

*“Understanding Masculinities:
Culture, Politics and Social Change”*

A Fellowship Programme in South Asia

ROUND II

STUDY GUIDE

South Asian
Network to Address
Masculinities

SANAM

Study Guide Note

South Asian Network to Address Masculinities (SANAM) aims to provide a platform for women, men and trans-people to work together in developing a culture of resistance to gender based violence.

SANAM offers young leaders from institutional and non institutional settings an opportunity to enhance their conceptual understanding as well as build the required skills to effectively work on the issues of men and masculinities in South Asia region and beyond.

© 2012 South Asian Network to Address Masculinities (SANAM)

Project Coordination: Save the Children

Steering Committee: AKAR Trust-India, CARE Bangladesh, CARE Sri Lanka, College Of Youth Activism & Development (CYAAD)-Pakistan, ROZAN-Pakistan, SAMANATA-Nepal, Save the Children, STEPS towards Development-Bangladesh, Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI)-India

Written by: Rahul Roy, Dilip Simeon, Maria Rashid, Raziq Fahim & Sanjay Srivastava

Funded by: Partners for Prevention/UN Regional Joint Programme for Asia and the Pacific

Produced by:

South Asian Network to Address Masculinities (SANAM)

laxman.belbase@savethechildren.org / sanam@engagingmen.org

<http://www.engagingmen.net/networks/sanam>

About SANAM

The South Asian Network on Addressing Masculinities (SANAM) was formed after several consultations and discussions, for several years, among the representatives from different organisations across South Asia those are working in the area of gender equality, women empowerment, women rights, human rights, engaging boys and men, & masculinities. The SANAM design is an evolutionary process which responds to debates and discussions within as well as a reading of the state of violence prevention mechanisms outside. In its short existence, SANAM has served as one of the few platforms that have attracted the best the region has to offer both in practice and in theorising change on gender, violence and masculinities. The SANAM core membership comprises of 24 people who have contributed significantly to violence prevention through their organisations, institutions and ideas. Add to this the 30 fellows who were selected for the fellowship from across the region who have completed their projects and are now networked nationally and regionally to start integrating their learning into their organisational programmes and in many cases start fresh interventions. The SANAM study programme drew in 8 resource persons (RPs), many of them the best minds in the region on gender violence prevention, to join the team in teaching the modules of the study programme. The fellows projects drew in a further sixteen subject experts to act as mentors. Thus SANAM in a short span of time has created a large community of over seventy people across the four countries of Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan that is thinking and contributing to knowledge on masculinities and designing prevention strategies.

SANAM has a Steering Committee with 10 members; two representatives from each of the 4 countries & one from Sri Lanka and the regional coordination agency. All of the organisations are well-recognised organisations in the area of gender equality with some of the organisations like AAKAR, CARE International, Centre for Health & Social Justice, CYAAD, ROZAN, Save the Children, STEPS Towards Development including others being pioneer organisations (regionally) working in the area of engaging boys and men for gender equality and violence prevention. Save the Children acts as the coordination agency of this network.

Table of Content

i	Background Note on Curricula
i	Understanding Masculinities
1	Module I: Self and Gender
11	Module II: Conflict, Violence and Masculinities
29	Module III: Sexuality and Masculinities
45	Module IV: Religion, Violence and Masculinities
60	Module V: Globalisation, Media and Masculinities
73	Reference to SANAM Materials

Background Note on Curricula

Gender norms and categories are directly related to the distribution of power among genders, and hence to issues of social justice, equity and human rights. ‘Power’, in turn, relates to the control over both symbolic as well as material goods. That is, the *ideas* we hold about men and women – their ‘appropriate’ roles, capacities, and characteristics – along with the access they enjoy to *material resources* go towards determining their positions with respect to each other. Hence, both symbolic and material processes are of crucial importance when we plan upon affecting changes in oppressive social structures and conditions. *All* social contexts are gendered, and the gendered nature of social contexts ‘means that neither male nor female power can be examined entirely in isolation’ (Malhotra and Mather 1997:603). ‘Gender’ is, therefore, a *relationship*.

Hence, the study of feminine, masculine and trans-gender identities concerns the exploration of *power relationships* within the contemporary gender landscape, where certain dominant ideals of manhood impact on women, different ways of being men, as well those identities that may not fit either gender category. This way of engaging with ‘gender’ is an exploration into the taken-for-granted category of ‘man’.

Masculinity refers to the *socially produced but embodied ways of being male*. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks ‘proper’ to men and women (‘men work in offices, women do housework’), and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived antithesis, femininity. 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. The mass media is one of the most important means for the transmission, circulation and reception of local and global masculine identities. With the rise of new technologies of media and communication, representations of masculinities find both local and global anchoring. In this sense, the media becomes a transformative force field with a capacity to change structures of belief.

In order to stand in a relationship of superiority to feminine identity, masculinity must be represented as possessing characteristics that are the binary opposite of (actual or imagined) feminine identity. However, this is not all. Dominant masculinity stands in a relationship not just to femininity but *also to those ways of being male* that are seen to deviate from the ideal. It is in this sense that masculinity possesses both external (relating to women) as well as an internal (relating to ‘other’ men) characteristics. It is also for this reason that we speak of *masculinities* rather than masculinity (in the singular).

There is also the need to differentiate the linked ideas of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘masculinity’. Patriarchy refers to a *system* of social organization which is fundamentally organised around the idea of men’s superiority to women. Within this system, even those who may not approximate to the male ideal (such as homosexual men) still stand to benefit from the privileges attached to being a man. So, as a parallel, we might think of the situation on apartheid era South Africa where all whites – those who supported apartheid and those who opposed it – were potential beneficiaries of the institutionalised privileges of being white. Though it is difficult to posit simple definitions of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘masculinity’, we might say that patriarchy refers to the systemic relationship of power between men and women, whereas masculinity concerns both inter and intra-gender relationships. And, while it can not be argued that under patriarchy *all* forms of masculinity are equally valorised, there is nevertheless an overwhelming consensus regarding the superiority of men over women. Patriarchy ‘makes’ men superior, whereas masculinity is the process of producing superior men.

The ideas of ‘making’ and ‘producing’ are crucial to the study of gender identities, for they point to their historical and social nature. The gigantic archive of ‘proper’ masculine behaviour – in novels, films, advertisements, and folk-advice – would clearly be unnecessary if it was a naturally endowed characteristic. The very fact that masculinity must consistently be reinforced – ‘if you buy this motorcycle you’ll be a real man’ – says something about the tenuous and fragile nature of gender identities; they must continually be reinforced. Following from this, we might also say that masculinity is *enacted* rather than expressed. For, when we say that something is ‘expressed’, we are working with the idea that it ‘already exists’, and gender identities in particular do not *already* exist (say, biologically). There is an entire task of building and rebuilding, consolidation, representation, and enforcement; in other words we must think of gender identities as works in progress.

A crucial task of this course is to foreground the social nature of gender identities and simultaneously explore possibilities of interventions. When we speak of ‘gender’, we are speaking of *social* and *cultural* attributes within human society. This approach moves away from the biologism that has historically been part of the study of gender and sexual identities. Biologism is the thinking that suggests that gender and sexual identities:

- are biologically derived
- have been historically stable (i.e. the same since the ‘dawn of time’)
- are ‘essentially’ about our ‘private’ lives, and,
- are ‘basically’ the same across different cultures
- are normative.

To imagine identities and behaviours as socially and historically constituted is also to imagine the possibility of effecting change in a desired direction. For, if masculine identities vary across time and space – appear in different forms at different times and are different across societies – therein lies the possibility of formulating appropriate policy measures and programmes and projects to influence the contexts within which gender inequalities persist.

Globalisation, Development and Masculinities

Globalisation has been understood in different ways. However, most people agree that it is about living in a more interconnected world with a definite economic, social and cultural process. Economically it is referred to as the reduction and removal of barriers between national borders in order to facilitate the flow of goods, capital, services and labour. Socially and culturally it connects us through the availability of goods, food, entertainment and information that are produced in any part of the globe to be consumed in any other. Even local work and jobs are dependent on the shifts in the global economy. In this scenario relations between men and women are rapidly changing and gender relations are being redefined. This section will build an understanding of how global processes have a bearing on individuals, families and communities living in different parts of south Asia.

Customs, Religion and Masculinities

The formation of identities through religion and cultures of masculinity is a prevalent feature of the region. Religious solidarities are often mobilized through appeals to a shared masculinity. The public expression of religious symbols is the background against which political formations take shape. The manner of expression of these symbols privileges the issue of gender by linking it to the gendering of the nation, i.e. how national identity and gender become linked contexts. Contemporary religiosity, whose contours are more mobile and unpredictable than before, has revealed itself to be one of the most decisive factors in the constitution of all cultural identity. The one element that this religiosity shows is the crucial importance of congregations in maintaining itself and disseminating its message. Almost all these congregations (mainly communities of men) are tied together by ideas of sacrifice, martyrdom, altruistic suicide. A focus on the making of congregations helps us understand how masculine identities might be constructed through ideas of socio-cultural differences, and how cultural differences inhibit the processes of socio-cultural integration.

The nostalgia for a culturally homogeneous society, for a strict separation between men and women in the public, for a close and literal reading of canonical texts, affects not only the possibilities of public dissent, but also supplies the normative basis of cultural separatism. The move towards homogeneity is made through the vehicle of religious symbols and it becomes important to investigate the scope of such symbols.

A recurrent feature of south Asian cultures is the expression of ethno-nationalism based on the forging of a homogeneous cultural identity. Expressions of ethnic nationalism and linguistic identities are also accompanied with a pervasive collective violence and the cult of charisma. Without exception, the leadership of such movements draws its inspiration from an appeal to a mythic past based on masculinised cultures. The region offers a variety of ethnic movements informed by a series of primordial loyalties.

While ethnic movements seem at odds with the secular consensus of modern states, they also force us to acknowledge that membership to a group can be premised upon an adherence to customary law. Across Asia, the resurfacing of customs that were thought to have been superseded by civil law shows the resilient character of local traditions. Whatever the cultural contents and variations of such customs, the one common factor that they express is that of restrictions to be placed upon women and the role

of men as arbiters. The asymmetrical effect of such custom upon men and women needs to be mapped, especially its authorizing of gender based violence.

One of the main justifications of male violence against women is the ‘cultural rights’ argument, variously posed in the idiom of honour, shame, and the maintenance of solidarity networks. In some societies in Asia, cultural rights have been enshrined as ‘customary’ law, while in others, honour and shame have been replaced by civil procedures of restitution. To trace the complexities of ethnic violence and its persistence over time, a comparative understanding of the custom of ethnic group solidarity would be of invaluable help in delineating cultures of violence.

Media and Masculinities

Mass media is perhaps the most important means for the transmission, circulation and reception of local and global gender identities. With the rise of new technologies of media and communications, representations of gender – feminine, masculine and ones that don’t fit this binary – come to be represented in complex ways. Further, media representations of gender are one of the most significant ways in which social and cultural norms regarding gender are both circulated as well as transformed. Irrespective of the regional context, globalization as a backdrop is fundamental to the ways in which contemporary gender identities are produced and negotiated. However, though new forms of media – satellite television and the internet, for example, – play an active role in circulating representations of masculinities, these also draw upon longer cultural histories, memories, and experiences. The sheer pervasiveness of the media as a purveyor of information and entertainment makes it imperative to understand the ways in which it constructs representations of gender, as well as how these intersect with contexts such as class, religion, caste and ethnicity.

Institutions and Masculinities

The idea that the public sphere is a ‘masculinised’ one is the starting point for exploring the relationship between gender and the functioning and structure of institutions. Here, the kinds of questions we need to explore include: How is gender power consolidated through civic associations such as clubs and societies that, either implicitly or explicitly, base themselves upon masculinist ideologies? How are the conjoined contexts of patriarchal privilege and masculinist ideals normalized through public institutions such as state bureaucracies, schools, the legal system and the police? The historic division of social life

as ‘public’ and ‘private’ has simultaneously entailed a division of institution as public and private. And, along with this, there has developed logic of – what might be called – the gender of such institutions. Hence, according to this logic, public institutions have been understood to be the ‘natural’ preserve of men and hence have tended to operate according to a variety of masculinist ideologies. One example of this is that the media quite often provides accounts of public women through describing what they wear, or, how many children they have. Beyond this, there are even more serious issues, such as the denial of equal opportunities to women through masculinity notions of what men can do and what women are capable. It becomes important, therefore, to explore the gender of our institutions in order to devise strategies if change.

Patriarchy, Masculinity and Sexuality

While patriarchy socially embeds the disprivileging of women as a group, masculinity is the process by which the hierarchy of gender orders is maintained. Amongst other things masculinities has often been described as a policing mechanism that maintains social hierarchies not only between women and men but also between men on the basis of class, caste, culture, religion, sexuality, etc.

Since masculinity is not simply a biological state but an unstable process and a state that has to constantly striven towards, it is inherently unstable. This instability means that men have to constantly prove their manhood in various social spheres including their sexual lives. Performance therefore becomes the cornerstone of men’s sexual practices and yet another arena that men have to negotiate within the context of experiencing power.

In this section we will explore the determinants of men’s experiences of sexuality and the linkages between intimacy, love, sexuality, performance and power. The section will also explore the modes by which codes of sexual control are established and practiced in different institutional settings and the consequences of such practices on relations between men and women and between men.

Self and Gender

The invisibility of gender to men and their inability to look at themselves as gendered remains the biggest challenge in creating spaces of self reflection that could contribute to challenging dominant forms and practices of masculinities. This section will provide for self exploratory methods of identifying the role and practice of gender in men's lives. The emphasis would be on delineating the process by which a certain 'normativity' is generated around the experience and practice of masculinities by identifying it as a core or essence of being men as opposed to gender being a relational reflection of the relations between men and women.

Conflict and Violence

Masculinities can be understood in various ways but one element that remains common to most definitions is its relationship with power. The experience of masculinities is about an entitlement to power. An entitlement that may not translate into an actual experience of power in all situations because our social fabric is a pyramid constructed on class, caste, religious, geographical, ethnic, cultural, sexual and segregation but nevertheless the sense of entitlement is what marks most expressions of masculinities from inside homes to institutions outside. And no doubt this tension between a sense of entitlement and in many cases an experience of powerlessness is a contributory factor to many conflicts that men find themselves caught within.

This section will explore the linkages between conflict, masculinities and violence in different social and political settings from within families to its manifestation in communal, ethnic and nationalist expressions.

Skills Building

At the heart of this project is to design a curriculum that works through the triad of epistemology, pedagogy and cognition to generate critical knowledge that can be utilized by

fellows to build grass root interventions that effectively address masculinities and gender based violence. The roots of knowledge around gender, the implication of translating this knowledge into training and curricula that gives primacy to processes of learning rather than prescriptive models of change are the central concerns that will facilitate both the design of the curricula and the training methodologies.

There exists in South Asia a pool of knowledge and skill that has been generated through several years of application in community situation. It is the aim of this project to collate the learning from these interventions and transfer it into a curriculum that generates knowledge not only towards a better understanding of the various ways in which masculinities operates and affects community lives but also provides the skill to negotiate these situations with effective programming. The curricula will set out a skill imparting section that will acquaint the participants with ongoing interventions, strategies and tools that are being utilized. However, importance will be given to critically reflect on these and develop appropriate strategies for each location where the fellows will intervene rather than blindly adopt methods that have been followed by others.

Module 0

UNDERSTANDING MASCULINITIES

I. Introduction

Gender norms and categories are directly related to the distribution of power among genders, and hence to issues of social justice, equity and human rights. ‘Power’, in turn, relates to the control over both symbolic as well as material goods. That is, the *ideas* we hold about men and women – their ‘appropriate’ roles, capacities, and characteristics – along with the access they enjoy to *material resources* go towards determining their positions with respect to each other. Hence, both symbolic and material processes are of crucial importance when we plan upon affecting changes in oppressive social structures and conditions. *All* social contexts are gendered, and the gendered nature of social contexts ‘means that neither male nor female power can be examined entirely in isolation’ (Malhotra and Mather 1997:603). ‘Gender’ is, therefore, a *relationship*.

Hence, the study of feminine, masculine and trans-gender identities concerns the exploration of *power relationships* within the contemporary gender landscape, where certain dominant ideals of manhood impact on women, different ways of being men, as well those identities that may not fit either gender category. This way of engaging with ‘gender’ is an exploration into the taken-for-granted category of ‘man’.

Masculinity refers to the *socially produced but embodied ways of being male*. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks ‘proper’ to men and women (‘men work in offices, women do housework’), and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived antithesis, femininity. 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. The mass media is one of the most important means for the transmission, circulation and reception of local and global masculine identities. With the rise of new technologies

of media and communication, representations of masculinities find both local and global anchoring. In this sense, the media becomes a transformative force field with a capacity to change structures of belief.

In order to stand in a relationship of superiority to feminine identity, masculinity must be represented as possessing characteristics that are the binary opposite of (actual or imagined) feminine identity. However, this is not all. Dominant masculinity stands in a relationship not just to femininity but *also to those ways of being male* that are seen to deviate from the ideal. It is in this sense that masculinity possesses both external (relating to women) as well as an internal (relating to 'other' men) characteristics. It is also for this reason that we speak of *masculinities* rather than masculinity (in the singular).

There is also the need to differentiate the linked ideas of 'patriarchy' and 'masculinity'. Patriarchy refers to a *system* of social organization which is fundamentally organised around the idea of men's superiority to women. Within this system, even those who may not approximate to the male ideal (such as homosexual men) still stand to benefit from the privileges attached to being a man. So, as a parallel, we might think of the situation on apartheid era South Africa where all whites – those who supported apartheid and those who opposed it – were potential beneficiaries of the institutionalised privileges of being white. Though it is difficult to posit simple definitions of 'patriarchy' and 'masculinity', we might say that patriarchy refers to the systemic relationship of power between men and women, whereas masculinity concerns both inter and intra-gender relationships. And, while it cannot be argued that under patriarchy *all* forms of masculinity are equally valourised, there is nevertheless an overwhelming consensus regarding the superiority of men over women. Patriarchy 'makes' men superior, whereas masculinity is the process of producing superior men.

The ideas of 'making' and 'producing' are crucial to the study of gender identities, for they point to their historical and social nature. The gigantic archive of 'proper'

masculine behaviour – in novels, films, advertisements, and folk-advice – would clearly be unnecessary if it was a naturally endowed characteristic. The very fact that masculinity must consistently be reinforced – ‘if you buy this motor-cycle you’ll be a real man’ – says something about the tenuous and fragile nature of gender identities; they must continually be reinforced. Following from this, we might also say that masculinity is *enacted* rather than expressed. For, when we say that something is ‘expressed’, we are working with the idea that it ‘already exists’, and gender identities in particular do not *already* exist (say, biologically). There is an entire task of building and rebuilding, consolidation, representation, and enforcement; in other words we must think of gender identities as works in progress.

A crucial task of this course is to foreground the social nature of gender identities and simultaneously explore possibilities of interventions. When we speak of ‘gender’, we are speaking of *social* and *cultural* attributes within human society. This approach moves away from the biologism that has historically been part of the study of gender and sexual identities. Biologism is the thinking that suggests that gender and sexual identities:

- are biologically derived
- have been historically stable (i.e. the same since the ‘dawn of time’)
- are ‘essentially’ about our ‘private’ lives, and,
- are ‘basically’ the same across different cultures
- are normative.

To imagine identities and behaviours as socially and historically constituted is also to imagine the possibility of effecting change in a desired direction. For, if masculine identities vary across time and space – appear in different forms at different times and are different across societies – therein lies the possibility of formulating appropriate

policy measures and programmes and projects to influence the contexts within which gender inequalities persist.

Masculinities have been defined and understood in different ways by scholars and activists. However, what is important for our purpose is to understand its relationship with power and violence. Masculinities are a set of practices that include manners of speech, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks that define what is 'appropriate' to men and women and very importantly it is the story by which it poses itself as superior to femininity, which is perceived as its binary opposite. Men often feel that masculinities is something that they carry somewhere deep inside themselves and it manifests itself with biological maturation. In other words from boyhood to becoming men is a passage that includes besides biological growth and maturation, a logical and linear development of masculinities. However, masculinity is not an essence that all men carry but socially produced notions and ideas about how men should act and behave. Thus the appearance of facial and bodily hair in adolescent young boys is not merely a sign of biological maturation but is given an added significance by systems of masculinities as transition to becoming a 'real' man, including the attachment of values to hair such as power, prestige, etc. This what we mean when we say that masculinities are socially produced but embodied, that is carried by men on their body, ways of being men. It is this embodiment that makes men feel that masculinities is something that is 'natural' and an essence that they carry.

Masculinities is almost always described as superior to femininity. By posing masculinities as something that is superior, men are able to provide a logic and justification to support their practice of authority, control and sense of power. Therefore, men appropriate for themselves the position of being decision makers or controlling and restricting the mobility of women, which in turn creates and sets up systems of deprivation and discrimination. Since women are weaker they should not venture out is the logic by which women are denied access to education, work and

personal growth and men thus appropriate for themselves the idea of being economic agents and assign the role of home-makers to women.

While masculinity is almost always defined as the experience of power, it is important to note that men's experience of power will also depend on where they stand in the social hierarchy of class, caste, sexual disposition, physical attributes, cultural background, etc. The experience of power is never absolute for men but at the same time because of their gender position the sense of entitlement to power remains intact. Therefore it is more useful to describe masculinities as a sense of entitlement to power that men carry because of their being men but ironically, however hard they may try, this entitlement never translates into an absolute experience. The only space where even men who occupy the lowest rungs of social hierarchy are most likely to experience power is vis a vis women and children in the domestic sphere. It has been pointed out that if masculinities is to be challenged then men need to understand these contradictory power flows that dictate the ways in which they act and behave.

This module will be taught through the following sub themes that have been identified by Raewyn Connell as crucial to understanding masculinities:

- (a) plurality of masculinities
- (b) hierarchy of masculinities or how do different forms of masculinities relate with each other
- (c) hegemonic masculinity
- (d) active participation of men in maintaining structures of masculinities
- (e) the contradictions between desires and the logic of hegemonic masculinity
- (f) cultural and historical nature of masculinities

I. Plurality of Masculinities

If we were to ask a group of men in a room to describe their experiences of masculinity, we are most likely to receive a wide range of response that demonstrates that men understand and experience masculinity in very different ways. Often we fall into the trap of seeing masculinities only through the lens of sex roles. This is inadequate because it doesn't go beyond talking about the social experience of learned norms of conduct and behaviour. To understand masculinities we have to look beyond sex roles and examine masculinities as a wide set of practices that reflect the gendered nature of power, which includes the economic and political spheres of our social life. The narratives of the experience of masculinities that will emerge from shared experiences will demonstrate that there is no single pattern to masculinities. Different cultures and different periods of history throw up different forms of masculinities. Some cultures eschew violence and others celebrate it but that doesn't mean that masculinities is absent from cultures that are less violent, these cultures may have a different way of expressing and practicing dominant forms of masculinities. That is why we use the word masculinities in plural. There are different kinds of masculinities based on class, caste, culture, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

The plurality of masculinities is not restricted to different sets of cultures. Even within one cultural setting we will find different practices of masculinities. Within any one community, worksite or peer group there are going to be multiple understanding of masculinities and thereby the gendered response of men.

II. Hierarchy and Hegemony

These different forms of masculinities do not peacefully reside alongside each other, they share a relationship with each other which is fraught with tensions, struggles and alliances.

The form of masculinity which is culturally dominant in a given setting is called 'hegemonic masculinity'. Hegemonic signifies a position of cultural authority and

leadership, not total dominance; other forms of masculinity persist alongside. Also, the hegemonic masculinity need not be the most common form of masculinity but rather the most visible. Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. In other words, while men as a group enjoy a set of privileges and power vis a vis women, hegemonic masculinities appropriates for itself the largest share of these privileges and power.

The concept of cultural hegemony, developed by the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, refers to the processes by which dominant culture maintains its dominant position. He developed his ideas in the context of the process of moral and intellectual leadership through which the subordinated classes of post 1870 industrial Western Europe consent to their own domination by ruling classes and this consent was created not through coercion or force but through the inculcation of the ideals of the hegemonic group. This consent is sought to be created through beliefs, explanations, perceptions and values spread through systems of education, mass media, literature, etc.

As discussed earlier, men's experience of power is negotiated through a complex web of class, caste and other hierarchies and higher the men are in the pyramid of social hierarchy more will be their share of power. Hegemonic in this context represents the top most form of masculinity which corners for itself the maximum benefits and power and it does so by not only the subjugation of women but also by subjugating other forms of masculinities. So it can be said that masculinity is an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women. The hierarchy of masculinities is an expression of the unequal shares in that privilege held by different groups of men.

III. Collective Masculinities

The gender norms of a society define patterns of conduct as 'masculine' and others as 'feminine'. At one level, these patterns characterise individuals. Thus we say that a particular man or woman is masculine, or behaves in a masculine way. We have seen in the sections above that there is no single pattern to masculinities. In each society and

culture there are always several practices that get associated with masculinity. However there is a collective aspect of masculinities as represented by the army, the police, gangs, sports, institutions like the school, corporations, factories, the state, etc.

In all these instances certain specific kinds of masculinities are constructed and valued and invariably it is the hegemonic variety of masculinity that is not only generated but provided legitimacy through the functioning of these institutions. While different notions and ideas of masculinities may be carried into these institutions by individual men but the structures of these institutions, their systems of training, their hierarchy of levels and rewards ensure that there is an ordering of all these different masculinities hierarchically with the hegemonic variety being the most rewarded and therefore the most sought and most enacted. The collective aspect of masculinities refers to these practices embedded in social processes through these institutions, it is the collective enactment of these different masculinities that help to sustain, perpetuate and circulate the codes of conduct and hierarchical cultures within and outside these institutions.

A number of studies have been conducted on aspects of collective masculinities in different social setting and contexts. Many of these studies have looked at peer cultures of young boys in school or neighbourhood settings. These studies suggest that violence and aggression amongst young boys predominantly occurs through norm setting in these highly organised peer cultures that have very strict codes of conduct. These peer cultures display power hierarchies that have to be constantly regulated and maintained through practices of individual as well as collective aggression. The entry points to these collectives and securing position in these cultures is almost always marked by proving your masculinity, by taking risk These oppressive behaviour patterns are the route to confirm their position and a sense of belonging within the highly hierarchical peer groups. The maintenance of prestige and the achievement of status within these collectives are through an elaborate system of competition marked by behaviour patterns based on humiliation, abusive language, bullying, aggressive body language and

sometimes violence. A process of subordination of other boys through hetero sexist and homophobic talk is a constant reminder within these groups of the importance of rejecting and the putting down of anything perceived as feminine. This in turn makes for the collective expression of masculinity of these groups based on toughness, male bonding and the denigration of the 'weak' and the feminine.

IV. Active Constructions

Masculinities do not exist prior to social behaviour, either as bodily states or fixed personalities. Rather, masculinities come into existence as people act, as they make choices or as they perform. There is almost always the act of doing that is associated with masculinities, which means that men have to act or behave in certain 'masculine' ways that have been deemed appropriate to their gender and only then will they qualify to be called real men. If men do not follow these rigid norms then they may be called 'not man enough' or effeminate or described through some other term that will have derogatory connotation. These patterns of conducting oneself according to what masculinities decrees as appropriate is a social process that is learnt from early childhood and is practiced in the domestic sphere as well as in all other social institutions. These ways of conducting oneself are important because they ensure whether you will be accepted or rejected as men. They, thus, become both a vehicle of entering the world of men as well as achieving the milestones against which men have to judge their success of becoming 'real' men. So when men follow the path paved by masculinities then they are making a choice and that is what we mean when we use the term active construction, that men are not born with masculinities as a given biological aspect of their lives but that it is a state that men constantly strive to achieve by doing things that are deemed appropriate for men.

For instance, crime is not a fixed masculine character but acts of crime may enable some men to experience power, money, sex, risk taking, etc. And all these elements play an

important role in achieving and proving to themselves that they are men as defined or understood in their peer groups.

V. Internal Complexity

One of the key reasons why masculinities are unstable is that they are not simple, homogenous patterns. By unstable is meant that men's success on the gender scale is always measured against extremely exacting standards of masculinities and this includes being bread winners, protectors, leaders, winners, etc. besides of course sexually potent and performance driven and most men are not able to achieve these standards all the time in all situations and throughout their lives. This often creates a sense of inadequacy as well as a sense of loss at not being able to follow one's heart. It is not uncommon to hear from men that they were forced to take up a certain career or that they couldn't express themselves emotionally in different situations because that is not how men are supposed to behave or conduct themselves. So, masculinities always exerts a pressure on men to present themselves in certain ways that may go against what they desire or feel thereby posing a certain inherent challenge and instability. For instance, we may often hear from women stories of how supportive their fathers were about their education or careers or interest in sports and if dug deeper these stories also reveal the kind of resistance that these fathers had to face, so the presence of masculinities in men's lives does not mean that there aren't desires to move away from the strictures that these systems place on men. It is important to observe and understand this complexity of desires, emotions or possibilities because they are the sources and resources of tension and change in gender patterns.

VI. Dynamics

From the fact that different masculinities exist in different cultures and historical periods we can conclude that norms concerning masculine behaviour are able to change. The layering of masculinities displays the sources of change and the hierarchy of masculinities the motives for change. The fact that there is no one masculinity and the

ideas, notions and practices linked with masculinity keep changing from culture to culture and even within one cultural setting means that we are dealing with not one but several ways of being men and along with that multiple ways in which gender relations are established and organised. Also as discussed earlier these different forms of masculinities are often locked in a bitter battle of trying to prove their supremacy and it is this tension that can be the source of change as far as masculinities is concerned. The other linked factor that there is a hierarchy of masculinities that gets set through several social processes including those of caste, class, sexuality, etc. reflects the real possibility of men rejecting the systems of power that keep pushing them into deeper and deeper conflicts both internally and externally, with other men as well as women.

The dynamics of masculinities refers to the fact that particular masculinities take form and shape, historically and may also disappear over time or get replaced by other forms. For instance, if we were to take the case of the Gorkhas who are celebrated as a martial race. Their becoming a martial race is linked to colonial history and their gradual absorption into the British army. However, over time now their link to the armies in India and Britain have diminished and the more educated Gorkhas don't want to have anything to do with the past and no longer want to be identified as the Gorkha soldiers who were famous for bravery and masculinity. This however does not mean that masculinities has disappeared from Gorkha society and culture but just that it has been replaced by certain other forms of masculinities, for instance, education and corporate jobs in foreign countries may have become the new markers for Gorkha men to gain prestige and power within the community.

Glossary of Key Terms

Masculinity

Masculinity refers to the socially produced but embodied ways of being men. Its manifestations include manners of speech, behaviour, gestures, social interaction, a division of tasks 'appropriate' to men and women and an overall narrative that positions it as superior to its perceived opposite, femininity. It has also been defined as a sense of entitlement to power. An entitlement that men feel is theirs because of their being men. It is important to note here that the word being used is 'entitlement' and not 'experience'. This distinction is important because men do not experience power all the time and in all situations however they do feel a sense of entitlement because of their gender position.

Manhood

Manhood refers to the qualities and attributes that men achieve through both a biological maturation and passage of rites into adulthood. Manhood is mostly associated with sex roles assigned to the male sex and mile stones men have to cross to be called 'real men'

Manliness

Manliness refers to the manifestation of qualities that are associated with providing meaning to gender identity and gender roles for men. Qualities such as strength, taking risks, bravery are all signs of manliness.

Feminist perspective

A feminist perspective includes, the awareness of a wrong, the development of a sense of sisterhood based on a shared sense of wrong, the autonomous definition by women

of their goals and strategies for addressing the wrong and, a vision of the society based on principles of equality and equity.

Women's Rights

A women's rights movement refers to struggles for winning for women equality with men in all aspects of society and gaining access to all rights and opportunities enjoyed by men in the institutions of that society.

Women's Emancipation

This refers to freedom from biological and societal restrictions. A freedom to determine and decide one's own destiny. And it also refers to an autonomous social position, that is, the opportunity to earn one's own status and not to gain it through marriage or other relationships with men. It means financial independence; freedom to choose one's lifestyle and sexual preference.

Patriarchy

This is the manifestation and institutionalisation of men's dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of men's dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources.

Gender

Gender is the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is a set of cultural roles. Gender has also been

defined as the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes. In other words, gender is concerned with the way human society deals with human bodies and the many consequences of that 'dealing' in our personal and collective lives.

Sex-Gender system

This refers to the institutionalised system which allots resources, property and privileges to persons according to culturally defined gender roles. For instance it is sex, that determines that women should be child bearers but it is the sex gender system that determines that women should be child rearers.

Sexism

Sexism defines the ideology of male supremacy, of male superiority and of beliefs that support and sustain it.

Misogyny

Fear or hatred of women. Misogyny is central to sexist prejudice and ideology and is an important basis for the oppression of females in male-dominated societies. Misogyny is manifested in many different ways, from jokes to literature to violence to the self-contempt women may be taught to feel toward their own bodies. Though most common in men, misogyny also exists in and is practiced by women against other women or even themselves. Misogyny functions as an ideology or belief system that has been part and parcel of patriarchal, or male-dominated societies for thousands of years and continues to place women in subordinate positions with limited access to power and decision making.

Phallogentric

A term in feminist theory used to describe the way society regards the phallus or penis as a symbol of power, and believes that attributes of masculinity are the norm for cultural definitions. The phallogentric fallacy in disciplines is the assumption that 'person' stands for male and therefore that women's experience has made no contribution to disciplinary methods or content. This perspective makes women unknowable. Feminists argue that phallogentrism is a source of women's oppression in education. Feminist literary critics also draw attention to how phallogentrism in literature establishes the idea that artistic creativity is a masculine quality.

Homophobia

This refers to an irrational fear and antipathy of homosexual men and women as well as of transgender people which manifests itself through discrimination, violence, humiliation and prejudice. Homophobia can be seen in individual responses, as a culture and also as institutionalised form of discrimination.

Heteronormativity

The institutionalization of heterosexuality in a society which results in the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles where heterosexuality is viewed as the only normal or acceptable sexual orientation is referred to as heteronormativity. Instances of this include the idea that people fall into two distinct and complementary categories (male and female), that sexual and marital relations are normal only when between people of different sexes, and that each sex has certain natural roles in life. The heteronormative view is that physical sex, gender identity, and gender roles should, in any given person, align to either all-male or all-female cultural norms.

Transgender

Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behaviour does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else; gender expression refers to the way a person communicates gender identity to others through behaviour, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics. There is no precise definition to the experience of being transgender and the term is under constant scrutiny and reformulations.

Intersex

A variety of conditions that lead to atypical development of physical sex characteristics are collectively referred to as intersex conditions. These conditions can involve abnormalities of the external genitals, internal reproductive organs, sex chromosomes, or sex-related hormones.

Transsexual

Transsexualism is an individual's identification with a gender inconsistent or not culturally associated with his or her biological sex. Simply put, it defines a person whose biological birth sex conflicts with his or her psychological gender.

Transvestite

A person and especially a male who adopts the dress and often the behaviour associated culturally with the opposite sex especially for purposes of emotional or sexual gratification.

Queer

Originally, "queer" was simply just another word for strange, unusual, or weird. It was also used earlier as an anti-gay epithet. More recently, it has been reclaimed by non-heterosexuals as a word used to describe themselves. Practices that are not heterosexual, heteronormative or gender binary are part of queer practices. **Queer theory** is a field of critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of LGBT studies and feminist studies. Queer theory includes both queer readings of texts and the theorisation of 'queerness' itself. Queer theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self and upon gay/lesbian studies' close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities. Queer theory challenges either/or, essentialist notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality within the mainstream discourse, and instead posits an understanding of sexuality that emphasizes shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context. "To queer" is to render "normal" sexuality as strange and unsettled, to challenge heterosexuality as a naturalized social-sexual norm and promote the notion of "non-straightness," challenging the hegemony of "straight" ideology. This emphasis on non-straightness lends queer theory its assimilationist, anti-essentialist cast, for when one considers the realms of fantasy, the unconscious, repression, and denial, much that is ostensibly considered "heterosexual" easily falls within the realm of queer.

Ideology

Ideology as a term is rooted in the writings of German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They defined Ideology as "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas ... The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production." The entirety or the system of ideas of the ruling class would be the Ideology of a given society. The function of ideology would be the continual reproduction of the means of production and thereby to ensure the continuous dominance of the ruling class. Ideology achieves this by distorting reality. While in fact the split in ruling and

subservient social classes is artificial (i.e. man made) and serves the needs of the economic system, the ideas of ideology makes it appear natural. It makes the subordinate classes accept a state of alienation against they would otherwise revolt. This state of alienation has also been referred to as "false consciousness". This definition has since been critiqued and gone through many changes

The Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci has contributed significantly to expand our understanding of the term. He introduced the concept of *hegemony* by which he means that ideology's power derives primarily from consent as opposed to the use of force. Secondly, Gramsci argued to expand ideology from a set or formal ideas to include "common sense." By the latter he means everyday attitudes, behaviours and habits which have been assimilated from ruling class ideas, i.e. they appear completely natural or commonsensical, yet they originally came into being as artificial concepts that served the purpose of a specific social group. The French critic Louis Althusser built on this concept to articulate two types of "apparatuses" for maintaining dominance: "repressive state apparatuses", for instance, the army, police, etc. which have explicit agendas to exert control and "Ideological State Apparatuses" like the media, education, the family which often function semi-independently and without explicit intent to exert control. Ideology, along with *discourse*, are the two central concepts in understanding the cultural transmission of ideas, values, and assumptions.

Discourse

Discourse is generally used to designate the forms of representation, codes, conventions and habits of language that produce specific fields of culturally and historically located meanings. In the humanities and sometimes the social sciences, 'discourse' refers to a formalized way of thinking that can be manifested through language, a social boundary defining what can be said about a specific topic

Discourses are seen to affect our views on all things; it is not possible to avoid discourse. For example, two notably distinct discourses can be used about various jihadi movements describing them either as "freedom fighters" or "terrorists". In other words, the chosen discourse provides the vocabulary, expressions and perhaps also the style needed to communicate.

Discourse is closely linked to different theories of power and state, at least as long as defining discourses is seen to mean defining reality itself. This conception of discourse is largely derived from the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault.

Suggested Readings

Connell, Raewyn; Masculinities, University of California Press, 2005

Roy, Rahul; A little book on men, Yoda Press, 2009

Suggested Films

When Four Friends Meet, dir, Rahul Roy, 2000

Module I

SELF, GENDER & MASCULINITIES

Preamble

At the end of this module the fellows are expected to:

- have deeper insight into the personal experiences, social and cultural processes that have gone into the making of their (& others) gendered identities,
- to reflect on the privileges and costs associated with this socialisation, in the context of their life and understand and share the vulnerabilities produced by it, &
- use this increased self awareness and ability to deepen knowledge around course modules on gender and masculinities.

I. Introduction

This module will provide for self exploratory methods of identifying the role and practice of gender in our lives; a look at the costs, privileges that it brings to our lives and those of others around us. It will also explore socialisation and our own peculiar subjectivities in an attempt to create self distance from dominant gender stereotypes and aim to create spaces to talk, and share, where discontent and resistances can be recognised and named.

The module addresses the self/history of the person within the context of that person's gender. However, discussion on the construction of masculinities is a lens that we are adding to this debate on self without necessarily subtracting the usual focus on women. Our approach follows from the notion that 'gender' is relational and in order to fully comprehend its meaning, we must explore how different genders – women, men, and trans-genders – relate to each other.

The module for self and gender has been developed based on some key assumptions.

First, as products of patriarchal societies, we have been influenced by our socialisation processes. The process starts at birth and seeps into our identity in crucial and undeniable ways. These sites of socialisation include the family, schools, community, religious institutions, public spaces etc. They influence who we are, what we do, how we think, the relationships we form & the way we form them, how we live, love and experience the world around us.

Secondly, the module recognises that while there may be commonalities in our experiences, the process of identity formation and gendering is also an innately unique process. Our personal histories, the kind of people our significant others/parents were, our own abilities or disabilities, encounters with violence, love, affection and abuse have shaped us into the kinds of persons we are.

Another concept that guides this module is emotional health and how that can be challenged or compromised by our life experiences, rigid societal expectations of men and women. Looking at

emotions is a key way of problematising existing models of masculinities where the limited list of acceptable masculine emotions can be restrictive. Being emotionally healthy involves being able to take a critical yet accepting look at ourselves, understanding our emotions and reactions, learning to accept our selves and through that process, others. It also requires that we are able to translate this competence in our relationships with others, through expressing our emotions and needs assertively without being aggressive or passive and being aware of and responsive to others especially those whose identities are less privileged than ours. As activists, seeking to understand and question social and cultural processes, our struggle must essentially be grounded in the study of the self. Without attempting to understand, know and accept our own selves, attempts to know, understand or accept others invariably remain half measures, incomplete and distorted. In other words, there is an inevitable link between regard for self, self awareness and awareness, respect and regard for others. So this module will require participants to look at the mirror and enhance their awareness of who they are – blemishes and all.

Lastly, it has become increasingly clear over the years of work on gender that there is a need to build a perspective on oppression and violence that does not limit it to gender and patriarchy. It is important to encompass other markers of inequality and subordination such as religion, ethnicity, caste, class, sexuality and nationality. There is a need for an intersectional understanding of oppression and violence so that we can better understand the dynamics of power and also our own personal positions within that discourse.

II. Analysing the key concepts

The invisibility of gender to men and their inability to look at themselves as gendered beings remains the biggest challenge in creating spaces of self reflection that could contribute to challenging dominant forms and practices of masculinities. Looking inward can be challenging for men for two reasons. On the one hand, because the overt message from a patriarchal society for men is that ‘You are OK simply because you are a man’. On the other hand the somewhat covert message is that ‘to be men you must be strong, powerful, potent, an aspect

that provides the link with masculinity. We could argue that men are socialised into being 'outward' looking and not exploring their problems, blemishes or owning up to chinks in their armour because they have to struggle against two forces, viz., patriarchy and masculinity.

Consciousness raising in feminist practice has been linked to sharing personal stories that trace the trajectory of socialisation and experiences around injustices and victim hood. These have been at the heart of the women's struggle against discrimination and personal histories of violence have fuelled the women's movement and as such the notion that women are the natural constituents for change in the struggle for a more gender just society has firm roots in our imagination.

***Is there a parallel process for men or for groups that do not wish to identify with this binary?
Is there value in sharing in mixed groups?***

We also see that within the definition of masculinity all forms and ways of being a man are not equally valorised. All men do not always make it to this higher ideal and that men unlike women do not always talk about it. What are the standards of masculinities and are these internalised expectations of masculinity possible to satisfy or attain? According to Michael Kauffman *'Whether it is physical or financial accomplishment, or the suppression of a range of human emotions and needs, the imperatives of manhood (as opposed to the simple certainties of biological maleness), seem to require constant vigilance and work, especially for younger men. The personal insecurities conferred by a failure to make the masculine grade, or simply, the threat of failure, is enough to propel many men, particularly when they are young, into a vortex of fear, isolation, anger, self-punishment, self-hatred, and aggression'*

Are there stories that can be told and like the stories of women, can they be used to understand private fears and discontents through a collective process?

If we understand gender as social practice, then we need to understand that it is generated through definite structures and sites. According to Connell, *'practice that relates to these structures and sites, generated as people and groups grapple with their historical situations,*

does not consist of isolated acts. Actions are configured in larger units and when we speak of masculinity and femininity we are naming configurations of gender practice'. Analysis of this practice can be individual- often referred to as personality and character; other sites of analysis can be family, culture or religion and also institutions such as the state, workplace, media and school. Each of these sites contribute to the making of our gender identities through messages; spoken or unspoken, overt or implied over the course of our lives. These messages are internalised and continue to shape and be shaped by experiences in our lives.

Messages are inherently part of the socialisation process for *both* males and females. These norms lead to inflexible gender stereotyping which impact women in obvious ways e.g. restricted mobility, withdrawal from school, control over interactions with males (Greene, 1997. "Watering the neighbours" garden: Investing in adolescent girls in India") and heightened threat and presence of violence (Verma, R.K. 2005. From research to action-addressing masculinity and gender norms to reduce HIV/AIDS related risky behaviour among young men in India). However, it is important to recognise that they also affect men and boys, where privileges such as autonomy, mobility, opportunity and power create a specific set of vulnerabilities and pressures for men (Greene 1997). This could be a distinctive vulnerability to child sexual abuse because of the perception that boys do not need to be protected and can take care of themselves or because boys are likely to minimise the impact of sexual violence experienced as a child. (Aangan, Rozan 2007 -The Bitter Truth', An analysis of 200 letters from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in Pakistan). Other examples of vulnerability include bodily harm through engagement with work that involves risk, risky behaviour such as unprotected sex, and increased exposure and engagement with violence on the streets.

Men can be victims too where because of placement within other markers of identity such as age, sexual orientation religious or ethnic minorities men face violence, abuse and discrimination. There is a need to explore and understand men's relationship to victimhood. Victims, for men, are the 'othered', defined as 'helpless', 'weak', 'stupid', or 'decent'. What is also apparent is the bravado with which this violence is faced and how the threat to self and

body, and even wounds are minimized. How men respond to victimization is also gendered. Responding aggressively and unflinchingly to other men's physical aggression or sexual aggression can be a sign of manhood.

For men to acknowledge victimhood and pain associated with it requires the relinquishing of a particular perception of masculinity that many are not yet prepared to do. Yet, they clearly are victims: of rape, as witnesses to violence within homes, of physical beating in schools, in sectarian conflict and violent wars waged by nation states. These experiences must be understood as important drivers of men's responses to violence against weaker groups, and of their awareness of power and its abuse. In empathizing with the victimhood of others, one's own associations with feeling helpless and powerless often come into play and can serve as a barrier if this experience is uncomfortable or unacceptable. (*Humqadam, Rozan, 2012- Will the real men please stand up - Stories of Five men and their affirmative action against Sexual Violence*)

With respect to violence, men and women have often been seen in binaries, as victims or as perpetrators, as the oppressed and the oppressor. It is important to explore, understand, accept that each one of us has aspects of both based on the dynamics of how these other markers of power play out in our lives. So a woman can be the oppressed in her relationship with her husband but be physically abusive in her relationship with her children. What we need to understand is that power is fluid, in flux always changing always shifting. Violence, how it is defined, in what context e.g. playground, office, street etc. what it means, what are the gains for different types of men and women in behaving violently and what are the costs of giving it up need to be explored within the context of our own lives.

The price for stepping out of these rigid gender moulds is high and the society through formal (school discipline, police, customary and state law) and informal practices (peer pressure, family norms) ensures that the individual finds it difficult to step out. In addition to external forces that keep any resistance, deviation in check, there are internal expectations, images of the self leading to guilt and feelings of inadequacy that keep us from exploring aspects of our

being that may seem healthier and more attractive. With women, this need to break free can be a rewarding experience as 'becoming male' is subscribing to a superior gender order although associated with censure or actual physical threat to self. For men to become feminine is associated with becoming the 'other' looked down upon gender. This becomes problematic especially for men as often the negation of feminine traits is important to their identity as a man, and *'being feminine is the antithesis of masculinity'* and because masculine and feminine are not simple opposites but arranged along a hierarchal scale.

Within this back drop it is important to explore our attitudes and assumptions about ourselves, our abilities, people, events and the world around us and how these are coloured and influenced by our socialization. And more importantly what is the cost that we pay for being socialized with a view to our emotional or physical health, what vital dimensions of our being do we give up when we are channelled into rigidly defined gender moulds. This could range from limiting our ability to develop our capacities, skills and interest, expressions of our sexuality and ability to form meaningful rewarding relationships. Attitudes can range from deeply personal issues such as how we express love, anger, fear, frustration to more societal issues such as indifference or even participation in cruelty to others and crimes against those less powerful than us.

Many men share the vision of a gender just world- but yet it is difficult for them to travel that path as this requires them to clearly look and come to terms with the costs and benefits that they receive from the structures that they want to challenge. It requires a sharing of power and a comfort in experiencing and expressing powerlessness. Self awareness can be one path towards this. Another is sharing of these difficulties not just amongst themselves but also with women and other vulnerable groups so that we can all recognize the unique challenges that we face when wanting to understand and change; ourselves or the societies that we live in.

III- Definition of some key terms

Emotional health/Self awareness

- Emotional health refers to a person's feeling about him/herself, his/her feelings and behaviour with others, her/his capacity to meet the demands of everyday life. This includes :
 1. *Self-awareness*: The ability to reflect on one's own life and self with a critical, yet understanding, eye and the awareness of one's strengths/weaknesses, emotions, needs, etc.
 2. *Management of feelings/emotions*: The ability to monitor and control one's emotions. Control, however, does not mean stopping emotions, but having enough control over them to be able to express them in variety of ways -- and then, consciously and responsibly, deciding how to best express them in a given situation.
 3. *Motivation*: The driving force, energy, and hope that comes from having a purpose, goal, and interest in one's life.
 4. *Interpersonal skills*: The ability to relate to other people and to form healthy, fulfilling, and meaningful relationships in one's life.
 5. *Empathy*: The ability to understand other people's feelings and needs and to be able to look at things from their point of view. (Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence 1995)

Intersectionality:

- Intersectionality is a sociological theory suggesting that—and seeking to examine how— various socially and culturally constructed categories of discrimination interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of

multiple forms of discrimination. (Knudsen, Susanne. "Intersectionality—A Theoretical Inspiration in the Analysis of Minority Cultures and Identities in Textbooks)

- Gender is a way of structuring social practice in general, not a specific type of practice, it is unavoidably involved with other social structures... Gender intersects with race and class...constantly interacts with nationality and position in the world order. (R.W. Connell, Masculinities 1995)

This has implications for the analysis of masculinities for instance they are constructed not only in relation to women but also to other men e.g. of a different class, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.

IV. Recommended Readings

Five readings and one film have been recommended as part of this module. They have been chosen as they explore and analyse different areas that will come under discussion in this module.

1) 'Engendering school children in Bali' by Parker, Lynette

This article explores a critical site for gendering: the school. It highlights the gendered nature of instruction, of teacher student and student to student interaction, physical settings, disciplining etc. but also challenges the sex role socialization theory as somewhat mechanistic and limiting for our understanding of how children are gendered. It argues that states '**children will not turn out like their parents; that societies will not duplicate themselves; that there will be wide variation among individuals in any one group; that some cultural notions, meanings and practices will be taken for granted and others shared, modified and argued over**'....and concludes that '**individuals, through their gendered subjectivities, and especially through their experience of relations with others, constitute their own gendered being**'. This is an important concept to explore as often when we look at gender, there is a tendency to ignore nuances of subjectivities and agency of the individuals and focus instead in commonalities which can be simplistic and in the

long run misleading, as then we fail to capture or appreciate the process of socialization which goes beyond *cultural reproduction* to *cultural creation* and opportunities and sites of resistance and action.

2) 'The Limits of Masculinity' by Andrew Tolson

This article is an account of the author's experience of being in a men's group and is a fascinating exploration of consciousness raising and the search for a language for men for self reflection. Can the experience of masculinity, primarily constructed around a position of domination be unpacked in the same way as women's experience, constructed from a position of subordination? These are the issues explored in Andrew Tolson's article.

3) 'But no one has explained to me who I am now'..... "Trans" Self-Perceptions in Sri Lanka' by Shermal Wijewardene

This article is based on 4 in-depth interviews with two transsexuals in Sri Lanka and presents their journey in framing their identity in a society that is violently intolerant of diversity. The focus is on the importance of *'acts of perception for these two individuals— others' perceptions of their gender expression as well as their self-perception of their gender behaviour*. It highlights how both are *continuously thrown back on their own imaginative resources to frame their gender difference'*. And how their own self-perceptions have served as the only resource in their lives to represent themselves with dignity in a world that has refuses to recognize them.

4) Will the real men please stand up: Stories of Five Men and their affirmative action against sexual violence. A Rozan Study, 2012

This research study narrates the stories of men who took affirmative actions against sexual violence against men, women and transgender persons in the context of Pakistan. Using life histories as a research tool, the study unpacks the experiences, socialization, motivations, pressures and coping techniques of men who out break popular norms of masculinity.

Findings of the study challenge the popular notion of masculinity as static, unchangeable and biological. It has very real implications for programmes that attempt to work with men on women's issues that use a lens that only displays the privileges associated with men's lives, without attempting to connect with men's own experiences of victimhood and shifting power and authority.

PDF of the study is available the following link: <http://www.engagingmen.net/resource/will-real-men-please-stand>

Module II

CONFLICT, VIOLENCE & MASCULINITIES

I. Introduction

While masculinities are produced and structured through specific practises of everyday life in every society, conflict, violence and war may be seen as the swift horses on which they ride like the horsemen of the Apocalypse to spread and reinforce themselves.

The central concern of this module is to develop a mode of understanding how specific practices of masculinities and femininities are produced by violent conflict and in turn contribute to producing violence. While the areas of development and conflict have received a lot of attention from researchers, there hasn't been adequate attention paid to the linkages between these areas of study through the lens of gender.

In the light of contemporary neo liberal economic surge, marked by massive shifts in the nature of agricultural societies and their produce, privatisation of public services and resources, destruction of labour protection and the under employment of male workers along with exploitation of female labour, it becomes imperative to examine the intersections between gender, violent conflict and development.

It has been suggested by many researchers that contemporary globalisation buttressed by an unprecedented militarisation at the global and local level is neither temporary nor an incidental aspect of capitalism but its very nature and that conflict and war are its organising principles.

An important aspect of this globalisation of conflict and militarisation of economies is its sustenance through the production of specific kinds of gendered ideologies and practices, not so much because of but as centrally embedded ideas of this mode of organising nations and their relationships with each other. Within this module we will examine this aspect in the context of 19th century histories of the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised in South Asia.

EXAMPLES OF PERCEPTIONS OF WAR AND CONFLICT

Gender hierarchies that were based on traditional norms of a domesticated femininity and a public masculinity were the norm during this phase. They were obliquely reinforced by the writings on war of authors like Ernst Junger. Comparing modern war with elemental eruptions like volcanic outbursts, Junger saw war as the supreme force essential for the survival and good health of nations.

“...our elemental substance, the deep primordial strength of the Volk remains untouched... With admiration, we watch how German youth, at the beginning of this crusade of reason to which the world’s nations are called under the spell of such an obvious, transparent dogma, raise the battle cry: glowing, enraptured, hungering after death in a way virtually unique in our history.

If one of these youths had been asked his motives for taking the field, the answer, certainly would have been less clear... but perhaps he would have offered the response, “for Germany” – that phrase with which the volunteer regiments went on the attack. “(Ernst Junger, Total Mobilisation, p133)

Such glorifications of violent conflict have been seen as masculine posturings that reinforce the divided gender identities of men and women.

“... the fundamental difference between creating life in the act of childbirth and that of destroying it in that of war... The meaning and importance given to a military weapon and to the sexual weapon are equal. Man uses his weapon like he uses his gun: to conquer, control and possess. The whole of macho society must be unveiled, and condemned because in the present system, one tries to obtain material goods and territory, not in order to enjoy them, not out of need, but to enlarge one’s domain and authority...”

(Evelyne Accad, The Little Magazine, Vo 2 no. 1, 2001)

It is thus important to understand the broader historical background to the emergence of war as an organising principle of nation states and global economies and become aware of some of the key concepts in contemporary scholarly work on modernity, nationalism and conflict.

This module will be taught through the following three sub themes:

- a) **The evolution of modern warfare:** The emergence of levee en masse and total mobilisation transformed warfare from an exploit of the elite to a totalising activity that now dominates the world system and its ruling ideologies. The democratisation of war and its consequences on families, society and nation states.
- b) **The development of reactionary modernism:** Nationalism emerged as the new religion of the state that contained the potential of turning into an enemy of truth and reason. It included the expansion of empires (along with 'scientific' theories of racial superiority); as well as the movements against them, that developed ideologies of a 'glorious past' as a means of countering imperial arrogance. Invariably some of these became counter-discourses of military heroism, technical excellence in some bygone golden era, etc, and crystallised as defining myths of new nation-states.
- c) **Nihilism, violence and political action:** Animus-ridden nature of modernity is an expression of patriarchal culture and is inextricably linked to perpetual war, patriarchy and annihilationism.

II. Evolution of modern warfare

War is the Father of all things: Heraclitus, The Dark One

On one estimate, the past 5600 years of written history have recorded 14,600 wars. This works out to between two and three wars per year (Hillman, 2004). As Hillman remarks, 'All wars are the same war because war is always going on.' But if there is something perennial about war, it lies in the militarist spirit enacted by real warriors, not something God-given, but created. As John Keegan writes at the end of his assessment of Alexander the Great, "His dreadful legacy was to ennoble savagery in the name of

glory and to leave a model of command that far too many men of ambition sought to act out in the centuries to come.” (Keegan, 2004)

However, with the growth of modernity and the rise of nation states, the concept of war itself underwent a profound transformation. Being part of a nation implied the involvement of the common people in its affairs, including defence or offence against other states. From 1792, *levee en masse* (requisition of all able-bodied men for war service) became the practice in Revolutionary France and spread to other nation states as well. Wars were no longer fought in restricted forms by armies of professional soldiers and mercenaries (known as *cabinet wars*). As a result of the *levee*, modern states could account for far larger armies than earlier.

Closer to our time, Ernst Junger (1930), saw modern warfare as requiring the involvement of the entire population – “total mobilisation”, as he named it in a seminal essay written between the two world wars. As Richard Wolin writes in the introduction to Junger’s *Total Mobilisation*, “... Junger viewed the energies released by the Great War (World War 1) as a heroic counter movement to European world-weariness: as a proving ground for an entire set of masculinist warrior virtues that seemed in danger of eclipse at the hands of an effete, decadent, and materialistic *Zivilisation*.”

The use of child soldiers, small arms, new technologies and indiscriminate mass terror to obtain political control, along with the creation and maintenance of a climate of hate, fear, and insecurity, are among the characteristics that distinguish the “newest wars”, and may be seen as confirmation of Junger’s analysis.

In her study of Rio de Janeiro, a city that can be considered an example of a “newest war-zone”, Tatiana Moura (2005) analyses “masculinised” actors within such wars and women’s resistance to masculinised practices in contexts of “formal peace.” She concludes that ‘the near-monopoly by men on the use and possession of firearms’ manifests socialization in a ‘violent and militarized masculinity’, which equate firearms

possession with power. Hegemonic and militarized masculinity, she says, is the common backdrop that unifies the cultures of violence present in all the scales of war (the "old", the "new" and the "newest").

How was warfare transformed from an exploit of the elite to a totalising activity that now dominates the world system and its ruling ideologies? How and why was war 'democratised'? Knowledge of the 'levee en masse', or conscription during the French revolutionary wars and the Napoleonic period helps us understand the 'total wars' of the twentieth century. The confrontational element in nationalism is the crucial factor that led to the crystallisation of international relations into what the psychologist John Mack names an 'enemy system' (Mack 1990). The subversive concept of democracy was itself subverted by state-sponsored military conscription; and via the emergence of fascist ideologies. Clausewitz's theory of war had profound implications, as did the general breakdown of the world system in the European crisis manifested in the Great War (1914-18) and the Second World War.

While the struggle of the ordinary people led to the establishment of democracy in many European nations and in America, we must not see democracy as being limited to a political rule by the majority. It had and has various strands, some of them progressive while the others that welcome conservative or even reactionary ideologies, which we shall discuss in the next section. What is important to note here is the fact that while reactionary movements like Fascism and Nazism embrace democracy, they do so to defeat it. Their majoritarian approach to democracy is tyranny. This is embodied in the concept of the nation as an abstraction worthy of worship and the view of the 'other' as an enemy worthy of total annihilation or subjugation. It is little wonder then that such ideologies began involving the *volk* (people) more and more in wars of 'total mobilisation' against a tangible 'total enemy' which blurred the distinction between the combatants and the civilians.

The twentieth century was witness to between 175 million to over 250 million unnatural deaths in the course of war, massacres, genocide and other politically inspired conflicts. If we assume casualty figures for the two wars as being 20 million dead in the Great (first) War, and 60 million in the second, the proportion of soldiers to civilians in the total number of dead was roughly 43% in 1914-18, but came down to 28% or less in the Second World War (1939-45). In time, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants evaporated and belligerents began targeting civilian populations; evidenced by the large-scale terror-bombings and massacres committed by all sides in World War Two.

Such processes were aided, because as Andrea Dworkin expressed it: men develop a strong loyalty to violence. Men must come to terms with violence because it is the prime component of male identity. Institutionalised in sports, the military, accultured sexuality, the history and mythology of heroism, it is taught to boys until they become its advocates — men, not women. Men become advocates of that which they most fear. In advocacy, they experience mastery of fear. In mastery of fear, they experience freedom. Men transform their fear of male violence into metaphysical commitment to male violence. Violence itself becomes the central definition of any experience that is profound and significant...'

Evelyne Accad, in her essay *On Sexuality and War* (2001), asks whether total annihilation is the only answer to violence. Her own answer is: 'The answer to violence is not violence but non-violence. Jean-Marie Muller has explained it well in the significance of non-violence. For him, "we must find means of action which will not lead us into the mesh of violence, which could quickly take us on a path where we could not master our own violence, and we could become perverted by a logic of destruction, the opposite of what we wish to realise for society and for our children."

Hence, modern warfare evolved from a limited engagement of professional soldiers to a 'levee en masse' in which ordinary citizens were conscripted to fight for the state. Such

escalating conflict had its roots in the rise of modern nation states, particularly Revolutionary France. The upsurge of reactionary ideologies like fascism and Nazism further developed the art of war into a deadly game of 'total mobilisation', which involved the entire population. The glorification of the cult of the male hero aided this transition from limited conflict to total warfare, which led to the death of millions of combatants as well as non-combatants.

III. The development of reactionary modernism

Modernism is usually couched in growth and 'moving forward' and 'becoming modern' but this is problematic because being modern does not really mean being progressive. One can be modern and anti-progressive. This section explores how these seemingly contradictory phenomena meld together in the modern world.

The early modern Enlightenment was an intellectual campaign to reduce the power of religious dogma and authoritarian government and to assert the authority of human reason; in particular the rationality of the new mathematical and experimental sciences. All versions of the Enlightenment attempted to 'eliminate restrictions placed upon bringing to light the truth about human experience' (Stanley Rosen, *The Elusiveness of the Ordinary*; 2002, 46).

However, two significant features of capitalist modernity have altered the pattern of Enlightenment rationality. The first is the sacralisation of the Nation, in other words, the emergence of nationalism as a secular religion; and the second, the adaptation of science and technology to nationalist ends. The first feature nullifies the rationalist challenge to religious dogma, by substituting (or adapting) traditional religiosity with another sacred object, viz., the Nation. The second channelizes scientific pursuits towards the militarist structure of modernity, contributing a new constraint to the pursuit of knowledge. As for religion, it has been transformed from a moral guide and source of ethical knowledge into a badge of political identity.

Science and technology are impressive achievements of the human spirit. But they are ethically neutral, as is mathematics. They cannot be treated as a guide for the journey of the spirit. Monarchical and pre-modern autocratic regimes used the constitutional dogma known as the Divine Right of Kings to govern. With the overthrow of this dogma as the basis of the State, there arrived the idea of democracy, the rule of the demos, or people. But its meaning was contested. Seen institutionally, conservatism sought to counter the idea of democracy and universal adult suffrage via the policy of adult conscription, that is, by making the army open to the public at large. Technology thus became wedded to the pursuit of national might and military power. The project of the nation-state transformed politics and technological pursuits into a means of controlling humanity as a resource for glorious ends. Nationalism is not merely affinity for one's home, which is a natural part of being human. Rather, it is an ideologically enforced affinity, the religion of the state, which requires the mobilisation of sentiment to control large populations. This is why it requires irrationalism, obscurantism and ignorance to sustain itself.

Thus, nationalism always contained the potential of turning into an enemy of the very truth and reason that the Enlightenment had set out to achieve in the modern era. Reactionary modernism is a concept that engages with the actual history of that turn. This history includes the expansion of empires (along with 'scientific' theories of racial superiority) as well as the movements against them, which developed ideologies of a 'glorious past' as a means of countering imperial arrogance. Invariably some of these became counter-discourses of military heroism, technical excellence in some bygone golden era, etc, and crystallised as defining myths of new nation-states. These developments were not homogenous, and often the national movements against European (later to include Japanese) imperialism witnessed fierce internal contests over the defining principles of the emergent demos. Colonial India was the arena for one such prolonged contestation, which arguably, has by no means exhausted its potential for violent conflict. Such are the lines along which civil wars become international ones.

The radicalisation of conservatism in the 20th century, and the concept of 'total mobilisation' witnessed its clearest manifestation in the rise of fascism, which transformed the entire state into a machinery for militaristic expansionism. Fascist ideologies embrace democracy to defeat it, and a majoritarian approach to democracy is tyranny. Today many modern democracies are leaning towards majoritarianism and increasingly being controlled by arms industries.

Rabindranath Tagore defined a nation as “that aspect which a whole population assumes when organised for a mechanical purpose. Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself.” This could be re-framed as follows: nationalism is the metaphysic of capitalist modernity; and the nation-state is a necessary institutional arrangement in global capitalism. Since nations define themselves in terms of relative power equations and various real and imaginary histories of contestation, the dynamic equilibrium of nations-states or conglomerates may be conceptualised as an enemy system.

Ernst Junger's essay under the title, 'Total Mobilisation' can be seen as both a representative political text of modern militarism and fascist mobilisation; as well as a means to explore the thesis that from ambivalent beginnings, capitalism has developed into reactionary modernity. This is a modernism that subsists on the perpetuation of conflict and the generation of animus. This points us towards the argument that patriarchal structures are a bulwark of modernity, and that the demand for women's equality is inassimilable, i.e., that such a reform cannot be implemented without systemic transformation.

The emerging concept of the nation-state and its concomitant ideology of nationalism were not limited to the Western World. During the colonial period, the concept of nationalism also arose in many subjugated countries as a reaction to the exploitation by the imperialist countries.

Responses to Empire

Nationalism emerged in the colonies of European empires – as attempts at overcoming humiliation. Since colonial subjugation was invariably accompanied by memories of military defeat, nostalgia for warrior cultures played a major role in this process of ‘regaining’ national pride.

Unfortunately, sometimes the path taken by different communities for such self-assertion diverged along communal lines. Hence, some Hindu nationalists harked back to a ‘golden age’, when Hindu rulers had supposedly ruled over a land of plenty and prosperity. Similarly, some Muslim nationalists viewed the era when the Mughals had held sway over India as the period of ‘righteous’ rule. Both sides of communal nationalists tended to underplay or reject the contributions of an interlinked, syncretic culture. For these ‘nationalists’, a result of such ‘tinted’ viewing was that the main arena of contention shifted from a fight against British rule to a contest between different communities that resided side by side within India. Very often, the same events were witnessed with diametrically opposed views in competition with each other. However, beneath the apparent differences, spoke in a kind of masculine unison. Here are two alternative interpretations of eighteenth century Indian history:

Akbar succeeded in establishing a strong empire... in retrospect it may be said that during the sixteenth century ‘Hindustan’ disappeared completely and was absorbed in ‘Pakistan’. Under Aurangzeb the ‘Pakistan’ spirit gathered in strength. This evoked the opposition of the Hindus and Aurangzeb had to carry out long drawn-out wars against the militant Marathas... During the eighteenth century, the crisis in Mughal India deepened, and the conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus gained in intensity. The militant Marathas spearheaded the movement for the resurgence of Hinduism and came to knock at the very gates of Delhi. (Zafar 1982, 6)

Just take up the map of India around 1600 AD. The Muslims ruled all over Hindustan unchallengeably. It was a veritable Pakistan realized not only in this province or that, but

all over India. Hindustan as such was simply wiped out. Then open the map of India about 1700 to 1798 AD and what do you see? The Hindu forces are marching triumphantly throughout India. The very Mogul throne at Delhi is smashed to pieces literally by a hammer Sadashiv Rao Bhao, the Generalissimo of the Marathas! (Savarkar 1949, 41)

Both quotations are anachronisms, and both present the same story. They are separated by forty years and the India-Pakistan frontier. Their common approach is (philosophically), that history is a prolonged account of military contestation; and secondly, that India's central conflict was a continuation of the tension between two monarchical-autocratic traditions. The first quotation is from a Pakistani textbook by M.D. Zafar (1982) who cites the New Education Policy: "to inculcate a true spirit of patriotism, love and affection for our country, religion and culture through the clear understanding of the ideology of Pakistan." (Here is an example of state-sponsored obscurantism.) The second quotation is from a speech to the Hindu Mahasabha by its president V.D. Savarkar in 1942. The speech continued: "The Pakistan actually realized by the Muslims was entombed and out of it rose up once more Hindustan, resurrected and triumphant. The conquering Muslim... got so completely crushed and weaned of his dominating dreams that even today in his heart of hearts he shudders to think of his fate as soon as he sees the probability of the consolidated strength of the overwhelming Hindu majority."

Another way of approaching this is to examine the phenomenon of nationalist insurrection, and the culture of martyrdom that it invoked. (Refer 'Permanent Spring', Dilip Simeon <http://www.sacw.net/article1376.html>).

Competitive politics as something enacted upon a 'ground shared by enemies', requires our attention. This ground is the culture of warrior-hood and glory-seeking. To see this, it is necessary to ask the right questions. For instance, we may observe insurrectionary movements in South Asia, and what they have in common - the position of and

idealisation of women, and the ideal of heroic martyrdom as the defining element of masculine pride. If we add to this the experiences of women during the partition of India in 1947; and the partition of Pakistan in 1971, a clearer picture emerges of the links between masculinity, militarism and the kind of politics they engender.

IV. Nihilism, violence and political action

The word *nihilism* stems from the same root as ‘annihilation’ – viz., *nihil*, or nothingness. The debate around it is a philosophical one, but remains a useful place to locate our reflections on the roots and nature of modern conflict. It also enables us to see how far the animus-ridden nature of modernity is an expression of patriarchal culture. Nihilism evokes and describes the modern sense of a loss of meaning. The most dramatic evocation of nihilism is Nietzsche’s announcement that God is Dead. It is also manifested in everyday observations such as that all opinions are equally valid, or that every standard is as good as any other, that there is no such thing as truth; and that life is meaningless and ethical judgments pointless. The replacement of dialogue by cynicism is one prominent consequence.

“Nihilism is fundamentally an attempt to overcome or to repudiate the past on behalf of an unknown and unknowable yet hoped-for future. The danger implicit in this attempt is that it seems necessarily to entail a negation of the present, or to remove the ground upon which man must stand in order to carry out or even merely to witness the process of historical transformation. The mood of boredom or hopelessness that is the most visible negative manifestation of nihilism testifies to the incoherence of the hidden essence of nihilism.” (Stanley Rosen; *Nihilism*; 140)

This segment will discuss the larger implications of the foregoing, and examine why *nihilism* is the proper rubric under which to explore our current predicament. It will cover the following:

A) The consideration of patriarchal and militarist culture is at root a question of human action and its justifications. Why do we flit easily from one justification to another? Why do so many political actors place themselves beyond good and evil? What exactly is 'ideology'? The colloquial usage conflates ideology with political doctrine. Actually ideology is a mixture of empirical observations with sentiments and faith. As such it expresses the visible tendency of modern politics to assume a religious form. The sacral odour of nationalism is just one example of this.

B) One ramification of the nihilist dissolution of meaning and purpose is the divorce between reason and goodness. This is a consequence of the idea that truth can be produced only by mathematical sciences. Are the natural sciences the sole repositories of truth? What kind of truth? As Weber said in 1919, science does not provide us with answers to questions such as what should I do? How should I live? Are such questions not amenable to intelligible thought and reason? Since mathematics is ethically neutral, we are left with a value-less world, where ethical questions are banished to the realm of speculation. Science is a great product of the human spirit, but cannot be elevated to the status of the supreme guide to that spirit.

C) The nihilist ambience surrounding modern thought and politics also results in the abolition of objectivity and the enforced legislation (by state or totalitarian forces) of belief. Totalitarianism and relativism (the idea that all truth is relative to the perspective of the observer) mirror each other. Totalitarianism treats truth as a fixed and unchangeable Absolute; the relativists treat it as a plastic substance with no stability whatsoever, thus placing all ethical and political choices in the realm of whim and artistry. Both approaches imply dissolution of object into subject, because the world is seen in effect, as a creation of the knowing subject, rather than as enjoying its own status in reality. The idea that 'real truth' can only be produced by mathematical sciences is an outcome of the Cartesian rationalism that begins from the solitary observer and ends in the separation of mind and body. It also starts by posing the goal

of subjugating nature and, confronted with the futility of this misplaced endeavour, ends with artistic lament and militarist posturing.

D) Nihilism is not merely a mood or outcome of mistaken philosophical beliefs. It is manifested in political and military institutions and economic structures with their attendant systems of ideological justification. Thus nation-states dressed up in semi-religious linguistic finery such as glory-seeking and virile pursuits. The modern state system has the capacity to absorb and neutralise all resistance via the logic of violent confrontation. This section will explore the hypothesis that nihilist modernity is inextricably linked to perpetual war, patriarchy and annihilationism.

IV. Conclusion

The current phase of globalisation is putting tremendous pressure on older and more traditional norms of gender hierarchies that were based on a domesticated femininity and a public masculinity. While the intense social and economic changes are challenging these traditional hegemonic practices by undercutting the material basis for these to survive, the ideological underpinnings of these practices are still thriving and therefore contemporary masculinities and femininities are in a state of flux. So, while on one hand, large groups of men are structurally under employed and losing access to traditional modes of asserting and reinforcing the dominant norms of masculinities, on the other, women are increasingly being absorbed into the wage labour market. While equal opportunities for women has to be the bedrock for any movement towards gender equality what also requires closer examination is whether this is contributing to greater gender justice. Any move in this direction would have to carefully consider the nature of development being witnessed globally and to what purpose are masculinities and femininities being deployed in this process. An uncritical conflation of women's employment growth with gender justice ignores the nature of women's employment and the needs of women workers, which point towards much lower wages, greater

exploitation and missing labour protection systems. Thus, in these uncertain times, contemporary conflicts and violence may also be viewed as the new mode for masculinity to garner for itself what it holds as its entitlement: power, status, benefits and leverage. The critical issue here is to also examine how new expressions of masculinity is intensifying the militarisation of civil society and how both masculinity and femininity are being deployed into the process of economic growth that draws its sustenance from conflict and war.

This module will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- An understanding how specific practices of masculinities and femininities are produced by violent conflict and in turn contribute to producing violence
- An understanding of how war evolved from a limited engagement of professional soldiers to a total mobilisation of entire populations
- An awareness of how men develop or are incorporated towards having a strong loyalty to violence
- An understanding of how the twin ideals of truth and reason were subverted by a form of reactionary modernism
- An appreciation of how reactionary modernism developed through a sacralisation of the concept of nation and the diversion of scientific discovery to militaristic ends
- An awareness of how total mobilisation supported and was in turn aided by the rise of fascist state structures
- An understanding of the fact that some of the nationalistic responses to imperialism followed communal and masculinist pathways
- An understanding that nihilism is the mirror image of totalitarianism and fuels violent conflicts

References and Suggested Readings

Strongly Recommended

Accad, Evelyne; Guns and Roses: On Sexuality and War, The Little Magazine, Vo 2 no. 1, 2001 <http://www.littlemag.com/jan-feb01/evelyne.html>

Butalia, Urvashi; The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India; Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1998

Dahrendorf Nicola; Mirror images in the Congo: Sexual Violence and Conflict

Open Democracy; October 2005 http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-resolution_1325/congo_2964.jsp

Hillman, James; *A Terrible Love of War*; Penguin, 2004

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*; Abacus, London, 1995

Junger, Ernst; Total Mobilisation, (1930) in Wolin, Richard; *The Heidegger Controversy*; MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, 1993; pp 119-139

Keegan, John, *A History of Warfare*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994

Kershaw, Ian; *Hitler - 1936-1945: Nemesis*; & *Hitler - 1889-1936: Hubris* Penguin, London, 1998 (2001)

Mack, John E., The Enemy System, in Volkan, Vamik D., Julius, Demetrius A., Montville, Joseph V., *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships, Vol 1, Concepts and theories*; Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., Toronto, 1990. Short version available at: <http://www.passporttothecosmos.com/enemysystem.html>

Moura, Tatiana: Between micro-war and macro-peace: Masculinities and femininities in gang warfare in Rio de Janeiro (Presented at the Hegemonic Masculinities in International Politics Conference, Manchester University Centre for International Politics, May 5, 2005) <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-06-28-moura-en.html>

Vadney, T.E.; *The World Since 1945*; Penguin, London, 1992

Nandy, Ashis., *The Intimate Enemy*; Oxford University Press, 1989

Further suggested readings

Adas, Michael; *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance*; Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London; 1989

Bell, David A. *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare*; Bloomsbury, London, 2007

Coll, Steve; *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*; Penguin Books, London, 2005

Correlates of War, Pennsylvania State University; <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>

Fromm, Erich; *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*; Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1977

Herf, Jeffrey; *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984

Keegan, John; *The Mask of Command: A Study of Generalship*; London, Jonathan Cape, 1987, London, Pimlico, 2004

Lowe, Norman; *Mastering Modern World History*; Macmillan, London, 1997

Lumpe, Lora (ed), *Running Guns: the Global Black Market in Small Arms*; Zed Books, London, 2000

Mass Violence, Online Encyclopaedia of; <http://www.massviolence.org/-The-Project>
-Mosse, George, Fascism and the French Revolution, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol 24, no. 1; January 1989

Shaikh, Farzana; *Making Sense of Pakistan*; Foundation Books, Hurst & Co.; London, 2009

White, Matthew; *Source List and Detailed Death Tolls for the Twentieth Century Hemoclysm*; <<http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat1.htm#Second>> Accessed July 19, 2009

Simeon, Dilip; Attached Essays: The Futility of Common Sense; The End of History; Total War; and, Between despair and hope: interrogating 'terrorism' - Hima, cover article in September 2005

Also 'Permanent Spring', Seminar, March 2010: <http://www.sacw.net/article1376.html>

Zamindar, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali; *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia, Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*; Penguin-Viking, New Delhi, 2008

Module III

SEXUALITY & MASCULINITIES

I. Introduction

In popular thinking, the term 'sexuality' most frequently elicits responses that have to do with biology. That is, whether as an area of study or as a set of ideas people have about their intimate lives, sexuality is too easily detached from the social contexts where it belongs, and presented as something of itself. There is a strong tendency to view our sexual lives as dictated by its own peculiar rules that:

- a) are biologically derived
- b) have been historically stable (i.e. the same since the 'dawn of time')
- c) are 'essentially' about our 'private' lives, and,
- d) are 'basically' the same across different cultures.

This course is intended to outline that sexuality cannot be understood on 'its own terms'. It seeks to emphasize that we cannot meaningfully begin to deploy it for whatever purposes we have in mind – activism, scholarship, etc. – until we realize that it is nothing but an empty vessel, filling up with a diversity of meanings, beliefs and actions depending on historical, social and cultural contexts. Hence, we can only productively engage with this topic through understanding the different contexts which influence the making of sexuality (or, more accurately, 'sexualities'), rather than insist that it constitutes a world-unto-itself.

A significant consequence of thinking that sexuality as a world-unto-itself has been that it tends to be simultaneously regarded as a very narrowly confined domain that has nothing to do with, say, politics and economics, as well as something that is of very general significance that is absolutely fundamental to the way we are and the very 'truth' of our being. We tend to both inflate its significance and downplay its role as a social process by treating it as a private 'thing'. So, for example, if you're a bad cook, it's a minor blemish, but being 'bad' at sex is seen as both a major crisis which requires intervention (through seeking help of 'sexologists', for example). It is ironic that Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), whose writings were fundamental to providing new – non-biological – directions in the study of sexuality in the West, was, nevertheless, a believer in sexuality-as-a-biological drive theory. Despite literary, historical, artistic and other evidence

that suggests that sexuality – both its expression and control – is fundamentally linked to contexts such as class, religion, wealth, and, gender norms, we nevertheless tend to de-link it from these social realities. If anything, we are inclined to think of these aspects as incidental, choosing to believe that ‘underneath it all’ there lurks a fundamentally fixed essence – and a drive – we can identify as sexuality.

So, the kinds of question this course seeks to explore are: Can we regard ‘sexuality’ as a fixed concept that can be easily understood both across different time periods and different cultures? Or, is it a knot made up of the most diverse contexts of social and cultural life, registering changes in them? European theorists of the topic such as Michel Foucault (1990) have suggested that sexuality as a clearly demarcated field of study and debate emerges during the early 18th century through a combination of medical, legal, educational and other discourses. This, in turn, led to the emergence of different categories of ‘sexual beings’ such as the homosexual, the heterosexual, the sexualized woman, the sexually awakened child, the reproductive family, the ‘pervert’, etc. Soon after, Foucault suggests, sexuality became focused on the family. That is to say, an entire range of experts (doctors, psychiatrists, priests, teachers, etc.) concentrated their attention on the family, advising against the perils of ‘bad’ sexuality and ensuring its ‘good health’. So, through these processes, the family was both ‘sexualized’ and acted as an agent of sexualisation. That is, it became the benchmark for topics such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexuality, and ‘healthy’ sexual behaviour. In this way, Foucault suggests, sexuality became a very important topic of discussion, rather than being banned from being discussed (or, repressed) as is commonly thought. ‘Good’ sexuality within the family–reproductive sexuality, able to produce a suitable labour force – then became part of the development of capitalism. As we will see in the sections that follow, there are several additional contexts to be considered when we think of sexuality in the non-Western context. However, the key point to retain is the social and historical nature of sexuality.

There is one final point to consider that also relates to the way in which the topic of sexuality is researched. From a social science perspective, sexuality remains an area of study – perhaps even more than other kinds of social behaviour – where any degree of methodological precision

is impossible to posit. This perspective differs from that shared by medically trained sexologists and others who offer a 'scientific' point of view. This follows from the perspective that we must re-think the truth-of-our-sexuality perspective as well as the biologism that has historically afflicted sexuality studies. The former suggests that a) sexual behaviour ought to be judged according to certain norms; and, b) there is an underlying 'truth' about our sexual lives that we must understand (for example: 'the gay gene explains homosexuality'; 'sexual orientation is a fixed trait'; 'men have uncontrollable sexual drives', etc.). Biologism in the study of sexuality, as already indicated above, is connected to the view that it (sexuality) can be explained by recourse to a set of unchanging bodily essences and drives. Hence, just as we tend to think that our genders are biologically determined, so too we assume that our sexual lives unfold according to an 'inner' biological template. This, in turn, connects to two other ideas. Firstly, we think in terms of 'expressing' our sexuality as if it is an essence that simply appears through its own natural logic. Another point of view would be to say that we enact our sexual selves, that is, it is learnt behaviour. And, secondly, we too easily assume that 'underneath our visible differences such as class and status, we harbour the same sexual 'drive'. Hence the commonly expressed sentiment that we should love people for their 'inner' selves.

Thinking about sexuality in another context – one that is just as susceptible to the inner drive discussion – Jeffrey Weeks (2003) points out that 'The real problem does not lie in whether homosexuality is inborn or learned. It lies instead in the question: what are the meanings this particular culture gives to homosexual behaviour, however, it may be caused, and what are the effects of those meanings on the ways in which individuals organize their sexual lives' (Weeks 2003: 34). This is an excellent way of thinking about the broader field of sexualities itself.

II. Sexuality in Society

Moving beyond medicalised approaches to sexuality and those that derive from the quantitative sciences, we can identify certain other frameworks that have sought to capture the social and cultural complexity within which sexual cultures are located. The Marxist approach, for example, requires that we primarily view sexuality as a series of economic relations of domination and exploitation. So, Marxists would argue, the heterosexual family is a key site of

support for capitalist relations of production in as much as it facilitates the seamless reproduction of a labour force that is socialised into not questioning social and economic inequalities. The overwhelming emphasis on the economic within Marxist approaches does not, however, do justice to the various other matrices of sexual cultures (how to account for non-heterosexual cultures, for example?). The psychoanalytic approach derives from the pioneering writings of Sigmund Freud on the topic. This approach emphasizes the role of multiple levels of consciousness in the making of sexual selves. Hence, the psychoanalytic approach would suggest that the sexual behaviour and thought is mere 'surface' activity that masks deeper fears, anxieties and desires. Notwithstanding its interest in exploring the influence of the social environment in the making of human sexuality, Freudian psychoanalysis nevertheless proceeds from the assumption that it (sexuality) derives from deeply embedded biological drives.

Feminist frameworks of analysis posit the historical subordination of women as the fundamental grounds for analysis. Feminist analyses have provide ground-breaking critiques of a wide range of contexts, including the family, legal frameworks, religious regulations, colonial and nationalist discourses, literary genres, and other intellectual paradigms such as Marxism and psychoanalysis. In a significant sense, the feminist approach cuts across all other analytical contexts, providing important ways of understanding the role of gendered power in the making of human relations.

Another approach is referred to as the social constructivist. Here, sexuality is explored through focussing upon its 'constructed' nature, that is, the different forms it takes according to the different social and historical circumstances. This approach moves away from notions of fixity and 'inner' drives towards ideas regarding constant flux. The approach has been criticised for downplaying the role of biology. This line of thought is a significant one in studies of sexuality. What is important to remember is that biology always operates in tandem with social and cultural realities, and it is this combination that produces different ways of being. This way of positing the issues avoids constituting 'biology' and 'culture' as totally unrelated realms, or biology as 'prior' to culture. It also serves to emphasize the fact that 'we become human only in human society' (Padgug 1989). Precisely because sexuality is learnt behaviour, it differs across

different times and different cultures. Hence, there is no universal category of the 'sexual' that holds true across all times and across all cultures. What is erotic in one culture (filed teeth, say) might not be regarded as such in another. This way of thinking about the topic also avoids thinking in terms of norms: that one particular context of sexual preference, behaviour, and desire is better than another.

Finally within context, while it is important to avoid biological reductionism, we should also avoid the trap of absolute difference. So, approaches that seek to posit an absolute difference between 'western' and non-western concepts and identities are problematic in themselves. The long history of interaction between different cultures suggests that though the specificities of history and culture are important, we should also be mindful that contemporary identity politics is played out in zones of interaction that are characterised by ideas and behaviours from diverse sources, including the processes we now refer to as 'globalization. Hence, as one anthropologist has pointed out, 'Rather than trying to rescue an image of a purely indigenous sexuality, distinct and untainted by "outside" Western influence, it is more useful to ask what kinds of interactions, connections and conflicts emerge in the ...porous zones' (Pigg 2005:54).

III. Histories of Sexuality

In order to think about the social field within which sexual cultures are embedded, it is important to historicize sexuality. For, ideas about sexuality – as about its relationship to gender – have developed through time in conjunction with a number of other factors. Within this context, we must also think of how sexual cultures are located within fields of power. This is not the only way of thinking about the topic, but it is an important one.

In all cultures, including the European, a wide variety of conceptions of gender and sexuality existed before the advent of the modern era. Many forms of expression – body appearance, gestures, voice, and so on – were seen to be part of maleness and femaleness, and a broad range of sexual behaviours were tolerated. Some theorists now argue for a strong connection between modernity and the emergence of norms around gender identities and sexual

behaviour. This concerned the consolidation of hierarchies such that certain kinds of gender identities and specific forms of sexualities were seen to be superior to others. So, for example, 'masculine' men and heterosexuality became the standards for 'normality'. We will turn to some examples below, however, following on from the discussion above, it is important to keep in mind the link between gender and sexuality: historical analysis tells us that the two are mutually reinforcing concepts and each helps define the other.

There are several contexts that can be explored to understand the historical nature of sexualities. The discussion above has already referred to the concept emerged in Europe through a number of linked developments. In this section, we will explore three other contexts, those that have particular relevance for non-western societies.

The colonial era was particularly important as a context that allows us to understand the social and political nature of sexuality. Indeed, the sexual politics of colonialism was one of the most significant strands in discourses that justified colonial rule, provided indices of difference between Europeans and non-Europeans, as well as lay at the basis of European anxieties about colonialism. A significant justification for colonial rule lay in the frequently reiterated notion of 'reform' that was required within colonised societies. Native sexual mores were frequently regarded as key objects of such reform and were also held up proof of the 'moral' inferiority of colonised populations. So, colonised societies were seen to be characterised by 'passionate unreason' and 'unruliness' (Levine 2006: 125) with regard to sexual behaviour, and it was a common belief that native religious and other beliefs justified 'loose' sexual mores. This 'lack of reason in the sexual arena mirrored colonial incapacity for self-rule' (Levine 2006: 125). Further, while on the one hand a significant colonial fear centred around the threat to the white woman resident in the colonies from the 'uncontrollably' lascivious black man (see Inglis's discussion for Papua New Guinea, Inglis 1978), non-western women were frequently characterised as sexually 'permissive' (see Alloula 1986 on colonial Algeria). Many of these stereotypes remain with us to this day.

There were both differences and similarities between the sexual cultures of the colonial masters and their colonised subjects around the world. And yet, the similarities tended to be largely denied. Why was this? For example, there was widespread prevalence of homoeroticism among European populations in the colonies and, for many European men in particular, the relative lack of proscription against homoeroticism was a key attraction for travelling and working in the colonies (Aldrich 2003, Chaudhury 2004) It could be suggested that the sameness of some of the sexual practices of the rulers and the ruled was a key threat to claims of moral and cultural superiority by colonial powers. Hence, the assertion of sexual difference became an important part of the discourse of European superiority. For, how could ideas of European superiority be established if non-Europeans were to be accepted as having similar attributes as Europeans? The production of colonial discourses around sexual and gender identities were significantly focussed on one aspect: that the gender and sexual identities of the colonised were different from those of the colonising populations. It is these sorts of contexts that need to be kept in mind when we consider the reasons for the promulgation of colonial laws that sought to 'normalise' sexual behaviour in the colonies. So, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code – drafted in 1860 and passed soon after – proscribes 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature'. The fact that same-sex behaviour among consenting adults was only decriminalised in India in 2009 also tells us something about the overlap between the sexual politics of colonial and post-colonial eras.

IV. Sexuality, 'identity', Power

There are different ways in which the field of sexuality acts as a significant site of identity, whether this relates to gender, 'community' or nation. Let us consider some contexts.

Sexual identities are simultaneously historical and contingent. That is to say, they have an unstable nature that is influenced by social and cultural circumstances. Further, there is no necessary link between sexual practice and sexual identity. So, in many non-western countries non-heterosexual behaviour does not necessarily lead to an adoption of a 'gay' identity. However, while we may say that sexual identities are fictions – i.e. invented and fluid – they can also serve the very real role of acting as points of resistance and support. This is most obviously

true in the case of, say, homosexuality. In the West, for example, the ‘construction’ of a gay community has been central to responses to HIV and AIDS. Similarly, the emergence of gay groups in non-western countries has served to intervene in and guide, among other things, debates around ‘compulsory heterosexuality’. Additionally, such groups have also intervened in debates about other kinds of norms formulated by the post-colonial nations state. These include those that have to do with ideas of ‘authentic’ Indian (African etc.) cultures that are now being destroyed by ‘westernization’. Writers and activists linked to Gay, Lesbian, and Queer movements in non-western countries have played an important role in re-thinking notions of the ‘ideal’ family, and normative gender identities.

There is a persistent debate among scholars and activists in many non-western countries regarding Lesbian, Gay and Queer identities that centres around the idea that these are ‘western’ identities and not really relevant in the context of non-heterosexual behaviour in non-western countries. This is a significant discussion debate for at least three reasons: 1) that cultural differences are important to consider; and, 2) that non-heterosexual behaviour has also been a ‘normal’ aspect of, say, Indian culture; and, 3) sexual identities are also class identities, in as much gay and lesbian in India might be terms that circulate in relatively privileged contexts. Notwithstanding this, many would argue that gay, lesbian and queer identities are significant aspects of contemporary sexual politics within non-western countries and should be given the same attention as ‘indigenous’ categories (whatever they might be); after all, we don't refuse to travel in trains (or use electricity) because they came from the West.

‘Gender’ and ‘sexuality’ are not merely ways of describing specific social relations. They are also sites of contestation and transformation of collective and personal identities. Hence, simultaneously as gender and sexual norms in a particular society seek to produce ideas about what ‘our’ culture is, they also give rise to counter-discourses and movements of resistance to these norms. The contestation of established norms is itself a struggle for recognition: it asks that actually existing state of affairs be recognised for what they are – actually existing – rather than be treated as non-existent through defining norms that wish it away. So, women’s desires, gender oppression, and non-heteronormative behaviour are realities of human existence and

cannot simply be swept away by ideas of feminine purity, the natural superiority of men, and the naturalisation of heterosexuality.

The trans-sexual and trans-gender histories of different societies around the world point to a multitude of sexual and gender identities and behaviours. The hijras of India (Nanda 1990, Reddy 2005), the kathoey of Thailand (Jackson 1997), and the waria (Boellstorff 2008) of Indonesia are only three of several such long-established identities. Many writers on transgender issues, Richard M. Juang notes, 'have referred to cultural systems in which third gender or sexes have an established role in order to develop a critique of the fixity and universality of contemporary Western taxonomies of gender and sex' (Juang 2006: 256). And that 'the existence of other cultural taxonomies is part of a larger body of evidence supporting the claim that Western models of sex, gender, and sexuality do not reflect some bedrock cultural necessity but one of several roads of historical development that are open to future change' (Juang 2006: 256).

Given these alternative sexual histories, the situation of postcolonial modernity – where such realities are sought to be suppressed and incorporated into a monolithic nationalist myth of heteronormativity – is a striking one. The history of colonial and post-colonial modernity in the region is, in fact, one of suppression and marginalization of gender and sexual identities that did not (or do not) live up to hypermasculinist ideals that were produced through a collaboration between colonial discourse and a native elite that aspired to emulate colonial norms. So, both hijras and kathoey – the former may be transvestites or transsexuals and the latter is the Thai term for a 'biological hermaphrodite' – face considerable discrimination in their societies. This is despite the fact that within Hinduism hijras have enjoyed well-defined ritual and religious roles, and within Thai culture, kathoeyes have historically occupied a traditionally recognised 'third-gender' category.

As suggested above, the colonial period was a significant watershed in the making of modern cultures of sexualities in post-colonial societies. So, certain acts and behaviours were 'criminalized', and others were put forward as normative. Notwithstanding the adoption of

colonial legal and moral attitudes towards sexuality in most post-colonial societies, there is a great deal of historical as well as contemporary evidence that points to the existence of well established contexts of homoeroticism in the countries of the region. So, in performative traditions in India such as the Marathi, Parsi and Gujarati theatres, men who acted as women were preferred to women actors (Hansen 2004), and in contemporary Afghanistan, the tradition – known as Bacha Baazi – of older married men keeping young male companions is a common one (Yaqub Ibrahimi 2008: 8). That in the latter case, it has become also become a context of sexual exploitation does not itself undermine the idea of homoeroticism in the region. The important thing is the existence of parallel strands of homoeroticism and homophobia.

The side-by-side existence of ‘men- who- have-sex-with-men’ but also hate men who might be identified (or self-identify as) as homosexual calls for an explanation. Why is it, for example, that Iranian law permits sex-change operations but that homosexuality is punishable by death? There are at least two distinct but related contexts that need to be engaged with. The first relates to the difference between ‘behaviour’ and ‘identity’, and the second to notions of masculine identity. The term ‘gay’ is part of the identity politics of homosexuality that pertains both to self-identification as well as an assertion of the right to openly adopt certain lifestyle characteristics. Now, as considerable research shows, there is no dearth of men in different parts of the world who have homoerotic relations, but do not identify as either gay or homosexual. The latter aspect relates both to the notion that homoeroticism is an unexceptional part of men’s lives, as well as the idea that homosexual men are ‘effeminate’, or ‘woman-like’. Hence, while a large number of men have relationships with other men, there is stigma to being the ‘woman’ (i.e. being penetrated) in the relationship. Different terminologies (‘Kothis’ and Panthis’ in India, for example) express this anxiety. Hence, simultaneously as homosexuality is considered a ‘life-cycle’ activity, or a harmless ‘pastime’, it is also situated in a context where it does not disturb traditional notions of masculine identity and responsibility (to get married, be the ‘provider’, extend the lineage, etc.) . The term ‘men-who-have sex-with-men’ was introduced into the HIV/AIDS prevention lexicon in the late 1980s in order to account for a group that was considered ‘at risk’ but could not be accounted for through an identity

related term such as 'gay'. If the cultural politics and debate around terms such as this and others that have gained prominence through NGO activism (Cohen 2005) remind us that classifications have a complex social history and are not 'naturally produced, they also, importantly, point to the possibilities of change through research, agitation and activism.

There is an additional complication to the above that has to do with the debate on the imposition of 'western' and 'universalising' categories on non-western societies. Many scholars and activists now suggest that we ought to simultaneously recognise the long history of non-heteronormative behaviour in the Asia Pacific, as well as resist the temptation to simply label these under the rubrics of 'gay' and 'queer'. The latter context, it is suggested, 'ignores the manner in which a particular penetrative Western discourse has interlaced sexuality, gay rights, human right, Oriental convictions, and Social Darwinism in confronting the question of same-sex desire and practice in the non-Western world' (Sarwar 2008: 15).

Moving on to other contexts of identity, one of the ways in which sexuality, gender and community identity come together can be explored through the notion of 'honour killings' that are prevalent in India and Pakistan in particular. Honour killings occur for different reasons. However, the most frequent reason concerns perceived transgressions of familial and community boundaries when an 'offending' couple decides to marry of its own accord. It is noticeable that there are more women victims of honour killings than men. The most significant aspect of 'honour' concerns the control of women's sexuality by men that is seen to have suffered a slight when a woman makes her own decision regarding a marital bond. Courts do punish the perpetrators of such crimes, however, they frequently reflect society-wide attitudes to masculine ideas regarding female sexuality. So, for example, in many cases, the 'patriarchal bias' (Warraich 2005) embodied in the application of laws has meant that ' instead of systematically intervening to address the violations of the right to life, judges have focused on the victims conduct and have been influenced by and reflected customary attitudes condoning the control of and violence against women. Even in the most progressive judgements to date, when dealing with 'honour killings' the courts have continued to focus on the issue of "provocation"' (Warraich 2005:104). Judges, as Patricia Uberoi points out, 'bring to their

interpretation of the law very masculinist sex-role stereotypes while manifestly upholding the cause of women' (Uberoi 1995:321)

Female sexuality and the discourse of public women come together in another way. An example from contemporary Kerala will be helpful. During the 1990s, several scholars have pointed out, there have increasingly strident debate that index 'augmented public fears about sexual transgression' (Devika 2009: 33) by women. Hence, 'visions of dystopia in public discussion in Kerala in the 1990s' is 'painted heavily with the horrors of "sexuality unleashed"' (Devika 2009: 33). Significantly, young women who had been subject to sexual crimes were often portrayed not as victims, but those whose 'worldliness' was to blame for the crimes they suffered. So, a high court judgement on the so-called Vithura case of 2000 involving the serial rape of a teenage girl noted that she was a ' "lascivious strumpet" who, as the days passed by... became more and more coquettish and voluptuous by availing the services of beauty parlours"' (Sreekumar 2001, quoted in Devika 2009: 33). As Devika points out, the 'fixation with the sexualisation of female bodies is... telling of how misogyny forms a sizable part of elitist cultural panic' (2009: 34). Women in public spaces not conforming to masculine rules of 'modesty' are frequently the source of a great deal of masculine (and patriarchal) anxiety regarding the 'decline of society'. The 'decline' perspective appears to have particularly salient in an era of globalization, where women are seen to be affected by the cultural and social changes in a manner not 'befitting' models of 'feminine honour' and respectability.

Sexual violence is another significant context of identity politics. Rape, it has been recognised is more than a physical act: it is also a means of perpetuating symbolic violence that seeks to establish the superiority of masculine identity. Further, in cases of rape in situations of war and other conflict, the act also seeks also to assert that the superiority of the rapist's group over that of the group to which the raped women belong. This relates to the idea that if men are not able to 'protect' the 'honour' of 'their' women, then it is their own honour that has been slighted. Increasingly, feminist thinkers have argued that the manner in which we think about rape – as 'lost honour', for example – is itself problematic, as it significantly draws upon male notions of honour. The feminist scholar Nivedita Menon suggests that simultaneously as we

seek to prevent and punish crimes of honour (and treat these as a human rights issue), we must also seek to problematise the notion that 'rape is the worst thing that can happen to a woman'. According to Menon, we must question the 'meaning of rape' itself (Menon 2004, 156; original emphasis). For, she says, "'rape as violation' is not only a feminist understanding, it is perfectly compatible with patriarchal and sexist notions of women's bodies and our sexuality (Menon 2004:159).

Finally, while the above discussion may have more frequently referred to female sexuality, the manner in which it is conceptualised stands in a direct relationship to the ways in which male sexuality is imagined. So, for example, 'good' and 'bad' women in Indian cinema have (though such representations are changing) historically been represented as the self-sacrificing wife and sexless mother, and the promiscuous 'vamp' respectively. The man who has multiple partners is, on the hand, frequently represented as 'virile' and someone who embodies 'genuine' masculinity. In these ways, the cultures of sexuality illuminate a number of contexts human interaction that, in turn, tell us something about the ways in which cultures of sociality and power unfold.

V. Conclusion

The topic of sexualities is frequently approached either through a biological lens or through one that assumes a fixed cultural template. So, for the Indian case it is common to suggest a direct link between contemporary Indian sexual cultures and 'classical Indian love texts' such as Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* and Kalyanamalla's *Ananga Ranga*. Any such link is highly tenuous: contemporary sexual cultures are formed in the crucible of a variety of nationalist politics and transnational flows, assertions of non-heterosexual identities, global sexual-health programmes, the effects of new consumer cultures, changing patterns of work and leisure among young women, and the effects of different media flows. Further, it is also inadequate to assume that ideas around sexuality in non-western countries been as stable as is sometimes posited in, say NGO narratives that seek to account for 'local' practices in global sexual health campaigns. It may, in fact, be quite impossible to find a 'purely' indigenous sexuality that can be contrasted with a western one: both have been formed through interaction with each other.

'Western' and 'non-western' may not capture that history where European sexuality has been made through the image of the non-European 'primitive', or, where the postcolonial nation-state has built upon this discourse in order to produce its own 'authentic' culture. The substantial portion of sexual cultures in the non-western world is made out of these sorts of hybrid transactions. The search for an 'authentic' Indian (etc.) sexual culture is, however, worth thinking about for another reason: what anxieties does it express? And, what kinds of positions of power does it embody.

References

- Aldrich, Robert (2003). *Colonialism and Homosexuality*. London and New York: Routledge
- Alloula, M. (1986). *The Colonial Harem*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Boellstorff, T. (2008). Dubbing culture: Indonesian *Gay* and *Lesbi* subjectivities and ethnography in an already globalized world. In Jonathan Xavier Inda & Renato Rosaldo (Eds.), *The Anthropology of Globalization. A Reader*. (pp. 303-333). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chaudhury, Zahid. 2004. "Controlling the Ganymedes. The colonial gaze in J.R. Ackerley's *Hindoo Holiday*. In Sanjay Srivastava (Ed.), *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes. Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia*. (pp. 83-98). New Delhi: Sage
- Cohen, L. (1995). Holi in Banaras and the *Mahaland* of modernity. *GLQ*, 2, 399-424
- Devika, J. (2009). Bodies gone awry: The abjection of sexuality in development discourse in contemporary Kerala. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 16 (1), 21- 46
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1 An Introduction*. London: Penguin Books
- Hansen, K. (2004). Theatrical transvestism in the Parsi, Gujarati and Marathi theatres (1850-1940). In Sanjay Srivastava (Ed.), *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes. Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia*. (pp. 99-123). New Delhi: Sage
- Herdt, G. (1999). *Sambia Sexual Culture. Notes from the Field*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Inglis, A. (1978). *Not a White Woman Safe: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby 1920-34*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Jackson, P. A. (1997). Kathoey < Gay > Man: The historical emergence of gay male identity in Thailand. In Lenore Manderson & Margaret Jolly (Eds.), *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure*. (pp. 160-190). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Juang, R. M. (2006). Transgendering the politics of recognition. In Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang and Shannon Price Mintor (Eds.), *Transgender Rights*. (pp. 242-261). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Menon, N. (2004). *Recovering Subversion. Feminist Politics Beyond the Law*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Padgug, R. A. (1989). Sexual matters. On conceptualising sexuality in history. In Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Eds.), *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*. (pp 14-32). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Pigg, S.L. (2005). Globalizing the facts of life. In V. Adams and S.L. Pigg (Eds.), *Sex in Development: Science, Sexuality and Morality in Global Perspective*. (pp. 39-65). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Levine, P. (2006). Sexuality and empire. In Catherin Hall & Sonya O. Rose (eds.) *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*. (pp. 122-142) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nanda, S. (1990). *Neither Man Nor Woman. The Hijras of India*. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth.
- Reddy, G. (2005). *With respect to Sex. Negotiating Hijra identity in Hyderabad*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sarwar, O. (2008). Iran, sexuality and intercultural dialogue. *Pukar*, 60, 14.
- Sreekmar, S. (2001). *Scripting Lives: Narratives by Dominant Women in a Southern State*, Unpublished Ph.d thesis, Hyderabad: Hyderabad Central University.
- Warrach, S. A. (2005). 'Honour killings' and the law in Pakistan. In Lynn Welchman and Sarah Hossain (Eds.), *'Honour'. Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*. (pp. 78-110). London: Zed Books.
- Uberoi, Patricia. 1995. "When is a marriage not a marriage? Sex, sacrament and contract in Hindu marriage." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (n.s.) 29, 1 & 2,
- Weeks, Jeffrey. 2003. *Sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Yaqub Ibrahim, Sayed. 2008. "Dancing Boys of the North." *Pukar*, January, Issue 60: 8-9.

Module IV

RELIGION, VIOLENCE & MASCULINITIES

I. Introduction: Religion in Contemporary South Asia

A recurrent feature of several societies in the South Asian region is the perceived contest between ‘indigenous traditions’ and ‘foreign modernity’. This is a particularly important context with respect to a variety of debates – cultural, political, legislative etc. – that relate to ‘women’s issues’. A significant way in which this debate unfolds is through casting women as the bearers of ‘local traditions’. And, since traditions are generally seen to be fixed, the argument usually runs that in order to protect ‘our’ traditions from ‘foreign’ influence ‘our’ women must be also be shielded from change. In certain countries within the region, this was a common theme in colonial debates on women’s issues (Chatterjee 1993a). In many ways, then, debates about women (and quite often, by women,) at the present time can be best understood as the result of a complex series of alignments between historical processes (such as colonialism) and their absorption into contemporary dialogues about modernity.

Further, debates about ‘our traditions’ (and how to protect them) often sit alongside expressions of ethnic and religious nationalism based on the forging of a homogeneous cultural identity. That is to say, cultural identities are sought to be defined in terms of a consensus that primarily derives from a power hierarchy where men’s interests are placed above those of women as a group. Here, the ‘honour’ of the community becomes coeval with that of men and while both men and women might be punished for disobeying honour-codes, it is women who bear the greatest burden – sometime with tragic consequences – of upholding community honour.

Expressions of religious nationalism – represented through notions of honour, shame, valour, etc., are commonly based upon appeals to mythic and masculinised histories. In this mythic past, men and women – and hence the society of which they were part – lived harmoniously since, the argument goes, they followed the rules of tradition and each knew his/her organic relation to the other; each acted in a way that was ‘proper’ to it, biological imperatives having solidified into social norms to produce a well-ordered social machinery. According to such narratives, social dysfunction comes about as a result of different genders (and, in particular,

women) not knowing their pre-ordained roles. Hence, in these ways the politics of the household that oversees the everyday relationships between genders, becomes linked with national level formulations of gender politics. The domestic, then, both draws upon and contributes to broader debates about gender and its manifestations. Ethno-nationalist movements and their gender politics are, therefore, significant sites of discourses of gender power in several ways. For example, ethno-nationalist movements frequently demand the implementation of ‘customary’ laws that have particularly deleterious effects on the position of women in society. Such movements also contain within them both seeds and justifications of violence against women – frequently organised around notions of honour and shame – as well as non-dominant ethnic groupings.

This is a general feature of ethnic and religious nationalism. Hence, in a survey of Cambodia media sources, Hill and Thay Ly (2004) reproduce one news item that reported that ‘Parliamentarians criticised the law [against violence against women and children] for providing women with too many freedoms and rights, which will cause them to be so happy with their freedom that they do not respect ancient Cambodian customs’ (Hill and Thay Ly 2004: 109)

The combination of shared identities formed through religion and cultures of masculinity is also a prevalent feature of the region. Religious solidarities are often mobilized through appeals to a shared masculinity. Here, rituals, both religious and secular, play a crucial role as storehouses of masculine cultures. There are specific connections between globalization, religion, religious violence and gender norms that need to be understood. For example, ‘globalization’ is often seen as a threat to existing religious values, leading, in turn, to stricter reinforcement of putatively religious rules that particularly affect women’s rights as equal citizens. Further, desires for a ‘pure community of believers may lead to textual understanding of belief, and subsequent discrimination against women (as well as religious minorities).

Religious nationalism and the idea that ‘ethnicity’ is a fixed essence can reinforce gender power through the emphasis on the stability of identity. That is to say, ethnic identities tend to be built around the idea that what is typical of a particular group is so because of certain behaviours

that can be expected of its men and women, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, etc. And that the identity of such and such group crucially depends on its members following its cultural rules which are usually understood to have been passed down from time immemorial. The idea that ethnic identities are fixed one and have been so 'from time immemorial' is, as a great deal of scholarship has pointed out, simply false. All identities are constantly in the process of change and flux and in as much as ethnicities are understood to be fixed and certain behaviours are expected of women and men – lest 'time-honoured' cultural rules be violated – they are part of the system of maintaining certain power hierarchies, including those of gender. A good example of the 'invention' of ethnic identities is the notion of 'martial masculinity' mentioned earlier. Gurkhas and the Sikhs, among others, have come to believe that their masculine 'war-like' qualities are both intrinsic to who they are, and have been around for as long as they have existed as cultural group. When men come to be defined as possessing certain qualities, women too come to be attributed their own 'essence'. And, in those situations where men become imbued with the qualities of being 'martial', the accompanying perspective is that that this version of masculinity is superior both to other ways of being men as well as to feminine identity.

II. Religion, Identity and Gender

The manner in which a community's body of customs can be part of its system of gendered power can be explored through looking at the institution of guthi among the Newar ethnic group in Nepal. Guthis are 'place based associations that enable households to fulfil their social and religious obligations through group action' (Rankin 2003: 116). Household membership of a guthi is through senior male representatives and 'commits individuals to social obligations' (Rankin 2003:116) such as taking part in religious rituals and mortuary rites along with other guthi members. The guthi system is fundamentally linked to the 'honour economy' of Newar society and it is seen as crucially important that members of different guthis fulfil their obligations to each other. To not do so, would be to 'lose face'.

While on the one hand guthi membership serves to define and entrench caste hierarchy – one should only marry within one’s guthi in order to maintain caste ‘purity’ – it also functions to institute gender difference. Hence, women cannot be direct members of guthis but are so because they belong to the household. Further, since women are seen to embody forms of ‘impurity’ associated with menstruation and childbirth, they are excluded ‘from the highly valued ritual obligations of mortuary guthis’ (Rankin 2003: 117). Indeed, women’s participation in guthi-related activity is along lines that most clearly places them as inferior to men through carrying out tasks that the men are not obliged to. Hence, it is left to them to provide the labour of preparing offerings that are to be made at various guthi-related ritual occasions. So, while the ‘honour’ of guthi membership accrues to men, the burden of achieving guthi-obligations falls squarely on women. Being excluded from a significant ritual life of the community, the women are also kept out of the positions of political power that accrues to those – the men – who can take part in it. Further, the honour of the household – and of the rituals it takes part in – is crucially dependent upon the behaviour of ‘its’ women. Hence, women must be careful not to ‘sully’ the reputation of the household through ‘inappropriate’ social, cultural and moral behaviour. This translates to a strict surveillance over their lives in order that they maintain the ‘purity’ of their positions as the guardians of household tradition. Hence, while the social benefits of guthi membership accrue to men, the gender ideologies of Newar society ensure that women bear the burden of securing these benefits while themselves being excluded from them. These burdens are economic, political, as well as entailing restrictions of personal freedom. Newar ‘customs’ are not, therefore, neutral cultural characteristics of that society but also specific relations of gender power that privilege men over women.

‘Custom’ often comes into play in situations of intense change. So, the rapid urbanization taking place in India has pointed to a significant dimension of gender politics. In January 2009, newspapers reported that a gang of ten young men had raped a young woman in the Delhi National Capital Region. Press reports indicated that the men had come upon their victim as she sat in a relatively isolated spot with a man, perhaps her boyfriend. The gang had been

returning from a match-winning performance in a cricket tournament. This is how the Hindustan Times newspaper reported the issue:

With malls and university campuses crawling closer to the villages at a steady pace, sometimes even entering them, boundary walls can no longer prevent some common spaces where the villagers and the city residents meet. [A student at one such institute of higher education noted that] ‘We have studied in co-ed institutions from the beginning and being friends with a girl is not uncommon. But it is an issue in these villages. If I go out with a girl, local boys make it a point to harass us’.

However, the report went on to say, ‘Women from the village [from where the perpetrators are reported to have come from] blame it on city girls. “In our village, the women cover themselves up. Our girls do not make boyfriends. City girls come to lonely stretches around the villages and indulge in obscene acts. Late night culture of the city has spoiled the girls”, said Asarfi Devi, an octogenarian from the village.’ There is a wider context to this than the somewhat simplistic ‘modern city person’ vs. ‘backward villager’ angle. As one villager pointed out, ‘part of the reason was also the effort to keep villagers out. “Residents want boundary walls to keep out villagers. Are villagers untouchables? If you respect the villagers, they will respect you”’.

Violence towards women – sometimes leading to death – is a significant aspect of the manifestation of ‘honour’ in many societies. Crimes of honour, Sen (2005) suggests, can be distinguished by the following characteristics: ‘ (1) gender relations that problematise and control women’s behaviours (especially women’s sexuality); (2) the role of women in policing and monitoring women’s behaviour; (3) collective decisions regarding punishment, or in upholding the actions considered appropriate for transgressions of these boundaries; (4) the potential for women’s participation in killings; (5) the ability to reclaim honour through enforced compliance or killings; and (6) state sanction of such killings through recognition of honour as motivation and mitigation (Sen 2005: 61).

The case of contemporary *sati* deaths in India and the stoning of ‘loose’ women in Pakistan provide good illustrations of the ways in which ‘honour’ is mobilised as a tool of male power. *Sati*, as is well known, refers to the act where a recently-widowed woman chooses – or so it is represented – to immolate herself upon the pyre of her dead husband. Memorial stones that mark different instances of *sati*, dating from the period of ancient Hindu dynasties, indicate that the practice of ‘widow-burning’ is of considerable antiquity. What is of relevance is the occurrence of *sati* in the contemporary period. The case of Roop Kanwar, an eighteen year old Rajput woman who committed *sati* on 4 September 1987 in the Rajasthan village of Deorala is perhaps the best known of contemporary instances of the practice.

Roop Kanwar’s *sati* was witnessed by several thousand people and following her death, items of popular culture (such as picture postcards), a variety of ritual events, as well as word-of-mouth publicity proclaimed her as a ‘true’ Indian woman for ‘voluntarily seeking to ‘follow’ her husband into the after-world. The event led to a great deal of public outcry, particularly among women’s groups, and in urban India. The Indian state’s most concrete response was the promulgation of the ‘The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act of 1987’. What are the discourses that have surrounded the making of a *sati*?

In a discussion of the debate over *sati* during the colonial period (that led to the ‘abolition of the practice in 1829), the feminist historian Lata Mani has shown (1989) that, ultimately, the issue reduced to a conversation between colonial male rulers and their (male) subjects. So, whereas the British argued that the practice should be banned because of its ‘barbarity’, Indians responded through a defence of their ‘traditions’. Ironically, as Mani points out, this tradition was itself produced through colonial discourse. For, ‘It was the colonialist discourse that, by assuming the hegemony of Brahmanical religious texts and the complete submission of all Hindus to the dictates of those texts, defined the tradition that was to be criticized and reformed’ (Chatterjee 1993b: 119). And, as Chatterjee further points out, ‘Indian nationalism, in demarcating a political position opposed to colonial rule, took up the women’s question as a problem already constituted for it: namely, as a problem of Indian tradition’ (ibid.). For the

British, the abolition of *sati* became part of the justification for colonial rule (and its ‘civilising mission’) and for Indians, it was a rallying point for the defence of Indian traditions; *sati* was no longer an issue of what happened to *women*.

In the Roop Kanwar case, notions of male honour – and in particular that of the ‘martial caste’ of Rajput – became entangled with various processes of modernity, including electoral politics (not alienating the section of the population that valourised *sati*), and the cultures of the market – ‘calendar art kitsch, cinema posters,...comic strip popular art’ (Sunder Rajan 1993: 27) – that circulated information about it. What is important in all this, as Sunder Rajan points out, is to imagine Roop Kanwar as *both* victim and possessing agency (i.e. the ability to resist and protest). This is an important generalisable point. For, ‘If “victim” and “agent” are adopted as exclusive and excluding labels for the female subject, and if, further, victimhood is equated with helplessness and agency with self-sufficiency, all feminist politics will be rendered either inauthentic or unnecessary’ (Sunder Rajan 1993: 35)

Recent ‘honour crimes’ in the North West region of Pakistan have garnered world-wide media attention. In particular, these have involved violence towards women who have chosen to marry out of their own accord, sought divorce without their family’s consent, had extra-marital relations, or been related to men who have committed an offence but have not been apprehended. In the last case, a woman relative is made to ‘pay’ for the man’s crime. The case of Mukhtaran Mai is perhaps the best known in recent times. Mukhtaran Mai’s brother was accused of sodomy of a girl known as Salma belonging to the powerful Mastoi tribe, and Mai was subjected to gang rape as revenge for redeeming the honour of the Mastoi tribe. It is important to note that the person who ensured Mukhtaran Mai’s family was able to file a case with the police is a religious cleric, a fact that should complicate our understanding of religious functionaries as invariably conservative and supportive of practices that oppress women. The international focus on the case – Mukhtaran Mai’s was named ‘Glamour Woman of the Year’, and her autobiography became a bestseller – ensured that it was not buried in the legal morass that characterises the subcontinent.

However, the story – in terms of publicity and punishment for the offenders – is not so sanguine for other women in a similar situation. In many cases, the ‘patriarchal bias’ (Warraich 2005) embodied in the application of laws has meant that ‘ instead of systematically intervening to address the violations of the right to life, judges have focused on the victims conduct and have been influenced by and reflected customary attitudes condoning the control of and violence against women. Even in the most progressive judgments to date, when dealing with ‘honour killings’ the courts have continued to focus on the issue of “provocation” (Warraich 2005:104). The manner in which systems of law combine with cultures of gender to instill masculinist bias is an important area of research. The agency of men both as perpetrators and victims is a lacuna that the law has not adequately explored. It is important to situate this agency in a comparative and cross-cultural frame across the Asia-Pacific. Further, how does the state ensure justice and equity across the gender divide? What actions build upon human capacities for self-development and empowerment?

Warraich notes that though the instances of ‘honour crimes’ – as reported through multiple sources – are on the rise, cases of conviction are nominal. The postcolonial Pakistani state’s adoption of the British Penal Code of 1860 with its masculinist and patriarchal biases, and the implicit endorsement by the contemporary legal system of customary attitudes towards women and the history of ‘Islamisation’ under general Zia’s rule have both contributed to present state of affairs. So, in a case where an elderly man killed his much younger wife after finding her in a ‘compromising ‘ position with another man, ‘ the court did not criticise the practice of marrying young women to much older men,...and failed to be appalled at the customary conduct of the woman’s own family – who had joined in the attack on her and subsequently disowned her body – rather considering this ‘proof’ of the “disgrace brought by her to the whole family by her conduct” (Warraich 2005: 96). Judges, as Patricia Uberoi points out, ‘bring to their interpretation of the law very masculinist sex-role stereotypes while manifestly upholding the cause of women’ (Uberoi 1995:321)

As the above discussion has indicated, ‘honour’ operates as a context of women’s oppression in a number of societal contexts and contrary to popular notions, cannot be understood as an exclusive characteristic of Islamic societies.

III. Religion, Everyday Practice and Gender

How is gender power consolidated through everyday discourses and practices that may not be explicitly religious but nevertheless draw upon specific religious thought to provide a basis for action? Religious ideologies that impact upon our everyday lives do not always operate in a direct manner but, rather, express themselves in a variety of ‘hidden’ ways. In order to illustrate this point of view, let us consider the case of ‘traditional-modern’ masculinity as propagated by the Mumbai Vyamshala Mandir (MVM, name changed), a club for ‘physical exercise’ for young people located on the grounds of the famous Shivaji Park in the suburb of Dadar in Mumbai¹. The MVM was founded in 1925, and its establishment expressed a certain tendency within Indian nationalism whereby rejuvenation of the subjugated (upper-caste, primarily male) body was understood as the precursor to regaining *Swarajya* (self-rule). It is one of many such clubs and leisure societies that have been instrumental in the propagation specific notions of masculinity through representing them as part and parcel of ‘nation-building’ and ‘character- building’.

At the time when MVM was founded, it was frequently argued that the depths to which a ‘glorious’ and ‘ancient’ (Hindu) civilisation’ had fallen could only be remedied through strict attention to the physical condition of the body through allegiance to a disciplinary mechanism which had become alien to it. The theme of physical exercise, masculinity, and the task of ‘nation-building’ was, of course, a common one in late 19th and early 20th centuries in a variety of discourses in India (see, for example, Alter 2000).

In the contemporary period, the MVM makes a special claim towards preserving and promoting the ‘ancient’ physical culture of *malkhamb*, the name given to both a wooden pole and a series

¹ This discussion is based upon original field-work by the author as part of on-going research on masculine cultures in India.

of exercises built around it. MVM activities follow a set pattern, routinised through the practice of many years: children lined up in their various groups (*malkhamb*, *kho-kho* [an Indian game], gymnastic, basketball, and a 'general' category), the hoisting of (Hindu) saffron flag, children saluting the flag and then dispersing to their activities, etc. At the end of each day's sessions, the participants line up again for the flag lowering ceremony and with the nationalist hymn *Vande Mataram* playing in the background, salute the flag, and, with a shout of *Jai Hind* ('Long Live India!'), disperse (*visarjan*).

Both boys and girls participate in the various 'physical culture' activities of the MVM, and though the girls are able to take part in almost all the activities, they do *not* perform on the pole *malkhamb*; their routines being confined to the 'rope *malkhamb*', and other exercises such as gymnastics. The proponents of *malkhamb* point out that 'certain exercises similar to *malkhamb*, can also be traced in the 12th Century Classic, *Mansolhas*' written by Chalukya (1135 A.D.). In modern times, its history can also be interpreted as tied to the emergence of Marathi Hindu male identity. *Malkhamb* was 'revived' as an organised activity through the efforts of Kale Guru. With its strong turn-of-the-century Marathi upper-caste milieu, the suburb of Dadar was fertile territory for the Mandir's establishment. And, though the MVM does not have explicit affiliations to any political or religious organisations, it has been an important site for the advocacy and elaboration of upper-caste Hindu masculinity. Here, in myriad ways the Hindu male body and society – 'Indian tradition' – are imagined as one.

For the past thirty years or so, the central figure at MVM has been Ramesh Kulkarni (name changed), a government employee whose life outside of office hours has been spent in nurturing an institution that is run on a shoe-string budget and attracts a great deal of support from the local area. Kulkarni is a very particular kind of masculine figure which has an important place in the cultural imagination of the post-liberalisation economy: the *modern* renouncer engaged in the task of 'improving' society, a task seen to be undertaken at great personal cost and sacrifice. Kulkarni's day begins around 5 am when he leaves his house for the MVM premises in order to supervise the morning session of exercises. At the conclusion of the

morning session, he leaves for work from the MVM premises itself. Then, at the end of work, he returns to the MVM, only going back home around 10 pm after attending to all of MVM business. This is his routine for the entire week. When asked what his wife thinks of this routine, he responds that 'she was informed of this before we got married', and is now 'used to it'. Needless to say, for more than twenty years or so married life, his wife has taken on the role of house-keeper, cook, budget manager, and educator of their children; Ramesh Kulkarni is, as he puts it, free to work towards the good of a society that is increasingly caught in the vices of modernity, and unceasingly attentive to its material needs at the cost of the spiritual. The positioning of Hindu masculinity and the male 'improver' – an embodiment of *tyag* (renunciation) – within the matrices of class, caste, and politics of the 'domestic' needs to be noted here. For, quite clearly the burden of doing 'social good' that is carried by Kulkarni's wife is largely obliterated through the close association of the social – and 'Indian tradition' – with *male* agency. In middle-class contexts at least, such as the one exemplified by the MVM, we can see an outline of 'traditional-modernity' in a time of rapid social change. Among other things, it serves the very real purpose of consolidating a discourse of masculinity that seeks preservation of male privileges that in many spheres of life are being brought into question.

MVM also has some women officials, and one of these is Kulkarni's second-in-command, Meera Tendulkar (name changed). Tendulkar has been associated with MVM since the age of eight, and thirty years later is very much a veteran and respected senior member of the institution. She narrates that during the 1980s she performed on the cane *malkhamb* wearing gymnasts clothes which was quite a 'daring' thing to do, in addition to travelling to various parts of the country to perform. The only gap in her participation in MVM's activities was when for 4 years after the birth of her son, she was an infrequent visitor. One of the 'adjustments' her family has made is that she is at MVM premises every evening from 6.30 to 8 pm. Initially there was some concern in her kin circles, but now her relatives have 'adjusted their visits according to this'. She has managed, she points out, to combine the roles of housewife, teacher (she is a college lecturer in psychology) and deputy to Kulkarni 'without much effort'. So, here the 'female modernity' that is permissible is that of someone who learns to combine, rather than have the

option of opting out of ‘feminine tasks’. It is important to remember that even where clubs and societies do not exclude women from membership, they may still be sites for the propagation of patriarchal and masculinist gender politics.

IV. Religious Nationalism

In many ways, what we have been discussing above is the coming together of sacred and secular identities, that is, religious nationalism. Religious nationalism is the context within which acts of bigotry, discrimination, violence, and self-definition (the ways in which group may represent their own identity) draw upon religious vocabulary to construct a community of shared beliefs. As has been pointed out throughout this discussion, there is a great deal of overlap between ethnic and religious identities, even though these are not exactly the same. We have already discussed ‘Hindu nationalism’ as a variety of religious nationalism. This module will conclude with another example in order to demonstrate the complexity of the topic and to show how it is linked to a variety of other contexts.

In situations of civil and military conflict, while men may go to war (though the induction of women in the militia of, say, the LTTE in Sri Lanka and various Maoist groups in India and Nepal complicates the issue), ‘militarised nationalism’ (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004: 535) has specific consequences for women. That is to say, ‘Men and women are affected differently by war’ (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004: 540), So, if women are identified as the main care-takers of the household economy, then the displacement effected by situations of conflict means a severe disruption in their activities. And, if – as is frequent – women are identified as the receptacles of ‘community honour’, they face sexual and other forms of violence at the hands of enemy forces. In those situations where the conflict is the consequence of secessionist movements – Sri Lanka, Kashmir, North East India, for example – the military forces of the state are the key sources of violence against women.

Hyndman and De Alwis (2004) suggest that ‘Sri Lanka provides an excellent example of how the distinction between (public) “battlefield” and (private) “home front” has virtually ceased to have any meaning in the context of war’ (2004: 539). The shifting nature of the ‘frontline’

invariably means the displacement of new groups and the consistent rearrangement of the putatively civilian space of the household. Further, while it is true that the social, political and economic effects of war impact more negatively upon women, the extent to which they are affected also depends upon their socio-economic position. So, in Sri Lanka, 'women from the majority (Sinhala) ethnic group and / or from the middle and upper classes certainly enjoy less vulnerability to displacement and more mobility, on average, than men from a minority ethnic group, especially those from the working classes or peasantry (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004: 541).

Hence, it is important to consider the ways in which situations of conflict are characterised by the intersections between class, ethnic and religious identities, nationalism and gender identity. While women are often made to stand as symbols of cultural purity – and hence central to projects of ethnic and religious nationalism – their subjectivity during war cannot be separated from the contexts of class, caste, religion and ethnicity. This way of thinking about the issues tells us that in situations of 'militarised nationalism', there is no simple way of setting gender identity apart from a variety of other identity positions. Hence, as Hyndman and De Alwis point out, access to resources, the ability to evade harassment at military check-points and the capacity to avoid harm to one's self vary according to the identity one has *in addition* to gender. Further, the ability to *pass* as a favoured identity (upper class, professional, Sinhala, say) can also be crucial to avoiding harassment and harm. So, 'identity is enacted through regulatory regimes that expect certain performances from specific people. Behaving in a way that is consistent with being a foreigner or an upper-class city dweller defines one, therefore, as a foreigner or upper class city dweller' (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004: 552).

V. Conclusion: Alternative Religious Traditions in South Asia

We have so far discussed the different ways in which religious beliefs pose problems for equitable gender relations and might be implicated in a variety of situations of conflict and violence. However, can religion be the basis for an alternative conception of human existence, one marked by tolerance, equity and peaceful co-existence? Given the pervasive nature of

religious belief in South Asia, religion cannot simply be ignored as an influence in people's lives. However, are there 'alternative' religious traditions in South Asia that we can utilize towards developing ideas of peaceful co-existence and gender and other forms of equity? Notwithstanding the histories of hybrid religious traditions such as Bhakti and Sufism, this is not a straightforward question to answer. Can we say, for example, that those who enjoy 'sufi music' are also likely to exhibit religious tolerance? And, how does one utilize hybrid religious traditions that originated in eras that were very different from ours in order to bring about peace and harmony? Does each era require its own form of politics – even religious politics – such that past religious beliefs must be reinterpreted anew, rather than simply be adopted in totality? These are some of the questions that need to be explored when we think the role of religion in 'solving' the complex problems of the present.

References

- Alter, Joseph. 2000. *Gandhi's body: sex, diet and the politics of nationalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1993a. "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question". In K. Sangari and S. Vaid, eds. *Recasting women. Essays in colonial history*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- . 1993b. *The nation and its fragments. Colonial and postcolonial histories*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Hill, Peter S. and Thay Lyi, Heng. 2004. "Women are Silver, women are Diamond: Conflicting images of women in the Cambodian media." *Reproductive Health Matters* 12 (24): 104-115.
- Hyndman, Jennifer and Malathi De Alwis. 2004. "Bodies, shrines, and roads: violence (im) mobility and displacement in Sri Lanka." *Gender, Place and Culture*, 11 (4): 535-557.
- Mani, Lata (1989) 'Contentious Traditions: the Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recastng Women: Essays in Colonial History*, pp. 88-126. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Rankin, Katherine. N. 2003. "Cultures of economies: gender and socio-spatial change in Nepal." *Gender, Place and Culture*, 10 (2): 111-129.
- Sen, Purna. 2005. "Crimes of Honour, Value and Meaning". In Lynn Welchman and Sarah Hossain, eds. *'Honour'. Crimes, paradigms, and violence against women*. London: Zed Books.
- Sunder Rajan, Rajeshwari. 1993. *Real and imagined women*. London: Routledge.
- Uberoi, Patricia 2000. "Feminine identity and national ethos in Indian calendar art". In A. Thorner and M. Krishnaraj, eds. *Ideals, images and real lives: Women in literature and history*. Mumbai: Orient Longman.
- Warraich, Sohail Akbar. 2005. "Honour Killings' and the law in Pakistan". In Lynn Welchman and Sarah Hossain, eds. *'Honour'. Crimes, paradigms, and violence against Women*. London: Zed Books.

Module V

GLOBALISATION, MEDIA & MASCULINITIES

I. Globalisation and the Media

We can understand 'globalization' in a number of different ways. The below provides Let us now look at some of the ways the current era of globalisation might be understood, keeping in mind that the headings below artificially separate processes that are otherwise interlinked.

A) PHYSICAL FLOWS

This refers to the movement of people across national boundaries. This flow may be either 'legal' (ie. state approved) or 'illegal', and voluntary or involuntary (such as refugees and other displaced people). The search for a better life and the urge to escape persecution and similar hardship is the usual context of this traffic. Of course, not all such movements are for purposes of permanent re-settlement and an important segment within them consists of groups of ex-pats, corporate executives, and other professionals who work in second or third countries (an Indonesian working for a British firm in, say, Saudi Arabia) but intend to return to their place of birth at some point. The mass migration of people from non-Western to Western countries of the past twenty-five to thirty years or so is one of the most striking aspects of the physical flows of the current phase of globalisation.

B) CULTURAL FLOWS

This refers to the objects, skills, beliefs, and practices that travel around the world both as 'cultural baggage' with people who move, as well as through other means such as being transferred through media and communication technologies. Under this heading, we might consider the following aspects:

- I. World music: Musical styles such as Cajun, Zydeco, Quawalli, Ska, Juju, Salsa, Klezmer... increasingly find audiences in localities other than their places of origin. What is of particular interest is their consolidation as an *unremarkable* aspect of the new cultural contexts where they now circulate. So, the above repertoire forms a part of the listening collection of 'mainstream' listeners, rather than being confined

to fringe or 'art' circles. It is this aspect that is reflected in the fact that well-established musicians such as Peter Gabriel and Mickey Hart (the drummer from the band Grateful Dead) have become sponsors and patrons of the so-called World Music. Conversely, performances of Western music are also frequent and popular events in many non-Western countries.

- II. Food: The proliferation of non-western cuisine in the West, as well as the increasing popularity of western food in other parts of the world. We might think here not just of 'eating out', but how the home has also become a site of globalisation through changes in the cooking styles of the domestic kitchen.
- III. Religious beliefs: The establishment of congregations and places of worship (such as mosque, church and temples) that mark the broadening of the spheres of belief in the west. While, mosques, temples, churches, and synagogues have co-existed for a relatively long time in many Asian societies, this has only recently begun to happen in the West. In Australia, as in the U.S, for example, this has sometimes occasioned heated public debate. So, you may be familiar with arguments in the media, among residents of particular localities, and elected members of city councils over whether mosques and temples should be allowed to be established near to Christian places of worship.
- IV. Languages: This refers to the proliferation of non-English languages at a number of sites: as subjects in schools and universities, as screening of 'foreign' films, and as regular part of many people's lives, such as the SBS television channel.
- V. Clothing and body style: We are increasingly witness to different styles of clothing and their slow proliferation into the European background populations of Australia. This might include, for example, the acceptance of bright colours in to the Anglo-Saxon wardrobe, body adornment that borrow from non-western traditions (such as body piercing).

- VI. New reading habits: the popularity of so called 'post-colonial literature', for example.
- VII. Foreign films: in particular, their increasing routine-ness in terms of viewing habits.

C) INFORMATION FLOWS

- I. The so-called information super highway: the information flows linked to the instantaneous and almost unlimited access to information of all kinds: Google search engine, online library catalogues, stock-market information, marriage and friendship websites.....
- II. The information exchanged by people in an increasingly mobile world: travellers' tales/stories of immigrants when they return for a visit to their home countries.

D) MEDIA FLOWS

This refers to the proliferation and consolidation of global media empires: Star TV beams out of Hong Kong and India to many parts of Asia, and you can watch Neighbours, Friends, Frasier, World Cup Cricket, Bollywood movies, and Chinese language news and entertainment programmes.... in villages in Thailand, in suburbs in Delhi, and high rise apartments in Jakarta. However, not just ownership, but also audiences form a crucial site of analysis of this aspect of globalisation.

Think also here of the events of September 11, 2001, and the invasion of Iraq, and the role of the media into making these into global events.

E) FLOWS OF CAPITAL

This is linked to the above two, for the flows of capital depend on, among other things, the smooth flow of information and, of course, the multinational media empires are an obvious example of global capital flows. We are also in the era of what some have referred to as 'flexible' or 'disorganised' capitalism. There are several dimensions to this. You would have come across one of these characteristics of the so called period of

flexible capitalism when you buy your Black and Decker Iron or your Sunbeam food processor, your iPod, your National Panasonic TV set, or your Adidas running shoes. For, you are quite likely to find that these are made in China or a South-East Asian country. International capital now flows to those parts of the worlds where relatively poor governments in need of foreign revenue are willing to provide a 'congenial' work environment for the owners of this international capital. By 'congenial' is meant a labour force with minimal rights in the work place, the outlawing of union activities and the abandoning of work-place safety measures in order to save costs (and hence increase profits) for international capital. Think for example, of the events in the American multinational Union Carbide's factory in the central Indian city of Bhopal in 1984. As well, we should also remember that the availability of relatively inexpensive but advanced electronic goods to consumers in the West is also based on paying sweat-shop wages to factory labour which quite often consists of those with the least ability to demand better conditions of work: women.

II. Gender and Sexuality

The last sentence of the previous section should alert us to the fact that there are specific gender dimensions to globalization that we should be aware of. However, 'gender' is still mainly deployed in both popular and academic discourse as a synonym for 'women', rather than as a relationship between women, men and other genders. The landscape of gender is one that is characterised by *power relationships*, and also one where certain dominant ideals of manhood impact on women, different ways of being men, as well those identities that may not fit either gender category. This way of engaging with 'gender' is to foreground the idea that gender identities are historically produced, rather than 'natural'.

Masculinity

Masculinity refers to the socially produced but embodied ways of being male. That is to say, men learn to be men and this 'learning' is expressed both in terms of social structures as well as in the ways in which men present themselves in everyday life. So, for example, the idea of 'men's work' and 'women's work' relates to social structure whereas the ways in which men speak, behave, gesture, and interact with other men (as well as women) reflects the embodiment of masculinity. Linked to this is the idea that some ways of being a man are better than others. These ideas about gender are produced at specific 'sites', and these might include educational systems, customary laws and regulations, the state and its mechanisms, the family, religious norms and sanctions, popular culture, and, the media. Finally, in this context, it is important to remember that in all societies there exist multiple ways of being a man, however, and that the dominant models of masculinity are always under challenge from other positions. That is to say, masculinity is not just a relationship between men and women, but also between men. So, for example, there is a particular relationship heterosexual and homosexual masculinities. Therefore, it is more proper to speak of 'masculinities' rather than 'masculinity'.

The ideas of 'making' and 'producing' are crucial to the study of gender identities, for they point to their historical and social nature. The various discourses of 'proper' masculine behaviour – in novels, films, advertisements, and folk-advice – would clearly be unnecessary if it was a naturally endowed characteristic. The very fact that masculinity must consistently be reinforced – 'if you buy this motor-cycle you'll be a real man' – says something about the tenuous and fragile nature of gender identities; they must continually be reinforced. Following from this, we might also say that masculinity is *enacted* rather than expressed.

Sexuality

'Sexuality' is also a much broader concept than a biological understanding of it allows.

'Biologism' is the thinking that suggests that gender and sexual identities:

- are biologically derived
- have been historically stable (i.e. the same since the 'dawn of time')
- are 'essentially' about our 'private' lives, and,
- are 'basically' the same across different cultures, and,
- are normative (ie. can tell us what is 'good' and what is 'bad')

To be critical of a biological understanding of sexuality is to suggest that the most fruitful way of approaching the topic is to think about the meanings cultures give to it: sexual meanings are cultural meanings and these differ from one culture to another. Of course, biology does play a role in the making of human behaviours and societies. However, it is important to think of it as the material that culture works upon and alongside it. As one author points out:

The content of sexuality is ultimately provided by human social relations, human productive activities, and human consciousness. The history of sexuality therefore the history of a subject whose meaning and contents are in a continual process of change. It is the history of social relations.

(Padgug 1979: 11)

It is important to think about sexuality alongside masculinity in order to explore the ways in which the two are linked contexts, and how each influences our ideas about the other. Media representations, in particular play upon our beliefs that the two are connected.

III. Masculinities in the Media

The media has been a very significant instrument of the circulation of ideas regarding gender identities. However, the media does not create ideas about gender, rather, it

represent discourses that already circulate within society. And, as these change, so do media representations. Let us begin with an early example of media representations of masculinity in South Asia.

Fat and Muscle

Consider the following images of two Bollywood stars – Dilip Kumar and Salman Khan – from different eras:



What strikes us immediately as we compare the two images of ‘leading men’ is the different ways in which the maleness is represented. So, whereas it is Dilip Kumar’s face that is the intended to be the object our gaze, it is Salman Khan’s *body* that is the focus of attention. Secondly, unlike for Dilip Kumar, for the star of the later period, *muscularity* becomes an important way of representing masculinity. What do these observations tell us about the social contexts and changing perceptions of masculinity in our time?

Firstly, let us consider the face/body dimension. Searching through photo archives for the periods represented by Dilip Kumar (1950s) and Salman Khan (the past and the current decades), it is noticeable that stars of the earlier era are mostly represented through facial shots whereas those of the latter through full body shots. Is it possible that earlier depictions of masculinity relied much more on the idea that the man's *face* as a representation of his manhood? Further, that this might have been linked to the class (and caste) as significant ways of representing male-hood? The facial portrait is a peculiarly elite activity. Further, Dilip Kumar's face is a 'chubby' one, hence representing that of an elite male who does not have to do physical labour. Finally, the chubby hero of an earlier period could still be identified as male through his association with masculine sciences: the hero of the earlier era was a scientist or a dam builder and hence 'masculine' through being 'scientific'. This was also true of Pakistani cinema of the period.

In the current period, globalization has had a substantial effect on representations of masculinity and it is this that is reflected in the predominance of muscular bodies in contemporary popular culture. The visible masculinity of Salman Khan is one that is linked to the global cultures of body-building and muscle toning. These, in turn relate to the rise of new consumer cultures and their circulation through transnational and national media sources.

Let us now consider some other examples.

Women, masculinities and the Media

Media images of women also tell us something about ideas around masculinities. In South Asia, media representations of women are most frequently inspired by debates between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Hence, as one observer points out, 'Perhaps the most important role that television is playing at present is the conflation of television programming with new, globally constructed versions of "modernity" and the changing dimension of the role of community in contemporary civil society. And women are the

focal point of both these changes' (Gupta 2000: 61). A key question in media representations and debates is the question: how modern should the 'local' woman be and yet maintain her 'local' identity? In other words, the non-western woman (and, this is usually assumed to be a monolithic category) is implicitly assumed to be the bearer of 'tradition', such that the most crucial battles over the maintenance of tradition in the face of perceived attacks upon it by 'external' forces are fought around representations of women. A contemporary representation of women within this context concerns that of the 'new woman' (Birch *et. al* 2001: 135). The 'modern woman' can most be found in 'in the pages of glossy magazines which cater to the emerging and relatively prosperous urban middle and upper-middle classes' (Birch *et. al.*), as well as in television advertising and regular programming. As Sunder Rajan (1993) points out, the new woman is usually portrayed as 'attractive, educated, hard-working, and socially aware' (Sunder Rajan 1993: 131). The modern woman is also represented as independent in the decisions she makes, as well as ambitious and seeking a career path for herself. And, being a working woman, she is also a consumer. From jewellery advertising to those that promote household goods, the modern woman is ubiquitous.

While the selling of products is a crucial reason for the presence of the modern woman in the advertising, the purely commercial aspect is inadequate for an understanding of the changing nature of gender representations in the media. 'The representation of the new woman', it has been suggested, 'are also a way of reformulating masculinist ideologies which domesticate political assertions for equality by women' (Birch *et. al.*, 2001:137). For, the most significant aspect of such representations is that the woman's primary role is defined as the self-sacrificing mother and the nurturer of the family. Hence, in an advertisement for a brand of contraceptive pills in an Indian magazine, a woman is the key figure. However, it is what she says that is interesting: 'I am mindful of all the needs of my family, no matter how small' (ad. for oral contraceptive, *Meri Saheli* magazine, January 1999). Hence, simultaneously as female desire is foregrounded – through de-linking sex from reproduction – the act of using contraception is represented

as responsible behaviour towards the family: one must not place a burden upon the family's resources through having more children. The possibilities of female desire are thus domesticated through pointing to her 'primary' role.

The Gender of Institutions

The historic division of social life as 'public' and 'private' has simultaneously entailed a division of *institutions* as public and private. And, along with this, there has developed a logic of the gender of such institutions. According to this logic, public institutions have been understood to be the 'natural' preserve of men and hence have tended to operate according to a variety of masculinist ideologies. One example of this is that the media quite often provides accounts of public women (say parliamentarians) through describing what they wear, or, how many children they have; women's primary identity continues to be defined through an implicit understanding that public institutions possess (and should possess) a masculine identity. Beyond this, there are even more serious issues, such as the denial of equal opportunities to women through masculinity notions of what men can do and what women are capable. It becomes important, therefore, to explore the gender of our institutions in order to devise strategies if change.

'Other' Men in the Media

How do media represent identities that do not fall into the traditional categories of male and female? And, what media strategies come into play where representations concern those who may have been born, say biologically male (/female) but identify as female (/male)? How does a medium address this context of 'category confusion'? We should begin with the idea that the most frequent response is, indeed, to see it as a state of confusion: that those who do not 'carry on' with their biologically assigned identities are

abnormal across a range of registers. Media responses in this context concern both representations of non-heterosexual identities as well as trans-gender ones. In the former case, the focus is on sexual preference, whereas the latter (though sexuality is also a significant context) more immediately relates to the presentation of the self in public life; Homosexuality speaks to our senses of 'proper' biological behaviour, whereas trans-gendered contexts generate anxieties regarding 'proper' social behaviour. Media engagements with the topic reflect these currents.

The salient representations of non-heterosexual men and trans-gender identities in the media in South Asia emerges from thinking about them as either inherently comical, fundamentally villainous, and lacking in emotional depth and sensitivity with respect to inter-personal relations. Notwithstanding the long history of tolerance of hybrid gender and sexual identities in South Asia, the contemporary media landscape primarily reflects heterosexual anxieties about non-normative identities. It is, no doubt, linked to a number of contexts. These include the significance of reproductive sex and the emphasis on reproducing the lineage (ie. 'son-preference'), nationalist discourses regarding 'virile' masculine and submissive female citizens, and, the (linked) politics of 'our heritage' which speaks of the deleterious effects of 'westernization' upon 'our' culture.

Given the above, how do we understand recent programmes on Pakistani and Indian television that have trans-gender (or, strictly speaking, transvestite) persons as their hosts? Consider the following clip from YouTube taken from Pakistani television:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUa7JVazi4w>

On the one hand, it might be said that programmes such as this lead to a broadening of representations of gender and sexuality on television. This is, indeed, a valid point, and as the following excerpt indicates, the programme enjoys great popularity:

So popular is the show that advertising rates during its weekend prime time slot are triple that of other shows in similar slots. Saleem [who acts as the Negum] is now one of the highest paid television hosts in the country and is constantly receiving offers from rival channels to bring the show to them.

During an arduous three-hour hair and make-up session before the recording of a show, Saleem was philosophical about the reasons why the show has clicked with audiences.

"I think Begum Nawazish Ali inspires women in particular because she is a strong, glamorous, opinionated woman who is unafraid of saying what she thinks and of flirting with men if she feels like it," explained Saleem. "Men, on the other hand, find her intriguing because she transcends all kinds of restrictions and plays with their imagination." (<http://www.sajaforum.org/2008/03/in-the-mid-nine.html>)

Are there other ways of addressing this apparently 'progressive' trend on sub-continental television? Staying away from conservative criticisms about 'vulgarity' and insult to Pakistani identity, what other frameworks of analysis are relevant? For example, does this programme also rely on caricatured ideas about both trans-gendered persons and women? What stereotypes are at play here regarding both categories? So, simultaneously as it might undermine the dominance of 'normal' people on television, does it reinforce existing ideas about the 'abnormals'? Or, is the impact of such representations overwhelmingly positive?

References

Birch, D. T. Schirato & S. Srivastava (2001) *Asia. Cultural Politics in the Global Age*. Palgrave: New York

Padgug, Robert (1979) 'Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History', *Radical History Review*, Spring/Summer, No.20: 3-23.

Sunder Rajan, Rajeshwari (1993) *Real and Imagined Women*. Routledge: New York.

South Asian Network to Address Masculinities (SANAM)