came to caste. The aspiration for a common origin can also perhaps be ascribed as the reason behind the repeated assertions by Vivekananda of the caste system as a product of foreign origin. Wendy Doniger has voiced her belief that Vivekananda firmly denounced caste on various occasions (2009, p 574; 2014, p 48). However, a detailed look at his complete works reveals a much more ambiguous stance. On the one hand, in the lectures

delivered at various Western locations, he expressed a firm belief in foreign invasions as the reason behind the continuation of the caste system while, on the other hand, his personal communications often indicated his personal belief in it. In a letter written from Hyderabad to his close friend Alasinga¹³ on 11 February 1893, Vivekananda expressed his reservations about the validity of promises made by the Raja of Ootacamund to him in providing the necessary means to travel to America. Comparing the Raja to Rajputs, he expresses (CWSV8, *Epistles Fourth Series: IX*) his firm belief in Rajput valour:

...you may be almost sure that I shall see you in a few days for a day or two in Madras and then go to Bangalore and thence to Ootacamund to see “if” the M—Maharaja sends me up. “If” — because you see I cannot be sure of any promise of a Dakshini (southern) Raja. They are not Rajputs. A Rajput would rather die than break his promise.

He even defended the caste system in some of his public lectures, and stressed its necessity¹⁴. In a discussion following a lecture on the Vedanta philosophy delivered at the Graduate Philosophical Society of Harvard University on 25 March 1896 (CWSV1, *Vedanta Philosophy*), he said:

It is owing to caste that three hundred millions of people can find a piece of bread to eat yet. It is an imperfect institution, no doubt. But if it had not been for caste, you would have had no Sanskrit books to study. This caste made walls, around which all sorts of invasions rolled and surged, but found it impossible to break through. That necessity has not gone yet; so caste remains. The caste we have now is not that of seven hundred years ago. Every blow has riveted it.

In the same lecture, he also elaborates on how Indian society and the Hindu religion had benefitted from the caste system:

Brahmins and Kshatriyas have always been our teachers, and most of the Upanishads were written by Kshatriyas, while the ritualistic portions of the Vedas came from the Brahmins. Most of our great teachers throughout India have been Kshatriyas, and were always universal

¹³ Alasinga Perumal (1865–1909) started the *Brahmavadin* (1896–1914), which later inspired the *Vedanta Kesari*. He was a school teacher and an avid follower of Vivekananda and often provided the monk with financial support.

¹⁴ It is important to remember that reformers like Jyotiba Phule (1827–1890) and Veerasalingam (1848–1919) were already actively working against the caste system during this time, and critique of the caste system was not only generated from Western intellectual spheres.

in their teachings; whilst the Brahmana prophets with two exceptions were very exclusive. Râma, Krishna, and Buddha — worshipped as Incarnations of God — were Kshatriyas.

According to Vivekananda, the very hereditary nature of the caste system would ensure the uplift of the Shudras in the society. In an extremely popular essay *Modern India* (CWSV4) – originally written in Bengali and then translated – he envisions the improvement of the lives of the Shudras:

In modern India, no one born of Shudra parents, be he a millionaire or a great Pandit, has ever the right to leave his own society, with the result that the power of his wealth, intellect, or wisdom, remaining confined within his own caste limits, is being employed for the betterment of his own community. This hereditary caste system of India, being thus unable to overstep its own bounds, is slowly but surely conducing to the advancement of the people moving within the same circle. The improvement of the lower classes of India will go on, in this way, so long as India will be under a government dealing with its subjects irrespective of their caste and position.

His firm belief in this forced division of labour along caste lines was expressed time and again, and the fact that this had not led to any improvement of the lower castes over thousands of years did not stall him from declaring (CWSV7, *Conversations and Dialogues* VII, 1898):

Even with the awakening of knowledge, the potter will remain a potter, the fisherman a fisherman, the peasant a peasant. Why should they leave their hereditary calling? — Don't give up the work to which you were born, even if it be attended with defects." If they are taught in this way, why should they give up their respective callings? Rather they will apply their knowledge to the better performance of the work to which they have been born.

This is the same position held by Gandhi on the occupations of people from lower castes, or Harijans as he called them, for a large part of his political career, as we shall see in Chapter 7. Vivekananda would probably have been against the reservation system, if these statements are to be believed. If there still remains any doubt about his firm belief in the utility of the caste system in a revived Hindu society, it is alleviated by the discussion with his disciples recorded by Sharat Chandra Chakravarty in his *Diary* (CWSV 5, *From the diary of a Disciple*, India wants not lecturing but work):

We must initiate the whole people into the codes of our old Manu and Yâjnavalkya, with a few modifications here and there to adjust them to the changed circumstances of the time. Do you not see that nowhere in India now are the original four castes (Châturvarnya) to be found? We have to redivide the whole Hindu population, grouping it under the four main castes, of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, as of old. The numberless modern subdivisions of the Brahmins that split them up into so many castes, as it were, have to be abolished and a single Brahmin caste to be made by uniting them all. Each of the three remaining castes also will have to be brought similarly into single groups, as was the case in Vedic times.

The acceptance of the hierarchy of caste carries within it the symbolic power that Bourdieu related with symbolic violence. The imperceptible nature of the symbolic violence against women and lower castes is clearly unmasked in the caste-gender hierarchy that is functional in the political use of religious capital by Vivekananda. This hierarchy is further exposed in his ideation of celibacy.

Tension between the Celibate and the Mother

Joseph Alter talks about celibacy as ‘an embodied opposition to the legacy of colonial sexuality’ (Alter 1994, p 58). Celibacy was often projected by Hindu leaders as a political tool – a religious means to political ends. Vivekananda, Golwalkar, Gandhi – all three use celibacy as a prominent feature in their ideological teachings. However, a prolonged examination of these messages often reveals a gendered tension in these teachings. In this section, I will look at Vivekananda’s vision of the ideal role of men and women in Indian society to establish that denial of sexuality to men led to an internal contradiction in his work, and this internal contradiction led to a persistent gendered tension.

In his lecture on the Vedas and the Upanishads, delivered in San Francisco on May 26, 1900 (CWSV1, *The Gita 1*), Vivekananda upholds renouncement as the highest ideal. He quotes the Upanishad:

The Upanishads say, renounce. That is the test of everything. Renounce everything. It is the creative faculty that brings us into all this entanglement. The mind is in its own nature when it is calm. The moment you can calm it, that [very] moment you will know the truth. What

is it that is whirling the mind? Imagination, creative activity. Stop creation and you know the truth.

However, renouncement was an aspiration only for men. The ideal role model of women that he espoused was that of the Mother: for women thus, it was not renunciation but reproduction which was the call of duty for the spiritual regeneration of Hindus. The interpretation of Upanishads was thus aimed solely towards men. As existing scholarship has repeatedly shown (Sarkar 1997), the realm of the community was a masculine space within the purview of upper caste Hindu men. Women were relegated to the domestic space of the home, and even though Vivekananda voiced his wish for women to take a more active role in the public sphere (see for example his letter to Sarala Ghosal, who was an editor of *Bharati*, CWSV5, LXXIV), he did not create as elaborate a blue print for women's participation in the regeneration of society.

In a newspaper report published in the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean* on 23 September 1893, Vivekananda publicized his vision of Hindu women as the ideal women in the world (CWSV8, *Notes of Class Talks and Lectures: Women of the East*):

The central idea of the life of a modern Hindu lady is her chastity. The wife is the centre of a circle, the fixity of which depends upon her chastity. It was the extreme of this idea which caused Hindu widows to be burnt. The Hindu women are very spiritual and very religious, perhaps more so than any other women in the world. If we can preserve these beautiful characteristics and at the same time develop the intellects of our women, the Hindu woman of the future will be the ideal woman of the world.

One has to remember here that these comments were made in front of a Western audience, often in contrast to the popular, oriental imageries of Indian women among those present. The interchangeable nature of the words 'wife', 'widow' and 'women' are a recurring feature in Vivekananda's work. Not only the respectability, but the value of women in the ideal future remains in their confinement to the marital domain, which in turn necessitates spiritual and religious belief. Marriage in Hinduism, after all, is not an affair of one life – your faithfulness is demanded for the next seven lives. In positing this firm location of a respectable woman within marital boundaries, there is also another crucial implication – he also defines the lack of intellect among Hindu women. Spirituality and intellect constitute separate spheres of social and political lives, and while the spiritual nature of women

contributes to the moral fabric of society, it is the intellect that drives political aspirations. Hence, we see Vivekananda promote education among women, but repeatedly stress its use by women as mothers¹⁵. Renunciation of marital and familial life is thus never an ideal for women¹⁶, unlike for his male disciples.

Making renunciation a necessary aspect of masculinity denies the role of reproduction to men. Dissociation of masculinity from reproduction was one of the central elements of Vivekananda's mission of recuperating Hindu glory – and this Hindu glory was for all practical purposes the glory of Hindu masculinity. The myth of loss of masculinity is, contrary to established expectations, not countered by a claim to hyper-fertility¹⁷. In Vivekananda's work, the highest form of masculinity is bestowed to those who refrain from sexuality in all forms.

This erasure of male sexuality and reproductive functions of the male body can, I argue, be seen as a form of symbolic violence that Pierre Bourdieu mentions in his work, *Masculine Domination*. Bourdieu uses the idea of symbolic violence to illustrate the violence perpetrated on the feminine body in invisible forms not recognised by social systems often by the victims themselves. His idea can be useful here to illustrate how masculine reality too, on Vivekananda's analysis, has to be devoid of its sexual and reproductive aspirations in order to be considered as one that has embodied the highest form of masculinity. Feminist research has established the crucial importance attached to the role of women as mothers (Sinha 2006). Sarkar (1997) pointed out how this helped maintain the economic and intellectual dominance of men: "In colonial India, male claims to power depended very largely on their intellectual achievements, since most other forms of 'manly' and masterful enterprise were closed to them. Educated women, therefore, posed a threat to the very basis of masculinity". The role of men as fathers – in the development of the children as well as in keeping women outside the public arena – was at best an unspoken mere biological necessity. This erasure defined and continued hegemonic masculinity as a gendered role to be played out in the public arena – out in the open, away from the domestic sphere. 'Motherhood' might have

¹⁵ Vivekananda often addressed to his female disciples as 'Mother' or 'Sister', even while Bramen (2001) points out the sexual appeal of the monk to his Western female audiences.

¹⁶ Most of his female disciples who took up celibacy during his lifetime were Western.

¹⁷ In contemporary right wing Indian politics, the myth of the Muslim population explosion is often used to propagate the need of Hindu population preservation through reproduction.

been a claim to glory for women in itself, but ‘Fatherhood’ did not assign such glory to masculinity.

The value of domestic life was not completely ruled out by Vivekananda. He spoke at length about the valuable contribution that could be made by his *grihastha* disciples. However, in his imagination of the spiritual revival of Hindu India, Vivekananda had always imagined celibate Sannyasins superior to his domestic followers. Talking of the respective duties of a monk and a householder, Swamiji said (CWSV7, *Class notes*):

A Sannyasin should avoid the food, bedding, etc., which have been touched or used by householders, in order to *save himself* — not from hatred towards them — so long as he has not risen to the highest grade, that is, become a Paramahansa. A householder should salute him with “Namo Nârâyanâya”, and a Sannyasin should bless the former.

मेरुसर्षपयोर्यद्यत् सूर्यखद्योतयोरिव ।
सरित्सागरयोर्यद्यत् तथा मिक्षुगृहस्थयोः ॥

— Like the difference between the biggest mountain and a mustard-seed, between the sun and a glow-worm, between the ocean and a streamlet, is the wide gulf between a Sannyasin and a householder.

It was evident for his followers that the transitory nature of the world that Hindu philosophy espoused, valued work towards the purity of soul (atman) above one for social or familial uplift for men. In a discussion with a disciple about the future course of action necessary for improvement of Hindu society, Vivekananda urges him (CWSV7, *Conversations and Dialogues VII*, 1898):

Do something, whatever it be. Either go in for some business, or like us come to the path of real Sannyasa, “ — For one’s own liberation and for the good of the world.” The latter path is of course the best way there is. What good will it do to be a worthless householder? You have understood that everything in life is transitory: “ — Life is as unstable as the water on the lotus leaf”.

It is with this ideal in mind, that Vivekananda instituted rules (CWSV 7, *Conversations and Dialogues XIII*, 1899) in his newly formed Belur Math that restricted Sanyasins from meeting not only those from the opposite sex, but also married men:

When they are established in the ideal of Sannyasa, they will be able to mix on an equal footing with worldly men without any harm. But now if they are not kept within the barriers of strict rules, they will all go wrong. In order to attain to ideal Brahmacharya one has in the beginning to observe strict rules regarding chastity. Not only should one keep oneself strictly aloof from the least association with the opposite sex, but also give up the company of married people even.

Celibacy was symbolic capital unavailable to women. The loftiest spiritually ideal state of being was not a possibility for women in the imagination of Vivekananda. Thus, ideal femininity and ideal masculinity seem to be always in tension with each other in his works. The achievement of ideal femininity and masculinity together was a spiritual impossibility since motherhood and celibacy were in contradiction. God was referred to as 'He' in all Vivekananda's lectures, books and letters: the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent nature of the Advaita did not restrict assignation of a gender identity. It is perhaps important here to note that in Vivekananda's native language of Bengali, any form of gendering is not practiced. Hence, the gendered Almighty surely was a conscious evocation.



Figure 3: Swami Vivekananda at a picnic with members of South Pasadena's Women's Club. Source: Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood.

There is evidence to suggest that in his later years, after his visits to America and prolonged association with women whose place in society was beyond the domestic arena, Vivekananda was full of admiration for them (see Figure 3). In fact, his position on Western women was often contradictory, dependent on his audience and the context in which the issue was being discussed. In front of his Western audiences, Vivekananda was critical of Western women, contrasting them with the virtue of Indian women. Bramen (2001) and Roy (1998) both argue that Vivekananda needed the figure of the Western woman to validate his nationalist, masculine, heterosexual image of the Indian man. Roy writes, 'It is her very racial difference that guarantees Vivekananda's, and paradigmatically, the Indian male's Indianness and masculinity' (1998, p 122). For his heterosexual spiritual philosophy, Western women represented the other.

In a letter to Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya (CWSV7, *Letter to Mr. Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya*, 5 September 1894), his caustic view of English women in comparison to Americans is worth noting, not only for its Anglophobia, but also for its racial and hereditary assertions to beauty, and scathing comments on Indian women's repeated motherhood – the very same motherhood that he idealised:

Those emaciated Western women, looking like old dried-up fruit, whom you see in India, are English, and the English are an ugly race amongst the Europeans. In America, the best blood strains of Europe have been blended, and therefore, the American women are very beautiful. And how they take care of their beauty! Can a woman retain her beauty if she gives birth to children . . . every hour from her tenth year on? Damn nonsense! What a terrible sin! Even the most beautiful woman of our country will look like a black owl here. Yet it must be admitted that the women of the Punjab have very well-drawn features. Many of the American women are very well educated and put many a learned professor to shame; nor do they care for anyone's opinion. And as regards their virtues: what kindness, what noble thought and action!

In public, Vivekananda repeatedly juxtaposed the Western woman 'as fickle, masculine, vulgar and lose' (Banerjee 2012, p 64) in contrast to Indian women, whose constrained and regulated sexuality as wives and widows was admirable and necessary in order for Hindu men to achieve their moral strength.

Human and Non-human: Interpretations of Violence and Implications for Masculinity

On the question of violence in the Hindu religion, many scholars have interpreted its importance in terms of human and non-human subjects. In looking at the question of masculinity in Hindu texts and concepts, some attention then needs to be diverted to the question of violence and to what extent it is linked to men, manliness, or masculinity. Practitioners of Hinduism have debated extensively about the place of Ahimsa (nonviolence) within Hindu philosophy. In the absence of any canonical text on the issue (Doniger 2009), the debate has focussed on interpretations and traditions over the ages. Wendy Doniger (2009, p 25) has linked Hinduism's ambivalent approach towards sexuality and violence in Hinduism and pointed out the symbolic role of animals as a connector between the two:

Sanskrit texts usually regard women and hunted animals as primary objects of addiction, and the senses that cause addiction are likened to horses; animals often represent both women and the lower classes; the tension between sexuality and renunciation results in an ambivalence toward women as mothers and seductresses; and violence is first addressed largely in the form of violence against animals. Violence and tolerance also interact in attitudes not only to other religions but between upper and lower castes, between men and women, and between humans and animals.

The practice of violence can thus be looked at in a hierarchy, and justification of the use of violence depends on the identity of the subject. This observation finds validation to some extent in a close observation of Vivekananda's work, as we saw in the earlier sections, where we find the same ambivalence about caste practices and the position of women in society. Doniger's point about the representation of women and lower classes through animal imagery is crucial, and in Vivekananda's work the productive and reproductive tensions caused by these two respective identities are evident. In this section, I turn to his interpretation of the concept of ahimsa (non-violence) towards human and non-human forms.

The concept of ahimsa holds a prominent place in Hindu philosophy; Vivekananda defined it in his book, *Bhakti Yoga* (CWSV3, *Bhakti Yoga, Chapter X*) as follows:

Ahimsa, non-injury to others. This duty of non-injury is, so to speak, obligatory on us in relation to all beings. As with some, it does not simply mean the non-injuring of human beings and mercilessness towards the lower animals; nor, as with some others, does it mean the protecting of cats and dogs and feeding of ants with sugar — with liberty to injure brother-man in every horrible way!

The idea of non-violence popularly manifested in vegetarianism among the upper castes in India was criticised by him. His philosophical interpretation of ahimsa placed non-violence to humans over that to animals. Hence, in defining a true Bhakta (follower) (CWSV3, Bhakti Yoga, Chapter X), he argues:

The man who will mercilessly cheat widows and orphans and do the vilest deeds for money is worse than any brute even if he lives entirely on grass. The man whose heart never cherishes even the thought of injury to anyone, who rejoices at the prosperity of even his greatest enemy, that man is the Bhakta, he is the Yogi, he is the Guru of all, even though he lives every day of his life on the flesh of swine. Therefore we must always remember that external practices have value only as it helps to develop internal purity. It is better to have internal purity alone when minute attention to external observances is not practicable. But woe unto the man and woe unto the nation that forgets the real, internal, spiritual essentials of religion and mechanically clutches with death-like grasp at all external forms and never lets them go.

Vivekananda was against the path of vegetarianism followed by Vaishnavites, and stressed the need to discard such practices in order to build a nation that is physically strong. The influence of his Western travels and prolonged exposure to eating habits in Western societies might have contributed significantly to such a position, as also his own spiritual guru, Ramakrishna. When questioned by a disciple on vegetarianism, unlike Gandhi or Golwalkar, Vivekananda unequivocally suggested (CWSV 5, *From the Diary of a Disciple*, India wants not lecturing but work) fish and meat:

What we want now is an immense awakening of Râjasika energy, for the whole country is wrapped in the shroud of Tamas. The people of this land must be fed and clothed — must be awakened — must be made more fully active. Otherwise they will become inert, as inert as trees and stones. So, I say, eat large quantities of fish and meat, my boy!

This dissociation of masculinity from culinary restrictions, I argue, has made Vivekananda more acceptable to the middle classes in contemporary India. The Ramakrishna Mission disciples still follow this tradition and joining the organisation does not include vegetarianism as a requirement, unlike most other prominent Hindu religious organisations, like the Arya Samaj or Vaishnavite sects like Gaudiya Mission. One of Vivekananda's most quoted sayings is his recommendation of the trio of beef, biceps and Bhagavad Gita for an invigorated youth (Banerjee 2012, Sharma 2013). It is also remarkable because around 1893, when Vivekananda was undertaking his journey to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, there was a controversy around killing of cows in India (Doniger 2014). This can be seen as his attempt to move away from the Vaishnavites on the one hand, but also the orthodox Brahmin Hindus on the other. His position on beef eating is of extreme significance in contemporary times, and will be elaborated further in later chapters. However, it is worth noting here that their differing positions on vegetarianism is a significant point of difference between Vivekananda, Golwalkar and Gandhi's visions of the future India – and is an issue which remains specially politically relevant today in the wake of 'beef lynchings' across the country (Nair 2017).

While Vivekananda was going through his spiritual and philosophical training in Calcutta, the Indian National Congress was formed in Bombay in 1885. With professed moderate liberal political aspirations, it was ridiculed by Vivekananda for its lack of any substantial strength (CWSV7, Conversations and Dialogues VII, 1898):

You have not the capacity to manufacture a needle, and you dare to criticise the English! Fools! Sit at their feet and learn from them the arts, industries, and the practicality necessary for the struggle for existence. You will be esteemed once more when you will become fit. Then they too will pay heed to your words. Without the necessary preparation, what will mere shouting in the Congress avail?

His disavowal of the work of Congress was also solidifying a political position that considered muscular strength as the necessary precondition for any fruitful negotiations. This muscular strength was not only physical, but as the above quote shows, also financial. What Vivekananda focuses on is the value of symbolic capital and economic capital in order to influence the field. The valour-violence dynamic was of paramount importance for the creation of a rejuvenated nation in Vivekananda's political aspiration. In fact, scholars like Das Gupta (1998) have also read him as an anarchist in his rejection of the political power

of the British as inspired by the philosophical notion of Dharma (CWSV5: p. 289): “The very word ‘Sannyasin’ means the divine outlaw and since ‘it is freedom alone that is desirable ...it is not law that we want but ability to break law. We want to be outlaws’”.

It is crucial to remember that Golwalkar, the inspiration and leader behind the RSS, was an ardent follower of Vivekananda. It is Vivekananda’s muscular nationalism that inspired him into creating the daily rituals of physical exercise that is the feature of every RSS Shakh. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Manifestoes mention ‘the spiritual nationalism expounded by Swami Vivekananda’ (Banerjee 2007, p 318), and since the BJP came to power in 2014, they have been celebrating his birthday as International Youth Day. It is safe to say that the masculine, virile, and heteronormative ideology of Vivekananda is alive and well, and continues to influence Indian national politics right up to the present.

Conclusion

Lest one thinks that this idea of recovering masculinity was in response to colonialism, researchers like Hansen (1996) have already shown extensively the continuation of these ideas ‘at the heart of the quest for national strength and national self-confidence’ (Hansen 1996, p 138) long after Indian independence. As contemporary postcolonial globalised Indian society continues to be saturated with violent communal imaginations of masculinity, Vivekananda’s ideas are also regaining popularity. His focus on virile masculinity and Vedantic philosophy has been able to attract the Hindu right wing due to its ability to continue the status quo that benefits the Hindu upper caste. Beckerlegge (2010) shows how Vivekananda continues to directly inspire organisations such as the Vivekananda Kendra, which is also influenced by both the RSS and Vivekananda. Sharma (2013) shows that the distance between Vivekananda’s rejuvenated Hinduism and extremist Hindutva is not as far as it is claimed by the followers of the Ramakrishna Mission. On the topic of the Somnath Temple, for example, Vivekananda made his stance on forced Hinduisation amply clear: ‘We took this and others over and re-Hinduised them. We shall have to do many things like that yet’ (in Sharma 2013, p xiii). This subtle ‘othering’ of non-Hindu religious communities, along with his silence on marginalised communities such as the lower castes, have proven Vivekananda’s ideology to be Hindu, upper caste and heteronormative. This is also the population group from which he derives most of his followers to this day.

Contemporary post-secular debates have recently brought into focus the intense and longstanding relation between religion and politics globally. In reading Vivekananda's work from a Bourdieusian feminist standpoint, critique of the Marxist position of political use of religious concepts put forth by King (1999, p 13) is reinforced.

... the Marxian-inspired claim that the Hindu doctrine of karma is promulgated by élite brahmins in order to justify caste divisions, control the masses and thus maintain their own authority. This approach presupposes that religion and politics can, and indeed should, be distinguished and that the political dimension is the more fundamental of the two. The political meta-discourse is thus given ultimate explanatory status, explaining what has been occluded by religious discourse.

Vivekananda's idea of masculinity privileges spirituality and Hindu scriptural knowledge above martial masculinity as a way of countering the colonial accusations of effeminacy. Aspirations to both racial equality and religious equality could thus be voiced in this claim of masculinity as a restrained practice of spirituality. However, the inherent caste and gender hierarchy that formed the basis of such masculinity meant obliteration of populations who were at the bottom of this structural hierarchy from the political sphere as active agents. Though the Hindu in Vivekananda's ideation will regenerate his virile masculinity, he will conquer through his spirituality; a spirituality that was limited in access to upper caste men, and out of bounds for women, lower castes and dalits, not to mention followers of other religions in India. It also masked other forms of Hinduism like Vaishnavism (Sharma 2013, Sarkar 1997). Both Vivekananda and Golwalkar thought non-violent practices and sects like Vaishnavites were hindering Hindu men from achieving true manliness. Using Bourdieusian terminology, it can be said that Vivekananda aimed to use the field of religion to change the symbolic capital garnered through masculinity in order to secure Hindu domination. There should be no doubt as to the nature of the political group¹⁸ on behalf of whom he was making this clarion call; it was Hindu, male, upper caste, and decidedly hetero-sexual in nature. Vivekananda continues to be politically relevant, and his use of Hindu concepts, carefully even if arbitrarily chosen, were but instruments in his political quest of Hindu supremacy. The next chapter will look at Vivekananda's influence on Golwalkar and his positions on masculinity and violence inspired by religion in greater detail.

¹⁸ Vivekananda's use of the words *desh* (i.e. nation), *Hindu* (religion), and *samaj* (i.e. society/community) interchangeably reflected his subconscious conflation of all three.

6.

Masculinity, Nationalism, and the Necessity of the ‘Other’: M. S. Golwalkar’s Legacy in RSS

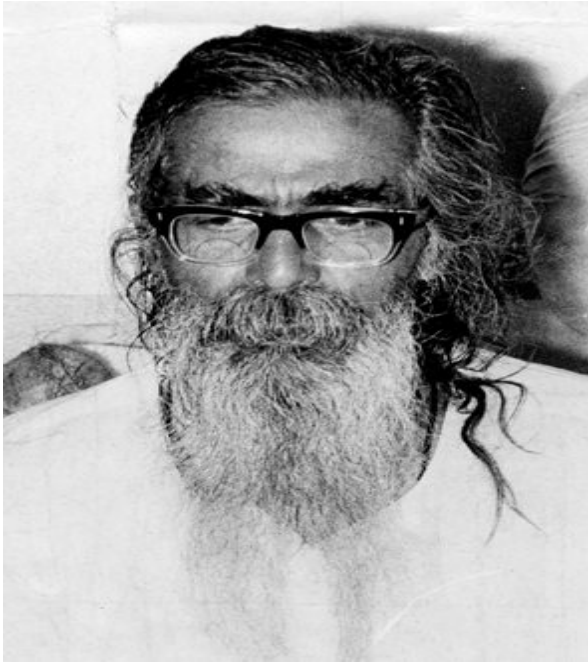


Figure 4: Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar.

Let us not become ‘careerists’ hankering after easy money, less effort and more comfort. Such unmanliness ill behoves the educated young men of a land, which has produced a Ramatirtha and a Vidyasagar. Let us build our life on those inspiring models blending the spirit of service with self-respect and humility with self-confidence. All our latent virtues and energies will then blossom into a beautiful and fragrant flower of heroic manhood.

— Golwalkar (1966)

The influence of Golwalkar on hegemonic masculinity in India today can hardly be overemphasized. M. S. Golwalkar was the most influential Sarsanghchalak (supreme leader) of the RSS, an organisation which currently boasts a follower base exceeding six million. To understand the linkages between Golwalkar, RSS, and the Hindu nationalist masculinity that this organisation perpetuates, this chapter will closely analyse the ideological teachings of Golwalkar during his period as Sarsanghchalak, 1940-1973¹. The chapter will also explore the influence of Hindu religious texts and concepts on his ideas around masculinity and violence, particularly the necessity of violence in expressions of masculinity.

The RSS has kept its tactical focus on the cultural arena of society, and though in recent years it has motivated its affiliate organizations into more political participation (Chaudhury 2016), its principal focus remains the cultural embedding of the concept of *Hindu rashtra*

¹ Since he perceived his karma as being tied to the organisation (Sharma 2007), the ideological teachings of Golwalkar and the works of the organisations are enmeshed together. In this chapter, I enquire into both.

throughout the country through its Shakhshas. Their effort, in Bourdieusian terms, has been to shift the habitus of the field of politics from a secular to a militant Hindutva notion of nation. This symbolic shift has been strived for through a particular realignment of the notion of masculinity. It is interesting to note how the RSS has aspired to appeal to the masculinity (or the lack thereof) of Hindu men in order to create the 'Self' in their politics of nationhood. The masculinity of Hindu men has been a symbolic image repeatedly shown under threat, specifically by the virile masculinity of Muslim men (Anand 2007).

The symbolic capital and cultural capital associated with Hindu religious practices and Hindu ways of life are ways in which the Hindu nationalists define nationhood (Smyth 1972). In Bourdieusian terms, this symbolic capital derives not only from the field of religion, but from the field of culture as well. The aim of Golwalkar's teaching is thus to create a habitus that will ensure the sustenance of this Hindu symbolic capital and its dominance over all others. In this he differed from the vision of Vivekananda, which was based upon a spiritual reawakening of the Hindu religion and Hindu men. Vivekananda did not, however, provide a concrete political shape and hierarchy in terms of citizenship in his teachings. In the light of this observation, let us remember one of Golwalkar's most quoted lines about the position of non-Hindu populations in his vision of *Akhand Bharat* (undivided India) (Golwalkar 1947, p 55-56):

[They] must either adopt Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion... and give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age long traditions... or may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges... not even citizen's rights.

This exclusivist view of nationality, as Smyth (1972) called it, has been brought into practice by the post 2014 BJP government in India (more discussion on this in Chapter 8). Gyanendra Pandey (1993, p. 252) defines this form of Hindu nationalism as 'upper-caste racism', bringing to light the ideological dependence on a racist and casteist hierarchy exemplified by it. Race is considered by Golwalkar as 'the important ingredient of a nation' (Golwalkar 1947, p 37), and the Hindu nationalist claims of an Aryan lineage are tied to the masculine imagination of their men, with clear influence of the fascist ideologies of Hitler and Mussolini being evident here.

The second section of this chapter will specifically focus on Golwalkar's interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, and his divergence from that of Vivekananda. Golwalkar's interpretation of dharma and karma, decisively shaped by the protective duty one has towards the country as the mother figure, was imagined as the assertion of protectionist, virulent heteronormative masculinity. The third and fourth section of this chapter details this imagination in his writings. This assertion also demarcates the primary societal role played by men in the Hindu nation of his imagination. The fifth section leads further into this and investigates the amalgamation of the religious concept of Brahmacharya from Hinduism with Islamic martial prowess to create the position of the pracharak within the RSS. The importance invested in celibacy for this role furthers the implied sexual threat embodied by women. In order to truly serve the nation, the ideal man in the role of the pracharak needs to divest himself of all sexual and familial connections – in congruence with the visions of Vivekananda. The ideation of such a masculinity also needed the Muslim man as its 'Other' – masculinity of the Hindu nation was imagined by Golwalkar in relation to the Muslim man, and not the Hindu woman. In other words, his work bases itself on the Hindu masculinity/Muslim masculinity dichotomy rather than the gender binary, and makes a study of his work crucial in the context of masculinity studies. This also leads to another central element of his political ideology in terms of the role envisaged for Hindu women in Golwalkar's ideology, which will be discussed in the later sections of this chapter.

Golwalkar's Gita, Vivekananda's Gita

The time period that Golwalkar spent at the Sargacchi Ashram of Ramakrishna Mission under the guidance of Swami Akhandananda² had a lasting influence on him. Despite being influenced by Swami Vivekananda, Golwalkar deviates from the path of Hindu spiritual conquest of the world and focuses on the creation and preservation of Akhand Bharat from the Muslim 'other'. In 1936, he left his legal practice and took the sudden decision to join the Ramakrishna Mission for spiritual initiation by Swami Akhandananda, and was given *deeksha*³ on 13 January 1937 (Sharma 2007, p xvi). Less than a month after, on 7 February, Akhandananda passed away, and by the end of March, Golwalkar was back in Nagpur (*ibid*).

² Swami Akhandananda (1864-1937) was the third president of the Ramakrishna Mission (1925-1937). A direct disciple of Ramakrishna along with Vivekananda, he was considered close to Vivekananda and took the vow of Sanyas in his presence at the Baranagar Math in 1890. For more on Akhandananda, see *The Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna* (1943) and *The Call of the Spirit: Conversations with Swami Akhandananda* (1984).

³ *Deeksha* means acceptance as a spiritual follower by the Guru and initiation into the brotherhood.

Though the amount of time he spent with his Guru was less than a month, the ideological influence of the Mission was longstanding. The figure of Akhandananda is often subsumed under the aura of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in the Mission legacy, but his differences with Vivekananda's school of thought is later reflected in the works of Golwalkar and RSS.

Discipline, physical strength, valour, and courage compose the basic ideological underpinnings of the RSS (Banerjee 2006). However, there is a decisive shift of importance from the Mahabharata (of which the Bhagavad Gita is a part) to the Ramayana when one compares Golwalkar's teachings with that of Vivekananda. While the warrior image of Krishna repeatedly finds mention in the works of Vivekananda, the RSS shifts its focus to the warrior Rama, starting from the times of Golwalkar. Physical training, exercises, and drills were introduced from the very first day of the RSS (Timeline, www.rss.org). The inspiration behind the formation of muscular, virile Hindu men was not the spiritual conquest of the world as Vivekananda envisaged, but the political conquest of the Indian subcontinent from foreign rulers – the Muslims. The creation of *Ramrajya* – a political utopia with Hindu cultural, religious and political identity is the ultimate goal of the organisation. This indicates a decisive shift from the field of religion of Vivekananda to the field of politics by Golwalkar.

Interpretation of the Gita also went through subtle changes as a consequence of this Bourdieusian change of field. The influence of the Bhagavad Gita is prominent in the ideation of the position of pracharak in RSS ideology. The pracharak has a significant role in the institutional conceptualisation of RSS. A pracharak is a full time RSS worker and organiser. He is expected to remain unmarried and celibate, and lead an ascetic lifestyle while working on furthering the vision of the organisation. This is how one RSS pracharak described his vows:

he should take a vow of celibacy, which ensures he will remain married only to the movement. He sleeps in dormitories in the network of rest-houses and centres the RSS maintains up and down the country. He cannot drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or eat meat. His whole existence is bound up with the cause (Luce 2006, p 155).

Jaffrelot (1993, p 41) has pointed out the convergence of the concept of karma yoga and asceticism in the role of the pracharak:

They [pracharaks] live an austere life of total devotion to the cause, one which professes to be a form of karma yoga, the yoga of action. While karma yoga is expounded in the Bhagavad Gita, where it is described as a matter of inner sacrifice (action, even when it is violent, can constitute a means of renunciation when it is undertaken without regard to personal advantage and in the service of Dharma)... In the RSS, one of the usual ways of honouring pracharaks when they die has been to designate them as Karma Yogis.

Jaffrelot attributes the adoption of karma yoga to the influence of Bengali revolutionary societies like the Anushilan Samiti on Hegdewar⁴. While this might be so, it is my contention that its continuation is, at least partially, a result of Vivekananda's influence on Golwalkar. The previous chapter discussed in detail Vivekananda's interpretation of karma yoga. Vivekananda imagined the need of the hour as service to the nation and society – through education, famine relief, health and other social services. However, the concept of karma yoga took a more militant interpretation from Golwalkar. Thus, in a response to the critique of the RSS being fanatical, he says (Golwalkar 1966, Chapter 35):

...we feel that there are no gradations in *desha-bhakti*, i.e., patriotism. *Bhakti* is self-surrender, it is dedicating oneself completely and unreservedly without any thought of the self. Real devotion can never be half-way. But it seems some people cannot bear this full-blooded spirit of patriotism. It may be too hot for them. Probably they require gradations in patriotism - warm, lukewarm, and cold! Those who dare to drink to the full the cup of devotion need not be afraid or misled by such words as 'fanatical'. Let us challengingly say, "Yes, we are building that intense white heat of patriotism".

Violence is comprehensible, if not necessary in the service of the nation. This response was also a critique of the path of ahimsa (non-violence) propagated by Gandhi at the time, which was influenced by the Hindu religious idea of Bhakti. In putting the path of *desha-bhakti* further ahead, Golwalkar was both denouncing the political path promoted by Gandhi and the non-violent aspects of Hinduism, which in his opinion was hindering Hindu men from achieving true manliness. It is also a prime example of the amalgamation of the political and the religious fields in his works. Using religious symbols, he justifies use of violence for political protection of Hindu dominance, in service of the country as the imagined 'Mother'. In

⁴ "The members of the Anushilan Samiti took an oath of allegiance to the organisation before an image of Kali, with the Bhagavad Gita in one hand and a revolver in the other, the presence of the goddess serving as a reminder that the movement drew its ethic of violence partly from the ritual of the Shakta sect" (Jaffrelot 1993, p 35). Hegdewar was a member of the Samiti during the time he spent in Calcutta.

erasing the divide between the political and the religious, Golwalkar successfully creates an alternative political sphere that appeals to the majority of landed, upper caste Hindus disillusioned with Gandhi's political moves during the 1930s and 1940s⁵. Anderson (1972) discusses at length the daily practice of physical exercises at every RSS shakha during Golwalkar's leadership, a practice which continues to this day. The use of weapons was also a common practice, especially in the shakhas in Punjab in the 1940s⁶.



Figure 5: Guru Golwalkar (second from left), Deendayal Upadhyay (fourth from left) and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (extreme right). Photo was taken in Mathura during Goraksha movement in 1965.

Golwalkar and Vivekananda also held significantly different positions on the practice of vegetarianism. Golwalkar was a strict practitioner of vegetarianism himself, and it is also a path followed by members of the organisation⁷. The requirement of vegetarianism in RSS is surprising, since Golwalkar himself was not required by his vows to follow vegetarianism according to the rules of the Ramakrishna Mission. While Vivekananda encouraged beef-eating, Golwalkar was an active participant in the Goraksha (cow protection) movement in the 1960s (see Figure 5). This is a significant departure – Vivekananda considered meat eating

⁵ For more on this, see Anderson (1972).

⁶ Writing in 1972, Anderson explains how RSS was only one of the organisations gathering arms since, in the wake of the Partition, Sikh, Muslim, as well as Hindu communities were also stockpiling weapons in anticipation of riots, which were a frequent occurrence. Recent works by scholars and investigative journalists have confirmed that this practice too continues to the present time, as will be discussed in detail in chapter eight.

⁷ In a letter to his friend Telang written on 28 February 1929, he talks about the dilemma he was in about eating an egg each day to recover his health (SGS6, p.178).

as crucial for revival of the physical strength of Hindu men. In RSS, even though physical exercise is a crucial part of every Shakra's daily routine, animal sources of protein are not seen as necessary for garnering muscular strength. The interesting position of meat eating as a symbol in the political and religious fields in India has been pointed out by Cunningham (2007, p 21):

By the time Babur conquered Hindustan, vegetarianism had become a powerful statement of one's position in Indian society. Brahmans, who as the priestly caste had once performed rites of sacrifice, were now firmly vegetarian. They condemned meat because it heightened the passions and encouraged the virile, animal side of human nature. Orthodox Brahmans avoided all foods that were thought to stimulate the passions (which were known as *rajasic*). These included meat, onions, and garlic. Instead, they made a virtue of their light, nutritious, and easily digestible, vegetarian (*sattvic*) diet that enabled their bodies to channel the energy that would otherwise have been used to digest food into the improvement of the mind. Vegetarianism introduced a new principle into the Indian social hierarchy. Unlike political power (which was based on physical strength and violence, sustained by an impure diet rich in meat), religious power was predicated on the principles of purity symbolized by vegetarianism. This conveniently placed the now strictly vegetarian Brahmans firmly at the top of the social pile.

Edward Luce (2006) has pointed out that in its formative years, the RSS was mostly headed by upper caste men from scientific backgrounds, whereas Congress was mostly led by lawyers and journalists (p 152). This upper caste leadership might also have influenced the tilt towards vegetarianism. M. S. Golwalkar was no exception – before joining the RSS as a full time worker, he was a zoologist. The scientific background explains the urge in RSS to prove Hindu supremacy through scientific concepts. This can explain the attempt of RSS to base its divisive ideology on scientific theories – eugenics and racial hierarchy often found common space in Golwalkar's lectures. In a lecture given in Kerala to a group of students in the context of breeding experiments, for example, he spoke about the crucial position eugenics might take in the caste system and in redefining the new age's social hierarchy (Golwalkar 1961, p 5):

Today experiments in cross-breeding are made only on animals. But the courage to make such experiments on human beings is not shown even by the so-called modern scientist of today. If some human cross-breeding is seen today it is the result not of scientific

experiments but of carnal lust. Now let us see the experiments our ancestors made in this sphere. In an effort to better the human species through cross-breeding the Namboodri Brahmanas of the North were settled in Kerala and a rule was laid down that the eldest son of a Namboodri family could marry only the daughter of Vaishya, Kashtriya or Shudra communities of Kerala. Another still more courageous rule was that the first off-spring of a married woman of any class must be fathered by a Namboodri Brahman and then she could beget children by her husband. Today this experiment will be called adultery but it was not so, as it was limited to the first child.

The above statement is crucial for elucidating Golwalkar's opinions on caste and race, as well as gender. In supporting the forced sexual union of a married woman with a Namboodiri Brahmin without any concern for the sexual autonomy of the women, Golwalkar was supporting a misogynist, patriarchal and casteist practice, which upheld the oppressive position of Brahmins in Indian society. The following sections will explore further how this racist, casteist, and communal social hierarchy was ratified using Hindu religious texts and concepts.

Seva as Karma, Violence as Dharma?

The idea of seva (organised service to humanity) (Beckerlegge 2004) is the conceptual connector between karma and dharma for both Golwalkar and Vivekananda. Vivekananda stressed the role of the Sanyasi as not spiritual renunciation, but social activism through service of humanity. Borrowing from Hindu traditions of caring for the guru and other devotees as part of worship, Vivekananda expanded the realm to humanity in its entirety (CWSV3, Address at the Rameswaram Temple on Real Worship)⁸. He merged renunciation of domestic life with social activism to create the public image of the Hindu male figure of the Sanyasi, who was the culmination of spirituality, religious knowledge, and commitment to social welfare. Beckerlegge (2000) considers this transformation from asceticism to social activism as one of the main reasons behind the Ramakrishna movement's place in the rise of modern Hindu social activism. There is an unnervingly close connection between this

⁸ *Bobu rupe sommu kbe tomar/ Chhadi kotha kbujicho ishwar,/ Jibe prem kore jei jon,/ sei jon sebiche ishwar* remains one of the most translated, popularised and oft-quoted words of Vivekananda in Bengali. Roughly translated in English, it means "In myriad forms in front of you/But where do you still look for God/One who loves living beings/Is the one who serves God".

Hindu social activism and Hindutva ideology, as Golwalkar's adoption of it in the RSS clearly shows.



Figure 6: Mother India. Source: *Huffington Post*, 2016.

Swami Akhandananda spoke about Vivekananda's patriotism as 'identification of the Self with the country... he was absorbed in the thought of the country and his countrymen – their past, present and future' (*The Call of the Spirit*, p 99). Golwalkar appropriated Vivekananda's conception of *seva*, and conceptualised the idea of 'Positive Hinduism' (Beckerlegge 2004, p 49). For Golwalkar, the karma of every Hindu was the service of the Hindu nation, and the dharma was to protect the Hindu nation from outsiders. The humanity in Vivekananda's vision is narrowed to 'Hindus' in Golwalkar's definition of karma, thus religiously coding the subjects of such service. In order to understand this protectionist definition of dharma, one needs to first understand the heteronormative gendered conceptualisation of Bharat Mata or Mother India (see Figure 6). He imagined the country as 'Mother India', and this image of the mother figure extends the confines of the cartographic boundaries of India to coincide with the entirety of South Asia⁹. These imageries could be found in various RSS calendars, websites, proselytizing pamphlets, and

⁹ The image of Mother India has historically gone through multiple transformations; for more on its evolution, see Kovacs (2004), Ramaswamy (2001, 2010), and Thapar-Bjorkert and Ryan (2002) among others. For a pictorial history of 65 different cultural and geographical representations of Bharat Mata, see <http://probinglens.com/in-pictures-65-faces-of-bharat-mata/>.

books. Given its prime position in the RSS ideological imagery, it needs to be discussed in some detail.

The image of Mother India, in almost all its various forms, resembles the idol of Goddess Durga. Even though the initial painting of Bharat Mata by Abanindranath Tagore in 1905 showed her in ascetic clothing, the Bharat Mata of RSS is bejewelled and crowned and always riding a lion. Even more significant is the flag that she carries – it is not the national flag of India as would be expected from a graphic representation of the nation, but rather the saffron flag of RSS¹⁰. The saffron flag replaces the trident held by Goddess Durga, both unequivocally symbolising Hindu vigour. This subtle manifestation of Hindu imagery for a country with pronounced secular credentials continues long after India's independence and to this day. The ultimate aim of the Hindu Rashtra envisaged by Golwalkar was to undo Partition and recreate *Akhand Bharat* - undivided India as it was before independence from the British. As Golwalkar wrote in *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966, p 88): 'At times, political boundaries undergo some changes on account of political impacts and the whimsical fortunes of war. But it can never mean that the portions we have lost politically are not parts of our motherland at all'.

In a teleological narration or rewriting of history, Golwalkar repeatedly draws the picture of a nation struggling to protect itself from outsiders for centuries. Chakraborty (2011b, p) points out that

... this teleological narration did not end with the achievement of Independence and the exit of the British colonisers. The project of a battle against the outsiders continues in his version of history with the Muslims as the others, even when they are citizens of the country. This othering of Muslims (as the biggest minority group, but also Christians) serves two purposes: it continues the sense of crisis, while at the same time appealing to the nascent masculinity of Hindu men to respond to this crisis. The image of the emasculated Hindu man and the Hindu woman under constant threat is necessary in order to solidify the notion of 'self' as well as that of the 'other'.

In representing the country as the mother figure also lies the masculine protectionism that is called forth for the protection of the 'mother'. The country, just like a Hindu mother,

¹⁰ The RSS flag, to which every member of the RSS owes their allegiance, is inspired by the flag used by Shivaji (Anderson 1972).

seeks protection from her sons – the image is thus a call to Hindu men to bring forth their masculine strength, virility, and protectionism in service of the nation. Women are silent, passive and obedient subjects who are not part of this political project¹¹. The Partition of the physiological boundaries of Akhand Bharat is thus a physical blow to the Mother – and the masculine strength of Hindu men is necessary in order to restore her to her former glory. Hence, in reference to the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, Golwalkar (1966) writes:

Our valiant jawans have given the lie direct to that mischievous propaganda and proved that every son of the soil inherits the blood of those peerless ancestors. They have projected before the world the real mighty image of Bharat Mata with Her millions of arms raised to strike down evil forces on the face of the earth (p 244).

Thus, the figure of the Bharat Mata by the very cartographical imagination is a reminder of partition and solidifies Muslims as the Other in the Hindu imagination. This cartographic anxiety is at the root of the sustenance of Golwalkar's ideology.

Defensive Violence, Masculinity, and the Muslim Other

The RSS has its own students' and teachers' organisations, as well as its women's wing. Its affiliates have spawned myriad sub-affiliates: trade unions, youth and women's organisations, charitable bodies, associations of religious leaders, networks of temples, cells in the army and media, cultural organisations, entertainment and leisure industries. Together, they bite deep into diverse social levels and into the everyday with formal organisations as well as with informal personal contacts in neighbourhoods, workplaces and kin groups: saturating each with hatred against religious minorities.

– Tanika Sarkar (2018, p 119).

This network mentioned by Sarkar has its roots in the early twentieth century. In an imagination fuelled by a sense of perpetual crisis, the political strategies of Congress during the early twentieth century seemed to be far from adequate for many sections of Hindus even within the Congress party, which led to the formation of the RSS. The numerous communal riots that the country witnessed between Hindus and Muslims during the 1920s and 1930s further exacerbated such anxieties. Gandhi's teachings of ahimsa (which I will

¹¹ However, recent works by scholars like Tanika Sarkar (2018) has shown how organisations like Durga Vahini and Rashtriya Sevika Samiti are training their women to perform violent masculinities, in a reversal of gendered roles ascribed to women in Golwalkar's vision.

discuss in more detail in the next chapter) were seen as further weakening and feminizing the already-threatened Hindu community (Anderson 1972, Jaffrelot 1993, Pandey 1993). Gandhi antagonised many upper class patrons of the Congress, who went on to join the RSS. His exposition on Hinduism influenced by Bhakti excluded many Brahmanical values. The popularity of the non-violent, feminine image of Gandhi seemed to promise further emasculation of Brahmins. Golwalkar's (2000) opinion reflected what he felt was a political bias against Hindus: "Whenever the Muslims slaughtered cows to insult Hindu feelings, the Hindus were told that it was the religious right of Muslims and that, being tolerant to other religions, they should not object it [*sic*]. Although there is not a word of sanction in Quran [*sic*] for cow slaughter."

Apart from Golwalkar's written works, another important source on his influence on RSS ideology is a collection of books available across varied websites and publications by the supporters of RSS, the archive maintained by the official website of RSS being the most vital source. These collections of books typically carry a picture of Golwalkar on their covers (see for example Figure 7 below), but the text inside is loosely structured and expanded on Golwalkar's ideology, with a few quotations strewn throughout. Both sources have been used in this chapter, since these books play a crucial ideological role among the followers. Such texts are mostly on politically contentious issues, such as the idea of a Hindu nation, Muslims, Christians and his ideas on women. Though mediocre, eulogistic and unoriginal in nature, they are nonetheless important, because in them one can get an insight into the interpretations of his ideas among his followers, and also the direction his karmic child RSS is taking. These books throw light on what is believed to be the path shown by Golwalkar to his followers – they are proof of the discursive transformations Golwalkar's ideas underwent since his demise.

The consolidation of the Muslim community as the most potent threat to the continuation of a Hindu nation is repeatedly affirmed in these hagiographic treatises. Rakesh Sinha's undated book found on the website of RSS and most other related online right wing networks, cites Golwalkar (2000, p 178) to singularly place the blame for partition on Muslims:

The Muslim desire, growing ever since they stepped on this land some twelve hundreds years ago, to convert and enslave the entire country could not bear fruit, in spite of their political domination for several centuries. In the coming of the British they found an opportunity to

fulfil their desire. They played their card shrewdly... and ultimately succeeded in browbeating our leadership into panicky surrender before their sinful demand of Partition... Naked fact remains that an aggressive Muslim state has been carved out of our Motherland.

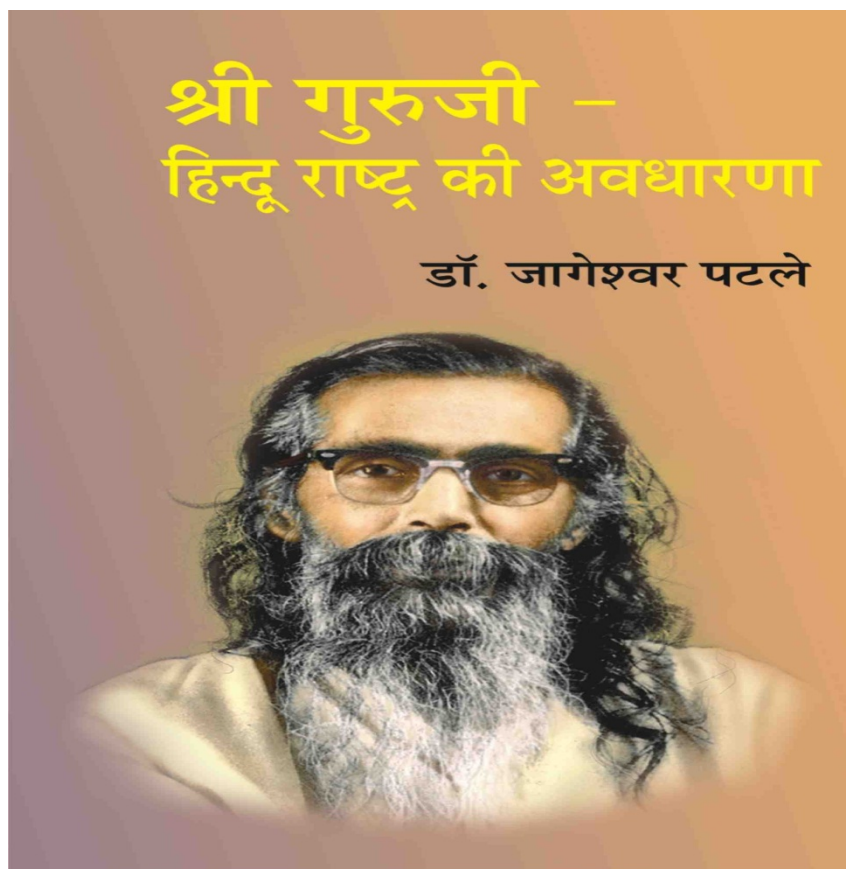


Figure 7: Cover art of *Sri Gurujī: Conception of a Hindu State* by Dr Jageshwar Patle.

The issue of Muslims in the Indian socio-political sphere enjoy a central space in most of these works. The importance of othering of Muslims can be understood when one looks closely at the ideological connections between Hegdewar and Golwalkar's ideology with that of Italian and German fascist ideologies in Europe in the early twentieth century. Both Golwalkar and Hedgewar were immensely inspired and impressed with the fascist ideologies (Deo 2016), and RSS leaders 'also travelled to Italy and Germany to see what great advances the two nations had then made' (Ahmad 2005, p 3). Jaffrelot (1996, p. 53-64) established that Golwalkar was inspired by racist German writers such as Bluntschli, Gettel, and Burgers, whom he quotes extensively in *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (Chapter II)¹². This influence becomes evident in the same text (quoted in Islam 2006, p 171), when he writes:

¹² For archival research into the influence of Italian and German fascist ideologies on Hindu nationalism in the 1930s, see Casolari (2000).

Germany has shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by... From this standpoint sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations (i.e., Germany), the foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture; i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-old traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less preferential treatment, not even citizens' rights.

Golwalkar described himself as an expert on war due to his personal participation in violence during the Hindu-Muslim riots in Nagpur in 1927 (Golwalkar 2006, 225-227). It is of importance to note his consideration of a communal riot as an act of war. Golwalkar portrays the use of violence against Muslims as part of a war continuing for centuries that has been waged by Muslims against Hindusthan: 'Ever since that evil day, when Moslems first landed in Hindusthan, right upto [*sic*] the present moment the Hindu Nation has been gallantly fighting on to shake off the despoilers...the war goes on and has not been decided yet' (Golwalkar 1947, p 12).

This alienates Muslims as non-Indians, as well as proves them to be perpetual invaders whose violent tactics have to be emulated if they are to be defeated. This is one of the three strategies of RSS that Jaffrelot (1993, p 8) identified:

Three strategies - the formation of an ideological identity through a strategy of stigmatisation and emulation that capitalised on feelings of vulnerability, the instrumentalist strategy of ethno-religious mobilisation, and a specific pattern of local implantation - assumed a definite shape between the 1920s and the 1950s and were the main elements in the Hindu nationalist quest for power.

In Golwalkar's ideology, the war against Muslims that started with the arrival of central Asian invaders centuries ago is ongoing. Thus, every major political event post the arrival of Muslims is part of a larger war to protect Bharat Mata from the clutches of Muslims. Thus, his view of the Partition of India by the British was 'Hindus were defeated at the hands of

Muslims in 1947' (Golwalkar 1966, p 152). The marked erasure of all Muslim and female national scholars, intelligentsia and leaders from his narrative of laudation was a form of symbolic violence that was inflicted not only on these two sections of the populations. While Golwalkar's lectures and public addresses were rife with adulation for upper caste violent heroes like Shivaji, lower castes, women, and other religious communities find only tertiary mention. This sustained form of symbolic violence erases historic roles of these communities and consolidates them to a secondary role in the national imagination.

A discussion on Golwalkar's position on violence will remain incomplete without a mention of Gandhi. Gandhi's declarations of non-violence were criticized by Golwalkar's RSS as furthering the same effeminate principles that had led the Hindu nation to deterioration. His position on the Muslim claim for separate electorates was seen as appeasing, and his insistence on paying Pakistan reparations during partition was seen as positively harmful for the Hindu nation. Negation of Gandhi's principle of ahimsa was thus, one of the central motivations behind the formation and continuation of RSS before and after India's independence. Gandhi was assassinated by a former RSS follower, Nathuram Godse. Following the assassination, the newly formed government of India moved swiftly to ban the RSS, and Golwalkar was imprisoned from February 1948 to July 1949, accused of playing a role in the assassination. The incident left its mark on the history of the organisation, and RSS has denied its involvement with Godse ever since¹³. Most scholars have understood RSS's position on Gandhi in relation to the organisation's position on Muslims. However, a critical re-assessment of this understanding in relation to their position on Hindu masculinity is still called for.

Pandey (1993) has pointed out the effort evident in Golwalkar's writings of all social and political reform during the colonial period as effort towards the creation of a Hindu nation. Gandhi was prey to this as well, and Golwalkar expressed his admiration of Gandhi's efforts as that of a 'Hindu worker' (Golwalkar 1947, p. 16–17): '... the day's notaries - M. Gandhi and others, all Hindu workers, rightly conceiving the national future or not, but all sincerely and sternly fighting the foe. Surely the Hindu Nation is not conquered'. Gandhi's conception of the national future may be in doubt, but his efforts to 'fight against the foe' (i.e. Muslims) is not. This appropriation of Gandhi's anti-communal politics during the pre-Independence

¹³ However, after the election of BJP to form a national government in 2014, Godse has been celebrated across the country by the various subsidiary organisations of RSS.

years towards an anti-Muslim rhetoric also brings into question the pliability of the Mahatma's politics of non-violence. Also notice the erasure of the long history of Muslim participation in the anti-colonial struggle and Muslim participation in the imagination of the future nation. For, '[t]o a Hindu... the ideal is *Vajradapi kathorani, mruduni kusumadapi*. He is softer than a petal in promoting brotherliness and amicable friendship, but can become harder than a diamond when the other person turns down his hand of fraternity and prepares to strike him' (Golwalkar 1966, p 244).

As Nandini Deo (2016, p 41) describes, '[t]he Hindu nation was treated as a matter of fact, Hindu disunity the cause of its ills, and Hindu unity the panacea to the problems of India'. But where in this unity do women, lower castes, and minority communities stand? Are Muslims the only 'Other'? Golwalkar theorised on this through the concept of 'Mleccha': 'Mlecchas are those who do not subscribe to the social laws dictated by the Hindu Religion and Culture' (Golwalkar 1947 p.62). Those counted among the mlecchas were

Muslims, Christians, and Communists, but also the insufficiently "reclaimed" untouchables and tribals, Kabirpanthis and Satnamis, on occasion "women", "South Indians", the people of the north-eastern states of India, and indeed any other group or sect that challenges "the social laws" of the Hindus as defined by the [male] upper castes and classes of Hindu society (Pandey 1993, p 258).

Scholars like Romila Thapar and Alok Parashar have also pointed out that 'the mlecchas were discriminated against because they did not observe cultural rules recommended by the Dharma, not because of their racial characteristics' (Jaffrelot 1993, p. 30). Thus, Golwalkar envisioned the role of the pracharak in many ways as an anti-thesis to the 'mleccha'.

Celibacy and the Swayamsevaks

The ultimate vision of our work . . . is a perfectly organised state of society wherein each individual has been moulded into a model of ideal Hindu manhood and made into a living limb of the corporate personality of society.

- Golwalkar (1939, p 88, quoted by Jaffrelot 1996).

According to the Constitution of the RSS (Chitkara 2004, p 318), there are different roles for members, based on their level of participation in the activities of the Sangh. The initiation role is that of a *Swayamsevak*: 'Any male Hindu of 18 years or above, who subscribes to the

Aims and Objects of the Sangh and conforms generally to its discipline and associates himself with the activities of the Shakha will be considered as a Swayamsevak'. In this conceptualisation of general discipline, celibacy plays a crucial role.

Golwalkar did not consider himself celibate. In fact, in a letter to his friend Telang on 16 March 1929, he calls himself *Grahastashrami* or householder (SMG6, pp. 225-227). However, even while he was alive and thereafter, he along with Hegdewar were considered as Gurus by members of RSS. According to Beckerlegge (2004, p 57), '[t]his strand of personal devotion to human gurus and the ascetic behaviour of its leaders impinge on the way in which the practice of seva is explained and justified with the RSS and shape its presentation in popular iconography'. Just like in the ideology of Swami Vivekananda, the idea of the celibate sannyasis of Hinduism and Christian missionaries amalgamated in the imagination of Golwalkar (1966, Chapter 35) to create the imagined rescuer of the Hindu nation:

It is always the selfless, self-confident and devoted band of missionaries, intensely proud of their national ethos, who have roused the sleeping manliness in our nation in times of adversity and made our nation rise gloriously from a heap of shambles. Verily such men have been the true salt of this soil.

The symbolic field of communal politics and the symbolic field of Hindu religion were located in the body of the Hindu man, in contradiction to the nineteenth century focus on the body of the Hindu woman. In this, the critique of Chatterjee (1989) by Sinha (2006) is worth revisiting. In response to Chatterjee's claim that the anxiety around the control of the native woman's body was resolved by the bifurcation of the home and the public sphere, Sinha (2006) showed through her archival research on the development of the women's movement that such a binary was, if at all functioning, mostly fragmentary. The evidence of the shift of anxiety from the female body in the home to the male body as the focus of societal regeneration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century shows that the resolution of the women's question was also accompanied by a concurrent rethinking of masculinity, negotiated in complex social and political re-imaginings. Religion played a significant role in such a re-imagination, as is amply shown by the speeches of Golwalkar: "Today, more than anything else, Mother needs such men - young, intelligent, dedicated and more than all virile and masculine. When Narayana – eternal knowledge – and Nara – eternal manliness – combine, victory is ensured. And such are the men who make history - men with capital 'M'" (Golwalkar 1966, Chapter 35).

Conclusion

What was Golwalkar's position on the role women needed to play in the formation of the Hindu nation? One of the most potent critiques of the RSS and Golwalkar has been its discrimination against minority communities. However, with the exception of Chakraborty (2011) and Banerjee (2012), the gendered alienation resulting from the assumed heteronormative masculinity in his works is sparsely explored. Hindu men were the central elements of his Hindu Rashtra, and their virile masculinity its main component. The heteronormative male figure is the central element of Golwalkar's imagination of the Hindu nation. Religious ratification of violence has been projected on the masculine body of the Hindu man, seen as protecting not only the religiously ordained figure of Mother India, but also Hindu women. This narrative was further solidified during partition, when the RSS played a seminal role in areas like Delhi and Punjab for safe passage and relief of Hindu refugees and protection from violence. This was known and accepted by the then Home Minister of India, Vallabh Bhai Patel (Anderson 1972). The role played by RSS volunteers entailed use of arms and violent means, as Patels' description of them as a bit 'misguided' alluded to (*ibid*).

The formation of the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti ensured arms training for women as well. The Samiti, the female wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was started in 1936 by Lakshmi Kelkar (1905-1978). 'The balance of power between the two, with the Samiti acting as junior partner, also foreshadows the development of the rest of the Hindu nationalist family (the Sangh Parivar)' (Deo 2016, p 42). In many ways, relations between the Sangh and the Samiti reflect the power structure of the Hindu family in the imagination of Hindutva ideology. It was during Golwalkar's leadership period that the Samiti and its equation with the Sangh formally took shape. The role of the Samiti was to create generations of women aware of the dangers they faced from Muslims, be ready to protect themselves, and play an ideal role as mothers, sisters, and wives in the formation of the Hindu rashtra.

Banerjee (2012, p.140) sums up the tension between masculine ability and feminine threat within RSS ideology as follows:

masculine Hinduism, interpreted in terms of physical strength and martial ability, is the center of RSS muscular nationalism. However, as for Irish Volunteers and the Anushilan Samiti, warriorhood is wedded to celibacy and asceticism, indicating that female sexuality remains a threat to a brotherhood united in its pursuit of a Hindu muscular nation.

The manifestation of this masculine Hinduism in contemporary Indian politics is in the continued relevance of the ideas of Golwalkar. The form of warrior masculinity that Golwalkar envisaged, in reaction to the non-violent political ideology of Gandhi, continues to appeal to a large part of the Hindu population in India. With an aspiration of domination of the society by Hindus, he used religious symbolic capital to reconfigure the habitus of the Indian political field. The category of enemies in his philosophy modifiable and amenable – an aspect which has been extensively capitalised by the RSS in a heterogenous society like India's. The role of women as political agents had initially been confined to the subversive spread of ideology as ideal mothers, wives, and members of the family. Political agency was by definition masculine in Golwalkar's ideology, even while it differed from Vivekananda's in its ambition.

The idea of *seva* (i.e. organised service to humanity) (Beckerlegge 2004) is the conceptual connector between karma and dharma for Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi. Vivekananda stressed the role of the Sanyasi as not spiritual renunciation, but social activism through service of humanity. A crucial connector is the idea of 'man-making religion' – religion coming to the use of masculinisation. For both Vivekananda and Golwalkar, I argue, the conscious use of religion as a tool worked towards masculinising not only individual men, but the entire political habitus. Their belief in the 'spermatic economy' (Bramen 2001) excluded those unable to reinforce virile masculinity. The concept of 'spermatic economy' for personal as well as collective regeneration desexualised individual masculinity on the one hand while, on the other, made this desexualised masculinity a central element of Indian politics in the early twentieth century, seeds of which continue today. Thus, during the 2014 election campaign, we see Modi being projected as a brahmachari, *Lauba Purush* (i.e. iron man) whose unceremonious discarding of marital life was seen as proof of his virile masculinity necessary to be a national leader. Distrust in the role of women as political agents is a recurring feature of the writings of Vivekananda and Golwalkar. Though Gandhi included women in his vision of Satyagraha, the fatherly nature of the state that he envisioned, along with his studied position of political apathy towards dalits, meant his vision was realised for very few women in terms of becoming a part of the realpolitik. The most potent form of symbolic violence as a result of this religious masculinism was the exclusion of women, dalits, and minority communities from the political space and the imagination of the political future of the nation.

There is a change of focus from the Bourdieusian field of religion to that of politics from Vivekananda to Golwalkar, with the concept of karma yoga taking on a more political and militant interpretation. For Golwalkar, the karma of every Hindu was the service of the Hindu nation, and dharma was to protect the Hindu nation from outsiders. Negation of Gandhi's effeminate principle of ahimsa was one of the central motivations behind the formation and continuation of RSS before and after Independence. Most scholars have understood RSS's position on Gandhi in relation to the organisation's position on Muslims. However, a critical re-assessment of this understanding in relation to their position on Hindu masculinity remains largely unexplored; this thesis partially fills this gap. While Golwalkar's lectures and public addresses were rife with adulation for upper caste violent heroes like Shivaji, lower castes, women, and other religious communities find only tertiary mention. This sustained form of symbolic violence erases historic roles of these communities and consolidates them in a very much secondary role in the national imagination. In the next chapter, I will analyse how this symbolic violence is visible in the writings of Gandhi and his conceptualisation of masculinity that contributed to the creation of RSS.

7.

“The Non-violent Way is Not for Such Girls”: Interrogating Ideas of Masculinity and Sexual Violence in Gandhi’s Politics

To understand the importance of Gandhi’s ascetic masculinity in modern Indian politics, one has to remember Ashis Nandy’s (1983, p 11) pronouncement on the threat to colonizers in a situation of cultural consensus on codes of behaviour such as manliness:

The main threat to colonizers is bound to become the latent fear that the colonized will reject the consensus and, instead of trying to redeem their ‘masculinity’ by becoming counterplayers of the rulers according to the established rules, will discover an alternative frame of reference within which the oppressed do not seem weak, degraded and distorted men trying to break the monopoly of the rulers on a fixed quantity of machismo.

Gandhi’s claim to success lies in precisely this project of establishing an alternative masculinity where ‘the naked fakir’ became a symbol of power and ascetic masculinity, in contradiction to the established colonial Victorian masculinity. He not only disrupted the masculine/effeminate, colonizer/colonized hierarchical dyad of masculinity, but subverted it to dismantle the political hierarchy martial masculinity stood for. However, this was not a linear path, and there are contradictions in his actions and positions on violence and sexuality that feminists are yet to engage with. Recent works by scholars like Sanjay Palshikar (2016), Ajay Skaria (2016), and Faisal Devji (2011) have engaged with the ideation of violence and non-violence in Gandhi’s politics; however, its relation with masculinity in defining the political sphere is yet to be fully explored. An exception is perhaps Chandrima Chakraborty’s chapter on Gandhi in *Masculinity, Asceticism, Hinduism: Past and Present Imaginings of India* (2011). The huge body of work left behind by Gandhi also makes tracing the development of his political positions and their contradictions a difficult task to undertake.

The collected works of Gandhi amount to a staggering 98 volumes comprising 48,000 pages, standing proof of his changing and often contradictory statements on issues as critical to his politics as caste, inter-religious marriages and, as we will see later in this chapter, the place of violence in politics. These contradictions are as much the result of changing political needs as his disavowal of any one Truth, making his shifts in position only movements from ‘one

Truth to another'¹. Tracing these transformations is crucial to do justice to his ideas, which I have set out to do by focussing on two particular phases of his political activism: his initial years in South Africa and his last years during the Partition and India's Independence. Both these periods saw Gandhi's engagement with extraordinary forms of violence and it is curious to observe how the gap of more than three decades had moved his truth in relation to violence. This chapter thus engages with Gandhi's written works as well as with the latest scholarship on Gandhi's politico-religious ideas, and the manifestation of such an engagement in his imagination of masculinity.

In the next section, I start with one of the focal themes of this dissertation – Gandhi's understanding of the lessons in the Gita and the form of masculinity the Gita seeks to project as ideal. This discussion will also explore Gandhi's reconciliation of the necessary violence in Gita with his own ideas of non-violence. In the third section, I will take this discussion on non-violence further and explore the various positions taken up by him in relation to caste and race. During almost five decades of his political activism in South Africa and India, Gandhi's positions had understandably been challenged and redefined at various moments². In doing so, I will focus on certain key moments or episodes in his life. The fourth section discusses the influence of Gandhi's ideas on masculinity and violence on anti-colonial politics in India in the first half of the twentieth century, especially that of the conservative Hindu right discourse on masculinity as has been discussed in chapter six. The concluding section will provide a summation of the main arguments proposed in this chapter, underlining the masculinism inherent in Gandhi's ideation of non-violence, and how the idea of non-violence has ironically given way to Bourdieusian symbolic violence.

Gandhi's Gita

It was during the first Non-Cooperation movement that religious symbolism and religious tenets emerged as central to Gandhi's politics (Roy 2014a, p. 49). Ironically, Gandhi's introduction to the Gita took place not in his mother tongue or in Sanskrit, but in English. He himself mentions Edwin Arnold's *The Songs Celestial* (1885) as the first version of the Gita he came across in 1888-89 (Gandhi 2009). Desai and Vahed (2016) claim that with the large

¹ "My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with the truth as it may present itself to me in a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth" (CWMG 76, p 356).

² For a more detailed perspective, see Guha (2012) and Ghulam and Vahed (2016).

increase in the Jewish population in Johannesburg in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Gandhi developed a close relationship with many Jews (e.g. the Polaks, Kallenbach, Sonia Schlesin, Lewis Ritch, the Vogls and the jeweller Gabriel Isaac, among others) (see Figure 8), some of whom (like Albert West) were interested in theosophy, a blend of Hinduism and Buddhism. It was this influence that encouraged him to reinvestigate his own religious roots. He learned Sanskrit and read the Bhagavad Gita. It is interesting to note that Desai and Vahed (2016) mention Swami Vivekananda as one of the theosophical proponents. In a sense then, Gandhi's exposure to the ideas of Vivekananda can be traced as far back as his days in South Africa, 1880-1890.

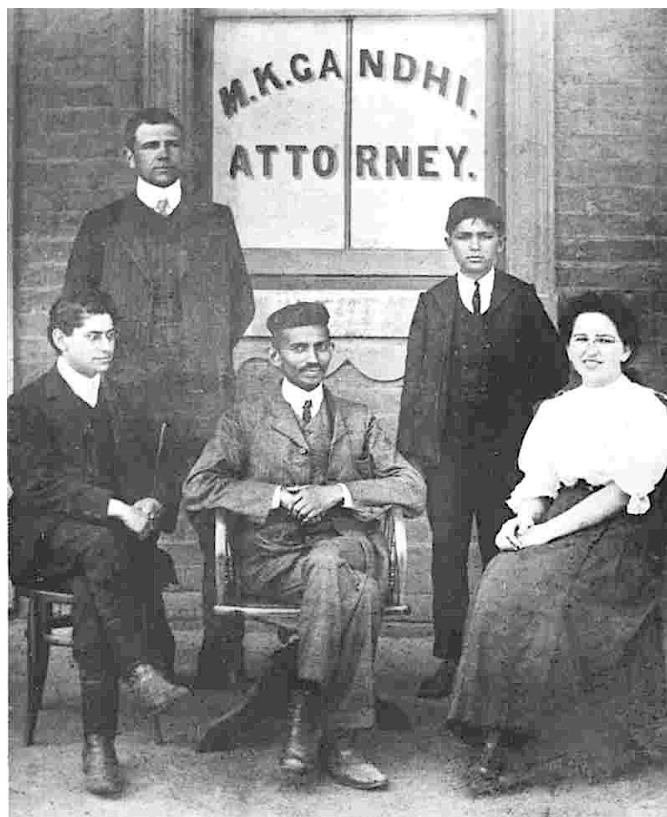


Figure 8: Gandhi (centre) in front of his Johannesburg law office, 1905, with Henry Polak (left), Sonia Schlesin, and others unidentified. Source: Satyagraha Foundation for Non-Violence Studies³.

Foremost of the influence that the Gita had on Gandhi was the idea of action without a desire for results or karma that an individual undertakes without any expectation of reaping spiritual or worldly benefits. Violence occupies a central position in this debate on karma, since verses of the Bhagavad Gita urge Arjuna toward fratricidal war. However, Gandhi

³ Available online at <http://www.satyagrahafoundation.org/the-origins-of-satyagraha-in-south-africa/>.

claims to have interpreted the teachings of the Gita related to karma as a call for non-violence: “I have felt that in trying to enforce in one’s life the central teaching of the Gita, one is bound to follow Truth and *ahimsa* [non-violence]. When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or *himsa*” (Gandhi 2009, p 17). Two points are of significance here: first, the centrality of desire and its relation to himsa (violence). As Palshikar (2016) points out, Gandhi’s ‘experiment’ of testing his brahmacharya by setting up a situation of physical intimacy with his grandnieces has striking parallel with his insistence on testing non-violence in a situation of violent conflict. The parallel is not accidental. The root of violence is desire, and sex is a particularly dramatic, stubborn and virulent form of desire in Gandhi’s understanding. The ‘test’, therefore, had to be similar in both cases. Second, Gandhi equated untruth and himsa, going beyond the mere physical manifestations of violence to a broader interpretation of violence, which recognises not only the act of being violent, but also the intention that leads to such an act. It is an important distinction to make, when one keeps in mind the role of desire and intention in the continuation of symbolic as well as structural forms of violence such as caste-based and gender-based violence. When one considers Gandhi’s gradually changing position on casteism in conjunction with this definition of violence, we find an incongruence that surprises us for its contrary and limited interpretation of the idea of violence.

An important product of the idea of karma has been sustenance of the caste system in India. Since the idea of multiple births connects the experiences of this life with the karma of one’s previous lives, the fate of lower castes is viewed not as a result of social oppression and exploitation, but their actions in their previous births. Gandhi’s firm belief in karma yoga as explained in the Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the reason why he maintained his belief in the caste system. He wrote in his Gujarati journal *Navajivan* (1921), (Roy 2014a, p 23):

I believe that if Hindu society is able to stand, it is because it is founded on the caste system... Hereditary principle is an eternal principle. To change it is to create disorder. I have no use of a Brahmin if I cannot call him a Brahmin for my life. It will be chaos if everyday a Brahmin is changed into a Shudra and a Shudra is to be changed into a Brahman.

Even while in later periods of his life Gandhi supported the challenge of dalit claims for a separate electorate and conversion by critiquing the harmful form the caste system has taken in contemporary society, we do not find him countering the theories behind the origins of the *Chaturvarna* system in any form. In fact, crucial to his belief in caste was also his belief in

renunciation – the central aspiration to be achieved through celibacy, vegetarianism, and caste practices that put a restriction on enjoyment and worldly desires. He wrote in 1921 (CWBA V9, p 276):

Caste is another name for control. Caste puts a limit on enjoyment. Caste does not allow a person to transgress caste limits in pursuit of enjoyment. These being my views I am opposed to all those who are out to destroy the caste system.⁴

The question perhaps arose only later in his mind about who was controlled and whose enjoyments were restricted by the caste system. Surely, in 1921 he had been aware of the various forms of violence practiced on the lower castes in order to ensure such ‘restrictions’. The erasure of these social, cultural, economic, and symbolic violences targeting dalits via the caste system in his above statement indicates that this structural violence was not registered within the ambit of his definition of *himsa*. Perhaps, Gandhi’s non-violence did not extend itself to the marginalised to the same extent as it did to the British Empire⁵. After all, Edwin Montagu, the then Secretary of State, met Gandhi while on a fact-finding tour to India in 1917 and had the impression (Hudson 1999, p 556) that:

He does not understand details of schemes; all he wants is that we should get India on our side. He wants the millions of Indians to leap to the assistance of the British throne. In fact, I may say here that, revolutionary or not, loathing or not as they may do the Indian Civil Service, none of these Indians show any sign of wanting to be removed from connection with the British throne.

This observation certainly held true for Gandhi, who spent a significant amount of his political career and his writings aspiring to equal treatment for Indians within the British empire rather than freedom from it. His insistence on non-violence led the British to grudgingly admit him as ‘our man’. George Orwell (1949) reflected:

It was also apparent that the British were making use of him, or thought they were making use of him. Strictly speaking, as a Nationalist, he was an enemy, but since in every crisis he

⁴ For more such statements on caste by Gandhi, see ‘What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables: Gandhism’, by B. R. Ambedkar, in *Collected Works of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar* (2014).

⁵ This in fact seems stranger when one considers Gandhi’s firm resistance to the idea of a state as a soulless structure which owes its continuance to violence. How could he denounce one structure and uphold another? (CWMG V65, p 318).

would exert himself to prevent violence — which, from the British point of view, meant preventing any effective action whatever — he could be regarded as “our man”. In private this was sometimes cynically admitted. The attitude of the Indian millionaires was similar. Gandhi called upon them to repent, and naturally they preferred him to the Socialists and Communists who, given the chance, would actually have taken their money away. How reliable such calculations are in the long run is doubtful; as Gandhi himself says, “in the end deceivers deceive only themselves”; but at any rate the gentleness with which he was nearly always handled was due partly to the feeling that he was useful. The British Conservatives only became really angry with him when, as in 1942, he was in effect turning his non-violence against a different conqueror.

The influence of the Gita in Gandhi’s ideas was repeated throughout his political life, until the very end. His conceptualisation of sacrifice — generally as well as in the form of renunciation of sex — as a tactic was influenced by the Gita (Palshikar 2016, p 418), as confirmed also by Vinay Lal (2000, p 114):

In staking the position that a detached and yet intense relationship with women in his married state constituted no abrogation of his conjugal vows, and that a true spiritual relationship could not be predicated on the ephemeral attachments of the flesh, Gandhi was doubtless also drawing on the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, which dwells on the manner in which the soul merely inhabits the body and counsels the cultivation of a frame of mind whereby one renounces not so much actions as the fruits or rewards of actions.

What he sought to renounce was not the company of women, but sexual desire towards them. Lal was discussing Gandhi’s experiments with celibacy after Kasturba’s death, when he was sleeping with his grandnieces in order to test his brahmacharya (the sexual aspect of Gandhi’s politics is discussed in more detail in a later segment of this chapter). But how did Gandhi imagine masculinity? How did he want to reimagine Indian masculinity? What did the concept of karma from the Bhagavad Gita mean in his dharma of non-violence? In gendering the concept of non-violence, the initial years of Gandhian politics saw Gandhi use the rhetoric of martial masculinity repeatedly (Misra 2014). This rhetoric of martial masculinity manifested itself ironically in the Gandhian idea of non-violence, creating a habitus of symbolic violence he overlooked.

Race, Caste, and Violence in Gandhi's Non-Violence

The race question and the caste question continue to be studied separately in the Indian context. It needs to be fully comprehended that the race and caste question, in the context of the imperial treatment of the colonized and in turn the colonized's exploitation of the less fortunate members of society – dalits and women – bear not only a passing similarity but a structural connection. Race, caste and gender were all part of a spectrum of power hierarchy, and determined how exploitation was diffused from the white to the upper class brown, and upper class upper caste brown babus to the lower caste dalits who would by virtue of their socio-economic position in the caste system remain lower class as well. The position of women was above that of the next rung of men (i.e. white women superior to brown babus, Brahmin women superior to Shudra men), but nevertheless subservient to the demands of the community. This hierarchy becomes clear in the works of Gandhi. Desai and Vahed (2016), while seeking to trace the racial features in Gandhi's political ventures in South Africa, uncover the workings of this spectrum in the everyday politics of the Empire.

In South Africa, it was an Empire where the whites and browns and African natives⁶ constituted a spectrum – both class and gender creating intersecting complex relations within them – but it would be a mistake to consider this as one maintained solely by the colonisers. The various communities and leaders – be it Gandhi while separating the aspirations of Indians from that of South Africans, or Gokhale reaffirming the willingness to accept the rule of the Empire – constructed and emboldened the structural violence of colonisation by internalising this hierarchy. The Indians fought their own fight and not only did they not join the fight of the Natives, but begged with the British to let them join the imperial army (under the leadership of Gandhi among others) in order to be able to curry favour with the imperialists – a strategy which failed as racist discriminatory laws grew stronger over the years. Gandhi was seeking theoretical equality for very few 'Indians of great culture' (ibid, p. 136). The class and caste bias of 'great culture' is not difficult to guess: for the most part of his South African politics, Gandhi spoke on behalf of the wealthy Indian merchants while the indentured labourers were left to fend for themselves (Roy 2014).

⁶ In using terms like Natives, Kaffirs, and whites, I am following the established political terminology of those times, since they unmask the hierarchy established in the political habitus and were accepted by all concerned communities. The linguistic hierarchy such language established continues to have their ramifications to this day.

His 1909 visit to London was disappointing for Gandhi, with his liberal policies failing to bring any substantial changes in favour of those Indians in South Africa in the Union legislature. Despite all his efforts, a law was passed to make it impossible for Indians to migrate or live in Transvaal. It was also during this visit that he met revolutionaries who had won the support of many young Indians in London. This was just after the assassination of Sir William Hutt Curzon Willie by Madan Lal Dhingra of *Abhinav Bharat Mandal* (Young India Society). Gandhi's letter to Lord Ampthill on 30 October 1909 talks about their use of violence (*ibid*, p 149). This was a period which marks a decisive turn in his attitude towards the West, which becomes manifest in *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, his most celebrated work. He wrote *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati on his voyage from England between 13 and 22 November 1909, and later translated it and published it in English in 1910.

To study Gandhi's ideas of masculinity and violence is also to study this intersectional story of power – one that brings in race, caste, class, and gender in a dynamic conversation in everyday politics, but which nonetheless keeps the steps of the hierarchy intact. Ultimately, for Gandhi, the interests of the South African Natives were subservient to that of the Indians, and the interests of dalits in the Mahad Satyagraha to that of the Hindu community at large. The political history of these communities and Gandhi's interaction with that history provides an opportunity to study them – and enquire into the assumptions behind the normative and acceptable in the politics of those times.

If racism, gender discrimination, and caste oppression are to be understood as systems of inequality and hierarchy, this begs the question as to what Gandhi's position was on the existence of inequality in society, from a political perspective? As early as 1908, in a letter to *The Star*, he wrote: 'Administrative inequality must always exist so long as people who are not the same grade live under the same flag' (CWMG V9, p 51). Was this statement questioning the necessity of living under the same flag, or the necessity of administrative inequality as a practice?

Time and again there are instances of Gandhi espousing violence – though never against whites. In this again, one is reminded of the influence of the Gita – his appreciation of violence as a duty for Arjuna while explaining Verses 34 and 35 of Chapter Three of *Bhagavad Gita* (Gandhi 2009, p 56) seems in conjunction with this aspiration of militant masculinity manifested during the South African years. The Boer war and Bambatha rebellion are

examples where he openly called in his newspaper *Indian Opinion* for Indians to take up arms if needed. He also made repeated requests to the concerned imperial authorities to include Indians in the brutal suppression of the Natives.

Gandhi repeatedly differentiated Indians – or the broadly grouped Asiatics as they were often called by the administration, along with Chinese immigrants – from the Kaffirs⁷ or Natives. Indians being ‘dragged down to the position of a raw Kaffir’ was the predominant complaint of Gandhi (CWMG V1, p 192-3). Even while he was imprisoned months after the Bambatha rebellion, his complaint (CWMG V8, p 198-99) was not against his imprisonment by the empire but rather:

We could understand not being classed with the Whites, but to be placed on the same level with the Natives seemed to be too much to put up with. I then felt that Indians had not launched our passive resistance too soon. Here was further proof that the obnoxious law was meant to emasculate the Indians...

A year later, the experience of his second imprisonment further solidified his hatred of Kaffirs and he was led to a resolve (CWMG V9, p 256-57) to start an agitation to:

ensure that Indian prisoners are not lodged with Kaffirs or others. We cannot ignore the fact that there is no common grounds between them and us. Moreover those who wish to sleep in the same room as them have ulterior motives for doing so.⁸

The clearly homophobic tone is not surprising, considering the deeply heteronormative ideation of male and female sexuality in his imagination.

What is interesting is that in confirming the racial hierarchy, he also clearly differentiated between two different types of Indians – the lower class, illiterate indentured coolies and the immigrants who paid for their rights of passage. See for example, his speech at Albert Hall in Calcutta in 1902 on how more Indians who were worthy of being British subjects were

⁷ A racial slur used in South Africa by Whites and Afrikaners to describe native Africans, and to call someone the same in today’s South Africa is an offence (Roy 2014, p 122).

⁸ For more detailed accounts of Gandhi’s firm separation of Indians from native Africans, see CWMG V9, p 274; CWMG V9, p 197; CWMG V9, p 270. However, twenty years down the line, we find Gandhi espousing the very opposite and stressing connections between native Africans and Indians in South Africa. For more on this, see CWMG V41, p 365.

needed in South Africa (CWMG V3, p 216). Class distinctions that he had earlier made became more apparent during the negotiations regarding the Black Act with General Smuts (ibid, p 128). ‘There are natural distinctions of class that no one can oppose’ (CWMG V8, p 144). The indentured Indians in South Africa, who mostly came from lower castes and had been subject to systemic structural forms of violence both in India and in South Africa, scarcely merited Gandhi’s attention. In fact, their suspect religiosity ensured the same neglectful treatment that Gandhi reserved for the Kaffirs: ‘Whether they are Hindus or Mahommedans, they are absolutely without any moral or religious instruction worthy of the name... They are apt to yield to the slightest temptation to tell a lie’ (CWMG V1, p 200). This class-based – most of them were from lower castes as well – assumption of Truth telling as a performance which the indentured labourers are unable of perhaps led him to not only disassociate from them until the very end of his time in South Africa, but also declare (Interview to the *The Natal Advertiser*. CWMG V2, p 6):

I have said most emphatically, in the pamphlets and elsewhere, that the treatment of the indentured Indians is no worse or better in Natal than they receive in any other parts of the world. I have never endeavoured to show that the indentured Indians have been receiving cruel treatment.

We see here a merger of race and caste hierarchy in the body of the Indian indentured labourer – an identity that Gandhi failed to identify or sympathise with. This political abandonment of the ‘coolies’ unmasks the obliviousness towards structural violences that Gandhi could afford in his ideation and praxis of non-violence.

In a meeting held on 24-26 March 1909, the South African Native Congress (SANC) demanded inclusion of a clause in the draft of the Union Constitution to guarantee equal rights for all South Africans ‘irrespective of class, colour or creed’ (Desai and Vahed 2016, p 135). Hence, the argument often put forward on behalf of Gandhi that he was only articulating the political thoughts of the time are unconvincing. Being equated with the African natives was for Gandhi tantamount to ‘emasculatation’. Masculinity and racial hierarchy were thus intimately connected in the colonial imperial discourse of brotherhood that he espoused, at least before the disheartening nonchalance of the British in 1909 finally led to his acceptance that the white race was considered superior to others in the British Empire. (IO 1909, CWMG V8, p 198-9). However, before 1909, not freedom from imperial oppression but maintenance of this hierarchy to ensure better treatment of Indians as

compared to the Kaffirs seemed to be of paramount importance in all his ventures in South Africa. His idea of masculinity was thus, in clear sync with ideas of race and caste.

Gandhi's first major political success was the 1913 strike against the Third Immigration Bill in South Africa, and one of the most crucial galvanising points for the Indian community was the honour of its women. With the Bill proposing to consider legitimate only those marriages that were monogamous, Hindu and Muslim marriages were not legally acceptable as these religions accepted the practice of polygamy. The idea of their women not being granted the stature of wives and their children being considered illegitimate acted as a major rallying point, with even women coming out of their houses to become active participants and organisers in the resistance. This was the start of the famed political participation of women in Gandhi's politics which had also continued during Gandhi's campaigns in India. However, as for the issue here, the issues around which women's political mobilisation took place were firmly entrenched in masculinist political ambitions.

If these were Gandhi's positions on caste, race, and class – one is curious about his position on communalism experienced extensively in twentieth century India. Muslim masculinity and virility had been discussed in the works of both Vivekananda and Golwalkar. How did Gandhi, for example, handle the issue of beef-eating – an issue of intense inter-communal antagonism and even riots? The next section briefly discusses his position on beef-eating and his conceptualisation of culinary masculinity.

Culinary Masculinity

Swami Vivekananda had openly called for young Hindu men to eat beef in order to reenergise themselves to the service of the nation. There were clear associations made between beef-eating, physical strength, and virile masculinity in Muslims and Christians. In comparison, Golwalkar was a Marathi Brahman, strict vegetarian, and even while his political philosophy was more overtly militant than Vivekananda's, he did not consider meat eating as one of the necessities in regenerating Hindu masculinity. As mentioned in chapter six, the pracharaks of RSS are encouraged to be vegetarians. In comparison to these two, how important were dietary habits in the political philosophy of Gandhi?

Culinary masculinity was a term coined by Rudolph and Rudolph (1983) in order to point to the position of diet and specifically meat eating in Gandhian philosophy. It is important for us to interrogate this in some detail in relation to contemporary Indian politics (also discussed in the next chapter). The connection of the 'gastronomic and the libidinal' as Parama Roy (2002) puts it, shaped Gandhian ideals of masculinity from his early days. One of the most popular segments of his *Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1925) is where, urged by a desire to achieve a martial body, Gandhi ventured into meat-eating, significantly with the help of a Muslim friend. 'We are a weak people because we do not eat meat. The English are able to rule over us because they are meat-eaters. . . . Try, and see what strength it gives'. However, the guilt and remorse of lying to his family soon stopped this adventure.

Before venturing further into a discussion of Gandhian vegetarianism, it is important to remember the social capital entailed by vegetarianism in his times. Vegetarianism in Indian society was associated with high castes like Brahmins and the Jain community to which he belonged. This association of vegetarianism with Brahmins and Jains also gave it a moral dimension. The popular understanding of Gandhian vegetarianism is linked to ahimsa or non-violence. In Gandhi's espousal of vegetarianism was probably also an influence of his valourisation of the feminine ideal of suffering. Enforced vegetarianism among Hindu widows would have been a marker of the feminine suffering that he had much valourised over years, and it would not be too amiss to suggest that renunciation of meat-eating would have also marked its appeal in that form.

It is understood that vegetarianism is a direct result of denouncing any form of violence towards any living beings. However, the ideological core of Gandhian dietary politics goes well beyond that. His avocation of vegetarianism can be linked to the same religious concept of abrogation of desire, which inspired brahmacharya as one of his central tenets. In this, again, he was inspired by the Gita (Alter 2000, p 20):

As he pointed out numerous times, controlling one's palate is intimately associated with controlling desire (CW 40, p 67; 44, p 79-81; also 50, p 209; 54, p 213) and standard vegetarianism aside a moderate, unspiced, minimally cooked, and quickly prepared meal of simple, unprocessed, natural food is the dietary basis for brahmacharya (see 15, p 46; 34, p 92; 35, p 394).

In imagining an ideal masculinity beyond the martial masculinity valorised in those times, it is ironic that Gandhi resorted to the same ideas of somatic embodiment even while refashioning them.

It is also curious that even though Gandhi was against meat eating and advocated vegetarianism strongly, he was against enforcing a ban on beef-eating. When he received about 50,000 postcards and 20-30,000 letters demanding a ban on cow-slaughter, his response (CWMG V88, *The Wire* 2017) was:

The assumption of the Hindus that India now has become the land of the Hindus is erroneous. India belongs to all who live here. If we stop cow slaughter by law here and the very reverse happens in Pakistan, what will be the result? Supposing they say Hindus would not be allowed to visit temples because it was against Shariat to worship idols? I see God even in a stone but how do I harm others by this belief?

This is crucial in the context of culinary masculinity because he believed meat-eating to be the basis of physical strength among Muslims and Christians. However, the risk of a forcible ban being interpreted as a majoritarian communal diktat was not lost on him, as is evident from the above text. But how did Gandhi respond to the communal violence that engulfed the nation during partition and independence? The next section looks at Gandhi's engagement with the question of sexual violence during partition, at the very end of his life.

Partition, Sexual Violence, and Gandhi

The communal riots during Partition tested Gandhi's politics of non-violence, and forms one of the crucial periods of analysis for a scholar of Gandhian nonviolence. This period of sub-continental history saw the unleashing of unprecedented violence, and the bodies of women from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities often became sites on which rival communities inscribed their violent power demands⁹. This period was also Gandhi's last phase of political action, before his assassination at the hands of a Hindu nationalist on 30 January 1948. Gandhi's political views had by then undertaken a long journey – for example, he had come to openly support inter-caste marriages, compared to his earlier hesitance (Roy

⁹ For a detailed history of the abduction of women and the subsequent state sponsored 'retrieval' of these women to their respective communities, see Menon and Bhasin (1993, 1998). For a detailed account of the violence that ensued post-Partition, see Hassan and Page (2005).

2014b). What, then, was his response to this orgy of murder, mutilation, and rape across the subcontinent?

His repeated addresses to women in areas of riot at that time had been to embrace self-annihilation rather than lose their honour by rape or sexual violence from the rival communities. In an article entitled 'Students' Shame' published in *Harijan* on 31 December 1938 (CWMG V74, p 355-356), he writes:

The modern girl dresses not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun but to attract attention. She improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary¹⁰. The non-violent way is not for such girls... [women] must develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man. It has been suggested that a girl who is gagged or bound so as to make her powerless even for struggling cannot die as easily as I seem to think. I venture to assert that a girl who has the will to resist can burst all the bonds that may have been used to render her powerless. The resolute will give her the strength to die.

In his eyes men were also justified in killing women 'in protection' from facing sexual violence. Gandhi even justified a protector's killing a woman and surrendering himself to her attacker as 'the purest form of ahimsa' (Gandhi, CWMG V43, p 59). He thus subscribed to a hierarchy of violence where sexual violence was deemed the worst, and in his opinion even self-annihilation was preferable for women than accepting a life post-rape. In his correspondence with Mahadev Desai, Gandhi took this even further. 'Not only I but medical jurisprudence holds it impossible for a woman to be outraged so long as she does not relax. A woman who is not ready to die relaxes, may be reluctantly, and submits to the hooligan', he wrote (CWMG V56, p 462). Despite his long political journey, which witnessed multiple forms of violence orchestrated across geographical barriers, no less the world wars, his opinion about men's ability to commit sexual violence remained strangely naïve: '[T]hat man does not exist nor will he ever be born who can force himself upon a woman who values her chastity. It has, of course, to be admitted that not every woman possesses this spiritual strength and purity' (Gandhi, CWMG V25, p 437).

¹⁰ Echoes of such opinion were recently found in a school textbook in India. *Current School Essays and Letters* by Prabi Bhattacharya described modern girls as "self-centred creature than a loving daughter or sympathetic sister" (The Hindu 2018). It created a furore and was seen as a manifestation of the popularisation of Hindutva conservative thoughts; however, as we can see here, such gendering can be dated back to even more centrist political schools of thought historically, and it will be erroneous to historically associate them only with right wing politics.

This lack of belief in women's spiritual strength and purity also led him to consider them not as individual political subjects capable of action, but rather as objects of control belonging to their respective communities. The idea of community thus remained masculine as well as religion-based in such an imagination. Consider Gandhi's position (CWMG V98, p 8–9) on the question of returning women to their families and communities post-Partition, often against the will of these women who had by then been integrated into the family of their assailants:

The Hindu and Sikh women carried away by force should be restored to their families. Similarly the Muslim women taken away should be restored to theirs. This task should not be left to the families of the women. It should be our charge. It is said that *the women concerned do not now want to return, but still they have to be brought back*. Muslim women similarly have to be taken back to Pakistan. (emphasis mine)

This also calls into question the oft-claimed status of Gandhi in liberating women from the domestic sphere and out into the sphere of national politics as individuals¹¹.

Mookerjee-Leonard points out Gandhi's advice to the Hindu women of Noakhali during the communal riots of 1946: 'to commit suicide by poison or some other means to avoid dishonour, to suffocate themselves or to bite their tongues to end their lives' (CWMG V92, p 355), and that 'women must learn how to die before a hair of their head could be injured' (CWMG V92, p 344). This association of women's honour with the honour of the community – to be protected even at the cost of their lives – again reconfirmed the same trope of masculinity and femininity that had been established and much admired within the Hindu right wing paradigm. In a speech on 18 September 1947, while communal riots raged all over India post-Independence, Gandhi glorified honour killing as a way towards a 'brave India' (CWMG V96, p 388-389):

I have heard that many women who did not want to lose their honour chose to die. Many men killed their own wives. I think that is really great, because I know that such things make India brave. After all, life and death is a transitory game. Whoever might have died are dead

¹¹ For a detailed discussion on the role of Gandhi in women's liberation and their participation in the anticolonial movement, see Suresh R. Bald (2000), Geraldine Forbes (1996), David Hardiman (2004), Ketu Katrak (1992), Madhu Kishwar (1985a, 1985b), Radha Kumar (1993), and Sujata Patel (1988).

and gone; but at least they have gone with courage. They have not sold away their honour. Not that their life was not dear to them, but they felt it was better to die than to be forcibly converted to Islam by the Muslims and allow them to assault their bodies. And so those women died. They were not just a handful, but quite a few. When I hear all these things I dance with joy that there are such brave women in India.

In fact, honour has been put before the lives of women repeatedly by Gandhi during the turbulent times of Partition violence. In a way, focussing on his response to violence during that period helps shed light on the masculine ideals that flourished within the ideology of ahimsa. 'Personally I believe', he wrote to his disciple Sumangal Prakash, 'that a woman, if she has courage, would be ready to die to save her honour. In discussing this matter with women, I would, therefore, certainly advise them to kill themselves in such circumstances, and explain to them that it is easy to take life if one wished to do so' (CWMG V56, p 67).

Self-annihilation is thus not recognised as a form of violence by Gandhi. One wonders what he would have said about the farmer suicides in India in recent years, or the suicides of dalit students. Recognition of the irony of self-annihilation as a form of protest against structural violence is absent in his writings. In fact, as has been clear in this chapter, we see Gandhi repeatedly advocating the idea of Satyagraha being practiced by individuals in order to counter violence, while symbolic forms of violence remain unrecognised. Whether he supports or denounces the Indian caste system, or racial forms of discrimination in South Africa, he does not include them within the frame of violence against which he has been fighting. The practice of Satyagraha is imagined at a communal, national or even global level, but sustenance of violence at the structural levels within his conceptualisation of masculinity remained unquestioned.

The Sexual Gandhi

One of the most examined parts of Gandhi's autobiography is where he confesses his visit to a brothel in his adolescent days, encouraged by his truant Muslim friend. Here, one is reminded of Bourdieu's description (2001, p 52) of the necessity of visits to brothels as one of the common memoirs of bourgeois adolescents:

Practices such as some gang rapes - a degraded variant of the group visit to the brothel, so common in the memoirs of bourgeois adolescents are designed to challenge those under test

to prove before others their virility in its violent reality, in other words stripped of all the devirilizing tenderness and gentleness of love, and they dramatically demonstrate the heteronomy of all affirmations of virility, their dependence on the judgement of the male group.

Sexual self-control played a significant part in creating the image of Gandhi as an ascetic. It is therefore, pertinent to take a closer look at the role sexuality played in the tool of ascetic masculinity Gandhi used in his Satyagraha. Celibacy as a part of the larger goal of brahmacharya¹² remained a crucial element of Gandhi's politics and his imagination of a remasculinised (through literal retention of semen) future of India¹³.

Joseph Alter (1994, p 45) has succinctly pointed out the amalgamation of politics, religion and morality Gandhi succeeded in through this sexual self-control:

Gandhi's enigmatic genius and his popular appeal among India's masses may be attributed, at least in part, to the degree he was able to embody a powerful ideal of sexual self-control that linked his sociopolitical projects to pervasive Hindu notions of renunciation (S. Rudolph 1967). Affecting the persona of a world-renouncer, Gandhi was able to mix political, religious, and moral power, thus translating personal self-control into radical social criticism and nationalist goals. Gandhi's mass appeal was partly effected on a visceral level at which many Hindu men were able to fully appreciate the logic of celibacy as a means to psychological security, self-improvement, and national reform¹⁴.

Somatic conceptualization of sexuality also played a central role in his sexual experimentation; he was firmly of the belief that retention of semen in the male body was related to increased strength and masculinity. In a letter to Harilal, he advocated celibacy since it 'increases your power' (Reddy 2007).

¹² Gandhi defined a brahmachari as 'One who never has any lustful intention, who by constant attendance upon God has become proof against conscious or unconscious emissions, who is capable of lying naked with naked women, however beautiful they may be, without being in any manner whatsoever sexually excited' (Lal 2000, p 123).

¹³ I can trace from Alter (2000) at least two Western sources that provided him with the biological base for his argument on celibacy: Paul Bureau's book *L'Indiscipline des mœurs* (1920), translated into English as *Towards Moral Bankruptcy*, and William Loftor Hare's *Generation and Regeneration* (1926).

¹⁴ However, as Vinay Lal (2000) has pointed out, Alter (1994) is one among many of Gandhi's critics who has observed a silence on the sexual experience, which for many of his ardent followers cast a dark shadow on the image of the Mahatma.

His advocacy of androgyny (Lal 2000, p. 119) would perhaps have been revolutionary, but for the fact that it was limited to a re-imagination of masculinity solely. Androgyny became the other of Christian masculinity, but it was also the other to a liberated femininity that he had been critical of all his life. It was Gandhi's position that in order to make Indian masculinity stronger, it has to induct the virtues of suffering and restraint from Indian femininity. However, the induction of such qualities was not intended to liberate Indian women to an equal status. In fact, in June 1947 while violence erupted across northern and eastern India, he found women's demand for equality responsible for sexual violence against women (CWMG V95, p 233):

If the atrocities one hears of are perpetrated on women, the fault does not lie with men alone. Women are also responsible. I know that today women have taken the downward path. In their craze for equality with men, they have forgotten their duty.

This 'craze for equality' did not gain the approval of Gandhi. That the British Parliament, despite being the 'mother of all parliaments' should not behave in a virtuous manner made him call it a prostitute in *Hind Swaraj* (Sharma and Suhrud, 2010, p 26). This mother-whore dichotomy plays on the classic gender trope subordinating women as either maternal figures or a sexual threat to the male sphere of dominance. And hence, celibacy – for both men and women – played a central part in his politics of non-violence. Sex was to be merely a tool of reproduction, and brahmacharya is to be followed even by a married couple.

Gandhi firmly believed that sex, even marital sex, leads to the loss of the vital bodily fluid or semen, which is a contributing cause of masculine effeminacy among Indians. In this, he seems to have been influenced by the contemporary discourse of the effeminate Indian (Sinha 1995). In fact, if one examines his prescription for the practice of brahmacharya, martial masculinity seems to be the discourse it will be most comfortable in. Alter (2000, p 15) writes:

Whereas organized sports – and wrestling in particular – were regarded as somewhat contrived and frankly excessive (CW 12: 22, 23; 34: 99), agricultural work, manual labor, and walking were considered to be highly efficacious (CW 11:131; 12:23, 24-25; also 33:378) as "work for the sake of the body" (CW 32:211), which helped in the development of brahmacharya (CW 32: 159).

This focus on the body as the location for the growth of masculinity reminds one again of the discourse of martial masculinity. In his obsession with brahmacharya, Gandhi had imagined masculinity not only as bodily strength, but also self-control through semen-retention. There was a mystification of the semen and its extraordinary power, which was based on hardly any scientific evidence. Thus, he could link any bodily ailment with the imperfect practice of celibacy, be it constipation (CWMG V12, p 103), pleurisy, dysentery or appendicitis (CWMG V24, p 117). Hagiographical accounts of Gandhian politics have unfortunately been unable to provide a critique of such firm beliefs based on no evidence¹⁵.

But why was brahmacharya so crucial? According to him (Gandhi 1925a, p 316), without brahmacharya, men will be unable to conduct the duty towards the family and duty towards the greater good of the community together. Hence:

I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity with his whole soul could not do without it. It was borne in upon me that I should have more and more occasions for service of the kind I was rendering, and that I should find myself unequal to the task if I were engaged in the pleasures of family life and in the propagation and rearing of children ... Without the observance of brahmacharya service of the family would be inconsistent with service of the community. With brahmacharya they would be perfectly consistent.

But what about a person's sexual responsibility towards their partner? While he formulated this brahmacharya for both men and women, denial of a sexual relationship by a married woman would have been an impossibility in conjugal relations in India in the twentieth century. In other words, brahmacharya as a spiritual or political possibility was present only for married men like himself, while women like Kasturbai could only have been the passive recipient of such a decision. It is a country where marital rape is legal to this day. The idea of celibacy in married relationships was thus only tenable if initiated by the husband. This is a social reality Gandhi left unaddressed. In these women's inability to take this decision lies the greatest gendered manifestation of Gandhi's political philosophy. And this led to another tension in his conceptualisation, pointed at by Palshikar (2016, p 420):

¹⁵ Gandhi found a most unlikely ally in his beliefs in the form of a major in the United States Army, William R. Thurston. Gandhi quotes him (Alter 2000, p 11):

through personal observation, data obtained from physicians, statistics of social hygiene, and medical statistics," Thurston showed that unrestrained sexual intercourse caused women to become 'highly nervous, prematurely aged, diseased, irritable, restless, discontented and incapable of caring for [their] children ... [and] ... drain[ed] [men] of the vitality necessary for earning a good living' (CWGS 37, p 305-7; also p 315-17).

its practice was supposed to make the practitioner more maternal, but it was also supposed to give him access to extraordinary potency. Gandhi ascribed asexual nature to women and 'lust' to men. If women were naturally less driven by sexual urge, if they were naturally maternal, if they had natural capacity for enduring suffering, then there was no 'overcoming'; where there is no 'overcoming', there could be no extraordinary potency.

This desexualisation of women, as we will see later, was in contrast to his reaction to sexual violence during partition. Sudhir Kakar (1990, p. 118) has psychoanalysed this desexualisation of women as also connected to Gandhi's efforts to feminise himself.

But celibacy had another crucial theoretical contribution: it was the only logical response that Gandhi could formulate against violence (Alter 2000). Gandhi was affected by the 'sheer physicality of violence' and was searching for a way to break into the space connected by ideology and biology, which violence attacks. Alter surmises that through celibacy, Gandhi attempted to break this ideology-biology connection (*ibid*). It was also perhaps why he was against child marriages, as bringing new lives into a world mired by violence seemed antithetical to him.

Conclusion

The role of Gandhi in women's participation in the freedom movement has been acknowledged by even his most ardent feminist critics (see for example, Kishwar 1985a, 1985b). However, this role was limited not only in the patriarchal reiteration of women's position at home where they could spin Khadi, but also in the reconfirmation of motherhood as the primary role of women. As Kumar (1993, p 83) pointed out, the dichotomy of public/private, male/female, or masculine/feminine was scarcely challenged in Gandhi's imagination of the future India:

'[Gandhi's] definition of women's nature and role was deeply rooted in Hindu patriarchy, and his inclinations were often to limit the women's movement rather than push it forward ... [and] it took many years of pressure from nationalist women before he was to appeal to women to join in public campaigning'.

It is the male heroes who will take the society ahead, women only need participate in the birthing process. Gandhi said at a women's meeting in Sukkur, in 1929 (CWMG V45, p 53) that:

If you want to establish swaraj in India, which for you and me can only mean Ramarajya (kingdom of Rama/God), you must become pure in mind and body like Sita, for then alone you will become mothers of heroes. And as a first step towards attaining bodily purity you must wear pure, homespun khadi just as Sita did¹⁶.

This obsession with purity is also reminiscent of the concept of purity on which casteism thrives. Gandhi's aspirations of purity among Hindu women as a path towards freedom relocates the focus to the female body, much like both the social reformers and the imperial authorities from the last century. Connected to this was the centrality of the idea of sexual abstinence or brahmacharya or the regrettable sexual contact only for reproductive purposes. Purity was a central notion underlying all Gandhi's core theorisations and contributions – brahmacharya, women's participation in the national movement, and ahimsa.

Moonje wrote to Gandhi that he had no choice but to reject the latter's non-violence because the Hindu Mahasabha was for 'violence organised and disciplined on modern scientific lines' and opposed the charkha (spinning wheel) because 'it emasculates manliness' (Moonje papers, NMML (MSS section), letter of 10 Sept 1945, cited in Jaffrelot 1993, p 46). Palshikar (2016) has recently underlined that the "orientalist representations of Muslims that Gandhi shared with the votaries of Hindutva (Sharma 2015) point to the trope of manliness common to Gandhi and his militant contemporaries"¹⁷. This trope of manliness was very much influenced by the imperial Christian ideals of masculinity discussed in detail in the previous chapters. Suffice it here to say that even when espousing non-violence, Gandhi was aspiring for a masculinity that held up the martial characteristics, expressed in an altered form. He did not discard the game altogether, he changed the rules of masculinity that gave the colonised a better chance of survival. In the next and final chapter, I will show how these ideas of masculinity still find resonance in contemporary Indian politics as direct descendants

¹⁶ This portrayal of Sita's unfair trial as a practice of Ahimsa, in fact, comes up repeatedly in Gandhi's written works. We know the meaning of a boon', he said, '[i]t is only a symbol. Every woman who has inviolable purity of character enjoys the same boon as Sita did' (CWMG V50, p 235).

¹⁷ In fact, Gandhi shared a platform with Savarkar in London on 8 October 1909. On 24 October, 1909 they addressed a meeting at the Nizam-ud-din's restaurant where Gandhi spoke of Sita and Savarkar of Durga.

of performances of Gandhian ascetic and culinary masculinities (Rudolph and Rudolph 1983 p 21).

Bourdieu's materialist interpretation of symbolic capital also helps in unmasking the multiple shapes and forms of exclusion practiced to reinforce gender hierarchies. This already emerged to some extent in the last three chapters, in how intense scrutiny unearths the inherent masculinism of different political ideologies. Application of Bourdieu's theory of practice to the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi shows how they used their religious capital (with its inherent masculinist interpretations) in the political field, how they transformed religious capital into political capital and how this process reinforces gender structures in Indian society right up to the present. In ascertaining the transformation of their religious capital into political capital, which in turn contributes to the continuation of masculine domination, the particular role of the Gita in their works is brought into play. Spirituality has been differentiated by Bourdieu from religious capital. But in the case of a polytheistic religion like Hinduism, this border is much more blurred. Further, if the relations between the sexes have been more consistent than usually perceived, as Bourdieu (2001) suggests, then it follows that the observations of the early twentieth century society shed light on the gender relations of contemporary society as well.

Defence of the caste system, the gender divide, and the inability of women to become active political participants in social upliftment without the guidance of able male leaders are common assumptions underlying the writings of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi. The imperceptible nature of condoning such violent institutions in Gandhi's writings, despite his political philosophy of non-violence, can perhaps be understood through the Bourdieusian perception of symbolic violence as naturalised. These political philosophies continue to resonate to this day, and mark the habitus of the political field by religiously condoning caste, gender, and racial inequality, which are so deeply entrenched that they now seem natural. The works of these leaders are shown to integrate political and religious capital, which contributed in the continuation of such symbolic violence. The acceptance of the hierarchy of caste carries within it the symbolic power that Bourdieu related with symbolic violence. The imperceptible nature of the symbolic violence against women and lower castes is unmasked in the caste-gender hierarchy that is functional in the political use of religious capital by Vivekananda. What Vivekananda focuses on is the value of symbolic capital and economic capital in order to influence the field. The valour-violence dynamic was of

paramount importance for the creation of a rejuvenated nation in Vivekananda's political aspiration.

Even while their positions on violence differed significantly, the writings of all three leaders analysed here had two things in common: first, a heavy dependence on religious symbolic capital to define masculinity. And, second, masculinity as an essential element of political agency. In order to become an active contributor to the vision of the political future of the country, virile masculinity continued to remain the single most significant factor. In this, we find Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi firmly aligned, even while their political positions often differed in respect to their vision of future of the country. The assumed heteronormative masculinity of political agents was a reality even in the case of Gandhi, who has been lauded for including women in the anticolonial movements.

8. Conclusion

‘Spermatic Economy’, Violent Masculinity, and Religion in Indian Politics: Contemporary Relevance of Masculinism

The aim of this chapter is to show the continued presence of masculinism and its resultant symbolic violence in contemporary India, made acceptable through a calculated use of religious discourses. In the previous three chapters, I traced the trajectory of violent masculinism in Indian politics not only to protestant Christian influences, but also Hindu religious ideas that predated colonialism and were reinvigorated during the colonial period, exploring the works of three leaders who consistently used religious concepts and promoted masculinism. As Sharma (2015, p. 239) has also suggested:

The non-violent Gandhi is often pitted against the Hindu nationalists as enthusiastic advocates of violence. Rather, it is useful to see the ideas of this entire period as a heady mixture of European modernity, orientalism, ideas of reform and restatement of society and religion forming the foundational basis for much of what masquerades as the decisive versions of nationalism.

I aim to demonstrate two things in this chapter: the various forms of masculinities traced in the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi continue to be present and influence politics in India. Secondly, that these masculinities and the resultant symbolic violence are a structural societal problem; they cannot be reduced to the effect of the right-wing conservative ideology of RSS alone. It is true that the contemporary rise of Hindutva has been accompanied by a rise of masculinist practices, manifested in the increased violence against women, dalits, and minorities. However, these masculinist violences can be traced back not only to right-wing conservative ideologues like Golwalkar, but also globally hailed peace activists like Gandhi. This chapter shows that the contemporary beliefs, ideas and practices prevalent across the ideological spectrum are a continuation of symbolic value ascribed to them as positive masculinities. Our habitus promotes masculinism and symbolic violence of this masculinism.

The last three chapters took us through the various assertions and interpretations of religiously-inflected masculinity in Indian politics. These interpretations dealt integrally with the idea of symbolic violence, which emerge even in the works of ardent supporters of non-violence like Gandhi. The act of violence remains at the core of martial masculinity, and virile martial masculinity as the hegemonic heteronormative performance of masculinity retains a strong hold in Indian society. Vivekananda's spiritual masculinity, built on muscular strength, Golwalkar's ascetic masculinity and Gandhi's asexual virile masculinity – has contributed to the violent political masculinism evidenced in India today.

The feminist rhetorical analysis of the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi have established the sustained link between masculinity and violence through religious references. Masculinism – or the continued prevalence of masculinity in political institutions and structures – is evident in the relevance of their ideas of violent masculinity even to this day. As the preceding chapters have shown, religious ideas have played—and as this chapter will show, continue to play—a central role in Indian politics, and these ideas are gendered and masculine in nature; this masculinity – violent, heterosexual and upper caste – finds expression in the political sphere through symbolic as well as direct forms of violence. The various forms and manifestations of these violences are the central focus of this chapter.

In the next section, I summarise the findings from Bourdieusian analysis of the writings of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Golwalkar and their interconnections on the issues of masculinism and violence in contemporary India. In the third section of this chapter, I explore ascetic masculinity in praxis in India, particularly the symbolic capital associated with the Bhagavad Gita and its connections with contemporary assertions of upper caste masculinity in India. The three most important and symbolic political positions in the Indian federal system of government are the posts of Prime Minister, President, and Vice-President. All three are currently held by former RSS pracharaks. Thus the Indian government's enthusiasm for the Gita, read in this context shows an unmistakable effort towards using the text to align the state with the religious capital of Hinduism. Ambedkar's critique of the Gita in the context of the caste system, mentioned earlier in this thesis, needs to be remembered here. The section will then look at the resurgence of ascetic masculinity in the wake of the BJP's access to the hegemonizing tool of state structure at both national and state levels. This section will thus build on the discussions of ascetic masculinity discussed in the earlier chapters and show its praxis in our times. The fourth section will discuss what Rudolph and

Rudolph (1983) called culinary masculinity. While being a component of ascetic masculinity, culinary masculinity has evolved into a significant form of nationalist identity assertion in India in the past decade, especially through the political focus on the practice of beef-eating. This section will therefore discuss in detail how Vivekananda's calls for beef-eating for muscular regeneration have ironically morphed into Gandhian ideas of vegetarianism in contemporary Hindu nationalist discourse. The fifth section of this chapter discusses how violent masculinity is practiced today in Indian politics, symbolically as well as physically. In light of these sections, the sixth section theorises the intergenerational praxis of hegemonic masculinity and masculinism using historical memory in the political sphere.

Bourdieuian analysis of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi's works

Recounting the two forms of deprivation pointed out by Bourdieu through his materialist interpretation of symbolic capital (Chapter 2, p 3) in our understanding of the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi we see that a pattern emerges. Irrespective of their political positions in relation to caste, communal politics, or violence, they all subscribe to the symbolic capital associated with masculinity. Masculinism carries symbolic capital in the field of Indian politics, and this capital in turn also influences political practice. In other words, a vicious cycle exists that rewards masculinist practices and thus ensures its continued existence. The inherent symbolic capital of masculinist practices were found to be present in the politics of all three leaders analysed in this thesis, and they were seen to ensure the continuation of discrimination against all communities and individuals who failed to subscribe to its values. Gandhi, for example, ascribed value to the masculinist idea of bravery and while doing so, condoned the honour-killing of women by their own family members. In attempting an alternative masculinity, both Vivekananda and Gandhi renormalised and reaffirmed the role of masculinity itself in the political sphere, so that the political subject became, by default, masculine.

The symbolic field of communal politics and the symbolic field of Hindu religion were located sartorially in the body of the Hindu man, in contradiction to the nineteenth century focus on the body of the Hindu woman, as I mentioned in chapter 6. In response to Chatterjee's claim that anxiety around control of the native woman's body was resolved by bifurcation of the home and the public sphere, Sinha (2006) showed through her archival research on the development of the Indian women's movement that such a binary was, if

functioning at all, mostly fragmentary. However, the evidence of the shift of anxiety from the female body in the home to the male body in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century shows that the resolution of the women's question was negotiated in complex social and political re-imaginings. In fact, in moving our focus from social reform specifically to the broader political field, it becomes apparent that both masculinity as political agency and as symbolic capital gained crucial focus, as evidenced in the works of the three leaders.

The system of hegemonic masculinity also played its role in establishing upper caste Hindu men as a dominant political and social group by invisibilising their symbolic power, and also making this symbolic capital critical in politics, as pointed out by Swartz (1997). From a feminist standpoint, this masculinist symbolic capital had particularly oppressive effects on dalits, particularly on dalit women. The upper caste nature of hegemonic masculinity in politics continued its exclusion of dalit men, while at the same time the structural masculinism made dalit women subject to violence from both upper castes and dalit men trying to garner symbolic and political capital through emulation of hegemonic violent masculinities. It also meant that if marginalised communities sought to gain symbolic capital in the political sphere, they had to embed themselves in the structures of political masculinism as practiced. This can be true even for those who do not conform to the expectation of hegemonic masculinity in terms of their ascribed gender. Thus, we see female political figures like Sadhvi Rithambara and Uma Bharati including themselves in this structure by actively practicing ascetic masculinity. In doing so, they also successfully desexualise themselves, separating themselves from the threat feminine sexuality usually poses, and transcending the limitations of binary heteronormative gender identities.

A suitable example comes to mind from Anand Patwardhan's acclaimed documentary on the communal riots in Bombay after the Babri Masjid demolition. *Father Son and Holy War* (1994) opens with a sequence of shots from the 1993 riots. Among them, the viewers can see a teenage boy, smiling and telling the camera, "Ask the Muslims to go wear saris". 'Wearing saris' or 'wearing bangles' are the colloquial everyday phrases used in many parts of India as an abuse, a symbol of emasculation. They defy the code of honour a man is required to follow in order to separate himself from the object of 'womanhood', to be able to declare himself as a political subject in the economy of symbolic goods. The example of Patwardhan's film is not an anomaly, as many gendered analyses of cultural commodities

have shown in the past few decades¹.

Feminist standpoint helps us to unearth the inherent racial-caste hierarchy in their ideology, in continuation with the religious symbolic capital used by all three. Clear support is found in their works for the caste system, which contributes to the political habitus to this day, with anti-caste violence still occurring even seventy years after independence. The ideas of karma, karma yogi, brahmacharya, virile masculinity, reproductive anxieties, nationalism, Bharat Mata, caste supremacy, and racial claims of Aryan superiority are all interconnected in a continuum that has established itself within the habitus of contemporary Indian politics. The masculinism in Indian politics solidifies itself on the basis of this core understanding of what constitutes the political sphere. To understand caste and communal violence, the state sponsored violence in Kashmir and northeast India, the structural exclusion and violence faced by women and minority sexualities, the structural unmasking of this nexus is an urgent necessity. This masculinism is racist, casteist, and heteronormative in nature, the historical evidence of which is strewn over the last century and continues in the present.

Ascetic Masculinity in post-2014 Indian Politics

Consider these statistics. According to 2016 data from India's National Crime Records Bureau, 99 per cent of legal cases of atrocities against dalits in India are pending (First Post 2018). In one in three rural villages, public health workers refuse to go to dalit homes (dalit Fact Sheet, overcomingviolence.org nd). Twenty-one dalit women are raped every week in India (ibid). Even though Reservation quotas have been introduced for dalits, it is only accessible at the level of higher education, when the highest dropout rates among dalit students are found in high school. According to reports (Times of India 2014b), crimes against dalits have increased by 245% in the last decade in states like Haryana. The violent masculinity that has been popularised through Hindu nationalist masculinist assertions have led to brutal crimes of sexual violence, garnering international attention due to the macabre nature of some such acts, like the 2012 gang rape of Jyoti Pandey in Delhi.

¹ Feminist readings of Bollywood films, music industry, mainstream popular Indian literature in English, or the various television programmes (known as *Saas-Bahu* (mother-in-law daughter-in-law) serials) have over the years consistently shown the masculine code at play. Citations?

Upper caste masculinity asserts itself on dalit bodies in multiple direct and indirect ways. In a report submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against dalit Women (AIDMAM 2013) by a collective of feminist activists from India, the following harrowing figures were supplied:

...dalit women's experience of violence across four Indian states shows that the majority of dalit women report having faced one or more incidents of verbal abuse (62.4%), physical assault (54.8%), sexual harassment and assault (46.8%), domestic violence (43.0%) and rape (23.2%). In less than 1% of cases were the perpetrators convicted by the courts. In 17.4% of instances of violence, police obstructed the women from attaining justice. In 26.5% of instances of violence, the perpetrators and their supporters, and/or the community at large, prevented the women from obtaining justice. In 40.2% of instances of violence, the women did not attempt to obtain legal or community remedies for the violence primarily out of fear of the perpetrators or social dishonour if (sexual) violence was revealed, or ignorance of the law, or the belief that they would not get justice.

Two points are worth noting: firstly, almost half of dalit women in four Indian states have faced sexual assault according to the report, and in 40.2 per cent of those cases, the women did not attempt legal or community remedies. This is a significant part of the population, and also one of the most marginalised and structurally deprived. What these statistics unmask is a structural form of violence prevalent in Indian society at large, and the lack of legal or communal infrastructure for dalit women is part of the larger issue of symbolic violence that refuses to address the masculinism, which lies at its core. The direct physical forms of violence are symptoms of the ailment of masculinism, which fails to recognise impediments for dalit women and make structural adjustments that would address this core bias that in turn informs all policy-making. One of these policies has been the Indian government's recent enthusiasm in promoting the Gita.

Symbolic Capital of the Gita in Indian Politics

Symbolic forms of violence continue to be perpetrated in more ways than one. As Subir Sinha (2018) has pointed out, Hindu nationalist authors are not simply relying on traditional Hindu right wing sources, but are using even subaltern historiography's call for postcolonial scholarship as a formidable weapon to reject 'Western' tenets like political equality and secularism. The discourse of feminism is one of the foremost targets of this emerging body

of Hindu nationalist scholarship. This Hindu nationalist scholarship has also embarked on a project to reinterpret the Gita as a non-religious text and hence taught as part of, for example, management courses. The discovery of this non-religious aspect of the Gita has led to calls for this 2,000 year old text to be adopted as the national scripture by the Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj (Times of India, 8 December 2014a). The Prime Minister of India has now made it a habit of gifting the Gita to world leaders. It will not be wrong to say that the Gita and its teachings have made a re-entry into contemporary Indian politics in a way unprecedented since the times of Gandhi². This re-entry is also accompanied by a strengthening of Hindu nationalist masculinist politics across national and regional politics, similar to those made visible in the previous chapters.

The Gita did not invent the caste system, it is important to remember. The caste system came from the concepts of Guna from Hindu Samkhya philosophy and karma from the Upanishads (Nanda 2016). However, the importance of the Gita lies in its continuing popularity among religious Hindus as compared to the more esoteric religious texts. In fact, the Gita's explanation of the concepts of duty and violence has alarming consequences. In attempts to give this popular religious text a secular affirmation, the ideas contained in the Gita are thus ascribed cultural hegemonic legitimacy, if not legal hegemony. It is not only a tool for perpetuating the symbolic violence of caste on dalit men and women, but it also champions violent masculinity. Another such manifestation is through the calculated reproduction of hegemonic forms of masculinity in the political sphere.

In the face of colonial emasculation, the Gita was reclaimed as an intellectual treatise on masculine karma. The lure of the Gita in the field of politics lay in retrieving Hinduism from its place as a religious treatise into a political capital, by reclaiming it as a political guideline. It is being popularised as a credible Hinduised alternative to the Directive Principles of State Policy written down in the Indian Constitution with its secular aspirations. In the last three chapters, the malleable ways in which the Gita can be interpreted and politically capitalised in the contexts of caste and violence were explored. In the next few pages, it will be shown how this political interest in the Gita is concurrent with certain other features of masculinism

² Crucial here is the reminder from Ambedkar (2010) about the interconnection between the Gita and *Manusmriti*, the scriptural basis of the caste system. The Bhagavad Gita is described by Ambedkar (2010, np) as 'Manusmriti in a nutshell'.

prevalent in the works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi, including the turn of politicians towards claiming an ascetic masculinity.

Ascetic masculinity in praxis

There is a rise of ascetic forms of masculinity in the political sphere in India. Despite their decreed renouncement of worldly affairs, ironically more and more ascetic figures are occupying political positions. Yogi Adityanath, the founder of the *Hindu Yuva Vahini* – a violent youth organization often accused of involvement in communal incidences – has been appointed as the new Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Significantly, UP is a state with one of the largest Muslim population. One has to only remember Swami Ramdev's failed political aspirations made visible when he shed his saffron robes during a political campaign in 2011, running away from police wearing *salwar kameez*. News discussions established (see, for example, NDTV 2011) his transition from an ascetic masculine figure to an effeminate one as much due to the act of running away as due to his dress code. Swami Ramdev, who spearheads an Ayurvedic business of net worth of US\$ 1.6 billion, is currently one of the most vocal advocates of Hindu nationalism in India (Bloomberg Businessweek 2018).

There is calculated promotion of religious ascetic figures in the public and political sphere in India. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Yogi Adityanath, and Sakshi Maharaj are only the more well-known of such figures. RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's annual address to the organisation was broadcast live on the state television channel, Doordarshan. This is only one of the markers of the prominence of the ascetic masculine and such figures in the Indian political landscape. These figures reaffirm the intersection of religion and politics in Indian society on the one hand, while on the other are embodiments of ascetic masculinity in praxis in Indian politics. Their political appeal lies in lack of personal attachments, since their proclaimed celibacy is proof of their ability to serve the country without any partiality. There is a connection made between celibacy, patriotic duty, and masculinism that makes ascetic male figures the ideal political subjects and agents. Both the Prime Ministers of India from BJP – former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee (in Figure 9) and current PM Narendra Modi – have been projected as brahmacharis³.

³ Though Modi was married as a child, he left his family to live as a pracharak and has been claimed by his followers as celibate.

The biggest promoter of this brand of political asceticism is the current Prime Minister of India. Modi was pictured as a national ‘strongman’, a hypermasculine image that was successfully sold during the 2014 election campaigns. He is representative of the Hindu masculinity, which has been legitimised in the Indian political sphere through symbolism



Figure 9: Golwalkar with former Prime Minister of India, Atal Vihari Vajpayee.

discussed in the earlier chapters. While Muslim masculinity expressed through violence is associated with Islamic terrorism, violence by Hindu masculine organisations has achieved acceptance as an essential necessity to save Hindu cultural heritage. Even while not expressly violent, this symbolic approval also leads to and promotes a gender and caste hierarchy. The recent state policies taken up by the Modi government – planting trees to collect dowry for daughters, which reconfirms dowry system⁴, banning of beef, silence on communal lynchings happening across the country – can be argued as manifestations of the same Hindu upper caste masculinity, which gains legitimacy and religious sanctions through quotes from the Gita and images of Vivekananda (see Figure 10). The popularisation of Vivekananda in current times is particularly ironical, given his professed preference for beef eating, discussed in detail in chapter 6. This digression in his politics has been strategically used to give the current government’s policies a more acceptable face among its Hindu middle class

⁴ Recent studies have shown links between dowry system, rise of gold prices, and increase in female foeticide in India, contributing to gender imbalance (Ratcliffe 2018).

followers. Vivekananda and Gandhi have been appropriated as the faces of various governmental campaigns launched by the BJP government to increase its acceptability to a wider section of the population (Sen 2016). Vivekananda as an acceptable front for Hindu nationalist ideas to the middle class in India has been extensively used in associating his name with youth-related schemes such as the *Yuva Vichar Vikas Rath* (Menon 2014). Strategic use of all three leaders discussed in detail in this thesis can also be observed in Modi's silence on Golwalkar who he had professed on an earlier occasion as one of the seminal influences in his life (Patel 2014).

This is in sync with his tactical navigation of symbolic masculinity, which has also manifested in his dress, as described by Visvanathan (2013): 'Originally Modi appeared in the drabness



Figure 10: Narendra Modi addressing a political rally, with Swami Vivekananda's image behind him.

of white kurtas, which conveyed a swadeshi asceticism... Modi realized that ascetic white was an archaic language. His PROs forged a more colourful Modi, a Brand Modi more cheerful in blue and peach, more ethnic in gorgeous turbans'. Ascetic masculinity is thus reformulated and publicised in a more palatable garb, even while the philosophical essence of his politics continues to remain the same. Hartwell (2018) has pointed out how this anatomical, hyper-masculinity of the Indian state represented in the figure of Modi has been challenged through militant masculinities like that of Kashmiri militant Burhan Wani. In challenging the state sponsored violence of the Indian army in Kashmir, Wani also successfully models himself as an alternative masculinity.

Wani's youth, violence, and Muslim Kashmiri identity forges him as a symbol of resistance to Hindu porno-nationalism (Anand 2008). However, this challenge is also marked by a similar performance of masculinity among Wani and his comrades: 'Stringently heterosexual in their performance, this camaraderie is religiously inflicted through iconographies such as flags, Islamic symbols and placement of The Quran, marking the space as a distinctly Muslim environment'.

The claims of ascetic masculinity in recent Indian politics, as well as the reclamation of ascetic political figures like Swami Vivekananda as masculine ideals have signified the return of right wing politics into popularity⁵. Vivekananda and Gandhi are regularly mentioned in RSS rhetoric against conversion to other religions (Ghatwai 2014). As Arundhati Roy pointed out in a BBC interview (2018), the growing political power of BJP is more concerning than the concurrent rise of right wing politics in countries like the USA because it has successfully come to influence the state apparatus. The violent ascetic masculinity championed in the name of saving Hindu religion is gaining traction. There were 751 incidences in 2015 according to reports cited in Parliament, up from 644 incidences of communal riots in India in 2014 – most occurring in states with BJP governments (Kim 2017, p. 363). Some states like West Bengal saw a 100 per cent increase in communal violence between 2014 and 2015 (Times of India 2016). The performance of such ascetic masculinity is also related to another form – culinary masculinity, which focuses on dietary habits as an expression of masculine performance.

Culinary Masculinity

Assertion of masculinity in the contemporary Indian political sphere uses food and culinary tropes as one of its central tenets. These assertions of culinary masculinity are legitimised through their links with national identity rather than Hindu communal identity. While in eating beef, Muslims are imagined to assert their virile, foreign masculinity, Hindu masculinity is associated with the normative whole of Indian identity through its rejection of the same culinary habit. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, we saw the contradictions between Vivekananda and Golwalkar on beef-eating. However, contemporary politics has seen the BJP use both of these leaders as ideological heroes, without addressing this contradiction. It is, I argue, a cultivated tactic that helps the party navigate a thin line between their ideology and realpolitik. Swami Vivekananda appeals to the middle class and youth in India, while Golwalkar is used to cater to the RSS's core following and its affiliate organisations. The cultural hegemony within this RSS following is important because it translates into votes for the BJP in electoral politics. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar,

⁵ Vivekananda's dreams of global conquest have also come to partial fruition with diasporic nationalism – also known as long distance nationalism (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007).

and the BJP president Amit Shah are only some of the prominent figures in contemporary Indian politics with a long and pronounced connection with the RSS.

According to Golwalkar, the only ground for Indian unity and harmony was a common respect for the cow (Sarkar and Sarkar 2016, p. 334; Golwalkar 1966). Thus, it is no surprise that in keeping with the RSS position on cow slaughter, BJP has encouraged the state level ban of cow slaughter in BJP ruled states, thus creating the horror of beef lynchings across the country. As of now, 24 out of 29 states in the country have laws against cow slaughter (Indian Express 2015)⁶. This policy has adversely affected Muslims, Christians, as well as the dalit population. Cows have been a source of not only protein, but also livelihood for many dalits who used cowhide for leather, handicrafts and other forms of income generation. Muslims are primarily engaged in the \$10 billion leather and meat production business in India, and thus have been hit the hardest by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules, 2017 that banned the sale and purchase of cattle at livestock markets (The Tribune 2017).

The most crucial change in this respect has been the rise of the thousands of *Gau rakshaks* (cow protection vigilante groups) created by Hindutva activists at local levels to prevent cow slaughter. Violent shows of masculine force became the signature mark of these groups. Reports of lynchings started pouring in from across the country. Accused of having beef in his refrigerator, Mohammad Akhlaq was lynched by a mob in Dadri, UP in 2015 (Kumar 2017). Other cow related lynchings have been reported from the states of Gujarat (Chaturvedi 2016), Rajasthan (Huffington Post 2018), and Jharkhand (Dasgupta 2018), among many others. Muslims and dalits have been forced to eat cow dung (Indian Express 2016), stripped and beaten, and incidences of harassment in the hands of these vigilante groups have become a common occurrence in various parts of India in the last few years. Apart from causing death, grievous bodily harm, and psychological insecurity in the minds of minorities, these groups are also successfully establishing cultural and symbolic hegemony of the masculinist Brahmanical Hindutva ideology. An interesting study on this issue is Barak-Erez's (2010) comparison between the politics of symbolism in the legal banning of cow-slaughter in India and that of pig farming and pork trading in Israel. She shows how the changing political relevance of the 'Other' in these two contexts – Muslims in India and

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the differences between cow protection laws across various states and its effects on Indian secularism, see Sarkar and Sarkar (2016).

Christians in Israel – is made visible through these pieces of legislation. While in India constitutional backing by the Supreme Court has led to increasing bans on cow slaughter, especially in the BJP led states, Israel has seen pig-related legal prohibitions become an issue of contention, but moving from the context of national identity to that between secular and religious Jews. As Sarkar and Sarkar (2016) have argued, this recent spate of banning of beef consumption is contrary to the established position of the Indian state with regard to religious beliefs and practices of its citizens. It is based on a narrow, ahistorical understanding of Brahmanical Hindutva as Hinduism and risks altering the secular nature of the Indian state. What Sarkar and Sarkar miss in their critique however is the simultaneous espousal of violent Brahmanical masculinity in Indian politics that is the cause of this threat to India's secular political habitus.

The current Indian government has the lowest number of Muslim MPs since Independence; only 23 out of 545 (Kim 2017, p. 361). Of the 151 ministers in the 9 BJP-ruled states, only one is Muslim (ibid). The BJP transformed from a minority anti-system party to a majority anti-system party in the 2014 elections, and the majority they enjoy in the lower house of Parliament has shown some decisive shifts in the practices of masculinity. Since their election in 2014, BJP leaders have been repeatedly stoking the Babri Masjid controversy (Bacchetta 2000, Mehta 2015). BJP President Amit Shah, BJP MP from Uttar Pradesh Sakshi Maharaj, and others like Subramanian Swami have repeatedly declared the party's commitment to the building of the temple in a direct threat to communal harmony in the country.

As alarming as the rise of the BJP as the single majority party influenced by this ideology might be, the role of the state in condoning and participating in violence has always been documented. The masculine, patriarchal role that we see Gandhi ascribe to the state during Partition is evident even today. In the marginalisation of women, dalits, and the Muslim community from education and job opportunities (Sacchar Committee Report 2006), in the forced land grab from Adivasis, and in its inability to bring to justice armed forces personnel accused of sexual violence, the state has continued to subject direct and symbolic forms of violence on its population. In the next section, I will discuss these violent masculinities in more detail.

Performing Violent Masculinities

In the previous sections, events post 2014, and the growth of influence of the RSS-BJP nexus in the political and cultural habitus of India were discussed in some detail. However, can violent masculinity be traced back solely to Hindu nationalist politics? Islamophobia in current times does garner its acceptability from global events post 9/11, and the spectre of ISIS have fanned Islamophobic sentiments across the globe. However, the anti-Muslim violence experienced in India today had left its mark not only in right wing politics, but rather across all schools of political thought. While talking about riots, Kalpana Kannabiran (2006, p. 35) says,

The crowds that participate in riots are not passive pools of people, but active networks that only need to be mobilized. While these crowds may be equipped - with voters' lists and weapons - they must also simultaneously draw on repositories of unconscious images in order to be able to act with dangerous precision, so that what needs investigation or enquiry if you like, is not just information about networks and organising but also a systematic documentation of the organising images - rumours for instance.

The repositories of unconscious images that she talks about, remind one of the Bourdieusian concept of symbolic capital. The economy of symbolic goods thus, has an effective social hierarchy that marks itself through class, caste, and religion. This is where the concept of intersectionality is useful in addition to Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic capital, since without the components of caste, class, religion and language that influence all fields, any attempt towards reading masculinity would remain segmented. The writings of Vivekananda, Golwalkar and Gandhi had symbolic power precisely because they acted as repositories of such symbolic capital, which influenced public opinion, shaped social positions on issues and influenced the religious and political habitus of their followers, which in turn contributed to the formation of doxa.

Consider Gandhi's reaction after the assassination of Swami Shraddhanand, a well-known activist of the Hindu reform movement in the early twentieth century. In his tribute to Shraddhanand published in *Young India* on 30 December 1926, Gandhi agrees that Muslims are 'too free with the knife and the pistol' (Sharma 2015). While Swami Shraddhanand (1924,

p. 138) had once expressed anguish over the ‘onrush of Hindu widows towards prostitution and Muhammadanism’, Gandhi’s tribute to Shraddhanand marked Muslims as violent as a community while distinguishing Islam from the community. ‘The sword is yet too much in evidence among Mussalmans’, he said, though Islam was not a violent religion. By distinguishing the two, Gandhi was creating a political space between communal politics and religion; hoping to portray this fissure as the future promise of harmony with Muslims. This fissure is absent in the contemporary Indian political field – Muslims are imagined, in continuation with the Hindu nationalist imagery drawn in the words of Golwalkar and Savarkar – as violent, treacherous, and anti-national beyond redemption⁷. In marking Muslim bodies with this stable identity, any reformatory politics or efforts at transforming communal relationships are seen as futile. Ironically, in a later piece, Gandhi himself asserts that the original thoughts in a religion are transformed into “religious violence due to misinterpretation and irreligious propaganda of their followers” (Sharma 2015, p. 237; *Young India* 20 January 1927). The assertions of masculinity through violence, and the confirmation of such violence through religious texts and ideas that we saw in the previous chapters, can be explained through this logic to repudiate Gandhi himself. In a way, the central idea of this thesis can be explained by Gandhi, even though he did not endeavour to apply it to his own ideas.

Kumkum Sangari (2008, p 2) talks about how ‘culturalism works as a code for tradition and religion, conflates religion and patriarchies with “culture”, and turns acts of violence into religion-driven third world pathologies or customary/sacred tradition’. What she does not mention is that in the context of south Asia, such religion driven pathologies are not only directed towards the ‘other’ in terms of religion, but even within the practitioners of one’s own religion when they do not conform to the notions of an acceptable ‘self’. Here, one can think of the innumerable caste atrocities when they convert to Islam or Christianity (Rao, 2011; Jaoul, 2013; Kannabiran & Kannabiran 1991). These are also connected to how gender relations within religious or caste community is visualised, with honour killings becoming a regular feature in cases where couples flout established rules. What I am underlining here is that while casteism, communalism and state sponsored violence have been studied extensively, there is further exploration needed in terms of how notions of gender relations and violent masculinity in Indian culture, which is increasingly Hindutva-ised, are at the core

⁷ See, for example, Savarkar’s response to this series of articles by Gandhi after Shraddhanand’s assassination (Sharma 2015). However, Sharma does not mention the original text of Savarkar or the source.

of political violence.

The ‘political move to create, awaken, and strengthen a masculinist-nationalist body which is always vulnerable to the exposure of the self as non-masculine’ (Anand 2008, p 180) means that Hindu nationalist masculinity thus works towards the consolidation of the boundaries between the two communities of Hindus and Muslims, and nowhere is this more evident than on the bodies of women. Female foeticide, limited access to education, differential income, the failure to pass the women’s reservation bill in Parliament – are all manifestations of this misogynist masculinism. Criminalisation of marital rape has been opposed by the BJP on the grounds that it would destroy the family (Nair 2017). In the performance of Hindu nationalist masculinity, a significant characteristic is the violent claim on women’s bodies. While dalit women’s bodies have been subject to predatory sexual violence and exploitation of labour, upper caste women have also faced renewed forms of repression and violation of bodily autonomy.

Consider the occurrence of ‘Love Jihad’⁸ cases in the political sphere in recent times, the most famous of which was the case of a medical student called Hadiya. In seeking to convert to Islam and marry a Muslim, Hadiya came to the centre of a controversy around Islamophobia, conversion, and the freedom of Indian women to take decisions on their personal life. It is a case that shows the prevalence of masculinist symbolic violence in the judiciary. Hadiya, a 24 year old woman known as Akhila prior to her conversion, was reported missing by her father in early 2016. Later, Hadiya confirmed that she left home of her own volition since her parents were not allowing her to practice her religion. In 2017, the Kerala High Court annulled her marriage with Shafin Jehan on the basis of a report submitted by the National Investigative Agency (NIA) to the Supreme Court of India, on the grounds that Hadiya was a victim of ‘indoctrination and psychological kidnapping’ (Indian Express 2017). Hadiya, an adult citizen of India, was handed over to her father by the High Court, in one of the most blatant examples of patriarchal and masculinist essence of the Indian judiciary, with the remark: ‘As per Indian tradition, the custody of an unmarried daughter is with the parents, until she is properly married’ (Krishnan 2017). Shafin Jahan had to move to the Supreme Court, which finally restored their marriage in March 2018 (Times of India 2018). However, the prevalent masculinism in judiciary continues to affect

⁸ ‘Love Jihad refers to love between a Hindu woman and a Muslim man which, as a transgression of communal boundaries, is alleged to be a conspiracy to convert Hindu women’ (Sarkar 2018, p. 119).

judgments in cases that clearly define the lives and choices of many. Hadiya's experience is one among many incidents, which have been termed 'Love Jihad' – for intercommunal romantic relationships. The term was coined by Yogi Adityanath, the ascetic BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (Sarkar 2018).

The masculine domination of upper caste Hindus in the Indian social sphere has been visible through a renewed clampdown on women's access to public spaces as well as ownership of their own bodies. In a path breaking work on women's access to public spaces in India and its effect on gendering social roles, Phadke et al. (2011) show how the lack of debate around the projection of home as the safe space for women has enormous consequences on how women are allowed to access not only public spaces, but also the possibilities that such spaces present⁹. Women's receding role in the public sphere also demarcates the normalisation of masculinism in the public sphere – women's bodies, queer bodies, Muslim bodies do not belong. They are 'space invaders', as Nirmal Puwar (2004) called them. Even as they are given access to the public space, that becomes functional in nature, limited. It is in this context that the movement for accessing public space goes to the heart of such a loss of symbolic capital for non-normative bodies.

Rethinking masculinism in India

Through an analysis of masculinism in the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi and masculinities practiced in the contemporary Indian political sphere, I argue that even while hegemonic masculinity changes in form as it responds to cultural, social and political moments, this process does not take place in historical amnesia. In fact, in either responding to a socio-political situation, or attempting to elicit a particular socio-political situation, the formation of hegemonic masculinity attempts to bring back historical memory and past imaginings of masculinity into present use. Mining through the archives of their written works is a method that proves rewarding in two ways from the perspective of masculinity studies: it shows the role of prominent individuals in building regional

⁹ The 'Why Loiter' campaign in India spearheaded by the authors of *Why Loiter* (2011), and the Pakistani campaign 'Girls at Dhabas' (<https://girlsatdhabas.tumblr.com/>) are creative, innovative campaigns aimed at reclaiming public spaces for the pleasure for women.

masculinity, and it points towards the historical continuity of notions around masculinity that plays a critical role in masculinism.

I extend further the argument made by Fernandez-Kelly (1994, p 259) that 'the social definition of manhood and womanhood vary with the ebb and flow of political and economic change in a non-deterministic way'. Even when the social definitions of manhood and womanhood vary, they are still being formulated in reference to and remembrance of past such formulations. And the process works the other way around too. In order to elicit past socio-political situations, the hegemonic masculine practices of those times might be brought back into current political habitus. In other words, even while hegemonic masculinity is transitioning, there are certain culturally significant events/metaphors that can be brought forth in order to stress on an eternal essence that remains unchanged. For example, in attempting to remind the people of the communal tensions during pre-independence and partition times under the influence of which Golwalkar formed his ideology, forms of hegemonic masculinity practiced at that time are brought into practice by the RSS and its sister organisations. In this process, religious capital can be efficiently utilised due to its permanence across political and temporal spaces.

This historical memory of masculinity is elicited differently at different spacio-temporal realities and in response to different social settings. However, the difference does not equate to novelty. The violent masculine practices in contemporary India are both an attempt to practice hegemonic anti-Muslim masculinity of the kind propagated by Golwalkar, as well as an attempt to convince people that the socio-political reality of contemporary society is the same as the perceived Muslim threat from pre-partition times. Riots at Mujaffarnagar, the beef lynchings, the surgical operations against Pakistan are all examples of such a vicious cycle of masculinism and masculinist habitus reinforcing each other. Hindu religious concepts upholding such violence, especially in the form of the caste system is a significant factor shaping the violent nature of hegemonic masculinity in India. However, it is an ideal that very few Indian men actually embody in its totality. To understand contemporary Indian politics, the comprehension of this cycle remains crucial and as yet partially explored. This thesis worked towards fulfilling this gap.

In this context, it is also vital to address the existence of concurrent regional hegemonic masculinities globally. As Ratele (2014) mentions, often political masculinities occupying a hegemonic role in the region might be marginal in the global political context. The rise of

the alt-right globally and its relations with the rise of Hindu masculinity in India will make for a very necessary study. In fact, the understanding of political masculinism needs to address both cross-temporal and cross-geographical spaces, however, due to the constraints of space and time, I limited my research only to the historical continuity in Indian political masculinism.

The practices of violent masculinism in Indian politics in the early twentieth century bears resemblance to the political masculinity in contemporary India, with symbolic violence remaining as its core feature. In using Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, I have shown how this masculinism contributes systematically to structural violence. A dalit feminist standpoint reading of the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi unmask the consistency of casteist and racial implications of the heteronormative masculinity practiced in normative India. This is not to say that other versions of masculinity are not present, or do not find a place within the hegemonic. However, even while they are co-opted, they continue to remain at the fringes. This is the theoretical framework on which this thesis rests.

This violent masculinism derives its strength from other structural violences such as casteism. These hierarchies intersect with each other in complicated ways and as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p 849) point out – masculinities are often performed contradictorily by subjects based on their locations. However, the hierarchy is ever-present, and violent masculinism remains at the core of Indian socio-political reality. The need of the hour is to understand gender relations in their totality; the whole spectrum of manhood, womanhood, sexes, sexualities, and their interconnections with our social spheres of culture, politics and religion. In fact, in either responding to a socio-political moment, or attempting to re-enact a particular socio-political situation, the formation of hegemonic masculinity can be of use to bring back historical memories and past imaginings into present use. As Anand (2009) observes,

Hindu nationalism fantasizes potency (of a Hindu collective), yet it fears impotency. Nationalism, for Hindutva, is a politico-cultural project to create, awaken, and strengthen a masculinist-nationalist body... The sexual dimension of the Hindutva discourse, as revealed in the jokes, slogans, gossip, and conversations of young male activists, is relevant not only as an ethnographic curiosity but because it is politically salient. Such a porno-nationalist imagination of the hypersexualized Muslim Other performs two moves at the same time: it

assures the Hindu nationalist self of its moral superiority and yet instils an anxiety about the threatening masculine Other. Hindu nationalism, despite claiming to represent the majority Hindu community, has at its core a deep masculinist anxiety which, it claims, will be solved through a masculinist, often bordering on militarized, awakening.

In the performance of masculinity, the spheres of politics and religion intersect. This intersection stabilises the trope of masculinity and gives it form. This thesis made evident the connections between masculinity, politics and religion in the previous chapters through feminist rhetorical analysis of the written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi. Gandhi's views on women estranged from their communities during partition was also reflected in the position taken up by the state. The self-identity manifested by the state through this was that of a father figure – heterosexual, Hindu and patriarchal. The Indian state also confirms its celebration of masculinity through the celebration of Vivekananda's birthday as International Youth Day. These are but a few examples of the symbolic violence that structurally and systematically upholds the gender hierarchy.

As Sarkar (2015, p. 195) has rightly pointed out, the identification of maleness and violence has led to a discomfort about violent women, specifically those from Hindutva organisations. Their acts of violence are often a means to desexualise and delegitimise their gender identity. This arises as much from a flawed understanding of women as inherently peaceful, as that of men as inherently violent. Violence is not a masculine genetic condition – it is socio-culturally instilled in one's behaviour. In understanding how this takes place through politics and religion, this project therefore promotes the necessity to see violence as an action that is learned and a part of the cultural and political structure. The object of this project has been to show that the rationalization and legitimation of violence has been gendered in religious and political fields in modern India, even while works by the likes of Sarkar (1999), Bacchetta (2004), and Basu (1995) have shed light on the presence of the violent woman in the discourse as well.

The place of such heteronormative, virile masculinity in the times of technology based capitalism remains unquestioned. In fact, gendered violence and violent masculinity is taking on newer forms in the virtual space. The performance of masculinity in Indian society can be seen live on social media today. Feminists, activists, politicians and common people are all visibly and often violently interacting with each other on social media. Narendra Modi is now the second most followed politician on Twitter (Paul 2015). The role social media

played in the last general election showed abundantly the promise of online platforms in an age when India has more mobile phones than toilets. This also means the politics of violent masculinity has become more visible and traceable in these spaces. Paid Twitter handles, paid media houses (Al Jazeera 2018) and trolls have emerged as the new violent masculine Hindu nationalists, defining the Indian political discourse. While I have mostly focused on written archival works in the previous chapters and incidents of violence manifested physically in this chapter, I have discussed this elsewhere (Chakraborty 2019). The realm of social media in the permeation of the symbolic violence perpetuated by online daily interactions needs a detailed research. The role of social media companies like Facebook and Twitter in giving space to hate speech, dissemination of the image of a politician (e.g. Modi as a modern iron-man), and the impact these have in perpetuation of the gender hierarchy are urgently called for, like Srivastava's article (2015) analysing the image of Modi in the 2014 election campaign.

Modi has been recast as 'modern, development hero' through his Facebook page, Twitter handle @narendramodi, Pinterest board, Youtube channel, profiles on Google+, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Instagram, and online products like laptop bags featuring him (Paul 2015, p. 380). Even in this recast Modi however, nascent ideas of hegemonic masculinity are clearly present. The Bhagavad Gita has already rationalised and justified inequality in society and in the production systems through its acceptance of one's position in the society according to *guna* and *karma* (Nayak 2018). The capitalist mode of economy that Modi has come to usher in since 2014 – opening the market for foreign investments, divestment from public sector undertakings, and privatisation of public sector enterprises – will lead to increasing inequality and poverty for more than 80 per cent of the population. It is thus understandable why the current government has renewed initiatives to popularise the book (Nanda 2016).

As Pandey (1993, p 240) pointed out long before BJP came to political power and formed the national government, 'What we sometimes have is the remarkable proposition that all social and political activities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which Hindus took part were geared to the task of re-establishing the Hindu nation in its superior and glorious splendour'. This seems to be valid even today – and so does the masculine nature of such a 're-established Hindu nation'. The threat it poses is not only to minorities or the women, but it can subsume the Hindu men themselves and restrain them from achieving their potential as human beings. In the same way, violent Hindu nationalist masculinity can restrain India

from achieving its potential to become a nurturing and peaceful space for people of all beliefs, genders, and sexualities.

Contradictions continue to exist between masculinism in the political sphere and the several manifestations of masculinity, often competing, in the social sphere. For example, Chopra, Osella and Osella (2004) pointed out how culinary masculinity and ascetic masculinities confront each other, with both vegetarian teetotallers and meat-eating ‘party’ men compelled to follow the heteronormative social expectations of ‘marriage and setting up home’. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) described hegemonic masculinity, it is embodied by very few men. In discussing the aspirational model of hegemonic masculinity in politics, I have therefore not ventured into variations of masculinities in practice.

Conclusion

Hegemonic masculinity can and is reconstructed continuously. Unlike Bourdieu’s bleak prediction of masculine domination, it does not predict a future. But even while it is transitioning, there are certain culturally significant events/metaphors that it can go back to in order to stress on an eternal form of masculinity. In this, religious capital comes to use. It is one of the many discursive networks that shape up the historicized definition of masculinity in India – sexual, economic, political, and legal. This hegemonic masculinity, even while marginalised in the global scale of masculinities (Ratele 2014), continues to influence the shaping of bodies and bodily practices physically, socially and psychologically. These bodies are not only biologically male ones, but all those who aspire to be a part of the masculinist power structure. It is clear that men have also been victims of violent masculinity. Constricted within the expectations of confirming to this idea of masculinity, unable to find any other form of expression of their identity, normative masculinity often impedes the right to freedom of expression.

On the other hand, the masculinism prevalent in state structures has meant that at the legislative and executive levels, mitigation of violence against women has been addressed primarily by aiming policies at women, rather than addressing the pervasive presence of masculinism in society. The state has been trying to treat the symptoms without treating the disease, which lies at the heart of the issue of violence. Locating this research in the context of the work already done in terms of masculinity and colonisation, one can see that the myth

of manliness is not a static concept handed over across generations. Manliness, as an idea, as an ideal concept of gender performativity for those who want to be seen as 'men' in the society, go through repeated processes of adaptation. This adaptation takes place through accommodation of new information, changing social realities, and discursive shifts in the society. Myth does not adhere to historical accuracy by definition, and the changing nature of myth only serves to show its dependence on a host of historical factors (Barthes 1972). The aim of this research was to throw light on the very process of the creation of the myth of masculinity, in a particular historical juncture under the influence of many competing discourses. Thus, the myth of manliness, and the myth of the Hindu nation worked hand in hand in times of colonial struggle, and are still working in tandem to continue the project of Bharat mata (Banerjee 2006, Blansett 2012, Thapar-Björkert and Ryan 2002). The questions around gender roles in India, and continuing gender discrimination in all walks of life despite rising education and income, cannot, therefore be addressed, if we do not look at how the myths that are the foundation of the idea of the 'nation' perpetuate it. Their invisibilisation is only the last step of their normalisation: once made commonsensical, these ideological components are assured societal acceptance at large. In Indian society, the diversity of societal, communal and geographical richness makes the workings of ideologies localised to a large extent.

It has showed how masculinism and violent masculinity has repeatedly found its way into contemporary Indian politics. The written works of Vivekananda, Golwalkar, and Gandhi are evidence of how nationalist interpretation of religious texts validate masculinism in contemporary India, and the directly preceding chapter has shown how it has led to structural forms of exclusion and violence. Bourdieu emphasises the participation of women in the continuation of these symbolic forms of violence. That might be true; however, as this work showed, the concurrent myths surrounding masculinity continue to prop up masculine domination as a natural phenomenon. Cultures of resistance and cultures of domination – as seen for example in the Indian state's oppression and the Kashmiri resistance against it - both valorise gender hierarchies. Physical violence is only one part of the heteronormative, upper caste masculinity that sits comfortably at the top of this hierarchy. The symbolic celebration of heteronormative masculinity co-exists with and promotes the subjugation of women. The very structural basis of masculinity is after all dependent on silencing of voices and actions of a significant part of the population – women,

queers, dalits – to reproduce the same structures in an effort to gain legitimacy and power. This silencing takes overt and covert forms; covert silencing as an act of violence is what I have explored in this thesis.

This thesis has pointed out the contradictions and normalisations of certain forms of violence by crafting it as a seemingly naturalised part of the social system, and the influence of various ideologies behind such normalisation. With the struggle of the women's movement being mainly forged through public campaigns focused around specific cases of extreme violence to demand legal reform, the normalisation of certain forms of gendered control by kinship structures, communities, and the society at large on women continues. These forms of control, like equal access to education, public spaces, or independence of decision making are acknowledged as patriarchal, but nonetheless, not seen as violence. In fighting against extreme forms of sexual and gendered violence such as rapes, these have been put lower in the hierarchy of fights to a certain extent. Without trivialising the brutality of such crimes, it has to be pointed out that the large discourse surrounding 'gendered violence' often ends up excluding day to day broader structures of control from the definition of violence. These broader structures of control are however, much more pervasive and influential in maintaining the discriminatory gender hierarchy in the society. The feminist imagination of a violence-free future has kept the figure of the woman-victim as focus of the discourse on violence. Critique from the queer politics have in the last few decades broadened the focus from the cis-woman body to a more inclusive imagination of 'violence' in India. However, the project of theorising the 'gendering' of the human body and the influence of religion on that process – specifically the demands made on the male body to conform to heteronormative expectations – has been sparsely taken up. Hopefully, this thesis goes some way towards filling this void.

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