

THE MAKING OF NEOLIBERAL INDIA

Rupal Oza



Nationalism, Gender, and the Paradoxes of Globalization

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Traveling to the outskirts of New Delhi on a hot summer afternoon in 1996, I noticed a series of Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements along the highway. Painted on the sides of shops and tea stalls, they blended together into a blur of white and red. The giant soft drink manufacturers had only recently gained entrée into the Indian market, and their logos already peppered the landscape. Painted on walls, on building facades, and on corrugated store shutters, the logos formed an endless stream on surfaces once filled with a collage of other advertisements, ripped movie posters, and political graffiti from the last election. We stopped a little while later and stepped out into the blistering heat at one of the roadside tea stalls. As we sat in the shade and waited for our tea, I noticed another Coca-Cola logo painted on a nearby wall. Leaching faintly through the white background that surrounded the logo was an old advertisement for washing soap, marketed predominantly to middle and lower middle income households. The juxtaposition appeared as a palimpsest where a new “multinational” advertisement was grafted onto an old “Indian” one. This image stayed with me over the next few years as I researched globalization in India, becoming emblematic of the tensions I witnessed.

Introduction

This book is about the contentious debates over India's identity in the 1990s. I set out to explore the contours of this debate in the context of three independent yet intertwined developments. The first is the neoliberal policies of reform instituted in 1991, which intensified India's encounter with global capital. Second is the rise in political power of Hindu nationalists (*The Sangh Parivar*) through the decade.¹ The third is the manner in which both the economic reform process and the Hindu Right bolstered the consolidation of middle class identity and power. While dialectically connected, these three political and economic developments are independent of each other in the sense that they are not causatively linked.

I examine "the idea of India," to use Sunil Khilnani's term (1999, 1), through three sites of public debate. Each was the locus of vibrant public discussions about India's place in the global order. The three sites are: court cases against satellite and cable television companies, the 1996 Miss World Pageant, and India's declaration of nuclear weapons capability in 1998. Each site reveals the tortured negotiations of modernity, culture, and sovereignty in a globalizing India. These sites function as flashpoints that bring together a series of different actors: the state, organizations in civil society, the media, and representatives of domestic and global capital. The array of actors changes in each site and with it the manner in which globalizing India represents both an opportunity and a threat to them.

My main argument is that, in the context of India's intensified encounter with global capital, the concomitant loss of sovereignty has resulted in the displacement of control onto national culture and identity. India's attempts to control and establish sovereignty over national culture and identity have manifested themselves by fortifying rigid gender and sexual identities. These reified national and gender identities are not simply orchestrated by a hegemonic state apparatus pitted against civil society. Rather, different actors within civil society participate in promoting particular national and gender identities even when they hold politically divergent positions. Second, while the nation-state's power to mediate global capital's intrusion has weakened, this does not automatically translate to its demise. The three sites in this book show that efforts were made to compensate for the loss of autonomy by establishing India's independence and cultural difference from the West. Therefore, the structural and discursive ways in which national identity was crafted and solidified during the decade of the 1990s contradicts the argument that some theorists of globalization are making regarding the demise of the nation-state (Appadurai 1996; Wilson and Dissanayake 1996; Hardt and Negri 2000). The focus of inquiry, I suggest, needs to shift from one that concerns itself with questioning the

continuing relevance of the nation-state in globalization to one that asks instead what kinds of sovereignties are being compromised and created in the wake of global capital flows.

Lastly, the three sites disturb any neat understanding of the categories “global” and “local.” The sites function instead as *spaces of arbitration* where that which is perceived to be global/foreign/colonial clashes with that which is perceived to be local/indigenous/independent. However, the designation of foreign versus Indian is not easily demarcated. For instance, the court cases against satellite and cable channels were not only about ‘foreign programs’ (such as *Baywatch*) but also focused on dramatic series made in India by Indian producers and actors for the burgeoning private television industry. In the discourse of the court cases, women’s sexual autonomy was designated as foreign to “Indian culture.” Consequently, “global” and “foreign” as well as “local” and “Indian” were invented by the court cases. It was through this arbitration, then, that globalized India came to be defined and contested.

Globalization and the Nation-state

According to David Harvey, globalization has altered our comprehension of time and space in fundamental ways. Referring to the current phase of capital in terms of time-space compression, he argues, “I use the word ‘compression’ because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by a speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inward upon us” (1990, 240). The very organization of space has altered such that actual distances between places are no longer the only ways with which to measure connections. A grid of financial transactions, electronic landscapes, and the global assembly line of production and consumption connects geographically diverse places to one another. Mike Featherstone refers to this network of connections in terms of “third cultures,” which are identifiable patterns and flows of “goods, people, information, knowledge and images” that occur beyond the confines of the state-society at a trans-national level (1990, 1). Akin to Featherstone’s conceptualization of global cultures as identifiable third cultures is McKenzie Wark’s framework of “third nature.” Third nature is a pattern of superimposed networks that overlays “second nature”— the landscape of cities, roads, and harbors — with a network of “information flows” (1994). According to Arjun Appadurai, this new spatial temporal grid creates disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics. In an attempt to theorize these disjunctures, Appadurai proposes five global cultural flows — ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, financescapas, and ideoscapas (1996, 33).

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These “scapes” characterize a global grid that remaps the world in new ways. Old territorial units such as nation-states are no longer sufficient spatial mechanisms to demarcate the world, given the flows of capital, electronic signals, refugees, and migrant labor that traverse the boundaries of the nation-state.

However, rather than papering over all differences to make the world unified, social theorists now characterize globalization as a process whereby differences are absorbed as part of global capital. As Featherstone points out, we are not witnessing global cultural imperialism riding on the backs of economic imperialism (1990, 2). Instead, we are witnessing the simultaneous solidification of global flows and the consolidation of local identities. As spatial barriers are more easily overcome, the difference between places in terms of labor cost, infrastructure, language, consuming classes, etc., become important in pitting different places against each other. Difference, in other words, is key to capitalist accumulation. This is what Harvey calls the “central paradox”: “the less important the spatial barriers, the greater the sensitivity of capital to the variations of place within space, and the greater the incentive for places to be differentiated in ways attractive to capital” (1990, 296). Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake call this the “global-local nexus” through which “a new world-space of cultural production and national representation which is simultaneously becoming more *globalized* (unified around dynamics of capitalistic moving across borders) and more *localized* (fragmented into contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance) in everyday texture and composition” (1996, 1).

As a consequence of the global-local nexus, global entities are emerging that are directly connected to local places. The nesting order of local to national to global has been replaced with direct linkages between the local and the global, thereby making the nation-state less and less significant in the transactions. As Arif Dirlik remarks, “Production and economic activity becomes localized in regions below the nation, while its management requires supranational supervision and coordination” (1996, 31). This has signaled the demise of the nation-state for some theorists of globalization. Wilson and Dissanayake contend, “the nation-state, in effect, having been shaped into an ‘imagined community’ of coherent modern identity through warfare, religion, blood, patriotic symbology, and language, is being undone by this fast imploding heteroglossic interface of the global and the local: what we would here diversely theorize as the *global/local* nexus” (1996, 3). They go on to argue that the paths of globalization cut across so many boundaries that the contours through which the nation-state defines itself and controls its sovereignty are no longer

effectual. Similarly Dirlik says, “the new pathways for the development of capital cut across national boundaries and intrude on national economic sovereignty, which renders irrelevant the notion of a national market or a national economic unit and undermines national sovereignty from within by fragmenting the national economy” (1996, 31). Thus, rather than mapping the globalized world through national boundaries, the need now is to “think ourselves beyond the nation” (Appadurai 1996, 158).

However, for whom is the nation-state no longer relevant? Who can think beyond the nation? One can certainly argue that there are groups of people all over the world who continue to struggle for statehood. While there are several critiques to be made of the nation-state, the structural paradox that exists is that the nation-state nevertheless remains the unit of power with which to negotiate rights and demand responsibility.² Certainly for women, the argument can be made that the dissolving of the nation-state would be cause for celebration since the relationship with the nation has been deeply problematic and disempowering for *most* women.³ In a similar vein, Linda McDowell, speculates whether the anxiety that accompanies the placelessness produced by globalization is not “gender-specific.” She contends that “for many women, the decentering of the local, the widening of spatial horizons may have liberating effects as well as raising new anxieties” (1996, 31).

Some social theorists couple predictions of the demise of the nation with the emergence of a sense of “placelessness.” This sense of being unanchored comes from the dissolution of the link between nation-state and national culture — the loss of “a sense of place” (Massey 1994, 162). What is presented in the wake of the nation is a dizzying, anxiety-ridden concern with grounding in “place.” According to Harvey, the response to the fragmentation of globalization is that

place-identity, in this collage of superimposed spatial images that implode in upon us, becomes an important issue, because everyone occupies a space of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate ourselves shapes identity. Furthermore, if no one “knows their place” in this shifting collage world, then how can a secure social order be fashioned or sustained? (1990, 302).

This sense of fragmentation is unhinging the link between nation-state and national culture. Even for Stuart Hall “the process of globalization, that form of relationship between a national cultural identity and a nation-state is now beginning, at any rate in Britain, to disappear. And one suspects that it is not only there that it is beginning to disappear” (1991, 22).

The consequences of this are new forms of ethnic-based identities and jingoistic nationalisms.

In the din and disorientation caused by globalization, feminist geographer Doreen Massey asks, “For who is it in these times who feels dislocated/placeless/invaded? To what extent, for instance, is this a predominantly white/First World take on things?” (1994, 165). Massey’s question particularly challenges Morley and Robins who say that “globalization, as it dissolves the barriers of distance, makes the encounter of colonial center and colonized periphery immediate and intense” (1995, 108). In response to the global restructuring, Massey questions the perspective from which the encounter between the center and periphery is intense. She argues that “[for the] colonized periphery that encounter has for centuries been ‘immediate and intense’” (1994, 165).

Rather than a sense of placelessness Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in their monumental book, *Empire*, argue that the demise of national sovereignty gives way to a global Empire. They say “the declining sovereignty of nation-states and their increasing inability to regulate economic and cultural exchanges is in fact one of the primary symptoms of the coming of Empire” (2000, xii). They claim it is not that sovereignty *per se* is dissolving but that the sovereignty of nation-states is giving way to a *global* sovereignty governed by global economic and cultural flows. This Empire is unbounded, positioned in contrast to imperialism: “Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers” (ibid). However, the authors’ efforts to construct this Empire demonstrate a lack of attention to spatiality and even geography that parallels the lack of empirical detail in their study.

In his critical review of *Empire*, Stuart Corbridge (2003) counters Hardt and Negri’s claim of the dissolution of nation-states with evidence that points to “strongly bordered nations or regional blocks” and to the “home” nations to which mobile capitals retreat during periods of crisis. For postcolonial countries such as India, the nation-state emerged out of struggles for sovereignty, and their claims to it are far from waning (Alexander 1997). While it remains undisputed that some postcolonial regimes are repressive in their own right, the nation-state nevertheless remains an important structural unit of power with which subaltern groups struggle to gain justice. The question in the global era is: What kinds of national sovereignties are being exercised and deployed by the nation-state? I show in this book that one of the ways in which India fortifies its sovereignty against globalization is by enforcing and codifying systems of identity and belonging.

The attention to identity and belonging runs counter to the concern within globalization discourses that claims that places are being detached from identities. Drawing attention to this discourse, Massey writes, “the link between culture and place, it is argued, is being ruptured” (1994, 160). Instead of a complete break, in this project I show that the ruptures between identity and place are resutured through gender and sexuality. Women, because they bear the burden of being cultural repositories, subjectively resolve the balance between the old and the new. For instance, I show in chapter 3 that, as satellite television signals transgress Indian boundaries, the attempt to restore national sovereignty and control is by securing the borders of the nation against the foreign. Here, women’s bodies and representational praxis represent the borders of the nation that need to be protected from the outside. In chapter 4, I show how, at the same time as women’s representational practices are the subject of protection and censorship, women are used by the state, private and domestic capital to showcase a modern, capable nation in an effort to draw in foreign investment. Finally, in chapter 5, I examine how attempts to project a strong virile (male) nation in the face of the increasingly globalized world are efforts to project the image of a unified (Hindu) nation capable of joining the global fraternity of nuclear nations and establishing regional supremacy, both of which entail securing national borders.

Gender and Nations in Globalization

All nations depend on powerful constructions of gender.

Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 353

The discursive and material construction of nations prescribes definitive roles for men and women. Locked within a heteronormative paradigm, women bear the nation’s children while men’s virility is weighed by their ability to protect territory and women against invasion. Feminist analysis of the nation has given us a wide array of tools with which to understand how particular constructions of gender are anchored to the metaphorical and material ways in which women form the borders and boundaries of the nation and are its repositories of culture, its source of control, its temptation, and its danger (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1980; McClintock 1995; Mayer 1999; Ivekovic and Mostov 2004).

While gender is fundamental to any understanding of nations and nationalism, the influential collection *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (Parker et al., 1992) reminds us of the impossibility of neatly relegating nationalism to the domain of the public and sexuality to the private. Rather, gender

and sexuality centrally inform the organization of allegiance, patriotism, and nationalism. In her study of the Bahamas, M. Jacqui Alexander compellingly illustrates the fundamental ways in which the erotic economy of tourism is undergirded by repressive state laws legislating normative heterosexuality. She says, "Attempts to guard against the contamination of the body politic by legislating heterosexuality are contradictorily bolstered by state gestures that make borders permeable for the entry of multinational capital" (Alexander 1997, 67). It is increasingly apparent, therefore, that control and administration of gender, sexuality, and difference is key for nations and their economies (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem 1999).

As nation-states open their borders to global capital, resulting political economic transformations compel the reorganization of national economy and ideology to assert compliance, control, and sovereignty. If gender is central to understanding nations and nationalism, then the changes brought on by global capital flows demand a critical look at how gender figures in the reorganization of nations in globalization. Considering the manner in which women's sexual economy has been inextricably tied to "property and propriety" Bannerji, Mojab, and Whitehead argue: "As secular, liberal, or even socialist nationalisms, with their prior economic policies of 'import substitution,' have given way to 'free trade,' nationalist rhetoric increasingly has taken the form of defending 'traditional cultural politics,' which include anti-feminist and inegalitarian religious and moral injunctions" (2001, 9).

M. Jacqui Alexander examines the efforts that Bahamian lawmakers made to "reinvent" heteropatriarchy through the Bahama's 1991 Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act. These efforts are about preserving the transfer of property and the creation of docile procreative citizen subjects instead of deviant nonprocreative ones. Alexander, who approaches this situation from the framework of a postcolonial nation-state asserting heterosexual control over the nation, understands such policies as "border policing" (1997, 67). Who has sex with whom is as much a source of concern because it blurs the boundaries of sexual propriety (while offering the erotic possibility of transgression) as it is about the breach of the sanctity of national borders.

As national borders are breached, boundaries between public and private come to be increasingly policed. With the change in the political economic conditions that draws more women into the public sphere, the breach of gendered boundaries is constructed as a threat that requires the reorganization of the moral and national order. In her study of women industrial workers in Malaysia, Ahiwa Ong notes that Free Trade Zones have generated a particularly gendered and sexualized labor pool of young Asian women workers who come from predominantly rural areas to the

urban industrial centers. The influx of young women workers has generated a moral panic about the degeneracy of Muslim society. Ong observes, “As new workers, young women engage in activities that violate traditional boundaries (spatial, economic, social, and political) in public life, forcing a *redefinition of social order*” (1997, 74).

Even as state policies and the gendered and sexualized lure of Asian women who are docile workers with “nimble” fingers attracts global capital into the country, there is a simultaneous effort to undermine feminine status. The nation strives to establish that, while women may serve as labor, their working status and newfound presence in the public sphere cannot bestow independence upon them. Ong explains, “state and revivalist movements [in Malaysia] competed in enforcing a moral discipline on working women in public life ... each vying to be more ‘Islamic’ than the other” (1997, 75).

While women face the brunt of control and surveillance, men and masculinities also figure centrally in the imagining of the nation. As McClintock reminds us, “the needs of the nation [are] typically identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men” (1997, 89). In contemporary India, the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s through the 1990s has coincided with displays of aggressive masculinity demonstrated through a display of heteronormative sexual virility (Vijayan 2004). Kajri Jain traces the circuits through which a muscular aggressive figure of the Hindu god Ram came to dominate “bazaar prints” during the *Ramjanmabhoomi* movement.⁴ These images of the muscular Ram, Jain argues, were attempts at reappropriating the space generated by Amitabh Bachchan’s⁵ “angry young man” persona, which embodied working class and castes disillusionment with the state in the 1970s and 1980s. Jain says the Bachchan image “posed a threat to the canonical symbolic order, to which Hindutva’s response was a *defensive reappropriation* of the muscular body in the form of the aggressive Ram” (2001, 224).

Also drawing on mass culture, Uma Chakravarti, shows that the “crisis of legitimacy” faced by the Indian state by the 1980s was dealt with by “reconstructing the nation’s ‘glorious’ past” through the representation of masculine authority (1998, 244). The discourse of masculine authority was dramatically represented through the televised narrative of *Chanakya*, which is based on the life of the historical figure who fought for just rule against a corrupt emperor. Chakravarti elaborates: “This man ... was created as the archetypal figure of masculine authority. In a far-reaching reinterpretation of *Dharma* (duty), the patriotic worshipper of the nation could lie, cheat, bribe, and incite in the cause of Dharma where Dharma now stood for the securing of the integrity, unity, and Brahminic values

of the nation” (1998, 247). *Chanakya*, while drawing on a long history of nationalist writing from the first half of the twentieth century, was deliberately adapted and transformed into a “saffron hero” (1998, 248).⁶

Chanakya was telecast nationally in the wake of the hugely popular *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, both of which had already served the goals of Hindu nationalists by saturating the popular imagination with particular versions of the epics.⁷ The creators of *Chanakya* orchestrated the “saffroning” of the protagonist by subtly presenting him as the hero who rescued the weak and fragmented nation dominated by rivalries and transforming it into a strong, centralized empire. In the televised version, *Chanakya* (re)presents history, claiming “India at birth [was] created as a strong, unique, spiritual and decisively ‘Hindutva’ nation” (Chakravarti 1998, 250). It is this version of a strong and unified India that lends itself quite easily to Hindutva’s *Akhand Bharat* agenda.⁸

In the (re)telling of history, *Chanakya* can bring India back to its past glory through a subtle language of sexuality. *Chanakya*, Chakravarti says, “reiterates the view that celibacy is the preferred state for possessing concentrated masculine vigor” (1988, 256). Masculine sexuality in these narratives is celibate and controlled, yet ferocious and powerful, always at the brink of being unleashed to defend the nation. This retelling of history coincides neatly with Hindutva narratives that claim that the virile sons of India will restore the defiled motherland to its past glory. Thus, a particularly narrow, aggressive, parochial version of masculinity is resurrected to restore the nation’s power during crisis.

The three sites examined in this book are used to investigate the production of these discourses of female protection and masculine aggression in the process of reimagining the nation in globalization. My attempt is to focus not only on the narratives of threat and danger posed by global capital (with its discursive threads that articulate the global as a masculine, penetrative force) but also on the masculinized response of postcolonial India in terms of virility and potency. What kinds of masculinity and sexuality become consolidated in these responses to globalization? To what extent does the “protection of women” discourse and the demonstration of virility tap into sentiments of postcolonial defiance of imperial power while simultaneously solidifying normative prescriptions of gender and sexuality? The three sites unravel some of these questions to expose the debates surrounding India’s identity in the context of globalization, Hindu nationalism’s growing popularity, and the consolidation of the middle classes.

Economic Reform, Hindu Nationalism, and the Middle Classes

The political economic changes in the early 1990s began to materially and discursively construct a new India. They forced the country to shed its image of a cumbersome bureaucracy of the “license-permit-raj” in favor of a vibrant new economy that welcomed foreign investment. It is within the context of the neoliberal economic reforms, the rise of the Hindu nationalism, and the consolidation of the middle classes that I explore the three sites and view them as flashpoints of debate on globalization in India.

It is well known among political economic commentators that the 1991 economic reforms — while certainly dramatic — were not a fundamental paradigm shift from a socialist growth model to capitalism. The significance of the 1991 reforms was in the radical loosening of the controls and regulations. These controls and regulations were indicative of what Baldev Raj Nayar calls “economic nationalism,” which combined “external protection with internal regulation” (2001, 129). From 1974 onwards, comments Nayar, India under Indira Gandhi had been slowly liberalizing the economy in response to the political crisis in the mid-1970s. Partha Chatterjee explains that the 1970s reforms focused on reviving the stagnant industrial sector by changing the licensing policy in order to boost exports (1997a, 63). Both the economic conditions introduced by the reforms as well as the authoritarian political climate imposed as a consequence of the 1975 emergency were of most benefit to the Industrial bourgeoisie.

Structural changes in the Indian economy implemented in the mid-1980s under Rajiv Gandhi’s government led to further liberalization of state controls and regulations. In an attempt to deal with a looming fiscal crisis Gandhi’s 1985 budget “reduced income, corporate and wealth taxes, cut import duties on capital goods, provided tax breaks to exporters and largely eliminated licensing restrictions on investments in twenty-five industries” (Corbridge and Harriss 2000, 102). Gandhi attempted to emulate the Asian “tiger” economies by creating a new India that would “do a Korea” (Corbridge and Harriss 2000, 151). These measures pandered quite unabashedly to the upper middle class and elite sectors of the economy, whose interest in liberalization lay, according to Prabhat Patnaik (1995), in expanding into the international arena in ways that that previous policies inhibited.

One of the consequences of the reforms implemented by the mid-1980s was the emergence of a consumer goods economy. Technology for the production of consumer goods — because of loosening licensing regulations — could now be imported from abroad, and India could assemble products at cheaper labor costs. As a result of these reforms the number of television sets in the country grew from 6.8 million in 1985 to 27 million by 1988 (Pendakur 1991, 245). State policies toward liberalization of

the state television network (Doordarshan) to attract advertising revenue also supported the growth of the television market. The expansion of the consumer goods market fulfilled aspirations of the middle class as televisions, scooters, and refrigerators became icons of mobility.

The economic liberalization of the 1980s and the subsequent expansion of the consumer goods market, Thomas Blom Hansen suggests, “generated a certain ‘foreign technology fetishism’ i.e. an obsession with stereotyped symbols of modernity: Japanese efficiency, American ingenuity, German solidity, French sophistication, Italian taste, as these qualities were symbolically embedded in commodities” (2004b, 297). These direct changes in the middle class consumer market made Rajiv Gandhi famous as the prime minister “who understood the importance of color television” in the minds of the growing middle class (Ninan 1985, 110).

The reforms in the 1980s coupled with a growing consumer market brought the middle classes visibly to the fore. The middle classes in India are notoriously difficult to define and classify primarily because the difference between the lower middle class and the upper middle class is significant. The difference between the lower and upper is seen not only in income levels, but also in education and access to resources. In the absence of accurate and reliable demographic numbers, the middle classes have often been defined as the petty bourgeoisie of traders, small businessmen, and those in service occupations — especially in government jobs. In an attempt to suggest this multiplicity, the middle class in India are referred to as the middle *classes*. According to Corbridge and Harriss, “It has become fashionable, not least in the popular imagination, [to define the middle class] by income and its correlates, mainly a variety of branded private consumer goods” (2000, 123).

Pavan K. Varma notes that the 1991 economic reforms allowed India to revise its image as a third world country by marketing its consuming middle classes as “the world’s third largest country” (1998, 171). The reforms promised to fulfill long-held middle class aspirations of joining the ranks of global consumers. Salim Lakha comments that “by most accounts the middle class is expressing an insatiable propensity to consume as a consequence of rising incomes and a greater variety of goods offered through an increased exposure to global forces” (1999, 251). This “insatiable consumerism” was reflected in the turnover of consumer goods, which grew at exponential rates during this period, reflecting a “keeping up with the Joshi’s trend” (Kulkarni 1993, 45).

The consumption lifestyle was bolstered by advertisements, newspapers, magazines, and television programs that filled the popular imagination with attitudes reflecting the new modern middle classes. Within this

domain, Chakravarty and Gooptu suggest, contemporary India has constructed itself with “a certain vision ... in which the middle class family forms the core of a community and a nation-space of plenty, and consumption provides the primary mode of enfranchisement.”⁹ The construction of the new nation was particularly reflected in the emergence of reworked gender roles, in which women carried the responsibility of embodying the nation’s modernity. The emergence of the “new liberal Indian woman” as the self-assured, independent, rich, and fashionable woman during this time became the mimetic trope of the nation in globalization. Through her subjectivity, this woman represented modernity as an entitlement of middle class upper caste citizens who enthusiastically embraced the emergence of the nation onto the global arena. At the same time, however, her modernity was also tempered so she would not become “too modern.” It always remained tethered to Indian (usually Hindu) tradition.¹⁰

In his scathing critique of this consumerist middle class identity, Dipanker Gupta says Indian construction of modernity is “mistakenly [associated with] cars, gadgets, and foreign travel and misrecognized as technological progress” (2000, 8). This modernity is fetishistically attached to material objects, says Gupta, rather than to a commitment to universal norms and values that apply to all regardless of caste, class, and religious affiliations.

Concomitant with the consolidation of middle class identity around consumerism, religion and caste became heightened aspects of subjectivity as Hindu nationalists gained power in the 1980s. This factor was aided by the fact that a disproportionate number of middle classes are also upper caste and Hindu. While the middle class and upper caste sympathies to the *Sangh* are not new, the growth in power of the middle classes and the *Sangh* during the 1990s, albeit through separate developments and factors, were nevertheless linked in a manner that became significant.

The *Sangh*’s strategy during the 1970s and 1980s focused on consolidating all the different sects of Hinduism under one overarching umbrella.¹¹ The extensive organization network through which this consolidation was achieved, argue Tapan Basu et al., made the *Sangh* “co-extensive with the phenomenon of mass communalism” (1993, 56). According to Peter van der Veer, the *Sangh* constructed, in the last decades of the twentieth century, what he calls “modern Hinduism,” a form of the religion that defines itself as the national religion of India (1994, 131). He says it is, “In this way [that] nationalism embraces religion as the defining characteristic of the nation” (132).

The affiliations between the middle classes and the Hindu nationalists date back to the early twentieth century when, according to John Zavos, “Hindu nationalism emerged coterminous with that of elite-led Indian

nationalism” (2004, 8). It would be in the last two decades of the twentieth century that middle class nationalism began to cohere with Hindu nationalism. It was the controversy around the Mandal Commission report (explored in more detail below and in chapter 5) that most visibly demonstrated the emergence of, in Thomas Blom Hansen’s understanding, a “public culture” permeated by Hindutva sentiments and a middle class sense of entitlement (2004c, 4).

Beginning in the early 1980s, Hindu nationalists began a concerted campaign, facilitated in part by concessions made by the Congress Party government, to reenergize their efforts to define India as Hindu.¹⁴ These efforts were sparked by a ceremony of mass conversions to Islam by 1000 Scheduled Castes in a village in Meenakshipuram (a district in Tamil Nadu) in 1981.¹⁵ The conversions renewed Hindu nationalist’s anxieties that the nation was being “taken over” by Muslims. In response to the conversions and what they saw as a larger trend of growing Muslim power, the VHP (World Hindu Council) organized nation-wide chariot processions that traversed the length and breadth of the country, stopping at places of religious significance in a manner that deliberately set out to resemble a religious pilgrimage. Peter van der Veer comments that the use of pilgrimage by the processions “effectively transformed [it] into a ritual of national integration” (1994, 124). The intent of the processions was a conversion of public space into Hindu space.

In 1985 the Shah Bano case was used by Hindu nationalists to accuse Rajiv Gandhi of pandering to the dictates of the Muslim community.¹⁶ In response to the Muslim mobilization around the Shah Bano case, Hindu nationalists renewed their effort to get access to Babri Masjid by organizing a procession that would end with rituals performed at the disputed site. Yielding to the pressure of Hindu nationalists, the central government did not intervene when the district court in Faizabad ordered the padlocks at Babri Masjid be opened. The Shah Bano case and the state’s concessions to Hindu nationalists made it clear that the Hindu national movement had growing influence within the government and the public sphere. Toward the end of the decade, as the telecasts of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* experienced overwhelming popularity, sentiments favoring Hindu nationalism were further consolidated.

It is in the midst of this public sphere already imbued by Hindu right-wing sentiments that the National Front government, led by V. P. Singh, announced the implementation of a policy through which 27 percent of all jobs under the direct and indirect control of the central government would be reserved for “Other Backward Castes (OBCs).” The affirmative action policy were based on the recommendations by the second Backward

Classes Commission (their report came to be popularly be known as the *Mandal* Commission report after the president of the commission, B. P. Mandal). Upper caste and middle class students reacted to the allocation policy by staging demonstrations throughout the nation. The Mandal controversy in many ways visibly brought to the fore the extent to which the middle classes and the upper caste felt entitled to jobs and educational institutions, and it solidified in the public imagination the power held by these groups.¹⁷

The Mandal commission controversy left the BJP, who had pledged conditional support to the National Front government, in a bit of a quandary. BJP was aware that in order to increase its power base it needed the votes of OBCs, but openly endorsing the Mandal commission report would anger and alienate their traditional base among the upper caste and upper class Hindus. With the upper caste vote held hostage, the Hindu Right needed to displace the political fractures onto another political arena, namely Hindu–Muslim conflict. This displacement allowed them to escape from addressing their upper caste bias while attempting to draw the lower castes and other backward castes to their side by constructing a Hindu versus Muslim divide. These efforts proved to be a success, at least within the electoral realm, and in 1991 BJP emerged as the largest opposition party in the country.

The decade of the 1990s began within this highly charged political context of rising communal tensions and a fiscal crisis. The fiscal crisis was reflected in a deficit that in 1991 was 9 percent of the GDP, inflation levels were moving above the 10 percent mark, and foreign exchange reserves were depleted to levels that were the equivalent of three weeks' worth of imports (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000, 151). In an effort to deal with the crisis, the architect of the reforms, Manmohan Singh, laid out a strategy for stabilizing the economy that entailed devaluing the currency and taking a loan from the International Monetary Fund.

By this time, the rising political importance of the middle class, which had already been acknowledged by Rajiv Gandhi's administration, was being widely recognized by domestic and global capital as one of the most important emerging markets in the world. As a consequence of the reforms and lured by the promise of a huge consumer class, foreign direct investment (FDI) between 1991–92 and 1995–96 totaled \$3.4 billion, and foreign portfolio investments reached \$14.0 billion, with the United States, Japan, the UK, South Korea, and the Netherlands emerging as the major investors (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000, 171). These reforms fundamentally changed India's relationship with the global marketplace.

Despite the success of attracting FDI into the country and averting the fiscal crisis of 1991, as Corbridge and Harriss maintain, the reforms primarily worked to the advantage of India's elites (for whom reforms meant getting rid of those aspects of state-managed capitalism that inhibited their global ambitions) and to the disadvantage of the majority of Indians. In their view, "the partiality of reforms" is confirmed by "the consistency with which the reforms have failed to promote the economic and political interests of those who are excluded from India's 'new' regime of accumulation ... they have eroded further those institutions of state which might once have been turned to by the less powerful as a possible source of redress for the 'hidden injuries of class'" (2000, 121). The shift away from social services was apparent in the reduction of capital expenditure, which fell as a percentage of total government revenue from 15.28 percent in 1990–91 to 9.50 percent by 1996–97 (167).

What emerged from the 1991 reforms, therefore, was a skewed political economic scenario. As consumer products gained increasing visibility on the market and the state retreated from social responsibility toward its poor, the gap between the classes increased dramatically. Abhijit Sen points out that in the first eighteen months of the reform period, rural poverty increased by over 60 million as a direct consequence of the structural adjustment policies (Quoted in Corbridge and Harriss, 2000, 165). Prices for basic commodities went up, directly impacting household consumption.¹⁸ The consumption lifestyle engendered the ideological shift that justified and even valorized individual wealth accumulation and viewed the poor as "responsible for their own fates" (121). The decade of the 1990s, therefore, unfolds with the confluence of the middle classes and the Hindu Right against a rapidly globalizing nation. It is in the context of these changes that I examine the three sites of public debate in order to show the ways in which the middle classes, the Hindu Right, and secular groups engage with the question of the nation and national identity in an era of globalization.

The Three Sites

The globalization of information networks has lent itself to deterritorialization of media such that the map of satellite television signals no longer conforms to national boundaries.¹⁹ On the receiving end, satellite and cable television is viewed as the intrusion of the outside into the sanctity of national boundaries. The first site, therefore, focuses on the sense of deterritorialization engendered by the spread of satellite and cable television in India in the early 1990s, and the resulting discourse on threatened national culture. It is here that the threat to national culture is debated

through a discourse on obscenity and vulgarity, focused on women's bodies and representational praxis. Spectacles such as international beauty pageants become symbolic platforms on which national culture and identity are performed. In the second site, I examine India's attempts to showcase itself to the world through the televised spectacle of the 1996 Miss World Pageant. Here again, women's bodies are the conduits through which the new nation is advertised, and in the critiques of the pageant, exposure of women's bodies is akin to exposure of the nation in globalization. Last, I examine the discourse of masculine strength and virility associated with India's successful nuclear tests, conducted in 1998. In this site, the nation is reconstituted through a discourse of strength and virility as a nation capable of joining the global nuclear fraternity.

Each site represents moments of eruption that reveal complex shifting discourses on the nation and nationalism in globalization. While each site is unique, I deliberately juxtapose them to demonstrate the evolving and wide-ranging trajectory of debates around specific constructs of the nation through the decade. In chronological order, the three sites register the rising political power of the Hindu Right such that toward the end of the decade, in the discourse around the nuclear tests, the construction of the nation in terms of strength and virility was vested in the Sangh's ideology of a (Hindu) nation.

In my research, I came to understand public debate in two ways, first in terms of those who participated in the discourse on the nation and second in terms of the venues of public debate. I recognize that all "public" spaces are circumscribed, that is, not everyone can participate, structurally or discursively, in these debates. I am concerned here, therefore, predominantly with the middle class's engagement with India's identity in globalization. I track these debates through public demonstrations, rallies, public lectures; in newspapers and magazines; through court cases and parliamentary proceedings; in political manifestoes; and on television programs. The discourses in these debates were directed at "the public" in that they were conducted *in the name of* India/Indians. For example, the debates on satellite television sought to curtail and censor programs deemed obscene and vulgar to protect "public" morality and decency. Therefore, I understand the Public to include those who participated, the arenas of participation, and the subjects in whose name these debates occurred. My research entailed observation of participants in all of these venues as well as extensive interviews with those involved in the debates.

Chapter Outline

The dramatic political and economic changes in India in the 1990s were presented by the state as necessary — a new paradigm from which a “new India” would emerge. This discourse of a new nation was mirrored in the subjectivity of the “new Indian woman.” This new woman, iconic of new India, was represented in magazines, newspapers, and television programs as confident, articulate, and a consumer who made choices for herself and her family. In chapter 2, I examine this discourse on the new Indian woman, particularly the debates over her subjectivity. As liberalization of the economy came to be realized as liberalization of sexual codes, debates by the state, women’s organizations, and secular groups over the new “liberal” Indian woman demarcated the boundaries of her subjectivity. The discourse on the new liberal Indian woman serves as a backdrop against which the concerns with privatization of television and critiques of the pageant are manifest.

In chapter 3, I examine the “moral panic” with programs on satellite and cable television. Instead of examining the narratives and their ruptures in the programs, I examine the discourse of anxiety through three court cases filed in the Delhi High Court between 1994 and 1996 against satellite companies and the state. The cases allege that the satellite companies violate the 1986 Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act as well as several Indian border laws such as the Customs Act of 1962 and the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act. The cases used these laws to suggest that the sanctity of the national borders had been violated by the satellite companies. Provoked by what I call an “anxiety with territoriality,” the cases ask the state to protect Indian borders against “obscene and vulgar” programs.

By 1996, globalization in India produced a skewed portrait: at one end of the spectrum were images of integration with the global consumer market as store fronts advertised foreign brand names and billboards addressed the global Indian consumer, and on the other end were deepening structural inequalities aggravated by the steady rise in the price of basic goods. The growing disparities coupled with the retreat of the state began to generate frustration among citizen groups at the inability to reach either the corporate owners or the state for a redressal of inequity. Thus, when the 1996 Miss World Pageant was announced, it became symptomatic of globalizing India because of the visible alliance between domestic and global capital and the state. Its venue, in the southern city of Bangalore, became the site of extensive protests. In chapter 4, I examine the discourses by the state — for whom the pageant provided an opportunity to “showcase” India to the world — and the counterdiscourses by those pro-

testing the pageant, for whom the spectacle symbolized a threat to Indian culture and the re-entrenchment of imperialism in the country.

If one sees in the sites of television and the pageant contradictory impulses of the state in its attempts to mediate its borders, then the discourses on the nuclear blasts can be seen as attempts to define a masculine heterosexual nation as capable of protecting and reasserting its geopolitical boundaries. In chapter 5, I examine the construction of the heterosexual (Hindu) nation-state through the celebratory discourses accompanying India's declaration of nuclear weapons capability. As the Hindu right-wing government came to power in 1998, the construction of India shifted from one emulating the "West" to a discourse of "independent world power." I argue that the display of power and control through the nuclear tests is indicative of what I call "fetishized sovereignty" that seeks to mask the loss of economic and political sovereignty with a display of militarized strength.

I conclude in chapter 6 by considering the question of "local resistance" to globalization and the manner in which some of these attempts valorize the local recreate problematic categories of identity and belonging. I suggest that our attempts at opposition should consider more carefully the realigned geographies that we inhabit.

CHAPTER 2

The New Liberal Indian Woman and Globalization

On a chilly winter afternoon in 1994 I came across a footpath vendor in Connaught Place selling magazines and books. Emblematic of British architecture in India, Connaught Place is one of the oldest shopping and business centers in New Delhi. In its wide corridors lined with columns, footpath vendors are a familiar counterpoint to the established shops. The vendors range from those selling books and magazines to Paan (a flavored betel leaf used as a mouth freshener after a meal) and — particularly in winter — roasted peanuts. As I stood looking at the magazines, people hurriedly walked behind me and others stepped out of shops to seek warmth from the weak winter sun. A few, like me, stopped to glance at the magazines on display before moving along. It was the magazine headlines that caught my interest, jostling with each other, vying for attention, each claiming to be “the” magazine for the contemporary Indian woman. As I decided to take a closer look, I noticed a series of new magazines that I had never seen before, as well as Indian editions of American women’s magazines. The vendor, eager to make a sale, exclaimed the virtues of several

magazines he saw me peering closely at. Speaking in Hindi with complete authority about the popularity of these English language magazines, he urged me to buy them. I had heard and seen references to this “new Indian woman” in various places, ranging from television programs and advertisements to newspaper articles and Bollywood films. The new Indian woman was associated, on the one hand, with deteriorating Indian culture attributed to satellite television, and on the other, to the emergence of a more complex representation of women iconic of liberalized India. As the vendor extolled the virtues of one magazine over the other, I settled in for a longer chat. He told me which ones he managed to sell more of than others and offered his opinion on the marketability of the new American magazines versus the older Indian ones. I left about an hour later, my bag considerably heavier with several magazines, to consider the discourse on the new Indian woman.

Introduction

Popular cultural archives such as cinema, television, radio, spectacles, and the print medium are important sites that engage with changing gender subjectivities. In the beginning of the 1990s, these archives began to refer to the new Indian woman whose emergence coincided with India’s economic liberalization. In contrast to the more docile and homely figure of the idealized *Bharatiya nari* (traditional Indian woman), this new woman was aggressive, confident, urban, and she displayed a sexual identity that had previously been associated with “vamps” in Bollywood cinema.¹ This new woman quickly became iconic of liberalized India. She reflected the nation’s evolving political economy and newly open borders. If, as Purnima Mankekar points out, the subject position of “Indian womanhood” is a dynamic construction that engages nationalism through visual narratives, then the discursive maneuvers of Indian nationalism in globalization can be discerned by tracking the shifts in the representation of Indian women within popular cultural archives (1999, 9). In these representational genres, the new woman blurred boundaries between the good “virtuous” woman and the bad “vamp,” sparking a moral panic over what constituted the new Indian woman. This chapter focuses on the discourse on the new Indian woman and the contentious debates about her subjectivity. The Indian woman was carefully crafted within public cultural discourses to be modern, representing globalizing India, yet “Indian” by being anchored in “core” values.

While I focus my discussion on advertisements and magazines, the discourse on the new Indian woman is also visible on television and to some extent in Bollywood films. In these venues, the new woman's subjectivity is the terrain on which the tensions between the tradition/modernity dyad are negotiated.² The representation of the new woman reflects the emergence of new subjectivities for Indian women that are tethered, in particular ways, to older ones. The boundaries of this new subject formation are determined by critique, censure, and censorship of those representations deemed inappropriate by the state, the Hindu Right, as well as some secular organizations. The concern with the threat to Indian culture is one of the central focal points of the Hindu Right, who have historically sought to represent a unified Indian (Hindu) culture. This construct of Indian culture, which gained considerable legitimacy in the 1990s, is deeply problematic for women. What is significant in the debate surrounding the new Indian woman is the way that the concerns about the representation of women voiced by secular women's organizations (and other progressive groups) echo those voiced by the Hindu right.

Primarily framed in terms of "obscene and vulgar" images, these groups attempted to demarcate appropriate representations of women. This discourse on obscenity and vulgarity was meant to protect "public" morality and decency and extended seamlessly to protecting Indian culture. What is remarkable in this framework is the juxtaposition of scales, whereby threats to national culture are measured on women's bodies and representational practices. The latter half of this chapter focuses on groups who accuse global cultural influences such as satellite television of threatening Indian culture. My concern here is the juxtaposition of scales and the discursive and material production of boundaries.

The obscenity/vulgarity/commodification debate among secular women's groups is not new. One of the earliest campaigns against obscenity was launched in the 1970s by women's groups; they painted over film advertisement billboards that displayed what they thought to be vulgar images. However, since the early 1990s there has been an increase in the charges of obscenity against lyrics in films, advertisements, and images of women in magazines. Feminists who are critical of these debates have lamented that old arguments are being used to critique a contemporary context. Others have also questioned the manner in which the charge of obscenity has been directed predominantly at women's sexual representation (Ghosh 1999). Within this context, feminists ask, who gets to decide what is obscene? Furthermore, they say, the argument that obscene images cause "harm" leads to a "blaming the victim" analysis. Similarly, the commodification argument, when directed at women, is questioned for its focus on women's

commodification but rarely on sportsmen who routinely endorse consumer products (Ghosh 1999).

While I agree with these critiques, they insufficiently explain the reasons why moral panic centers on the figure of the woman within the political context under discussion. There are two analytical trajectories that follow. Both relate to the political economic context of neoliberal policies of reform and the rise of the Hindu Right within which these debates occur.

The first trajectory is in the redeployment of the debate on obscenity from the 1970s and 1980s the discourse assumed a very different tenor in the political context of the 1990s. In addition to the Hindu Right, organizations such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Center for Media Studies, the National Commission for Women (a statutory body in the India's government), the Parliamentary Standing Committee, and the Central Board of Film Certification sought to censure, ban, and critique women's representation based on obscenity. While neither the debates nor the organizations authoring them were new, what is significant is that even concerns voiced by secular organizations were easily harnessed by the Far Right to reinforce their own political position. In this context, secular organizations found themselves on the same side as the Hindu Right in asking for prescribed gender roles.

The second trajectory to follow shows how the figure of the new Indian woman came to occupy a central locus of concern within middle class public debates because the anxiety associated with a globalizing nation-state was displaced onto women's bodies and practices. In this paradigm, Indian borders could/should be open to economic liberalization but not to "Western" cultural influences. Since women's subjectivity has historically been framed as vulnerable, pure, and a repository of culture, it is primarily toward women that this concern was directed as opposed to men whose encounter with the "West" is not framed in terms of purity. The concern with the vulnerability of open borders was mapped onto the subjectivity of what I call the new *liberal* Indian woman in the new liberalizing India. This ontological juxtaposition mapped globalization onto women's bodies and served to demarcate boundaries whereby exposure of women signified exposure of the nation.

This chapter traces the debate on the new liberal Indian woman and explores the manner in which political and economic changes in the nation generated dynamic debate on the subjectivity of Indian women presented as icons of globalizing India. In examining the construction of the new Indian woman, this chapter argues that the nationwide anxiety with globalization was displaced onto women's bodies and representational politics. This is particularly evidenced in the court cases brought against satellite

and cable television companies (chapter 3) as well as the protests around the 1996 Miss World Pageant (chapter 4). Women's sexual representation in the popular visual media (television, advertisements, magazines, billboards) led to a notion that women themselves were sexually "open" and indiscriminate. This understanding led to a corresponding belief that globalization in India was in itself open and indiscriminate. This juxtaposition of scales is articulated through a discourse of concern about securing the borders of the nation-state against transgressive sexual representation. These debates serve as a context against which the three sites I examine — television, the 1996 Miss World Pageant, and the nuclear tests — represent moments of eruption that reveal the debates surrounding the anxiety with globalization in India.

The New Liberal Indian Women

A 1994 newspaper advertisement for Chambor cosmetics, an international cosmetics company, read, "The age of the new woman has arrived. Our apologies for taking so long over her cosmetics."

The new woman in the Chambor cosmetics advertisement refers to the emergence of new womanhood in new India. There is a sense of inevitability in the advertisement, that India and Indian women have emerged out of decades of state control and finally have the opportunity to express themselves. There is a sense of having been "behind" other countries for decades and having finally "caught up." The new liberal Indian women have finally joined a global league of modern female consumers.³ The creation of the new liberal Indian woman was registered in several discursive

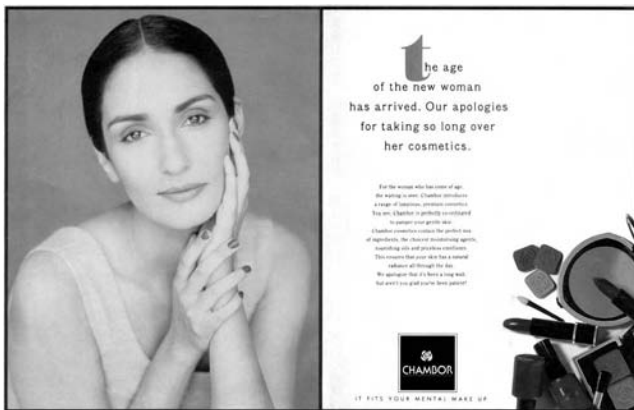


Figure 2.1 Chambor Cosmetics, *The Times of India*, October 9, 1994. (Reproduced with permission from Baccarose, New Delhi.)

locations such as magazine and newspaper articles, television fictional narratives, and talk shows. Together, these narratives generated a visible public archive in which the new woman entered the popular imagination as an icon of modernity. The deliberate intertwining of the new woman with new India compels critical inquiry, as Mankekar suggests, into not only unraveling gender ideologies constituted by the “new liberal Indian woman” but also an understanding of what is meant by the “new nation” (1999, 10).

What, however, is “new” about the new woman? How is her subjectivity reconstituted in new India? *Femina*, one of India’s oldest and most popular women’s magazines, attempted to target the new woman by re-launching in 1992 with a new catchphrase that claimed the magazine was, “for the woman of substance” (Thapan 2004, 418). Directed primarily at urban middle and elite class women, *Femina* was first published in 1959 and acquired a readership of over 850,000 by the early 1990s, making it the largest circulating women’s magazine after *Women’s Era*, its main competition, which had a circulation of just over 800,000 (Srilata 1999). The editor of *Femina*, Satya Saran, claimed that the new catchphrase targeted India’s “new woman”:

We realized that the Indian woman had changed, and there were so many new influences in her life, there was television, there was satellite television, all these foreign junkets she went on and the fact that there are more professionals in the field today ... who are women and ... we felt that they have a new mindset that needed to be represented.⁴

Saran goes on to explain that *Femina* targets

the professional Indian woman, who is between the ages of 20–40, also a homemaker, probably has young children in school. That’s the obvious target ... but beyond that is the target that I think is more relevant ... the woman wherever she is and whatever she is doing is interested in improving her life ... it’s a very aspirational kind of target.⁵

While older magazines like *Femina* were relaunched in 1992, international magazines such as *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* began their Indian editions in response to India’s new, sophisticated global female consumer. There were also new publications, such as *New Woman* published by Bollywood film actress Hemi Malini which addressed its audience with a caption that read: “she’s a bit like you.” Hema Malini deliberately distanced herself from more “up-market” magazines such as *Femina* and *Elle*, claiming that

New Woman authentically meets the needs of modern “Indian” women. She says that *New Woman* is “a magazine for women who believe in family values and are modern enough to find an identity for themselves along with being good housewives” (Sharma 1996, 4).

While advertisements and magazines targeted and sought the new woman consumer, television was not far behind in the portrayal of the new woman. According to Jain, television serials, particularly those on satellite and cable, were instigating

a quiet little revolution ... on the small screen. Extramarital affairs (almost all the soaps), teenage girls slapping their father’s friends (*Tara*), illegitimate children (*Kismet*, *Scandal*, El TV’s new soap); women- desi Mrs. Robinsons – having affairs with lovers the ages of their sons (*Asman se Aage*); even confessions of a young gay man in *Tara* are the stuff that soaps are made of. TV serials come of age as the small screen mirrors the new liberal Indian. (1994)

The target group of the women who *Femina* seeks to reach are the upper middle and elite class of consumers who were well entrenched prior to India’s economic reform. However, the discourse of the new woman implies that the liberalization of the economy opens up spaces and possibilities for Indian women to express themselves and satisfy their aspirations in ways not previously possible in a closed economy. The availability of global products, cosmetics, domestic appliances, magazines, television shows, and jobs with multinational companies all represent the gamut of avenues through which Indian women have joined — and are now connected — with other global cosmopolitan women.

Newspaper articles and magazines during this time suggested that the decade of the 1990s not only opened the Indian economy to foreign investment and the liberating influences of globalization but also freed sexuality from its moorings in strict middle class morality (Raote 1997, 5). For instance, a weekly newsmagazine called *Outlook*, which was launched in 1995 and quickly gained a readership of 1.5 million, dedicated its October 1997 cover issue to the link between liberalizing sexuality and the liberalizing economy.⁶ The cover has a man and woman kissing under the heading of “Kama Chaos” (Wadhwa 1997, 72). Claiming that “in the age of glitzy media, money and emancipation, promiscuity loses its stigma,” the article couples the “liberalization” of the economy with the “liberalization of sexual codes.”

Particularly suggestive of the transition of liberalization from the public domain of the economy to the private domain of the sexual is the caption to the article, which claims, “liberalisation enters urban Indian

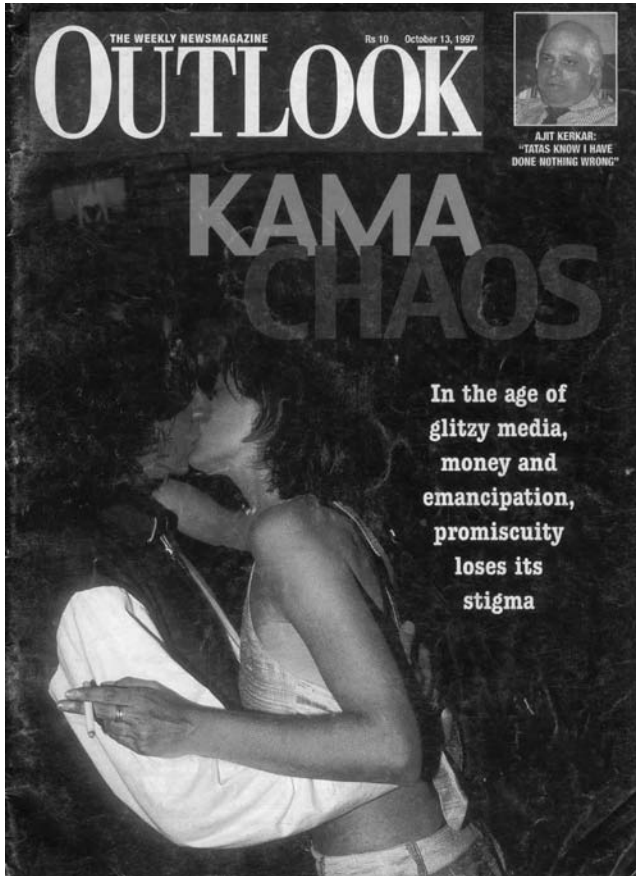


Figure 2.2 Outlook Magazine, October 13, 1997. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)

bedrooms as promiscuity sheds its purdha of guilt” (72). The article bases the change in sexual attitudes on an extensive survey of sixteen cities by the Sex Education Counseling Research Training Division of the Family Planning Association of India, which claimed “between 77 and 90 % of unmarried and educated women and men (between the ages of 15 and 29) respectively, condone sex before marriage” (75).

According to the filmmaker Aparna Sen, the liberalizing of sexual morality occurred because “the new Indian woman is perhaps seen as being more assertive and has heralded the present ‘liberal behavior’” (quoted in Wadhwa 1997, 78). These narratives persistently place the new woman at the forefront of the changes in India. However, these narratives avoid stating that women’s agency is responsible for change; instead, her change is



Figure 2.3 Outlook Magazine, October 13, 1997. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)

attributed to “outside” influences. The article claims liberalization of the economy and the “labyrinthine sexual relationships portrayed in the bold and beautiful potboilers beamed continually into drawing rooms” are responsible for the emergence of the “new woman.”⁷⁷

In response to these images of modern Indian women, Mary E. John asks, “what is the relationship between the less objectified and more ‘wholesome’ body-images of women, on the one hand, and India’s recent attempted transition from a ‘restrictive’ state-regulated form of capitalism to a global consumerism, on the other?” (1998, 382). The reference to “new” and “liberal” in the definition of the “new liberal Indian woman” intertwines India’s economic liberalization in 1991 with the emergence of the modern liberated Indian women. According to Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, the intertwining of the economy and sexual codes in the discourse of “new liberal Indian women” signals the “coming of age” of women in India. Yet this maturation is not realized as a political struggle for rights but as a process of change initiated by economic reform (1993, 130). Rajan continues, “The development of the new woman is made to appear as a ‘natural’ outcome of benevolent capitalist socio-economic forces” (131). The new woman serves as a contrast to earlier images of oppressed, burdened, and backward Indian women. She is projected in sharp relief against this earlier image as confident, assertive, in control, and particularly modern. Thus, this new liberal Indian woman “is ‘new’ in the sense of both having evolved and arrived in response to the times, as well as of being intrinsically ‘modern’ and ‘liberated’” (130). The “Indian-ness” of her identity unifies Indian women across regional, communal, and linguistic boundaries.

The “newness” of this woman is linked to the availability of consumer choices. A certain sense of freedom from restrictive state regulations and the long-awaited availability of foreign consumer products and services have fulfilled decades of unrequited aspirations of the middle and upper class Indian consumer. Rajagopal questions the intertwining of desire and economy in India’s newly product-dense marketplace: “How do the increased circulation of desire, images and capital inflect and reshape existing class and caste configurations? As new consumers are sought to anchor expanding global markets, how is the libidinal economy re-inserted into the material economy?” (1999, 59). The intertwining of desire and the economy is, for Rajagopal, upper caste and upper class coded such that advertisers in the new libidinal economy “reproduce their inability to imagine an aesthetic of intimacy for the lower castes” (60). Because negotiations of desire in the new economy are directed primarily at the upper caste and upper class consumer, they are also particularly gendered and sexualized.

One of the most remarkable changes in advertising has been in the use of women’s bodies to sell products that directly target female consumers. Commenting on the increase in advertisements that directly target women, Chakravarti says that women “are being targeted not merely as consumers of goods but as desirers and active buyers of goods” (2000, WS 13). However, these upper caste, middle, and elite class women who are recruited as actively consuming subjects, according to John, “cannot take place without her sexualization as an actively desiring subject” (1998, 382). It is the constitution of women as autonomous consuming and sexual agents that engenders the moral panic with women’s sexuality. Therefore, while female consumers are wanted and even needed, advertisers continue to circumscribe women’s sexual autonomy. As Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan puts it, though “women are no longer denied a role in the time-space of the modern ... a sufficient modernity is measured out for them with suitable variations to account for class and caste differences” (1999, 7).

One of the most effective ways in which the new liberal Indian woman’s consumer and sexual identity is crafted is through her relationship with the patriarchal household — as mother, wife, and sister. These roles not only prescribe her relationship with men but also anchor her to the home. The formation of the new woman, therefore, does not reconstitute the old structures of oppression rather, to follow Sarkar’s formulation, she is subject to new forms of patriarchal oppression (1993, 24–44).

Similar constitution of a “new woman” in 1980s in the United States served dual purposes of simultaneously creating new markets to appeal to the new woman consumer and anchoring new forms of patriarchy. According to Hennessy, “in this way the appeal to the new serves as an

instrument of hegemony, working to reproduce the subjectivities that will be adequate to capital's extending markets and to elicit consent to the way things are" (1993, 104). Thus, the new Indian woman had to be constituted through narratives of home and family that required a negotiation and balance between the new "modern" woman and the old "traditional" one. This traditional modernity dyad also interfaces with the dual construction of Indian versus Western. The new Indian woman had to be modern but not so modern as to transgress into "Westernized" modernity. Furthermore, this resolution of tradition/modernity, old/new, and Indian/Western in the identity of the new woman was also an attempt at reconstituting globalizing national identity. As Rajan points out, "'women' are produced by and within cultural narratives, typically of a past whose negotiations with the present of a new nation centrally require the reconfiguring of gender relations" (1999, 7).

The conflict between tradition and modernity has been addressed with particular acuity by the cinematic narrative. In the Bollywood film genre, women's subjectivity becomes the focus of the conflict between tradition and modernity. The dangers of Western cultural intrusion were symbolized by provocative attire, smoking, or drinking, and resolution of this conflict was achieved when women recognized their imperative role as mother and nurturer (Niranjana 1991; Vasudevan 1994; Mazumdar 1996). More contemporary images in advertisements and television do not recreate the binary; rather, they resolve the conflict in a new "modern" subjectivity that positions women as constitutive of both tradition and modernity. For instance, according to a publisher of a women's magazine, "her outlook is global, but her values would make her grandma proud" (quoted in Fernandes 2000, 623).

This new woman makes confident, rational choices for herself and for family members. She is fashioned as a modern woman who is aware of the "world" around her while at the same time conscious of her role as mother and wife. According to Srilata, *Femina* attempts, more than any other women's magazine in India, to market itself to the "fashion conscious upper class working woman interested in both career and home" (1999, 65). *Femina* is thus positioned against *Women's Era*, which is directed at a more traditional women readership and *Savvy*, which is more "feminist" in its position. The editor of *Femina* formulated its position as: "unlike *Savvy*, which is aggressively feminist, *Femina* takes a balanced position, promoting feminism only in a mild fashion and amongst a host of other things" (Srilata 1999, 66). It is this woman, therefore, who is both modern and independent yet is able to negotiate home and children with ease. Similar reconstitutions of gender in the United States were apparent around

the “New Traditionalist Woman” discourse in the late 1980s, where these new traditional women were “contemporary women who find fulfillment in traditional values that were considered old fashioned just a few years ago” (Darnovsky 1991, 72). Efforts to sustain the patriarchal order within changing domestic arrangements required a shift whereby the new working woman was “figured as the professional career women, often juggling work with the domestic responsibilities of ‘home and family’” (Hennessy 1993, 106).

While women’s magazines like *Femina* espoused the new liberal Indian woman most overtly, such narratives also were apparent in advertisements. Consider, for instance, an advertisement for the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT), a computer-training institute. The advertisement shows a black and white close-up of a woman looking out at the viewer. She appears to be middle aged and is dressed in an understated chic *shalwar kameez* and has short hair.⁸ While short hair marks her as a “modern women,” her Indian outfit fashions her “modernity” as “Indian.” Accompanying the photograph, in bold typeface, the advertisement has her saying to the viewer, “You know who helped me decide that NIIT was best suited to train my son in software? — IBM and the World Bank.”

NIIT is aware of the influence of IBM and the World Bank, and their advertisements attempt to project the importance of their training program by using these “household” names that symbolize India’s integration into the global market.⁹

The “cosmopolitan” Indian, according to Satish Deshpande, makes “economic calculations not confined to the Indian economy ... This group, which consists of the Indian middle class elite, may be said to have joined the global middle class” (1993, 28). The woman in the advertisement is aware of these political economic shifts and makes rational choices for her son’s future in the global world. Advertising, Irene Costera Meijer suggests, should be looked at “as the act of telling stories that enable a certain interaction with and management of reality” (1998, 236). In the NIIT advertisement, reality is manifest in acknowledging liberalized India through both references to the World Bank and IBM as well as the modern woman in the copy, while managing to make it “Indian” in foregrounding the woman’s role as mother. As a new liberal Indian woman, she participates, on the one hand, as a “cosmopolitan Indian in the global middle class” who is informed about the importance of IBM and the World Bank and, on the other, is very comfortable in negotiating her role as a mother who helps her son make decisions.

This image of the confident, assertive new woman appeared on billboards, television advertisements, and magazine covers. But the ubiquitous

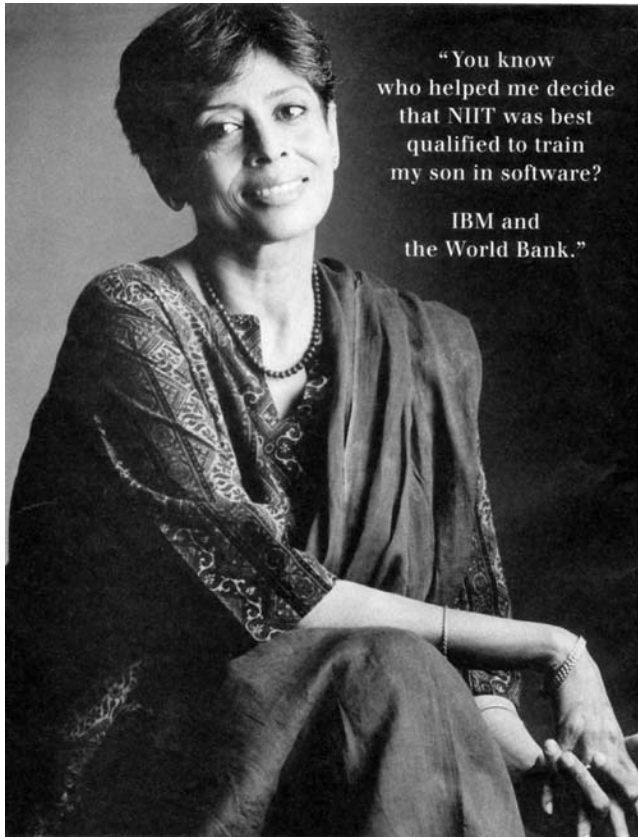


Figure 2.4 National Institute of Information Technology. *Times of India* (Mumbai), September 17, 1994. (Reproduced with permission from Contract Advertising, New Delhi.)

figure of the new woman was nowhere more apparent than in advertisements for domestic appliances such as microwaves, washing machines, detergents, etc. Here, the modern woman consumer was invited to buy products that would make her work in the home easier. In one instance, an advertisement for a washing machine even couched the exercise of consumer “choice” in buying the product as “women’s liberation” (Manchanda 1996, 89). In each of these instances, the persistent narrative was that the primary responsibility of a woman was to maintain the home. The resolution of women’s traditional roles within the persona of the new liberal Indian woman is arrived at through a discourse on women’s innate abilities, maternal instincts, and familial care. Through this essentializing discourse, the new woman can be modern and assertive while continuing to inhabit traditionally prescribed gender roles as mother, wife, and sister.

Kelvinator ESTD 1954 100% LOCAL MANUFACTURE 100% LOCAL SERVICE 100% LOCAL PARTS 100% LOCAL SUPPORT 100% LOCAL CARE 100% LOCAL PROUDLY MADE IN INDIA

110 LITRE 100% LOCAL MANUFACTURE 100% LOCAL SERVICE 100% LOCAL PARTS 100% LOCAL SUPPORT 100% LOCAL CARE 100% LOCAL PROUDLY MADE IN INDIA

Built by our engineers. But designed by a woman.

In addition to being from the makers of *Madras*, the engineers at Kelvinator are from shorter of life. Which sometimes brings them to the most interesting solutions in the most interesting problems. Like actually using a woman to help design a Kelvinator. We call this advanced and demanding process 'U-Tank'.

The result is an immensely usable fridge—the 110 litre *Storing*. The first thing you'll notice is the *Storing* is the incredibly clever use of space. Four generous shelves to store all the groceries your family needs. (The top shelf is also designed to tilt, and become a large bottle tray for the times you have a party.) Above the shelves is a huge 70 litre freezer. (And the freezer has two shelves too. This means every bit of space is used. Things don't get frozen in a big jumble on top of each other, and removing them doesn't become a struggle.)

Beneath the shelves are two vegetable trays. Light, deep and wider vegetables can be kept apart from heavy ones, to prevent them getting crushed.

Now the door. Again there's lots of space for jars and bottles. Tough, *manpower* and *submarine* S&N doors for butter and cheese. And removable egg trays specially designed for vegetables.

Further, the inner bottle rack tilts to make removal easier. And its special gripper adjusts to individually hold even small bottles firmly.

But why not take a closer look at the 110 *Storing* at the nearest Kelvinator dealer? Or mail the coupon.

We have ample reason to believe you'll like it.

WOMEN DO THE SHOPPING. WOMEN DO THE COOKING. WOMEN DO THE STORING.

IS THAT WHY INDIA'S LARGEST FRIDGE IS DESIGNED BY A WOMAN?

COUPON

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

POSTAL CODE _____

PHONE _____

SEND TO: KELVINATOR, 110 LITRE, 100% LOCAL MANUFACTURE, 100% LOCAL SERVICE, 100% LOCAL PARTS, 100% LOCAL SUPPORT, 100% LOCAL CARE, 100% LOCAL PROUDLY MADE IN INDIA.

Figure 2.5 Kelvinator Refrigerators. *Times of India* May, 24, 1994. (Reproduced with permission from Contract Advertising, New Delhi.)

This construct of the new woman's innate ability functions as the core narrative to such a degree that some advertisements use it to suggest that women can design better household products. Consider, for example, an advertisement for the Kelvinator brand of refrigerators, which appeared in the weekend section of the *Times of India*, one of the country's largest selling English daily newspapers. In the advertisement, a close-up photograph of a young woman is accompanied by bold typeface in capital letters that claims: "Women do the shopping. Women do the cooking. Women do the storing. Is that why India's largest fridge is designed by a woman?"

According to the advertisement, a woman's ability as designer of refrigerators is tied to her "intrinsic" role as one who cooks, cleans, and stores. Members of the creative team claimed that the advertising campaign for Kelvinator refrigerators was immensely successful. (They measured success the number of refrigerators that were sold as well as the number of the ad's mail-in coupons that the company received.) In addition to the refrigerator advertisement, there were several other advertisements for kitchen appliances by other companies that specifically targeted women consumers. The contradiction that the Kelvinator advertisement resolves is that it shows the woman as an active, desiring consumer, but at the same time it reconstitutes her primary role as the one who "shops, cooks, and stores."

The proliferation of advertisements directed specifically at women resulted in a special weekend section in the *Times of India* that examined

“White Goods and the Woman.” According to this special section, the availability of household products for women is an outcome of more and more women entering waged work and needing these household appliances to make their work at home easier (Pherwani 1995). While these advertisements and special sections targeted women as desiring consumers, the threat of the new woman’s excess desires is balanced by reinforcing her primary identity as mother and wife.

As advertisements, magazines, and television programs engaged in the construction of the new liberal Indian woman, the particularities of her subjectivity became specifically defined. She represented part of the global middle class but — though she bore no overt signs of “tradition” marked through geography or language — remained distinctively “Indian.” This image became symbolic of neoliberal India, and it is in this discourse on the new woman as representative of new India that fault lines of transgression were drawn. So long as women were represented as modern, yet aware of their intrinsic roles as mother and wife such as in the NIIT and the Kelvinator advertisements, the figure of the new woman could be iconic of new India. However, the expression and representation of women’s sexual autonomy was indicative of an unruly modernity that had to be controlled and tempered to alleviate the risk of threatening patriarchal order and the nation. Images, advertisements, magazines, and television programs that transgressed these boundaries were banned and censored by the state.

Transgressive Representations

In the early 1990s, with the intertwining of the liberalization of sexuality and economy, there was a proliferation of narratives on sexuality evidenced on television, in advertisements, and in magazines. Throughout the 1990s, as India moved beyond the established ways in which sexuality was commodified in advertisements and magazines, representations of sexuality came to occupy a central role in popular discourses. Surveys about sexual habits, billboards that advertised condoms, and television narratives in which women chose to express sexual autonomy all came to be understood in terms of the liberalizing economy. Drawing on the visibility of sexual representations, John asks, “can any direct connections be made between my claims regarding the legitimacy accorded to visual representations of the erotic couple and our entry into a new phase of capitalist development?” (1998, 382). Criticism and anxiety about the visibility of sexualized discourses were framed in terms of extreme consumerism and liberalization gone amok. This framework also informed the discourses of censorship that sought to regulate those narratives that were posited to

represent excesses threatening boundaries of decency and, ultimately, of the nation-state itself.

Sensationally presented with headlines such as “Sensuous Women Tough and Strong, Too,” “Lust for Life,” “Sex and the Modern Woman,” sexuality — particularly of women — was debated in the pages of newspapers and magazines. In one instance, the “lifestyle” section of *Pioneer*, a leading English-language newspaper, printed a full-page article discussing “Sex in the ‘Liberated’ Nineties” (Raote 1997). The article suggested that the aggressive sexuality of the 1990s, fed through cable television and magazines, was generating a discourse of physical attraction that was problematic for the traditions of “family” and “honor.” Interviews with five men and four women between the ages of 14 and 48 revealed that “men still

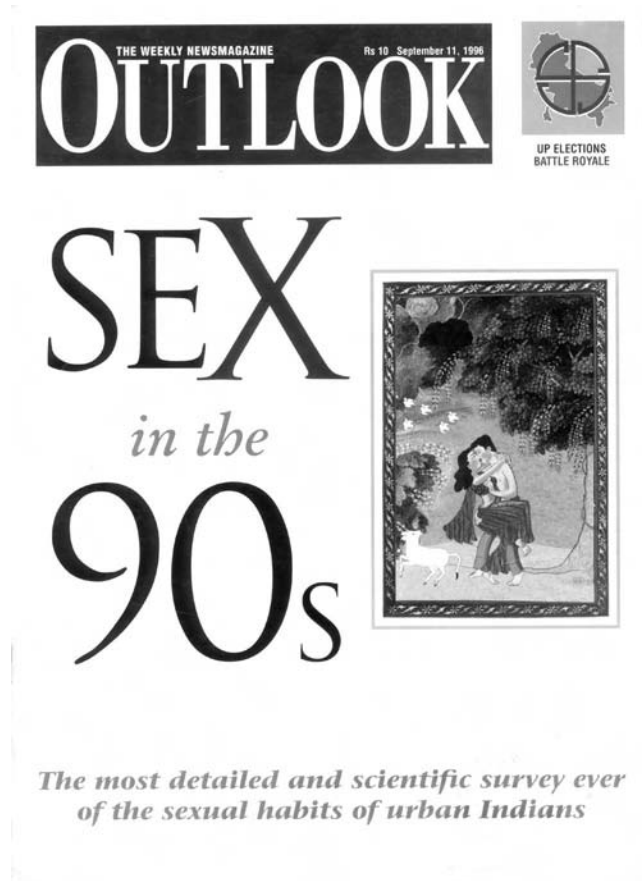


Figure 2.6 Outlook Magazine, September 11, 1996. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)



Figure 2.7 Outlook Magazine. September 11, 1996. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)

want to have fun, and a good woman at the end of it all. Women also want to have fun, but without the certainty that there will be a good man at the end of the rainbow” (Raote 1997). In another instance, *Outlook* magazine dedicated an entire issue to sexuality in the 1990s and printed according to them, the most comprehensive survey on sexual habits of urban Indians to date (September 11, 1996).

As these popular discourses on sexuality on satellite and cable television and in the print media became more visible, they generated public anxiety expressed primarily through the rhetoric of “obscenity” and “violence.” I refer to anxiety not in a personal or intimate sense, but rather as a “public” phenomenon in which concern is expressed *in the name of* “public morality,” “Indian tradition,” and “the nation.” However, the concern was class specific, as John and Nair explain: “Women bear the marks, sometimes violent marks, of caste, ethnic and national imaginings. Not only has the middle class, upper class woman been the ground on which questions of modernity and tradition are framed, she is the embodiment of boundaries between licit and illicit forms of sexuality, as well as the guardian of the nation’s morality” (1998, 8). Lower class women have in some ways been sexually “available” to upper caste and upper class men, so debates and controls center on the sexuality of the upper caste and upper class women. In the 1990s, upper class women’s representation of their sexuality was once again seen as unruly and in need of control. Those who sought to author this control consisted of some women’s organizations, political parties, and the state.

Articles in the English-language newspapers expressed public anxiety that television was responsible for the fall of “social values.”¹⁰ Such con-

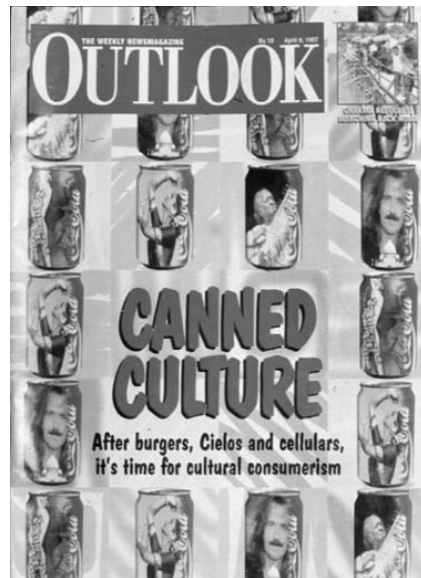
cern motivated research by citizen's watch organizations and institutions on the impact of television. These were the first reports since the privatization of television and the introduction of satellite television in 1991 to document the effects of privatized television, and they assumed particular validity in the media. The report by Media Advocacy Group justified their research saying, "politicians of all hues, academicians and school teachers have expressed concern about the violence and sex being shown in Indian films and repeated on Doordarshan, Zee and now, even Star TV" (Rai 1994). Television talk shows also addressed issues of "the social and moral fabric of the nation" deemed under threat by a new visual medium. An article in the *Times of India* held the state responsible, despite its virtual inability¹¹ to police the spread of satellite television, by asking: "But does the government recognize the strength and range of the perception in favor of greater vigilance and regulation?" (Gandhi 1994). With complaints ranging from the availability of an "adult channel"¹² to the very presence of "foreign media"¹³ in the country, the state was accused of floundering in response to the presence of satellite television in India.

Concern and moral panic was expressed through a discourse on the corruption and the commodification of Indian culture. It is in the anxiety with corruption of culture where efforts to police gender and sexuality were most apparent. In 1997, *Outlook* magazine featured this anxiety on its cover, which exclaimed: "After burgers, Cielos and cellualars, it's time for cultural consumerism."

The feature article said: "Disposable incomes, social aspirations and corporate instincts are leading to a slick packaging of high culture, with debatable results."

The Congress Party government's ineffectual attempts to respond to the anxiety about cultural consumerism drew criticism from its main opposition, the Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Criticizing the Congress government, Uma Bharti, a conservative member of BJP, claimed, "as an apex institution of India and democracy, [Parliament] has great power and strength to prohibit advertisements [and] foreign channels [from] the type of obscenity and vulgarity beamed through it."¹⁴

Figure 2.8 *Outlook Magazine*. April 9, 1997. (Reproduced with permission from *Outlook Magazine*, New Delhi).



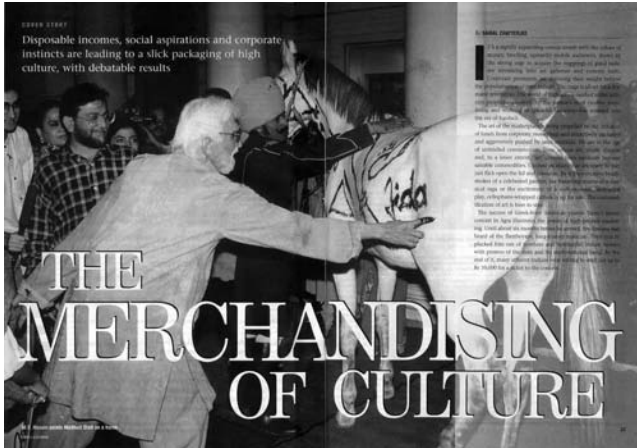


Figure 2.9 Outlook Magazine, April 9, 1997. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)

Exercising its own “power” and “strength,” after gaining control of the central government, BJP banned three advertisements on television that they deemed “obscene.”¹⁵ This discourse on vulgarity and obscenity in the visual media, however, was voiced not only by the Hindu right-wing BJP. For instance, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, C. M. Ibrahim of the United Front government — a coalition of political parties supported by the Congress government that came to power after the collapse of the BJP government in 1996 — claimed, “I am concerned about the culture and integrity of the country. What they show from foreign soil should have some restrictions.” In their effort to “clean up” the city, the Delhi police seized the December 1996 issue of *Cosmopolitan* (Indian edition), along with other “objectionable” magazines such as *Lacemaker*, *Chastity*, and *Sensuous Massage* (Raman 1997).

While the rhetoric of vulgarity and obscenity has been used by a number of groups and political parties, the Hindu right-wing’s opposition stems from deeply conservative gender and sexual codes that prescribe specific roles for women. It is these particular positions vested within the ideological framework of the Hindu Right that governed a series of bans and censorship measures instigated by the then Cultural Minister of Maharashtra, Pramod Navalkar. The Maharashtra state appointed a seventeen-member board called the Citizens Organization for Public Opinion, authorizing them to “hold performers and audience to the caveat — ‘no man, woman or child shall behave in an indecent fashion during the show, including hugging and kissing’” (quoted in Akthar and Menezes 1998, 50). As part of this morality drive, women nightclub workers in Mumbai were banned from working after 8:30 in the evening (Tanna 1995; Akthar and Menezes 1998). In another instance, a well-known Indian film actress, Pooja Bhatt,



Figure 2.10 Outlook Magazine, May 18, 1998. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)

along with seven other actresses, were summoned to the Bombay High Court on charges of obscenity. Pooja Bhatt was charged with “obscenity” because an image of her lying seminude (apparently computer generated) adorned the cover page of a Bombay film magazine, *Stardust*. In their clean-up mission, the Mumbai police seized 268 copies of the magazine.¹⁶ In the midst of this policing, M. F. Hussain, an internationally recognized artist, was criminally charged in Mumbai for painting the Hindu goddess Saraswati, in the nude. Right-wing religious groups protested the “defamation” of the Hindu goddess by a Muslim painter. Some activists of right-wing organizations burned his paintings and tapestries in Ahmedabad (Mustafa 1996; Sengupta 1996). The instances of moral policing became so visible that *Outlook* magazine dedicated a cover story to the measures of censorship in Mumbai.

This state of flux that governed much of the concern and opposition to globalization's influences stemmed from the fact that the boundary between foreign and indigenous that once was clear had become indistinct. The distinction between foreign and Indian was easily discernable during the early 1990s because satellite channels such as STAR TV (Satellite Television Asia Region), owned by Rupert Murdoch, telecast programs that were predominantly American and British,¹⁷ whereas channels such as Zee or Sun TV, which, although they had foreign partnerships, telecast programs and films in Indian languages. Toward the latter part of the decade; however, STAR had also begun to commission and telecast "Indian-made" programs blurring the distinction between foreign and indigenous. Because satellite channels and the programs on it were not subject to Indian censorship laws, an entire genre of television serials and talk shows emerged with themes that explored sexuality, previously considered vulgar and obscene. Thus, if that which was vulgar and obscene was "outside" and "foreign," then, with the Indian programs that explored similar themes, the relegation of themes such as sexuality to "Western culture" as opposed to "Indian culture" was no longer tenable. In this state of flux, the state was unable to police or control the privatization and spread of the visual medium, and therefore studies by research institutions and media watchdog groups assumed particular importance.

The framing of the anxiety in terms of "obscenity" and "vulgarity" was presented in two studies in 1994. These were the earliest reports since the introduction of satellite and cable television and became highly visible and were often quoted. The first report, authored by the Media Advocacy Group (MAG) in conjunction with the Mass Communication Research Center at



Figure 2.11 Outlook Magazine, May 18, 1998. (Reproduced with permission from Outlook Magazine, New Delhi.)

Jamia Millia Islamia University, was based on “a qualitative study of 110 respondents using the method of focus group discussions” (1994, 1). It concluded that “viewers are angry and disgusted at the rising obscenity levels of films and programmes on television ... it is felt that sexually explicit and kissing scenes are natural to Western films and culture... but it’s not a part of our culture. It is being imposed on us” (11–12). The study also claimed that “suggestive” lyrics in films and on the radio increased harassment of young women in public. Since the MAG report was the first of its kind and, more importantly, was commissioned by the National Commission for Women, a statutory body in the government of India, the press sanctioned it as representative of the view of all women’s organizations.

In an effort to present a critique of the unquestioned acceptance of the report in the press, Shohini Ghosh and Ratna Kapur argued:

The most problematic conclusion of the group is the link it draws between sex and violence and its impact on the viewer. The viewer is depicted as lacking any agency — a passive spectator who uncritically receives encoded messages from the screen. He (the report constructs the viewer as predominantly male) is attributed with agency only after he is transformed into a serial killer or rampaging rapist as a result of such exposure. (1994)

In September 1994, apprehensions similar to those voiced by the MAG report were reiterated at a national symposium, “Violence and Vulgarity in the Mass Media,” organized by the Center for Media Studies, an independent research center with a focus on media and communication trends. Calling together “eminent” members of society, the symposium sought to establish intellectual credibility for the popular concern with contemporary media. Justice Ranganath Misra, chairman of the National Human Rights Commission and former chief justice of India, claimed that

on account of the rampant vulgarity and violence in the mass media ... Indian society finds itself today in a situation worse than that of war ... Values which had held Indian society together from Rig Vedic times, with an ethical discipline governing men and women and different segments of society, are being eroded. (Center for Media Studies, 1994, 3)

The concern of the symposium was the “vulnerable sections of society” — women, children, and the poor. Particular attention was thus directed at the impact of television on children. Justice Misra established a direct link between juvenile crime and the depiction of violence in the media.

The discussions of vulgarity on television concerned the depiction of women as the “other vulnerable” section of society. Some participants questioned the right “of the urban well-to-do to lay down a code of decency and propriety for a society like India”¹⁸ and suggested that “obscenity” and “vulgarity” could not be defined according to singular precepts.

Conclusion

Although multiple independent reports were generated, they did little to quell the anxiety over the threat to cultural sovereignty, which reached a fever pitch. Thus, when Maharashtra’s Hindu right-wing cultural minister, Pramod Navalkar, banned nightclub workers from working after 8:30 in the evening and initiated court proceedings against actors and models for allegedly obscene images, his decisions were received among the anxious middle classes as legitimate responses to uncontrolled cultural influences. The absence of a more visible public critical discourse on obscenity and women’s sexuality meant that the majority of the discourse centered on the problematic discourse of threat and contamination. Women’s bodies and sexuality became intertwined with the exposure of the Indian nation to corrupt globalizing influences. Satellite and cable television were identified as the instruments of corrupting Western cultural influences and became the target of controls by the state and by organizations such as the Media Advocacy Group.

Television became a locus of attention because of its presence within the domestic private sphere. It brought the “outside” into intimate contact with the inner domain. The next chapter follows attempts by secular women’s organizations such as the National Commission for Women to guard this domestic space by bringing court cases against the state and the satellite cable companies.

Cartographic Anxiety¹

Television Censorship and Border Controls

Introduction

As a popular visual discourse, television in India provides space for national imaginings. Since its inception in the 1950s, television was controlled by the state and has been used to introduce and promote specific nation-building agendas. However, in 1992 the parameters of control that had been in effect earlier began to diminish in the wake of the introduction of satellite and cable television. Within a span of a few years, the viewing spectrum increased from three state-run channels to forty satellite and cable channels, available predominantly in urban India. Aside from the sheer increase in the number of channels and programs, the most dramatic change was in the content of programs. The new programs shifted focus from social development and nationalism to what Mankekar calls, “the politics of family, sexuality and intimacy” (1999, 356).

This shift toward the politics of sexuality and intimacy spurred the concern that Indian culture would be threatened by exposure to obscenity and vulgarity. In this discourse of threat, economic globalization is welcomed into the boundaries of the home and nation, but cultural globalization — predominantly understood as Western — is not. Directed primarily at women’s sexualized representation, this discourse of obscenity and vulgarity collapses the anxiety about globalization in India onto women’s bodies.² I examine this collapsing of scales — of the nation onto the body — and

demonstrate that efforts to secure the boundaries of the nation entailed curtailing and censoring representation of the sexually “open” body.

If television, as Rajagopal (2001) points out, “blurs the boundaries between public and private,” then satellite and cable television became an almost tangible intrusion of the outside (the corrupting West) into the domain of the most private, sacred, and vulnerable space — the home. Public and private spaces are gendered such that the domain of the home and the private is predominantly considered women’s place, where culture is fostered. The unmediated intrusion of satellite and cable television into the domain of the home therefore breaches boundaries between the public and private, threatening the inner sanctum. It is in this discourse of threat that the scales between the body, home, and the nation become intertwined such that censoring sexual representations of women protects the body and home — and ultimately secures the borders of the homeland against intrusion.

In this chapter, I explore attempts to secure the boundaries of the nation through three court petitions filed in Delhi High Court between 1994 and 1996 by secular women’s organizations and the National Commission for Women (NCW)³ against satellite and cable television companies and the state. The petitions accuse the state of failing to protect the vulnerable public and charge satellite and cable companies with violating several Indian laws including the Customs Act of 1962 and the Cigarettes Act of 1973, both of which concern border violations.

I make two interrelated arguments. First, the court cases are indicative of a displacement of the negotiation of rapidly globalizing political economy onto the popular cultural realm of representational politics, in particular the representation of women’s bodies and sexualities. This mapping of women’s bodies onto the borders of the nations and the subsequent efforts to shield the nation from corrupt, Western cultural influences is what I call “anxiety with territoriality.” Satellite television redefines territoriality by violating national borders with its signals. Because this lack of territoriality can enter the private domestic space, satellite signals engender a sense of vulnerability. The space of the nation is collapsed into the space of the home. It is this redrawing of boundaries that generates moral panic.

The second part of my argument concerns how the discourse of anxiety about women’s bodies and sexualities — as voiced by some secular women’s organizations — is limited; their discourse is (surprisingly) indistinguishable from conservative constructs of “women’s place,” articulated by the Hindu Right. The lack of distinction in discourses between the women’s organizations and those affiliated with the Hindu Right becomes particularly evident during the controversy surrounding the Miss World

Pageant, which I explore in the next chapter. It is in the rhetoric of indecency in representation surrounding the privatization of television that one sees the opening of a space of concern that is easily taken advantage of by the Hindu Right as a way to prescribe appropriate roles for women. If the previous chapter discussed how discourses surrounding the new liberal Indian woman attempted to demarcate the boundaries of appropriate representation, then this chapter shows how the court cases solidified those efforts within the apparatus of the state.

The court cases represented a significant moment in a widespread moral panic over obscenity and culture that spanned the decade of the 1990s.⁴ While concerns with images on television and film had come under scrutiny in prior decades, it was only in the 1990s that there was a substantial increase in efforts to ban, censor, and curtail representations that were deemed, “an insult to Hindu faith,” and “anti-national” (Ghosh 1999, 238). This discourse reflected the growing political influence of the Hindu Right, and, as the court cases demonstrate, there was an increasing confluence between the discourses on obscenity and vulgarity articulated by secular women’s organizations and those expressed by the Hindu Right.

The court cases primarily concerned the unmediated flow of television programs into the country. The petitioners demanded a supervising authority that would effect some control over television. I begin, therefore, with a history of television in India as it shed state control in favor of satellite and cable. I focus on the beginning of privatization in the 1980s, when the state’s policy on television shifted to include social development and revenue generation. The 1980s constituted a phase of dramatic change both in the political economy of the nation-state and the ways in which the state television network (Doordarshan) responded to state concerns. During the 1980s, Doordarshan’s programs focused on “positive images” of women in an effort to draw women into development agendas of the country. In the next section I briefly detail the introduction of satellite and cable television and the programs that became popular on these channels, particularly those that featured women protagonists. It is these representation of women, particularly in roles of sexual assertiveness, that raise the “anxiety with territoriality” that motivated secular women’s groups to attempt to reestablish the borders of the nation against intrusion. Lastly, I will focus on the court cases where the concern with waning state control is articulated.

The Structure of Television

The introduction of television in India was a deliberate policy woven into the development plan. The first five-year plan (1951–56) emphasized that

the success of development was predicated on effective means of communication to the public. It stated that “a wide-spread understanding of the plan is an essential stage in its fulfillment ... and will enable each person to relate his or her role to the larger purpose of the nation.” (quoted in Gupta 1995, 51). The plan allocated Rs 36.4 million to communication expenditures (Pendakur 1989, 179). Television equipment was donated to India by Phillips International Inc. and the Radio Corporation of America in 1955. Later, after India received a UNESCO grant of \$20,000, television began to be used in earnest as an experiment in social education. In these initial years, broadcasting was primarily a medium for development rather than for entertainment. Doordarshan evolved a state-sponsored instrument of nation building.⁵ Even as Doordarshan liberalized in the 1980s and shifted its focus to entertainment, it continued to be structured as part of the state apparatus and as a means through which a modern, independent state could be envisioned.⁶ It is because of this genealogy of television (control over television by the state for the purpose of nation building) that the anxiety about the introduction of satellite and cable was an anxiety over the loss of state control over the construction of India in the globalizing 1990s.

Privatization of Doordarshan in the 1980s was indicative of a larger political economic shift from a state-led development model to a reliance on neoliberal economic policies. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi enacted aggressive policies to encourage US investment in India. Pendakur notes that in 1980 the United States invested \$500 million in India, which was a jump of 16 percent from the previous year’s investment (1989, 186). Encouraged by US investment, “the International Monetary Fund sanctioned a loan of Rs 8,220 million to India in 1980, thereby expressing confidence in the economic policies pursued by Indira Gandhi’s regime” (1989, 187). In the context of these economic reforms, television began to be used as a revenue-generating mechanism rather than one that siphoned money from the state coffers. In 1982 the Minister of Information and Broadcasting urged, “Let’s earn more from TV so that we can spend more on development” (quoted in Pendakur 1989, 191). This tactical change was the first phase of privatization of Doordarshan.

As the economy shifted toward privatization, television programs were designed to be entertaining as well as aid in social development. A significant proportion of these programs centrally featured women and women’s empowerment. Political discourse during this time reflected efforts to draw those at the margins of society into the modernizing nation-state. The underprivileged — identified as farmers, the poor, the working class, and women — were the focus of state policies and social development efforts. In this discourse of social empowerment, Mankekar points out, “social

justice was conflated with development and modernization — the telos of the Indian nation” (1999, 58). Television figured heavily in efforts to integrate those at the margins into the modernizing project of the nation. Improving television transmission and access across the country, therefore, became a significant part of the plan. As a consequence, the sixth five-year plan (1983–88) included a substantial increase in the budget from Rs 509.8 million to Rs 869.5 million (Pendakur 1989, 182). The number of television transmitters during this plan period increased from 42 in 1983 to 175 by 1985, thereby reaching fifty-two percent of the population.

As a result of a 1982 report on Doordarshan, technological improvements in television were coupled with changes in programming content. The report, entitled “Working Group on Software for Doordarshan” (nicknamed the Joshi committee report), strongly criticized Doordarshan’s unfavorable portrayal of women and its reliance on film-based programs that catered only to the middle classes. The committee recommended that television should “focus on existing women’s groups and struggles, the significant contribution of women poets and artists, grass roots organizations and the like” (Krishnan and Dighe 1990, 14). According to Dhanraj, the Joshi committee report’s premise was “that the integration of women into the development process will automatically achieve equality for them” (1994, 246). The Joshi committee report along with several other impact studies on women and the media led television to focus on women’s history through both fictional and nonfictional narratives.

Two or three programs were telecast per week during prime time that dealt with women’s issues and sought to show the struggle and success of women in different spheres of life. For instance, *Adhikar* (Rights) dramatized women’s legal and constitutional rights, *Udaan* (Flight) and *Aur Bhi Hai Raahein* (There Are Other Ways) were based on women’s career opportunities. Other issues were dealt with through fictional narratives on programs such as *Stri* (Woman), *Air Hostess*, *Swayamsiddha* (Self-determination), and *Kashmakash*, which was based on short stories by prominent women authors writing from different linguistic regions.

In spite of the numerous programs that focused on the “positive portrayal” of women, Dhanraj (1994) argues they were fraught with problems. In most of these narratives, the women represented the minority middle classes — upper caste, literate, and urban — and yet their struggles were depicted as universally applicable. Dhanraj (1994) notes that these narratives dramatized resolution and success without challenging the fundamental structures of patriarchy, caste, and class. The programs did not acknowledge that the judicial system was biased, nor did they address

oppressive issues such as domestic violence and dowry. Rather, women had “personal victories” that valorized individual tenacity and perseverance.

Doordarshan’s female-oriented serials of the 1980s projected a modern Indian woman symbolic of a modernizing developing country. These women’s victories and struggles symbolized a modern nation coming of age. In her subjectivity, the classic dyads of public and private and of modernity and tradition were negotiated as conduits through which the emerging modernity of the nation was represented. Even as these new women entered the public domain they remained in the service of the patriarchal nation-state. Serials such as *Aur Bhi Hai Raahein* and *Udaan* prescribed particular roles that the women could play in public. In these serials, women were police officers, flight attendants, photographers, and theater directors. These were all public roles in which the character subsumed her sexuality to a career in the service of the public. Mankekar points out that, for the middle class “viewing families” she interviewed, the dilemmas posed by women’s agency generated through public life were resolved when women’s careers were framed in terms of “service to others.” If women’s work within the home was in service to her husband and children, then work outside the home should be in service to the community and nation (1999, 121). This understanding served primarily to assuage anxieties about unmarried women’s sexuality as they entered the public domain — a space that represented women’s accessibility to other men and ultimately the threat of community dishonor. Women’s “persistent vulnerability” to threat structured the idea that the normal and correct transition was from the protection of her parent’s home to her husband’s. For the new woman of the 1980s, however, transitions from her parent’s home to the public were acceptable because of a discourse of service to the patriarchal nation-state.

In the discourse of the serials in the 1980s, women’s empowerment was integral to the nation’s development and symbolic of its modernity. Thus, the women who would be part of the modern nation-state had to be “unyoked from those aspects of tradition that potentially impeded the nation’s predestined march toward modernity” (Mankekar 1999, 156). Those aspects of tradition seen as “backward” and premodern had to give way to modern sensibilities in the new nation. However, women were to be modern, but not too modern so as to betray core Indian values.

Some of these resolutions also appear in the discourse of the new liberal Indian women of the 1990s. However, a significant difference is that the subjectivity of the modern women of the 1990s is framed around a consumer identity. She is a liberated Indian woman because she is finally able to be a world consumer. The woman of the 1990s is similar to that of the 1980s because she must also subsume her desire within her role as mother,

wife, sister, and daughter. And, while she is a consumer of foreign goods and services, she cannot let the open, liberalized market corrupt her fundamental roles. In both constructions of the new woman, women continue to signify the nation — as a modernizing nation at the end of the 1980s and as a new liberalized nation open to global consumer capital in the middle of the 1990s. The new liberal Indian woman of the 1990s is also different in class. She is structured as the upper middle consuming class of liberalized India that the state “showcases” to the world. The new woman in the serials of the 1980s was an icon of India’s middle class (Mankekar 1999, 114).

Gender, the Middle Classes, and the Hindu Right

The 1980s came to an end with the consolidation of a middle class identity. The extent to which the experiment in the mid-1980s with women-oriented programs was successful in empowering women remains, at best, questionable. However, the investment in increasing television transmission and the introduction of color television did generate a captive market of millions of middle class consumers across the country and lent itself to the production of a middle class consuming identity. Corbridge and Harriss show that in the 1980s the number of television sets rose from 2 million to 30 million, production of cars increased fivefold, the number of refrigerators grew nearly fourfold, and the production of motor scooters rose elevenfold (2000, 124). Owning television sets, refrigerators, and scooters became a mark of middle class mobility and status. Remarking on the growing political importance of the middle classes, *India Today* reported that “for the first time in India, a Prime Minister now feels that the middle class is a political force, and it makes political sense to satisfy its aspirations even at the risk of being called anti-poor” (Ninan 1985, 110). The specificity of material goods as markers of success and mobility were recorded even in the items demanded in dowry.

As the middle classes consolidated toward the end of the 1980s, the increasingly popular Hindu Right advocated a particular nationalist narrative vested in conservative gender roles. It was also during this time that the portrayal of women on television underwent a dramatic shift from the “modern empowered women” of the serials of the mid 1980s to the “idealized (Hindu) woman” in the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* toward the end of the decade.

The telecasts of *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* toward the end of the 1980s enjoyed unprecedented popularity. Telecast in serialized form, the *Ramayana* was the first of the two epics and had up to 87 percent viewership. During the broadcast, the country experienced a virtual slowdown of traffic and business; and congregations of people crowded the shop fronts

with television sets to watch the serial. While the serials were not orchestrated by the Hindu Right, the timing of the telecasts was extremely fortuitous in mobilizing a public discourse on Hindu nationalism.⁷ Rather than positing a causal connection between the epics and the rise of the Hindu Right, Rajagopal argues that “the media re-shape the context in which politics is conceived, enacted, and understood” (2001, 1). The serialized epics created a shared discourse of a golden age of ethics based on sacrifice, honor, and duty (*Dharma*) symbolic of an idealized past. Harnessing this nostalgia for the past, the Hindu Right argued that the utopian past could be re-created through political will (Rajagopal 2001, 278). The telecast of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* offered the Hindu Right fertile ground for the production of a discourse of Hindu nationalism in globalizing India.

In addition to creating a discourse of an idealized past, the serials also generated a powerful image of the “ideal Indian woman.” In the *Ramayana*, Lord Ram’s wife, Sita, was emblematic of the dutiful, chaste, self-sacrificing wife. Women in both epics are represented as this ideal. Even though the characters were fictitious and could not be emulated, Mankekar points out that “the power of the image may be assessed from the fact that, long after the telecast of the *Ramayana*, many Hindu men and women were still debating the extent to which the ‘values’ associated with Sita were pertinent to their own lives” (1999, 210). The comparative frameworks through which contemporary women continue to be judged based on fictitious, idealized figures of women pivot around a discourse of sexuality. In both epics, Krishnan points out, the overarching framework is that a woman’s honor is located in her sexual purity and that the persistent threat is that this honor can be “easily fractured” (1990, WS 107). Thus, men — fathers, husbands, and brothers — are responsible for protecting the honor of women. In these epics, contests are fought over identity, land, and honor in order to gain control (sometimes literally) over women’s sexuality. In the center of these narratives is unquestioned patriarchy and men’s right to rule over land and body. In the contemporary moment, the discourse of women’s sexual vulnerability centers on the anxiety associated with young women working outside the home and being sexually available to “other” men. Ideal women, the epics demonstrate, are those who remain chaste under the protection of their father’s home and leave only for the protection of their husband’s home.

The discourse of the ideal woman as representative of the nation threads through the narrative of the epics, the modern Indian women of the serials of the 1980s, and the new liberal Indian woman of the 1990s. What is common in each of these instances is that women’s sexuality is the locus around which an ideal is shaped. In each instance women

are desexualized and their identities are constructed in relation to their husbands and children. If the women in the epics stand as fictitious idealizations, then the women in the serials of the 1980s and the new liberal Indian woman of the 1990s are modern manifestations of the narrative. The modern woman's world has expanded beyond her home and, she is aware of the world, is an active consumer, and in some instances even works outside the home. However, in all these narratives, women's subjective agency continues to be structured through patriarchy. As a consumer she makes choices for the home. As a police officer in a predominantly male-dominated field (such as the protagonist in the popular 1980s serial *Udaan*), her success, despite the barriers of the male police force, is valorized without a critical examination of the structure of patriarchy that operates both in the police force and in her home. These idealized women fight for social justice but do not challenge structures of male supremacy. The modern figures correspond to mythic Hindu goddess warrior figures of Durga and Kali whose battles with demons symbolized their fight against evil. The contemporary versions of women fighting for the greater good has a popular *Hindu* lexicon within which women's power is understood. In addition to being framed from primarily Hindu discourses, these constructions of women's power are profoundly limited in their agency. Thus, women who deviate and transgress these boundaries and constructs, particularly of sexuality, threaten patriarchal structure and, ultimately, the sanctity of the nation. Consequently, women's unruly sexuality in globalizing India is representative of modernity run amok and, so, in need of the patriarchal state's control.

It is against the backdrop of the Hindu Right gaining power, neoliberal policies of economic reform, a rapidly changing consumption landscape, and the anxieties of the middle classes that satellite and cable television enters India. In the next section I explain the entrée of satellite and cable television as well as the programs that filled these channels and became the subjects of the court cases I examine toward the chapter's close.

Satellite and Cable Television

A former minister of information, S. S. Gill, exclaimed that satellite and cable television poses a "threat to our national space, cultural values, communal harmony and international image!" (quoted in Ohm 1999, 72). It is the structure of satellite television, available "free-to-air" and transmitted from outside the territory of India and so not subject to Indian laws, that is the cause of concern and what motivates the discourse of control. I begin, therefore, by explaining the structure of satellite television since it was a particularly important and unique regional phenomena at the beginning

of the 1990s. Satellite television's lack of "territoriality" and its freedom from Indian laws is the framework that guides the "anxiety with territoriality" in the court cases discussed later in the chapter.

Structural Changes and the Discourse of Control

The rapid spread of satellite television was a pan-Asian phenomena that began in 1990 when AsiaSat-1, a predominantly telecommunications satellite, began to be used for television. AsiaSat's footprint extends from Egypt to Japan and from Indonesia to Siberia, covering a potential audience of 2.7 billion — almost half the world's population (Chan 1994). The use of AsiaSat for television was initiated by Li Ka-shing, a Hong Kong-based entrepreneur, after the Hong Kong government announced its intention to allow the operation of private cable networks in 1986 (Taylor 1992).

Li's company, Hutchison Whampoa, decided to use AsiaSat⁸ for television after being denied a license for a cable network by the Hong Kong government. With an initial investment of US\$300 million, Li started Hutch Vision, a subsidiary of Hutchison Whampoa for Satellite Television Asia Region (STAR TV). STAR TV can be received free of cost from AsiaSat-1 through an inexpensive "dish antenna." Using a satellite to beam programs circumvented the time-consuming method of laying down cable lines. STAR TV was initially limited to Hong Kong, which granted Li a license in December 1990, based on two conditions. First, that no Cantonese programs would be beamed into Hong Kong until October 1993 and second, that STAR would not charge for its services; rather, its profit would be based on advertising revenue. The STAR platform carried five channels: MTV, BBC, Prime Sports, "family entertainment," and a Mandarin channel.

The strategy behind STAR's free-to-air service was based on attracting advertisers to a pan-Asian, "top 5% audience: the well educated, the wealthy, the professional, and the English-speaking" (Chan 1994, 114). Within approximately ten months after its launch, STAR was able to attract HK\$546 million in advertising revenue. STAR's inception heralded a new era in satellite television. Political and economic changes in liberalizing economies in Asia served as a conducive environment for a pan-Asian advertising platform that would be accessible to the wealthiest 5 percent of 2.7 billion people. Since STAR is free via satellite and is distributed through local cable networks, a small fee is charged by cable networks to wire individual homes. But few can afford to pay even these small cable fees, so the audience receiving satellite television is already narrowed to the affluent people the advertisers want to target. The pan-Asian platform also allowed advertisers to reach audiences beyond their national boundaries, which prior to satellite television was not possible through national

(and often state-owned) television networks. It was the emergence of this specific pan-Asian audience that convinced the Australian media tycoon Rupert Murdoch to acquire 63 percent of Hutch Vision (Atkins 1995).⁹

STAR TV's free-to-air platform enabled the rapid spread of satellite television in urban India. The first signs of the spread of satellite television was evidenced when local cable companies wired homes to receive CNN's coverage of the 1991 Gulf War. In the months after the Gulf War ended, satellite and cable spread rapidly in urban centers. In 1992, cable and satellite homes grew by 211 percent from 412 thousand to 1.2 million homes in urban India; by 1996 the figure grew to 14.2 million homes (Rahman 1992; Thussu 1999). With the spread of STAR and other satellite channels, one of every four subscribers of satellite television was in India (Radhakrishnan 1993).

The spread of satellite television and its subsequent popularity caused concern at state television networks in several pan-Asian countries. The Malaysian government said in 1994 that they would "study satellite networks" to determine if they should allow them in Malaysia (Atkins 1995). The Malaysian Minister for Information said:

Already there is unhappiness in Europe with violence and sex raining from the air. Here in Malaysia, communalism and communism is still a danger for us. With satellites, I don't rule out the possibility of a clandestine TV. It could be very dangerous for the multiracial society. (quoted in Atkins 1995, 63)

In an effort to circumvent the anxieties of the Malaysian government, Murdoch suggested an "on/off switch" controlled by the Malaysian state, which could be used to block out programs deemed offensive by the Malay government (Atkins 1995). In spite of Murdoch's self-professed assertion that he takes pride in doing things without governments, his strategy in Asia for STAR has been the "development of a series of niche language programming formats within a global marketing and production structure — known ... as 'glocalisation'" (56). Murdoch's strategy of "glocalisation" was directed at the political and economic structures in Asia. For instance, in China, STAR replaced the BBC with Mandarin language channels after the Chinese government expressed anger at the BBC coverage of the Tiananmen Square uprising. According to Atkins, Murdoch was careful to not upset the Chinese government since China was one of the largest television markets in the world, boasting 186 million television households and "considered the plum of the Asian television market" (58).

In India, Murdoch established a market through Zee TV, a Hindi channel, that is beamed on the STAR platform. Zee TV was launched by Asia

Today Ltd., a group of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) from Hong Kong in 1992. Since its inception in 1992, Zee has attracted an unprecedented number of audiences and generated huge profits (Karmali and Abraham 1994). Given the rapid popularity of Zee TV's Hindi programming, it poses the biggest challenge to the state-run Doordarshan. Recognizing its potential, Murdoch, in early 1994, bought 49.9 percent of Asia Today Ltd. For advertisers, Zee TV was a more economical option than Doordarshan because advertising costs on Zee were a fifth of those on Doordarshan. Although Doordarshan had a larger audience, Zee claimed "that its viewership ... is probably the audience that the advertiser wants to target" (Karmali and Abraham 1994, 90). According to one advertiser, "we now use a combination of Zee for our higher end products and Doordarshan for our mass appeal products" (ibid.). The popularity of satellite and cable channels in 1993 signaled the first serious challenge to Doordarshan's monopoly over the visual medium.

Doordarshan's response to the challenge by Zee was to reshape its image in an effort to draw advertisers from Zee. In a cover story on Doordarshan's new image, *India Today* claimed that Doordarshan had become

the platform for the fare it had so far considered "elitist" and "five-starish" for a "public service" network ... the upshot is that it's now a routine thing for DD viewers to see skimpily-clad models sashaying down the catwalk ... [therefore] what's important is that DD has consulted the market. (Aggarwal 1994)

Doordarshan's new image with "up-market" programs of "lifestyle and fashion" was in response to STAR TV's fare of foreign programs such as *Baywatch*, *Santa Barbara*, and *The Bold and the Beautiful*. This strategy was adopted to serve as an "Indian" alternative to STAR TV's foreign fare, often considered "vulgar" and "obscene."

Doordarshan refashioned itself as "Indian" in contrast to the foreign fare of US soap operas by providing "quality programming" that catered to emerging consumer tastes in the changing economy.¹⁰ Anchored in its genealogy as a national network whose mission is entertainment and social development, Doordarshan was faced with the challenge of defining what constituted "Indian" in contrast to "Western" programming. Prior to the alternatives that satellite television brought, Doordarshan had no need to define itself as Indian. However, once this unique space had opened up, it became imperative to fashion what constitutes India/Indian.¹¹ I suggest that this quest for an "Indian image" is an anxiety with territoriality.

The Anxiety with Territoriality

Using satellites for transborder television defies the tradition that national sovereignty includes state control over television within a nation's border.

Margaret Scott, "News from Nowhere," 1991

Satellite television in the 1990s fundamentally altered the notion that national television networks have a monopoly over information and images within the borders of the nation. In India, the response to satellite television went from panic to a belief that Doordarshan was an "Indian" alternative to the invading "alien" culture. The discourse of invasion was problematic on various levels since it validated claims about a unified Indian culture — in effect adding to existing Hindu Right discourses of a pure Hindu nation. The structure of the argument also generated dualistic spheres of "us" versus the ubiquitous "West" that were distinct and autonomous from one another. However, what concerns me about these arguments was the geography of the responses that followed. Given that satellite television's footprint (the electronic coverage of a satellite signal) did not correspond to national borders, attempts to manage the redrawn boundaries manifest themselves in efforts to control the nation's borders. In these efforts the national culture was reimaged through a discourse of sexual purity.

The paramount concern with satellite television was that its source could not be located in a specific place. No particular country could be held responsible for the cultural invasion. Time Warner's CNN, Sony, Murdoch's STAR, Zee TV, and the BBC could all lease transponders on satellites and beam their programs into the country. This inability to locate a place or a country that could be held responsible highlighted the reliance on a lexicon of places, territories, and countries from which events and policies are authored — a grid that was rapidly becoming untenable in the globalizing world of multinational corporations and changing technologies. Networks like Rupert Murdoch's STAR TV became emblematic of "transnational media imperialism" (Ohm 1999, 72).

This lack of territoriality blurred the distinction between foreign versus Indian. This blurring between the ability to identify programs as "ours" versus "theirs" added to the concern about cultural erasure. Several programs shown on the satellite channels were produced within India by Indian companies with Indian actors. These programs were then sent outside the country to be uplinked to the satellite and then retransmitted back to Indian audiences. For example, Zee TV sends programs produced

within India to Hong Kong for uplink. So the ease with which it was once possible to distinguish foreign programs such as *Baywatch* from Indian programs no longer existed.

The first part of the anxiety with territoriality was the inability to geographically locate the threat from the outside. The second was manifest from within, in the inability to secure the borders of the nation from cultural invasion. In *Spaces of Identity* Morley and Robins argue, "As territories are transformed, so too are the spaces of identity" (1995, 108). Satellite television generated a change in the territorial understanding of the nation-state. Traditionally, national borders secure the territory within from the outside, and the policing of these borders is a significant aspect of national security. The ease with which satellite signals entered the borders of the nation generated a sense of being unprotected and vulnerable to the outside. National identity was understood to be under threat, generating a parochial and unified construction of Indian identity.

Brosius and Butcher note that "As visual *representations*, images are embedded in a codified vocabulary inextricably linked to 'local' culture" (1999, 12). The change in visual representations thus produced a concern about change in local (Indian) culture that was soon debated in the Parliament. During 1993, several debates in the Lok Sabha (the House of the People, the lower house in India's Parliament) centered on satellite television's threat to Indian culture and tradition. On December 13, 1993, for instance, K. P. Singh Deo, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, was asked "whether the cultural heritage of India based on unity in diversity is under peril on account of satellite transmission." In response, Mr. Singh Deo claimed that "apprehensions ... on this account had come to the government's notice ... [thus] a number of changes in the programming of Doordarshan's satellite channels have been carried out to provide a wholesome fare of programming that is predominantly Indian."¹² Apprehensions voiced in the Parliament over satellite television also recognized that "the contents of ... programmes of foreign networks do not come within the ambit of the regulations of the Government of India."¹³

Satellite television, Stuart Hall argues, cannot be understood "without understanding its grounding in a particular advanced national economy and culture and yet its whole purpose is precisely that it cannot be limited any longer by national boundaries" (1997, 27). Because national boundaries are ineffective against satellite transmission, national culture and identities are seen to be under threat, and the nation must attempt to secure the territory against corrupting alien influences. Drawing primarily on examples from Thatcherite Britain, Hall argues that the threat

to the nation-state produces a regressive and dangerous form of national identity (26).

Similar discourses of parochialism were evident in India in a range of responses: those of Doordarshan provided an “Indian” alternative to foreign programs, while those of the Hindu Right attempted to construct a pure Hindu nation-state. Efforts to guard against change in Indian identity and culture led to measures to guard the territory against intrusion from the outside. These measures entailed, among others, efforts to license and control cable transmission through the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995. Justifications for the Cable Act’s measures were stated in the introduction:

Cable television is the talk of the day ... there has been haphazard mushrooming of cable television networks all over the country ... the programmes which are being projected on the satellite channels are predominantly western and alien to our culture and way of life. On these cable television networks a lot of undesirable programmes and advertisements are also being screened without fear of being checked. To check this tendency it has been considered necessary to regulate the operation of cable television networks in the country so as to bring about uniformity in their operation.¹⁴

By entering the domain of the household, satellite television violated borders deemed sacrosanct. But the particularity of this sense of violation needs to be understood in terms of the centrality of television to the dynamic of family entertainment. In her study of television audiences in a low-income community in Delhi, Mankekar explains the “topography of power” that determines how family members position themselves around the television set (1999, 52). Since most families — even upper middle class ones — have only one television set per household (although this is now beginning to change), television viewing is primarily a family activity around which daily chores and meals revolve. Exposed to years of Doordarshan’s programming with messages of national integration and social development, “viewing families”¹⁵ participated in the discourse of national development. Programs such as the female-oriented serials of the 1980s were viewed as much as entertainment as attempts to impart social messages on the upliftment of women. These narratives of development, national integration, and social change were not all agreed upon and were certainly debated, but they were viewed in some sense as “Indian” as opposed to, particularly in the initial years, the US and British programs on satellite television. This distinction, however, was no

longer tenable once programs produced in India were shown and popularized on satellite television.

Indian programs on satellite television, therefore, blurred the boundaries between Indian and foreign. David Morley points out that satellite television transgresses boundaries between the local and the global (cited in Mankekar 1999, 47). The global entered the living rooms in India offering both images of commodities to be coveted as well as narratives of sexuality — not only through Western programs but also those produced in India and transmitted on cable channels. These narratives of sexuality disturbed the family viewing pattern where couples could watch serials with their in-laws and children. While the majority of serials were meant for “family viewing” to attract more audience members, the narratives had undergone a change.

Plot lines with extramarital affairs and unmarried women discussing their sexual encounters were not unusual. This change in the representation of sexuality became the cause for concern. The structure of the argument of threat here is significant since threat was palpable in the domain of the home, the space where “culture” was generated and imparted to the young. Since the responsibility of imparting culture was predominantly directed to women, the intrusion of Western culture threatened to corrupt those most vulnerable: “women and children” in society. Anne McClintock points out that “Nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space” (1995, 357). In this sense then, the domestic space — a microcosm of the national space — was violated. Efforts to protect against transgression entailed mapping the borders of the nation onto women’s representations in the new serials. Casting strict boundaries around permissible versus perverse images allowed for the allegorical securing of the nation.

New Serials and the Discourse of Obscenity and Vulgarity

An important and striking aspect of the proliferation of dramatic series on television has been the predominance of female protagonists on television. Breaking from earlier serials on Doordarshan, these dramatic series signaled a shift from stereotypical images of women in the visual domain — both in television and on film. As chapter 2 explored, advertisements, television, and magazines together generated a discourse of the new liberal Indian woman. The genesis of this new woman in television was initiated with *Tara*, a series telecast on Zee TV. *Tara*, which began in December 1992, is loosely based on the true-life story of its writer, Vinta Nanda. It is centered on the lives of five friends who leave home and come to live in Mumbai (Bombay). *Tara* is the name of one of its five women protagonists; in the

first few episodes she gets involved in a relationship with a married man who has an eight-year-old daughter. In subsequent episodes each woman makes choices about career, family, and relationships — both in and outside of wedlock. With *Tara* a new genre of dramatic series on television was created — one that hinged on challenging conventional roles of women in the visual domain. *Tara* came to be associated not only with setting the precedent for other serials on television but also for “liberating Indian women.” According to Raman Kumar, the director of the serial, “India was liberated in 1947 and [Indian] women [were] liberated with *Tara*.”¹⁶

Tara initiated, says Raman Kumar, a “modern sensibility” that broke earlier stereotypes of women (Sharma and Trikha 1996). Signaling a break from the image of women in popular epics, Kumar says “do we have to keep showing *pativrata naris* [literally women who pledge fidelity to their husbands] and do we have to keep following Sita?” (Sharma and Trikha 1996). *Tara* became emblematic of a new sensibility. According to one of the writers of the serial, Shobha Dé, a well-known popular fiction writer who has worked on several other new serials, “the star of Indian television today ... is the woman ... almost every serial you see is in one way or another projecting what is loosely called the new Indian woman.”¹⁷ The new women, according to Dé, has her “own money” and as a consequence, “redefines her position within the family ... which means reshaping the status quo.”¹⁸

Following the precedent set by *Tara*, several other fictional narratives featured prominent female protagonists in complicated heterosexual relationships. The woman was the “central character through which the serial moved.”¹⁹ But the significance of these serials, according to Dé, was “what they were saying ... they are tackling subjects like adultery, divorce, boredom within marriage, frustration, anger, rage, all the emotions that were sort of neatly swept under the carpet ... all the negative emotions women are not supposed to have which society finds threatening are being dealt with in a very up-front way on television.”²⁰

Ghutan, another popular serial on Zee TV, focused on a woman trapped within a forced marriage. At a critical juncture, *Ghutan*'s protagonist encounters a man from her past with whom she initiates a relationship. In a variation of the plot from *Ghutan*, *Saahil* is about a man who is forced to marry the daughter of the powerful film baron who gave him his break. *TV and Video Worlds* draws attention to the change in the representation of conjugal relationships on television: “Marriage, say both *Ghutan* and *Saahil*, is not as sacrosanct as it is made out to be” (Chatterji 1996, 13).

These dramatic series portray women's sexuality without reverting to simplistic binaries of “vamp” versus “virtuous.” While *Tara* initiated the

portrayal of a more complex female sexuality through relationships out of wedlock, dramatic series such as *Hasratein* (Desires) force their viewers to contend with women's sexual needs. In one instance the female protagonist in *Hasratein* asks her husband, who is 20 years older, "Why do you want to start a fire you cannot quench?" after he asks to assert his conjugal rights (Abraham 1995, 29). In subsequent episodes, she falls in love with a younger man and initiates a sexual relationship. In a symbolic representation of defying traditional dictates, the protagonist in *Hasratein* confronts her tradition-bound sister-in-law and asserts her rights as a woman with sexual needs: "I am not just your sister-in-law, I am also a woman. I can fast once a year but I cannot remain hungry all my life" (ibid.). According to the producer of *Hasratein*, the serial hopes to suggest that women want more from life than a husband, kids, and a kitchen.

Most of these dramatic series were telecast on Zee TV since directors and producers felt that *Hasratein*, *Tara*, *Saahil*, or *Ghutan* would be censored by Doordarshan's strict program codes. However, in an effort to not lose out on advertising revenue, Doordarshan commissioned privately produced programs that are markedly different from its prior lineup. In particular, Doordarshan started offering daily afternoon series in an attempt to "target women viewers." One such series, *Swabhiman* (Self-esteem), that has gained immense popularity is centered on the life of a dead tycoon's mistress who is caught up in financial and emotional battles with his family. The protagonist, who has two children out of wedlock with the deceased businessman, claims a moral right to a share of his wealth. Shobha Dé, who worked on *Swabhiman*, argues that these new serials are not clones of Western soaps such as *Dynasty*. Rather, they

show something far closer to urban reality than anything that is shown in Indian cinema ... *Swabhiman* is not a clone of anything ... it's the way I see certain segments of Bombay society. The very fact that the central character in this serial is a mistress with two illegitimate children and this mistress has become the hero of India ... indicates a major attitudinal shift ... It was unthinkable even ten years ago ... she would have been the vamp ... it's no longer so, she is someone people admire. She's not projected as someone who sleeps around, she's projected as someone who is exercising options and choice, which is in itself revolutionary and radical because women are not supposed to have any of those.²²

Several other series have followed in the wake of *Swabhiman*, such as *Shanti* (the name of the woman protagonist) who seeks to avenge her mother's rape, from which she was conceived.

The dramatic series mentioned above are only a small segment of similar narratives on the more than 30 channels available to the urban middle class Indian. The change in the image of women has provoked discussion and debate in both the print and television mediums via talk shows such as *Shakti*. Beginning in late 1993, Zee TV's *Shakti* shifted from discussing "women's issues" to addressing issues of "premarital sex," "extramarital affairs," "women bosses," etc. (Neogi 1995). Other prime time talk shows featured discussions on male desire and sexuality. One such show, *Purush Kshetra*, was hosted by a popular Indian film actress, Kiron Kher. While talk shows themselves were not new to Indian television, the public discussion of sexuality was.

The new representations of women in the serials blurred the boundaries between prior categories of good and bad women. Concerns about these blurred boundaries were reflected in the public sphere — through debates raised in the Parliament, on satellite television, in newspapers, in magazines, on radio, in reports by media watchdog organizations and some secular women's organizations, and in the court cases. These concerns led to banned events and calls for censorship by political groups and citizen organizations. It is within the context of this heightened sense of anxiety that three court cases were initiated in the Delhi High Court against the state for failing to take responsibility for protecting its citizens from satellite and cable companies.

The Court Cases

The court cases emerge from the context of a public discourse that was saturated by a moral panic with obscenity and vulgarity in the media. This moral panic was articulated in articles, newspapers, and magazines, through reports, and by members of Parliament who voiced their concern signaling this as an issue that required state intervention. The court cases are attempts by select women's organizations to secure the borders of the nation against what was considered obscene and vulgar representations.

Between 1995 and 1996 three civil writ petitions (CWPs) were filed at the Delhi High Court by separate constituencies all of which framed their arguments around violations of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 and infringements by the satellite channels of several border control laws.

Nirmala Sharma and Others versus the Union of India and Others

In July 1995, Ms. Nirmala Sharma along with Ms. Musharraf Chowdhary and Mr. Prem Gupta filed a CWP against the Union of India and several

private satellite networks. Upon hearing about the petition, The National Commission for Women made a request to implead as a co-petitioner. The Union of India, as named in the petition, included separate ministries and institutions including the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, Doordarshan, the Foreign Promotion Investment Board, and the Censor Board of Film Certification. Several private satellite channels — Zee Telefilms Limited, Jain Satellite Television, Asia Television Network, and STAR Plus — were also named.

The main petitioner, Nirmala Sharma, is the president of Jagriti Mahila Samiti, a voluntary nonprofit organization with which she “has been actively associated to bring awareness of rights and duties among women and to spread literary and [combat] social problems such as dowry, family planning etc.”²⁴ Sharma establishes her own legitimacy by identifying herself as a social activist who has been working for causes championed by the women’s movement. The co-petitioner, NCW is a statutory organization framed by the 1990 National Commission for Women Act. As a government body, the NCW’s request to implead in this case gives particular legitimacy to the petition’s contention that private satellite networks violate the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986. The other co-petitioners are also in “service to the public.” Ms. Chowdhary is a practicing advocate in the Supreme Court and Mr. Prem Gupta is a former Minister of Labor in the government of Punjab. In establishing their identities as members in “service to the public,” the petitioners state that they

have no personal interest in ... filing this petition [and are doing so] in Public Interest so that the citizens of this country, especially children and youth are saved from the degenerating and depraving influence of programmes being broadcast by the foreign networks. (CWP, Sharma, 4)

This issue of public anxiety is thus raised in the name of public interest in an attempt to protect children, youth, and Indian culture from the degenerating influence of private television. The perceived threat to Indian youth and culture is further framed in terms of a threat to constitutional rights guaranteed by the nation.

Civil writ petitions filed in the High Court have to establish grounds based on the alleged violation of constitutional rights by the respondents. Ms. Sharma and the others claim that, including the state agencies and private channels, eighteen respondents have violated constitutional rights. These rights specifically include articles 14, 19, and 21, as well as statutory provisions like the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986, the Customs Act of 1962, and the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act.²⁵

The civil writ petition hinges on the allegation that the private satellite television channels and networks violate constitutional rights for women by broadcasting “various programmes full of sex to attract maximum viewership without caring for the effect and impact on the citizens especially youth, which also spoils the culture and ethos of the country” (CWP, Sharma, 6). Based predominantly on this argument, the petitioners suggest that private satellite channels and networks violate several statutory provisions and constitute a threat to the country. While the petitioners accuse the private channels of violating the Customs Act of 1962 and the Cigarettes Act of 1973 (among others), in each instance the accusation is framed as a violation of “standards of decency or morality” (language found in the Customs Act of 1962). Throughout its fifty-one pages, the petition consistently expresses what Sankaran Krishna (1996) calls “cartographic anxiety” in which Indian borders are transgressed by sexualized representations of women. For example, the petitioners bring up the state’s inability to control the threat at India’s borders and recommend that police stations be instructed to “not permit relay of any indecent, vulgar, offensive programmes” (CWP, Sharma, 48).

The petitioners begin by clarifying that programs such as *Apki Adalat* and *Insight*, which are telecast on private channels, are “clean and with no sex exploitation” and are therefore acceptable. *Apki Adalat* loosely translates to “people’s court” where prominent public figures (often politicians) are asked questions in a simulated court in front of a live audience at the end of which they are served a “judgment.” The temporary and fantasmatic shift of power relations gives the audience the power to judge political figures. *Insight* is a popular news and current affairs program. In the petition, this genre of television programs is compared with an entirely different genre of fictional dramatic series.

The petitioners found fictional series, particularly “*Campus*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Baywatch*, *Banegi-apni-baat* (we’ll have our say),” as well as “vulgar movies, indecent songs and misleading advertisements” to be “full of sex for attracting advertisers to spoil the culture and ethos of the country” (CWP, Sharma, 6). In addition to the specific programs named, the petitioners recognize most of the programs on the satellite television networks as being “vulgar and indecent.” The majority of programs on satellite television are either US programs such as *Baywatch* or the programs produced in India such as *Hasratein*, *Tara*, *Saahil*, and *Ghutan*, which I examined in the previous section. As I have discussed, these programs broke away from earlier narratives on television, particularly in the representation of women’s sexuality. The new woman was assertive and confident and, perhaps most significantly, inhabited a sexual identity previously missing in most narratives.

The petitioners contend that vulgar representations of women in the serials are in direct violation of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986. The law states: “No person is permitted to produce or cause to be produced or sell or hire or distribute or circulate any film or photograph which contains indecent representation of women in any form.” Indecent representation of women is defined as:

the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent, or derogatory to, or denigrating women or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals. (CWP, Sharma, 10)

According to the petitioners, who conflate all women’s sexual representation as “indecent,” the entire range of images and narratives on advertisements and programs violates the act.

In order to be accountable to the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986, the respondents have to be within the jurisdiction of Indian laws. However, programs shown on private satellite networks are outside the control of the state; there is no state authority that has control over the content. The rapidity with which satellite television entered the country and spread left the state struggling for an appropriate response. The structure of satellite television, in which programs are produced in India and then sent outside the country for uplink, made it legislatively difficult to charge the satellite companies; instead, the petitioners directed their attention to the cable operators who downloaded programs from the satellites for their subscribers, even though the operators themselves had little access or control over the programs’ content.

In 1995, the state instituted the Cable Act and held cable operators responsible for telecasting programs that do not conform to the “program code.” The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting — one of the state agencies implicated in the court case — indicates that the Cable Television Act of 1995 makes provision for the monitoring of programs “where an officer, not below the rank of Group ‘A’ officer of the Central Government authorized by the state government in this behalf ... may order, [or] prohibit any cable operator from transmitting or re-transmitting any particular programme ...”²⁶ The Cable Act holds the cable operator responsible for what is telecast because he or she operates the cable network within Indian borders; and furthermore, the act itself will be enforced by officers of the state who can prohibit cable operators from showing programs deemed offensive. While the act spells out who can be held accountable, the criteria

with which to decide indecency and vulgarity was left ambiguous; definitions relied only on judgments made by “officers of Group ‘A.’”

Since private channels do not come under the ambit of state control, the Cable Act attempts to institute a degree of control over content. But petitioners were concerned with the ease with which satellite signals cross national boundaries, so they drew attention to the Customs Act of 1962. The Customs Act regulates imports and exports of goods and services into the country with restrictions on imports in order to “maintain of the security of India; the maintenance of public order and standards of decency or morality.” Private channels violate the Customs Act, alleges the petition, by importing programs that “threaten public standards of decency and morality.”²⁷ The petitioners claimed that since “programmes and advertisements which are shown on foreign television networks by the foreign company are produced and sent from India which are then exhibited and seen by masses including Indians,” they violated both the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 and the Customs Act of 1962 due to the content of the programs (CWP, Sharma, 13). In another instance, the petitioners claimed that the private channels violate the Cigarettes Act of 1975 by “exhibiting women and wine along with smoking [which] does not contain the statutory warning” (CWP, Sharma, 16).

The petitioners argument maneuvered a deliberate slide where indecent representation of women signified indecent representation of the nation. This slide was particularly evidenced in a series of arguments suggestive of Krishna’s cartographic anxiety. For Krishna, “cartography is more than the technical and scientific mapping of the country. I use the term to refer to representational practices that in various ways have attempted to inscribe something called ‘India’ and endow that entity with a content, a history, a meaning, and a trajectory” (1996, 194). By claiming that various laws of the country have been violated by the satellite networks, the argument of the petition serves to instruct the state to protect the country’s borders. In an obvious and direct instance of a concern with the borders of the nation, the petitioners claimed that “the foreign networks have even refused to recognize Indian borders and have frequently been showing parts of India as belonging to Pakistan and China” (CWP, Sharma, 3). Invoking rules, laws, and sanctions, the petition attempted to secure national borders stating that “no foreign person or foreign company can enter the Indian media and violate the lines of the land to the detriment and peril of India as a nation and at the cost of infringement of Fundamental Rights of Indian Constitution as regards aesthetic equality between women and men, privacy, vulgarity” (CWP, Sharma, 25).

The petition's critique was also directed at the ways in which women's sexuality was used for commercial purposes. They said that the foreign networks "are hell bent on making television into a medium of sex and violence [where] women [are] the key weapon to fight market warfare with the rivals" (CWP, Sharma, 24). According to the petitioners, the private networks "sensationalize and abet biological instincts and basic instincts of the mind and ... exploit such influenced minds into buying goods and commodities which foreign nationals and foreign companies are otherwise unable to sell" (44).

The commodification of women argument is an old feminist claim critiquing the use of women's bodies to sell products. However, Shohini Ghosh asks, "If 'commodification' means to sell 'consumer goods,' then we must ask *why* certain images of the body that transgress the more traditional representations of women are considered more 'problematic' than, say, the more pervasive representations of the saree-clad housewife selling detergents, washing machines, bathing soaps, [etc.]" (1999, 253). Clearly the objection the petitions had was not against the more traditional figure of the Indian women as portrayed in the Kelvinator refrigerator advertisement I discussed in the last chapter; rather, their critique was directed at sexual images of women. The issue then was not about commodification *per se*; rather, it was about sexual representations of women in the public domain.

In various sections of the petition, references are made to distinguish India from the "West." Claiming that India has a "different policy" on sexuality, the petitioners alleged that "unlike the Western world ... where sex shops are on display in almost every street," representations of sexuality on private networks violates the Indian Constitution (CWP, Sharma, 23). In one instance, the petition claims that the foreign network's game plan is to take over public broadcasting from the Indian government for financial gain and to promote its views on sensitive matters. In response to these and other allegations of obscenity and violence on their networks, STAR TV claimed that it transmitted only programs it received and did not have control over the content of the programs.

Since only the state has the authority to implement control over the foreign networks, the petition accused the state of being "oblivious to the harmful nature of the programs on the foreign networks." The petitioners requested the court to "instruct the police stations not to permit relay of any indecent, vulgar, offensive programmes depicting and presenting women in an indecent manner in violation of the Indecent Representation of Women Act of 1986" (CWP, Sharma, 48). Suggesting that police officers — the majority of whom are men — should decide what is considered offensive and vulgar is based on the assumption that, as officers of

the state, their judgment would be fair and unbiased. It completely negates any critical understanding of the state as a patriarchal institution and reinforces the literal policing of women's bodies and sexuality by the state.

In their writ, the petitioners implicated several state agencies including the Censor Board of Film Certification (CBFC), who responded by commissioning several television monitoring studies. Between August 1995 and November 1995, several programs and advertisements were selected for review, and private networks were asked to send tapes of programs aired during that period to the CBFC. Several television networks did not respond to the request. Jain TV claimed that Indian broadcasting law has no jurisdiction on programs aired on its channel and thus they were not obligated to comply with the request. Despite the lack of tapes, a preliminary analysis of programs was conducted on a total of 3,703 programs of which 705 were found 'not o.k.'²⁸ CBFC's credibility to view and monitor television programs is based on its role as the only state authority that routinely monitors and grants licenses to the film industry. The reviews of television programs were based on the criteria used for the film industry, despite the fact the discourse and structure of film is dramatically different from that of serialized television programs.

The Nirmala Sharma petition laid the groundwork for other petitions that followed. It set the precedent that satellite television networks could violate Indian border laws by broadcasting programs that were vulgar and indecent, and it attempted to establish that sexual representations of women constituted vulgarity. This framework displaces the concern with globalization onto women's bodies, re-inscribing women as signifiers of the nation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1980).

*Sunita Seth versus the Union of India and Others*²⁹

Much the same as the Nirmala Sharma petition, this petition expresses concern for children being affected by programs on television channels. In addition to those named in the previous petition — state agencies and private networks — this petition also implicates several newspapers. The petition states, "children being young and of impressionable mind, are not able to decide the wrong from the right and their behavior pattern is affected mostly by the programmes which they see on television and in newspapers and magazines that they may lay their hand upon" (CWP, Seth, 6). Once again, Seth claims that the programs are "full of sex and violence" and are affecting the future generation and that the invasion of foreign media is responsible for a deprivation of social mores.

Adopting almost the exact language of the previously discussed petition, this petition seeks to protect India's borders from objectionable

programs. The petition addresses a “gross violation of the Indian tradition, Indian Society, Indian culture,” and presents this concern as common to the entire nation — thereby suggesting that everyone views these programs in the same way (CWP, Seth, 30). The petitioners claim that “the public at large and citizens in general are interested in the present petition especially regarding the saving of the culture of the country.” Seth also told the court that “this petition may kindly be treated as a public interest litigation” (50).

Drawing on various Acts and statutory provisions, this petition also claims that the private television networks have violated the Customs Act since the programs shown on their networks are made in India and primarily marketed to Indian viewers. On the basis of this argument, the petition submits that the Censor Board of Film Certification must certify the programs. The CBFC certifies only feature films and has no jurisdiction over television programs, yet the petition seeks to extend CBFC’s control to include television programs. It requests the court to

direct the Censor Board of Film Certification ... to censor all the cinematographic films whether serials, soap operas, [or] telefilms which are being telecast by television broadcasters ... which depict scenes which are vulgar, obscene and in violation of the film certification rules. (CWP, Seth, 54)

While this petition covers many of the same arguments presented in the previous petition, it differs on one account. Beyond state agencies and private television networks, this petition also implicates several newspapers for publishing vulgar and obscene images. The annexure (attachment) to the petition included copies of advertisements and articles from leading newspapers. These attachments reflect a wide range of advertisements and article; for instance, the *Punjab Kesari* (a regional newspaper) has a small article about the American film *Striptease* accompanied by a photograph. There are also several small advertisements for film theaters showing pornographic films. These advertisements are used as proof of vulgarity in newspapers. In addition to advertisements for films, even images of women in silhouette are included as examples of what constitutes vulgarity. For instance, the petition cites an advertisement for a health and fitness center showing a silhouette of a woman that was published in the popular daily paper *The Hindustan Times*. Other articles included show a map of India without the disputed territory of Kashmir, such as a *Saturday Times of India* article on commodities aimed at the rich. This rather broad spectrum of articles and advertisements are found to be objectionable, and the petition asks the state to censor them. For Seth, there is no distinction

between television media and print; rather, both are subject to censorship based on the violation of similar statutory provisions.

Both Sunita Seth and Nirmala Sharma's petitions established a discourse of obscenity and vulgarity based on women's sexual representation through public media. Seth and Sharma raise their concern on behalf of "the public" and position themselves as working in public service. Nirmala Sharma is the president of Jagriti Mahila Samiti, a "volunteer social organization," and Sunita Seth is a teacher in a government school for girls. Both petitions reflect the political positions taken by parts of the feminist movement in the 1970s, and they echo the popular concern with satellite television. With the lack of any other visible, systematic feminist response to the discourse of obscenity and vulgarity, the petitions become the only position that claimed to protect the public. Thus, when the National Commission for Women joined their petitions the cases were accorded further legitimacy.

The National Commission for Women versus the Union of India and Others

The National Commission for Women is the sole petitioner in a case against the Union of India and Global Internet Limited, a company that proposed an all-adult channel named "Plus 21." Unlike the previous two petitions, the petitioner here is a governmental body. The NCW, created by the National Commission for Women Act, is charged with the responsibility of "safeguarding the interests of women" under the Constitution of India. This petition is thus filed by the NCW "... in discharge of its statutory rules and functions to preserve and protect constitutional values and, in particular, to prevent harm and injury to the interests of adolescents, women, youth ... and to prevent culture shock to the viewers" (CWP, NCW, 4). Indira Jaisingh, a well-known feminist lawyer, is the senior advocate representing this petition. Because the petition was filed by a national women's organization and represented by a famous feminist lawyer, it was understood as a position of the feminist movement.

The Union of India was represented by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which had the responsibility of regulating all information and broadcasting in the country on the basis of the Colonial Indian Telegraph Act of 1886. Basing their argument on the hundred-year-old colonial ruling, the petitioners alleged that the state must intervene and regulate the private satellite channels and in particular the proposed adult Plus 21 channel. Plus 21 is a pay channel that can be received only through a digital receiver and decoder. While there was extremely limited information on the kinds of programs that would be available on the channel, NCW claims that "it is obvious that the channel will be telecasting pornographic material" (CWP, NCW, 5). The primary allegation of the

petition was that the proposed channel would violate the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986. NCW further claimed that “there is a lot of documented data available to indicate there is a direct nexus between pornography and prostitution, crime and violence against women” (CWP, NCW, 5).

While all three of these petitions implicated state agencies for their inability to effect control over private satellite networks, they all relied on interpreting constitutional and statutory provisions that would give the state the power to initiate legal action against the networks. Each of the petitions, then, relied on the state for greater policing of women’s representation on television. The NCW petition targeted the validity of the Cable Act of 1995, in particular sections 5 and 6 of the act which refer to program and advertising codes. However, the act excludes those satellite channels that can be received without a decoder primarily because the majority of satellite channels are transmitted “free-to-air,” making it virtually impossible to police the programs and advertisements telecast on them. The NCW petition contended that the distinction is arbitrary:

Sections 5 and 6 [of the Cable Act] ... [which exclude] the applicability of the said sections to programmes of foreign channels which can be received without the use of any specialized gadgets or decoders are bad in law on the grounds that they make an arbitrary and meaningless distinction between programmes that can be received without a decoder and those that can be received with a decoder. (CWP, NCW, 12)

NCW claimed that all satellite channels must conform to the program and advertising code since “the said codes are intended to safeguard the rights permitted by the Constitution of India, under Article 19 (1) (a)” (*ibid.*). Article 19(1) (a) is the constitutional guarantee to the right to freedom of speech and expression; however, the petitioner claimed that the state was bound by law to impose “reasonable restrictions on the right to freedom of speech and expression in the interest of public order, decency and morality” (*ibid.*).

The NCW petition requested that the court hear all three petitions together, since they all addressed the same issue. Each petition framed its claim based on a particular interpretation of the program and advertising codes as well as the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986. Since neither the act nor the codes define indecent or vulgar images, in the petitions these terms have been interpreted as obscene representations of the female body and sexually explicit imagery. This broad range accommodates everything from the silhouette of a female

body to expressions of sexuality, in dramatics serials or talk shows. The petitions attempt to solidify the proximity between sexual expression as a discourse of perversion while feminists in India and elsewhere have been attempting to engage in a critical discourse of sexuality including one that interrogates its heteronormative bias.

In defense of women's sexual representation, the Center for Feminist Legal Research (CFLR) intervened in the Nirmala Sharma and National Commission for Women petitions based on the constitutional guarantee of the right to freedom of expression. The Constitution of India under Article 19 (1) (a) gives "protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech [where] all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression."³⁰ The CFLR contended that Nirmala Sharma and the National Commission for Women (NCW) challenged the constitutional guarantee of free speech by claiming that the state had the right to impose reasonable restrictions on the right to freedom of expression. For instance, the NCW petition claimed that "the respondent no. 1 [the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting] is bound by law to ensure that reasonable restrictions are imposed on the right to freedom of expression and speech, in the interest of public order, decency and morality" (CWP, NCW, 12). By calling on the state to impose restrictions on television, the petition relied on Article 19(2) in the Indian Constitution, which states:

Nothing in sub-clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interests of [the sovereignty and integrity of India], the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality.

This clause was called to attention because the NCW recognized that it was difficult to police satellite channels; therefore, in the interest of "decency and morality" reasonable restrictions must be imposed on the right to freedom of speech and expression. Further, NCW reminded the court that the Cable Act of 1995 authorized a government officer "not below the rank of Group 'A'" to prohibit any program it deemed "obscene."

In an effort to further bolster their claim, the NCW attached a letter to the petition that was addressed to the prime minister and signed by ten prominent women's organizations, including the All India Democratic Women's Association, the All India Women's Conference, and the Center for Women's Development Studies. It stated:

We are already witnessing a massive explosion in sex related crimes and a break up of traditionally valued social norms in the

face of “modernization” fueled by provocative and permissive TV programmes and advertisements in a number of channels, including Doordarshan’s Metro, and also trends in the print media ... The erosion of citizen’s inner ecology and the contamination of all public and private space that is taking place through powerful, perverse forces capitalizing sex for commercial gain cuts at the very root of the most sacred in human relationship ... and is an affront to women’s dignity. (CWP, NCW, annexure C)

The letter by the women’s organizations sought to support the claim of the court cases that indecent representation of women on television was contributing to the “break up of traditionally valued social norms.” They understood women’s sexuality solely as indecent and as a contributor to the breakup of social norms. Specific parameters of decency or a more subtle understanding of sexuality and sexual representation was written out of the discourse. This, then, becomes what Judith Butler calls the “domain of the sayable” within which these particular women’s organizations were understood as speaking in the best interests of all women and thus their definition of indecent representation of women became valid and justified (1997, 128).

The Hindu Right took advantage of this domain of the sayable — that is, the concern for the breakup of traditional social values — and used it to justify a series of political maneuvers meant to safeguard social values. However, the social values defined by the Hindu Right have entailed extremely conservative positions for women informed by discourses of threat and contamination. For the Hindu Right, threat and contamination came not only from the “West” but also from Muslim men’s lust for Hindu women. They used this vocabulary of threat to justify a series of violent campaigns and restrictive laws.³¹

The Center for Feminist Legal Research’s intervention entered this domain on a particular axis challenging the link the petitions made between vulgarity on the screen and sexual violence against women in the public. CFLR claimed that such a direct link leaves no room for oppositional or alternative readings of representation. Furthermore, they claimed that, while the petition reiterates a direct link between “violence and vulgarity” and violence against women, it absolves responsibility of those perpetuating the violence against women on grounds of being “influenced by the visual medium.” CFLR points out that “the danger of this image-blaming position is that it provides a grounds for the mitigation of sentences for rapists as has been the case in India.”³² CFLR used the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression in an effort to caution against stringent censorship measures that threatened to control women’s representation in

the popular visual medium. However, the last petition filed by the NCW used the same constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression to confer on the state the right to censor representational practices. In the concluding section that follows, I examine the implications of using juridical discourses to define and constrain women's representation as well as attempts like CFLR's to defend women's right to expression.

The State and Organized Civil Society: Censorship and Structure

The court cases examined here highlight aspects of the debate that already existed in broader public spheres. Iterations of concern that the petitions raised had multiple forums for address — newspapers, public debates, research studies, conferences etc. In each of these forums, with different visual archives in debate, the issues coalesced around censorship, on the one hand, and the right to free expression, on the other. The difference with the petitions filed in the Delhi High Court is that they used particular structural positions. In this instance, organized groups used the structure of the legal apparatus to instruct the state to institute censorship measures.

In this concluding section, I consider the implications of censorship. Who demands it? On what grounds? And what is evoked as justification? Additionally, I examine the structures within which the debate on censorship occurs; that is, the state, the law, and the globalizing nation-state.

Women's organizations, such as Media Advocacy Group, that are concerned with violence and obscenity on television claim that they do not endorse censorship; rather, their attempt is to lobby for sustained and consistent gender approaches in mass media. Therefore, within the parameters of debate set up by law, these organizations ask for "reasonable restrictions" on the visual medium in deference to what is considered a "nascent republic."

Because the debate on censorship occurred in the court, its parameters were restricted by judicial discourses. In response to censorship debates that have occurred in the United States, Judith Butler suggests that, rather than defining censorship as a method of constraining speech, it be understood as a way in which speech is produced, the creation of the "domain of the sayable" (1997, 128). She says, "The question is not what I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I will begin to speak at all" (133). The domain of the "sayable" draws attention to the pervasive ways in which speech and action constantly mediate power and structure. Thus, all speech and imagination is created from particular structural, political, and ideological positions. By default then, everything, it can be argued, is censored. For instance the programs on STAR TV or Zee TV are not neutral or innocent, that is, without power. If anything,

their profit agenda is clear in the alliance between advertisers and the programs shown on their networks.

Therefore, what is critical about censorship is understanding which structures create the “domain of the sayable.” That is, under what conditions are arguments for censorship valid and by whom? In this context my concern is not whether the court cases were won or not but rather the discourse of the court cases within which meanings became fixed. In each of the cases, the petitioners ask for effective means of censoring representation of women. However, if we understand censorship in terms of what Butler suggests “as a way of producing speech, constraining in advance what will and will not become acceptable speech, then it cannot be understood exclusively in terms of juridical power” (1997, 128). The discourses of censorship were produced during a period of rapid social, economic, and political transformation and a heightened sense of anxiety. Within this context, censorship came to be understood as the legitimate and effective manner with which to deal with the unfamiliar, the outside, and the foreign.

The petitions built a case for the alliance between the state and organized women’s groups. The ability to make their argument and be heard not in one but in three different cases points to the particular legitimacy that women’s groups enjoy. Tejaswini Niranjana argues that when women’s organizations protest visual imagery, it is assumed that they are coming from a moral standpoint, one that is “natural and normal” (1996, 24). In order to highlight the immediate legitimacy that women’s organizations are given, she contrasts it against a minority community such as Muslims. She writes:

Women — and gender-justice — are part of the story of the modern Indian nation in a way that Muslims are not. The struggle for women’s rights is rooted in a kind of nationalist struggle which sees itself as secular, in which there is no place for the assertion of particular identities based on caste or community. (ibid.)

In fact, the resonance of the petitions lay in their appeal to all women irrespective of caste, class, or community. It is this domain of appeal to Indian women as a whole that structures the validity of these petitions.

It is through the creation of an appeal for “all women” in general that such constructions solidify an image of the gendered citizen. This citizen, as we saw in the last chapter, is constituted as the “new woman” in “new India” — a modern woman who is able to balance rapid modernity from the “West” with deep-rooted Indian tradition. This gendered citizen, though marked by class and caste status, is still an aspirational figure

who can, and is, allowed to represent all women in India. It is the image of these women that resolves the precarious balance between tradition and modernity that the women's organizations sought to protect. It is this visual discourse of tradition and modernity played out in film, television, billboards, and advertisements that became the battleground. Thus the call to censor obscene and vulgar imagery was an effort to curtail Western cultural influence understood as excess modernity.

Therefore, it was critical for the three petitions to appeal to the state to institute measures of control. This was strategic in several ways. First, only the state could structurally impose any restrictions. Second, the state has a moral and legal obligation to protect women's constitutional rights, which is what makes it strategically important to have a statutory body such as the National Commission for Women as one of the petitioners in the cases. However, this appeal to the law and to the state is based on the assumption that both are neutral and asexual bodies. Wendy Brown, for instance, questions whether the state can be an arena for feminist political change (1992, 8). Furthermore, the discourse within law introduced by the petitions did not critically constitute or define what is indecent or what, and whose, social values would be threatened. Resolution of the problem was achieved by simply banning or deleting the images and programs. Censorship thus becomes an easy solution for the state to resolve issues of concern without really committing to structural change. Furthermore, those who have critiqued television programs that focused on "progressive" images of women have themselves reverted to the problematic stereotype that upper class and upper caste women are representative of all women (Dhanraj 1994). These programs, meanwhile, have not been the subject of censorship. As a consequence of the debate on censorship being locked within judicial discourses, issues of how modernity and tradition are being constituted remain outside of the debate. I suggest that the Hindu Right took advantage of this silence to fill tradition and modernity with meanings and implications that reflect conservative positions for women within the nation-state.

Conclusion

This chapter examined court cases that sought to impose restrictions on the representation of women in the visual archive. The court cases are emblematic of the concern with transgressive sexualities in a globalizing nation. Consequently, each petition conflates the threat of women's sexual transgression with the threat to the sanctity of the nation's borders; this re-inscribes women as symbolic signifiers of the nation. The petition's appeals and claims were based on concern for all women in India, thereby

creating a reified category absent of the structures through which gender is lived and navigated. The court cases illustrate the creation of an alliance between organized civil society and the state, through which hegemonic notions of sexuality and gender are embedded within what Davina Cooper (1995) calls the state's "technologies of power."

The issues and concerns that emerge in the court cases are illustrative of the discursive and material changes of India in the early 1990s. The dramatic political and economic changes in conjunction with the rise of the Hindu Right coalesce around a discourse of anxiety articulated by the middle classes. In the next chapter, the state assumes a very different posture, using the spectacle of the 1996 Miss World Pageant to showcase India to the world. It is here that the anxieties apparent in the court cases began to coalesce and find expression through groups ranging from progressive women's organizations to the Hindu Right. In the court cases we find the opening of a space where the Hindu Right can assert itself. During the pageant controversy, the rhetoric of obscenity raised by progressive women's organizations overlapped with that of the Hindu Right.

Showcasing India

Sexuality and the Nation in the 1996 Miss World Pageant

Introduction

On a cool late November evening in Bangalore, India — a city held under siege by a 12,500-strong security contingent — Irene Skliva from Greece was crowned Miss World 1996. Since August of 1996, when it was announced that India would host the Miss World Pageant, controversy and debate had surrounded the issue. Members of political parties and national and local women’s organizations, farmers, students, and trade unions from various parts of the country demonstrated, wrote petitions, filed public interest litigations in court, and threatened to damage the venue of the pageant. Opposition to the pageant revealed a broad spectrum of divergent concerns. There was, for instance, opposition to imperialism, resentment against the retreating role of the state, high inflation, threatened Indian culture, and an anxiety with the “foreign”; all these crystallized in response to the pageant. For the state, however, the pageant provided an international opportunity to “showcase” a new, liberalized India to the world. The pageant, therefore, was a site at which political protest and anxiety with “globalization” as well as the opportunity to showcase India to the world was articulated. It is in this tension between sentiments of proving national worth, on the one hand, and the protests against the pageant, on the other, that I examine the staging of discourses of gender, nation, sexuality, and place in this chapter.

A month prior to the event, the *Times of India*, a major English-language newspaper, ran an advertisement for the pageant that read: “The time has come for the world to see ... what real India is all about, Indian hospitality, Indian culture, Indian beauty, Indian capability.”¹ What is striking about the advertisement is the statement that “real” India — its capability and culture — will be showcased through an international beauty pageant. Recent work on beauty pageants reveals that these events cannot be dismissed as misogynist cultural kitsch; instead, “these contests showcase values, concepts, and behavior that exist at the center of a group’s sense of itself and exhibit values of morality, gender, and place” (Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996, 220). Pageants are spectacles that showcase important ways that gender and sexuality are linked with geography. Whether pageants are performed at the national scale, such as the Miss America Pageant (Banet-Weiser 1999), or as local community events (Wu 1997), they link gender and sexual identity with particular places in remarkably similar ways.

While the pageant itself showcased gender and nation, I am more concerned with the way in which the protests invoked a fidelity to nation and place in response to globalization. There are three analytical tasks with which I engage: first, I explore the way in which the pageant signified globalization in India and became the target of local opposition; second, I trace the politics of opposition and its attempts to redefine the nation in the face of globalization; and third, I reveal the manner in which gender and sexuality became inextricable with imagining contemporary India in the rhetoric of the supporters as well as the opposition to the pageant.

Rather than implicitly endorsing local opposition to globalization, I argue for a critical understanding of the formation of “the local” in the politics of opposition. The pageant provides an excellent empirical opportunity to examine the discursive contours of globalization and local opposition in India. Within anthropology, Akhil Gupta has outlined the need to destabilize and denaturalize the fixity of place, identity, and culture (1997). Drawing on this assessment in combination with geographical literature on space, I critically examine how opposing groups’ ideological and political positions manifest themselves by considering “place” as fixed and bounded.² Toward this effort, then, I examine the ways in which opposition to the pageant used a politics of place, whereby local opposition was spatially manifested as preserving the nation against the intrusive forces of globalization. In so doing, the nation in opposition to globalization rested on deeply problematic constructions of gender and sexuality. First, women’s bodies and sexuality became the material and discursive sites where the nation was performed, values were contested, and borders and boundaries were policed and controlled (Parker et al., 1992; Banet-Weiser 1999).

Second, the nation's resistance to globalization was structured on, and through, maintaining oppressive gender and sexual codes. Such oppositional praxis alerts us to the ways in which some structures may "borrow" from each other, at times across different scales, to perpetuate structures that are oppressive to women (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). Finally, the formulation of such oppositional praxis reinforced the idea that spaces such as the nation or the global are discrete and fixed "places" rather than persistently dynamic and mutable "ideas."

I begin with a brief outline of the analytical category of globalization and suggest the way the pageant was considered iconic of globalization in India. Next, I outline the rhetoric used by the organizers and the state to support the pageant primarily as a vehicle to showcase the "new" India to the world. It is here that the nation is reconstructed primarily as Hindu and gendered in terms of masculine capability and feminine compassion. If the support of the pageant sought to create a fixed identity of the nation in globalization, in the opposition to the pageant that effort was even more evident. In this section I examine the opposition stemming from those allied with feminist and other progressive groups and those allied with the Hindu nationalists. Finally, I dismantle the fixed notion of place and nation that emerged in the rhetoric of the supporters and the opposition. I argue that this fixed notion had to do with a concern for belonging and with an attempt to fortify against border crossings, which is indicative of an anxiety with sexual transgression in globalization. I suggest that a more nuanced understanding of geography and globalization will open opportunities for oppositional politics that preclude considering place and position as fixed and immutable and local resistance as always subversive.

Globalization and the Pageant

We live in a world where everyone seems to be watching satellite television and drinking Coke; it is also a world where making, claiming, and maintaining local identity and culture is increasingly important.

—Colleen Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje (1996, 2)

In this chapter, I consider globalization in terms of the ways in which place is reconfigured. This is not to suggest that globalization is a one-way process whereby the global "creates" the local, precluding its converse (the local creating the global).³ Instead, I consider globalization as the dynamic reorganization of borders and boundaries from the most local and intimate scale of the body to that of the global. In the reorganization

of these borders, previously established boundaries are challenged, and the politics around public spectacles such as the pageant afford the possibility of opening new and perhaps more emancipatory spaces of political expression. My focus here is on the assertion of place in response to globalization. In my analysis, I examine place in terms of the scales of the body and the nation, and I look at how these borders overlap and signify each other. Place is materially and discursively established through the assertion of identity and sovereignty that seeks to protect the nation against the outside. The pageant provides a venue where the discursive contours of the attempts to secure place by those on the right and the left of the political spectrum are discerned.

The factors that led the pageant to be an icon of globalization in contemporary India arose from the intersection of complex political, economic, and cultural changes. As I outlined in chapter 1, these changes began roughly in the mid-1970s with a series of economic liberalization policies that led up to globalization in the early 1990s. The distinction between a period of economic liberalization and one of globalization is somewhat arbitrary, since globalization in India can be traced back to the beginning of India's history of trade with various parts of the world. I base the difference between the two on the emphasis in the early 1990s on "marketing" India as an important global destination for foreign investment versus the domestic liberalization policies of the 1970s and 80s that set the precedent for the changes initiated in 1991.

With the liberalizing economy, foreign investment was lured by India's burgeoning middle classes. As multinational companies entered the country, the urban landscape bore the marks of an opening economy. Retail outlets replaced local brand names with multinational merchandise; across cities, billboards advertised Citibank and Levi's jeans, while walls and store shutters were painted over with Coca-Cola and Pepsi logos. These coveted "foreign-made" goods fed growing middle class aspirations of upward mobility and success. The commercial landscape was supplemented by advertisements, television programs, and magazines that saturated the public sphere with images, attitudes, and lifestyles celebrating consumption.

Purnima Mankekar says valorizing consumerism was based on "the premise that India could become a modern nation when its citizens acquired middle-class lifestyles through the acquisition of consumer goods" (1999, 74). Middle class consumption patterns became symbolic of India's modernity⁴ and came to articulate a discourse of national status and worth. This investment in India's status in the world is a particularly, though by no means exclusively, middle class predilection whose tentacles reach back to colonial emasculation that generated a form of effacement

that now demands visibility.⁵ This is why when Indian beauty queens win international beauty contests they are celebrated as national heroes — patriots who bring pride to the country in the international arena.⁶

Five years after the celebration with which the reforms were initiated, the aura of liberalization had begun to tarnish, revealing beneath it growing poverty and high inflation (Sen 1996). The 1995–96 Alternative Economy Survey reported that rural poverty increased steadily, from 35.04 percent in 1990–91 to approximately 44 percent in 1993–94; in actual numbers, those constituting the rural poor increased from 230 million in 1987–88 to 245 million by 1993–94 (Ghosh 1996). In addition, the reforms did little to change the rate of inflation, which remained at 10.6 percent from 1991–95 (Upadhyay 1996). Concomitant with the negative impact on the poor, the reforms had not materially translated — for the vast majority of the middle classes — into the alluring consumerist lifestyle that had been advertised. Stark income disparities and the retreat of the state from public expenditure on social services began to generate anxiety with political and economic stability by the mid-1990s.

The concern and criticism of the Congress Party regime's economic policies provided an opportune opening for the Hindu Right to generate political sympathy. In their critique of the economic reforms, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the Congress government of opening the "Indian economic womb to the West" (quoted in Hansen 2004a, 303). The use of the gendered trope is deliberate and based on the Hindutva ideological belief that Hindu sons must protect the vulnerable motherland from foreign contamination. Efforts to protect the motherland focused on a form of economic nationalism or *Swadeshi*. Launched as a critique to privatization, some of the more well-known Swadeshi campaigns have targeted big multinationals such as Coca-Cola and the US-based energy giant, Enron. Swadeshi discourse is extremely critical of globalization and privatization. It resists multinationals and campaigns the government to protect small businesses. These campaigns were organized by *Swadeshi Jagran Manch* (Swadeshi Awakening Organization), which in 1994 published a document entitled *Swadeshi View of Globalization* that discursively slips between an anti-imperialist discourse, echoing the Left, and Hindutva rhetoric on national sovereignty (Krishna 1994).

While Swadeshi Jagran Manch is part of the larger *Sangh Parivar* (family of organizations) — particularly in their ideological commitment to Hindutva — they nevertheless have differed with BJP, the organization's political wing, regarding Swadeshi strategy. Political exigencies of nationalist politics make BJP claim that Swadeshi is not against globalization; rather, according to Yashwant Sinha, the former finance minister, "Swadeshi is

pro-globalization because it is pro-Indian without being anti-foreign” (Keshavan 1998). The convoluted argument attempts to balance BJP’s voter base among the middle classes, who are invested in consumerist globalization, with nationalist protectionist rhetoric.⁷ Thus, Swadeshi, in BJP’s terms, is protectionist in rhetoric while liberal in policy.⁸

There are differences, however, between BJP’s liberal Swadeshi policy and the views of other members of the Sangh Parivar who consider foreign presence to foster hedonistic consumerism. The discourse of Swadeshi articulated by the latter groups is particularly significant because at times, its critique of liberalization closely resembles that of the political Left. For instance, in 1993–94, members of the Sangh launched a stringent critique of the “Dunkel Draft,” which outlined GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) reforms.⁹ The concerns of the Sangh were similar to those raised by the Left, who were also demanding job security and accountability by the state (Hansen 2004a, 304). In response to the Dunkel Draft, the Sangh warned that the WTO and the World Bank “were instruments to capture the resources and markets of the third world and hand them over to the super powers” (Hansen 2004a, 305).

As I show later in this chapter, this proximity in positions emerges again between the Hindu Right and the progressive and left coalitions in their opposition to pageant. With the discourse of Swadeshi, I suggest, the Hindu Right was able to tap into anxieties of economic instability, while at the same time affecting a rhetorical slide whereby the concern with economic sovereignty also carried over to cultural sovereignty. If the country’s borders were threatened by multinationals, then patriotism demanded that the borders be made secure against economic and cultural forms of intrusion.

Campaigns for Swadeshi were paralleled by campaigns against cultural “invasion” (for details, see chapters 2 and 3). Dress codes and bans on performances, songs, and advertisements deemed to threaten “Indian (Hindu) culture” were part of securing the nation against the outside. The further the forces of neoliberal reform opened the economy to globalization, the more stridently the Right attempted to secure cultural integrity. As Kumkum Sangari succinctly notes, “The surrender of economic sovereignty, the decline in relative autonomy of the nation-state, and the attenuation of democracy stand in inverse and compensatory relation to the rise in the pretentious culturalism of the present [Hindutva] regime” (2004, 158).

It is in the political economic context of the rise of Hindutva politics, the retreat of the state from social responsibility, middle class consumerism, Swadeshi, and cultural protectionism that the responses to the Miss World Pageant need to be understood. High inflation, increasing rural poverty,

and the rise of the Hindu Right combined with images of *Baywatch*, cellular phones, and Citibank billboards to create a fractured and dislocated image of a globalizing nation. Consumers and activist groups were faced with the question: “To whom should [we] address [our] protests?” (Butalia and Chakravarti 1996). Oppositional praxis was frustrated, on the one hand, by the state’s retreating role and, on the other, by often inaccessible corporate owners. It is within this context that the pageant became a viable target for opposition to globalization, because the event made visible the alliance between the state and domestic and global capital. Measures such as providing financial assistance for tourist attractions rather than infrastructure and providing extensive police protection for the pageant visibly reinforced state alliances with corporate capital. Because of the visibility of such alliances and the specific companies that sponsored the event, it was possible to name and identify the companies and people responsible for the pageant. The ability to name and identify was significant, because it made it possible to implicate particular people and power relationships in the social and discursive critique of the pageant.

Despite the fact the protestors held divergent political positions, the rhetoric of opposition to the Miss World Pageant was articulated in remarkably similar ways by both the right-wing and progressive coalitions. For each group, particular representations of women’s bodies and sexualities were understood as a threat to the integrity of the nation’s borders. In some of the Hindu Right’s opposition to the pageant, the perceived threat to borders resulted in efforts to protect Indian culture and tradition. For the progressive women’s groups, the pageant signified the threat of the re-entrenchment of imperialism in the country. Significantly, for both groups this concern with borders was gendered and sexualized. For the Hindu Right, the threat was expressed in terms of rampant, transgressive women’s sexuality and body exposure, while for the Left the concern was with the commodification of women’s bodies and the spread of sex trade. In both cases, the borders of the nation were symbolized through women’s bodies. Instances such as the pageant, therefore, allow us to understand how globalization was negotiated and contested and the manner in which borders were constantly recreated and policed at the scale of the gendered and sexualized body.

Showcasing India: the State, ABCL, and the Miss World Organization

For the state, the managers, and the sponsors, the opportunity to showcase India to the world through the pageant crystallized multiple agendas. For each, the opportunity was saturated with the promise of a worldwide audience. The collaboration between the managers of the event, the state,

and domestic capital was thus forged to safeguard this opportunity. For instance, Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited (ABCL), the Indian event managers of the pageant, claimed: “The pageant will showcase India and will provide a tremendous opportunity for Indian tourism, as a global audience of nearly 3 billion will watch this show.”¹⁰ For Godrej, the corporation that was the official domestic sponsor of the event, the pageant was an advertising opportunity to expand its large domestic market beyond India’s borders. Meanwhile, for the state, the pageant would help put Karnataka on the global tourist map. The chief minister of Karnataka justified the pageant by claiming it would “elevate the spirit of Indian women,” adding that the pageant would be like a traditional Indian *mela* (a carnival or fair) and that it should be viewed as an international *mela* where “there will be buyers and sellers” (Menon 1996).

The pageant served as a televisual exhibit for a worldwide audience of 2.3 billion. It was carefully marketed as an opportunity for India to be “exhibited” on the world stage — to be viewed and experienced from afar (Mitchell 1989, 220). In a telling instance, Julia Morley, the managing director of the Miss World organization, stated that the pageant allowed the opportunity for “many people to know about Indian women. And I think that it’s good that people have been able to get to know the Indian woman *without visiting*.”¹¹ As with exhibitions, the pageant allowed spectators to view India from a distance, “without visiting”; it provided a pre-packaged India, ready to be consumed.

Gender and sexuality occupied a carefully balanced position in the language of the pageant; on the one hand there was the veiled eroticism of viewing India without visiting, while on the other, the participant’s sexual codes were held in check through traditional displays of femininity and compassion. The discourses of the political and economic opportunities that the pageant would generate were able to balance a particular tension between the erotic possibilities of exoticized land and geography and strictly controlled displays of the respectable sexuality of the participants within its borders.¹²

The idea of “showcasing India” generated strong expressions of masculine capability. For instance, Amitabh Bachchan, the chief executive officer of ABCL, claimed, “I wanted to prove that an Indian show can be a world class event ... I’ve heard so many people treating India as a backward country that I wanted to prove them wrong ... They will realize that we can do it better than a Western country” (quoted in Sanghvi 1996).¹³ The opportunity to prove Indian capability through the international pageant tapped into a particularly middle and upper class discourse on India’s worth in the global arena.¹⁴ Articulating the reasons for hosting the

pageant in terms of Indian capability, Bachchan sought the endorsement of the middle and upper classes for the event.

The pageant sought to construct India as a modern, economically liberalized nation. These representational efforts were attentive to the shift in the balance of power in the post-Cold War era and therefore took great pains to demonstrate a nation that determined its own modernity. The selection of the venue of the pageant — Bangalore — was crucial for these efforts. As a modern metropolis that did not show the scars of the communal riots from a few years earlier, Bangalore — which exports thousands of software engineers all over the world — claimed to be India's Silicon Valley. Therefore, because it was strategically removed from associations with the communal riots that could have marked the nation as “primitive” and “third world,” Bangalore's burgeoning computer industry was used as an icon of modern India.

However, the pageant's promoters did not want modernity in India to be confused with Westernization and a loss of tradition. A demonstration of this desire for balance was achieved through an extravagantly designed stage for the main pageant and worldwide telecast. The stage, designed to reflect India's ancient culture, drew on architectural motifs of traditional temples and caves. Additionally, the theme of the pageant, “Kanyakumari to Kashmir,” was crafted to show India's cultural diversity and, according to an official press release, sought to “project unity amidst diversity to remind the people of mother Earth that all human beings belong to one big global family.”¹⁵

According to Liisa Malkki, international spectacles such as the Miss World Pageant and Olympic games serve as ceremonial arenas for nations to take their place among the “family of nations” (1994, 50). Therefore, internationalisms, in essence, are not about a dissolving of national borders toward the larger goal of a unified humanity but about recognition of the nation in the international, thus reinforcing particularly nationalist paradigms in the global era. Within the international arena of the pageant, therefore, India was out to prove not only masculine capability but also to display feminine compassion. To this end, the pageant was advertised as “beauty with a purpose.” In India, the pageant would raise money to be shared by the Spastics Society of Karnataka and the Variety Club International. Both agencies raise funds to help children. ABCL organized a children's party for the eighty-eight international contestants in “a ... function ... commemorating the concern for the child who is not normal.”¹⁶ Giving contestants the task of raising money for children highlighted the assumption of an implicit connection between women and children. The contestants also boasted about their natural compassion for children

— an image that served to contain their sexuality within respectable boundaries.

In her discussion of international beauty pageants, Sarah Banet-Weiser comments on the way in which contestants are linked with geography (1999). Each contestant embodies an exotic locale worth visiting, particularly with reference to third world countries. As the host country, India displayed its cultural diversity in the encompassing theme “Kanyakumari to Kashmir” — the span of the nation, peppered with exotic tourist destinations. The portrayal of a unified geography, however, erased the landscape of conflict, so that borderlands such as Kashmir were co-opted within the universal theme of the pageant — “peace on Earth, and belonging to one big global family.” Furthermore, the unified rhetoric erased minority groups from India and thus crafted the country as primarily Hindu. In one particularly telling instance, during an interview with the stage designer Sabu Cyril, I asked whether the ancient Indian motifs used for the set design also included those from Mughal architecture.¹⁷ In reply, he claimed that “Mughal was not part of Indian culture.” Cyril’s judgments of what constitutes Indian culture brought into focus the recent history of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India. Thus, the Indian dance forms and the stage design showed a markedly Hindu India and did not acknowledge Muslim influence as constitutive of Indian culture.

Reconstructing the nation as Hindu was an attempt to link space with ideology. Satish Deshpande suggests that “successful spatial strategies are able to link, in a durable and ideologically credible way, abstract (imagined) spaces to concrete (physical) spaces” (1998, 250). Conflict and protest around spectacles such as the pageant thus expose how meanings are created that link places, and borders around places, to particular ideologies and identities. In one significant response to the protests surrounding the pageant’s swimwear competition, spaces and the nation’s borders were fortified against obscenity and transgression. The objections to obscenity and vulgarity in the swimwear event, raised primarily by the Hindu Right, resulted in the event being moved outside India’s borders to Seychelles, a small island country in the Indian Ocean. The integrity of Indian borders was therefore maintained and shielded against obscenity. The protests as well as the decision to hold the swimwear event outside India’s borders reinforced a linear logic whereby body exposure is akin to obscenity and, by extension, a threat to the nation. The shift in the location for the event reinforced a linking of conservative gender and body codes with the nation and its borders.

The protests surrounding the pageant resulted in the mobilization of security forces to safeguard the event. It was in this effort, to safeguard

the event, that the alliances between the state and domestic and international capital were most visible. Efforts by the government, for instance, included the allotment of 100 million rupees “to beautify its tourist spots” for the pageant.¹⁸ Financial assistance for the pageant stood in stark relief against prior requests to the central government for infrastructure support in Bangalore. In addition, faced with increasing protests by both the right and the left coalitions, the state mobilized a 12,500-member police force in Bangalore consisting of central paramilitary contingents, including National Security Guard personnel, to safeguard its opportunity to advertise the new India. It was the first time that the Indian police force was mobilized so extensively to protect what was, in essence, a private multinational venture.

The pageant, for its supporters, was a vehicle to showcase liberalized India to the world. For the state, the pageant advertised India as a tourist destination; for ABCL, it served as an opportunity to display Indian capability; and for the corporate sponsors, the pageant aided in the creation of worldwide markets. To create these opportunities, structural alliances between the state and capital were forged, while choreography and set design exhibited India as an exotic tourist destination. For those opposed to the pageant, these multiple registers were the sources of anxieties with globalization.

The Opposition: Cultural Protectionism and Imperial Domination

Feminist theory has destabilized the notion of gender as a stable category. In its place, critical work on gender now reflects on “gender performativity” (Butler 1990). The controversy over the pageant created a space where meaning about gender and sexuality in contemporary India was expressed and debated. Consequently, the pageant was significant for the important political positions about gender and sexuality that emerged from the pageant itself as well as in the protests. While for the organizers and the state the event would showcase India, for the opposition the pageant signified a threat to the nation. The opposition to the pageant emerged from many different political positions, producing a complex discourse on gender and sexuality in contemporary India.

Groups opposing the pageant included students, farmers, unions, the Hindu Right, and a number of women’s organizations that formed a loosely defined progressive coalition. While these groups diverged ideologically and politically on several issues, there were several instances in which the progressive group’s rhetoric came surprisingly close to the views expressed by the Hindu Right. The resultant blurring of boundaries between the progressive coalition and the Hindu Right is indicative of the ways in which

the Right effectively used feminist politics to construct its opposition. It is also indicative of the challenge of formulating a coherent and nuanced critique of the pageant.

Among the various groups that voiced their protest of the pageant, none received as much media attention as the BJP and *Mahila Jagran*, a women's organization allied with the BJP. The BJP's form and articulation of protest, which included threats to destroy the venue of the pageant, self-immolation, strikes, and mass violent demonstrations, resulted in extensive media coverage. According to BJP and Mahila Jagran, the Miss World Pageant was a "show of obscenity" and "against Indian culture." In a large BJP demonstration in Bangalore, placards read, "Stop Miss World Pageant — Save National Honor" and "Big B [Amitabh Bachchan] means bring bad culture to Bharat" (Srikanth 1996).

The progressive women's coalitions, allied with the political Left, categorically distanced themselves from the right-wing arguments and focused their critique of the pageant on imperialism, arguing that the pageant encouraged the entry of multinational corporations into the country. The Center for Indian Trade Union (CITU) voiced a typical position adopted by the political Left: "Selection of India/Bangalore for the Beauty Pageant to select Miss World is nothing but an attempt to smoothen [sic] the entry of Multi Nationals into our country in a big way. It is also an attempt to divert the attention of the toiling people from their real problems adversely affecting their livelihood."¹⁹

A significant difference between the groups that were critical of the pageant was the ways in which their respective political campaigns were organized. Political campaigning and demonstrations by the religious Right gained immediate attention in the media, and the positions adopted by progressive organizations were often left out. Opposition to the pageant consequently was most visibly marked by the Hindu Right with relatively few alternative arguments presented. In the face of the primarily right-wing position visible in the media, progressive and left-allied political organizations sought to present a different opinion and critique of the pageant. For instance, the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), a women's organization allied with the political Left, made a point of claiming: "We do not agree with those who are opposing the contest in the name of 'Indian culture' and 'Indian womanhood.' We reject the notion of any one definition of culture, womanhood, and tradition being imposed on women."²⁰ Instead, AIDWA focused its critique on state expenditure on the pageant and sought to expose to public scrutiny the state's priorities and its alliance with global and domestic capital.

However, in the strategic rejection of the Hindu Right wing's version of culture, progressive groups relinquished the issue of culture altogether, so that the only opinion about culture that was visible was the conservative one. In the context of rapid political, economic, and cultural changes, about which there already existed concern with the corrupting impact of the media, the Hindu Right effectively mobilized sympathy for its concern for threatened Indian culture. Moreover, indigenous notions of sexuality that draw on a rich tradition of myth and legend remained silent in the opposition's discourses, so that it became easier for the right wing to claim that any discourse on sexuality was other, foreign, and not within the parameters of what is considered Indian culture.

A significant distinction between political parties affiliated with the Hindu Right, such as BJP, and those that distanced themselves from the Right was the way in which they framed gender and body politics in their arguments.²¹ For the right wing, such concern was primarily a link between body exposure and the perceived threat to the sanctity of the nation. An extremely vocal right-wing opponent of the pageant, Pramila Nesargi, a BJP Member of the Legislative Assembly in Bangalore, articulated the Hindu Right's position as: "The portions of the body which has to be covered, which women knows which has to be covered, which in the society it should not be shown it should not be meant for public places, and in other words, such portion of the body which will arouse the sensual or the sexual parts of man that must not be shown" (quoted in Menon 1996, 13). Nesargi's statement affords a particular kind of slippage between women's sexuality, body exposure, and femininity, such that "women must know" which parts of their body should be covered so as to not "arouse" men. It prescribes a certain kind of femininity that controls women's bodies and sexuality; this is necessary to temper men's sexuality, which is understood as uncontrollable. So, women's bodies, sexuality, and femininity are intricately woven together, and perceived transgression of any one of them threatens the others and subsequently threatens Indian culture. This is the other slippage evidenced in the BJP's arguments: exposure of certain parts of the female body is a threat to Indian culture and, by extension, to national sovereignty.

Conversely, women's organizations expressed gender and body politics primarily in terms of commodification of women and exploitation by structures of patriarchy and capital. However, in some instances, the rhetoric of some women's organizations mirrored the slippage between women's bodies and sexuality made by the Hindu Right. For instance, the Active Opposition Association, a consortium of six women's organizations in Bangalore, alleged that "the concept of prosperity of tourism through

the exhibition of beautiful bodies is questionable. This is not the prosperity of tourism, instead this is the prosperity of sex trade in the country.”²² Other organizations employed a similar rhetoric, asking: “Do we need to be watched and admired on such issues or as a nation hosting an almost pornographic show for the benefit of a few organizations who want to exploit us for profit?”²³ Such positions assume that the exhibition of women’s bodies will inevitably lead to sex trade in the country; they reveal a slippage between exposure of women’s bodies and the encouragement of “deviant” sexualities, which are a threat to national morality.

Significant similarities in rhetoric between the Hindu Right and the progressive coalitions also occurred because the Right adapted feminist agendas. For instance, most progressive groups that criticized the pageant and its impact were concerned with the commodification of women and the exploitation of women through patriarchy and capital. The Hindu Right used the argument against the commodification of women to suggest that the selling of women’s bodies offended Indian culture. AIDWA based their critique on the claim that “the media attention that they [the pageant’s contestants] receive contributes greatly to the commercialization of social relations and the commodification of women and their bodies that in turn reinforce their subordinate status.”²⁴

In another instance, *Mahila Sangharsha Okkuta*, a consortium of fifteen progressive women’s organizations in Bangalore, linked the pageant with multinational business and the denigration of women, stating that “at the altar of capital, a women’s body is turned into a salable commodity ... It is this market-created fraudulent image of beauty that we resist. An image that is falsely liberating and modern but which in reality pushes women into stereotypical, subordinate roles.”²⁵ Adapting these arguments about the commodification and exploitation of women’s bodies to fit the agenda of the right wing, Nesargi claimed: “In India women are not meant to be sold. Women are not treated as a commodity available for sale in the bazaar. If she sells herself, either her flesh, or body or beauty, she is offending every law in India ... Beauty cannot be sold” (quoted in Menon 1996, 13). The distinction between the two positions was that, for the Right, the commodification of women was an offense against Indian culture, while for the women’s groups the commodification of women was a consequence of capitalist relations of power.

However, political arguments concerning the commodification of women’s bodies needs to be rethought. The problem with this conceptualization (besides its conservative reenactment) is that it rests on the assumption that there are pure spaces outside a commodified realm. This inevitably raises questions: What would the outside of commodification be? Why and how

must women occupy this realm? Furthermore, this “outside” of commodification then allows for the Right to claim quite easily that women must occupy some sanctified, pure realm; this argument is politically dangerous precisely because it easily slips to fit the religious right-wing agenda.

While the political positions adopted by the Hindu Right and the progressive organizations often came close and were at times remarkably similar, a significant arena of difference between them has been their positions on women and work. Historically, women’s paid and unpaid labor has been an important site of political struggle for progressive groups.²⁶ Conversely, the Right has continued to re-create the public/private division, structuring women’s primary responsibility as maintaining the domestic sphere. This reiteration of the inside/outside division has been perpetuated despite the fact that more women are present in public spaces and some occupy prominent political positions in the right-wing political apparatus. Tanika Sarkar points out that, with several women in such prominent positions, more women within the right-wing political movement have mobility in public spaces earlier deemed closed to them. While the inclusion of women in the public space and their agency in the right-wing political movement may be seen as signs of progressive factions within a conservative movement, Sarkar cautions against such claims, stating that the “limited public identity and mobility that has become available to these women is made conditional on their submission to a new form of patriarchy” (1993, 42). Therefore, political organizing has to be attentive not only to what kinds of gender and sexual politics are enabled but also to the structures that enable them.

In the context of the pageant, I am concerned with the particular gender and sexual politics that were sanctioned conditional to new grids of oppression. A particularly interesting instance of such a grid was evidenced when a prominent BJP member of Parliament, Uma Bharti, protested that she was against “Westernization,” not “modernity,” in India. She distinguished modernization from Westernization, saying: “We want women to become doctors, engineers, IAS [Indian Administrative Service] and IPS [Indian Police Service] officers and ministers. But we don’t want them to smoke, drink and adopt Western styles of living.”²⁷ While Bharti’s carefully crafted distinction is emblematic of the crisis perceived in the contemporary moment, attempts to articulate the distinction between modernity and Westernization have historically recurred since the middle of the nineteenth century. Partha Chatterjee, for instance, claims that within the nationalist struggle, the woman question in the middle of the nineteenth century was resolved in the separation of the outside material sphere from the internal spiritual sphere (1989, 237). The inner spiritual

sphere was occupied by women and shielded from the influences of Western colonialism. After independence, India's modernity was conceived by Nehru through "big dams and industries," and toward the latter part of the century this recurs in the vision of his grandson, Rajiv Gandhi, for whom India's modernity was realized through computerization.

Chatterjee argues that this debate on Indian modernity and Westernization recurs because "of the way in which the history of our modernity has been intertwined with the history of colonialism ... We have never quite been able to believe that there exists a universal domain of free discourse, unfettered by differences of race or nationality" (1997b, 275). The recurrence of this debate in contemporary India and through various points in its history is indicative of the persistent desire to craft an Indian modernity.

Anxiety about crafting a specifically Indian modernity is particularly evident in both Nesargi's and Bharti's statements, where modernity is distinguished from Westernization, and this distinction is effected through the intersections of gender, class, and caste. Women are encouraged to join respectable middle class public service professions such as medicine and engineering but not to smoke or drink. Women's participation in waged labor is encouraged, but only as prescribed from within particular parameters through which India's modernity is defined. Thus, while Indian borders must be open to economic investment, Western value systems, seen as corrupting influences, must be policed and even censored. This dichotomy is enacted on women's bodies and representational praxis where women must balance desired modernity against undesirable Western values. For the Hindu Right, then, women are used to define India's modernity but are not active participants in crafting it.

The concern that women will adopt Western styles of living is a ruse used to mask the anxiety related to women's sexuality in liberalized India. The balancing of Westernization versus modernity is present in Bharti's statement that women can embrace modernity by becoming doctors and lawyers but not by smoking or drinking or adopting Western values. Defining "smoking or drinking" as Westernization echoes vamp images in Hindi films from the 1960s and 70s (Mazumdar 1996). The image of the vamp, according to Mazumdar, "was the visible intrusion of the West into the cinematic space of Indian films, signifying an unrestrained sexuality and license, given to vices 'unknown' to 'Indian' women" (1996, 29).

The opposition between Westernization and modernization, therefore, placed regulatory norms about the body and sexuality into public discourse. Smoking and drinking were associated with transgressive sexuality and the contamination by Western cultural influences made possible through globalization. It is through public spectacles such as the pageant

that norms and ideas about sexuality and gender are fixed or, in the words of Butler, “materialized.”²⁸ In place of gender construction, Butler contends that gender is materialized through “a process ... that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (1993, 9). My concern with the fixity of “matter” on the body stems from the ways in which bodies and sexualities then become regulated and prescribed within structures of state, patriarchy, and capital.

Such fixity was evident when the Bangalore High Court ruled in a landmark judgment that the pageant could not be stopped but would be monitored by the Director General of Police for indecent exposure of women. Although the court ruled against the Hindu Right’s petition to have the pageant banned, the judgment nevertheless served to endorse the concern that exposure of women’s bodies constitutes obscenity and indecent exposure and therefore must be policed. The Bangalore High Court ruling consummates the arguments made by the three petitions in the previous chapter. The ruling justifies the link between exposure and indecency and solidify’s the state’s authority to arbitrate on purity and perversion.

Sexuality, Nation, Globalization

Thus far I have argued that the pageant was iconic of globalization in India for those who supported, as well as those who opposed, the event. For the supporters, the pageant provided an international forum from which to advertise India’s capability to stage a world event successfully. The contours of the nation so defined, it was hoped, would draw the world’s attention to the new, “modern” India and secure its future as a world tourist destination. Meanwhile, for the opposition, the pageant was an icon of globalization in India, and it signified a threat. The discourses of the opponents and the supporters of the pageant defined the contours of the nation through women’s bodies and sexuality. From both, there emerged a particular politics of place that accorded primacy to the nation in globalization and, in so doing, asserted boundaries that were deeply problematic for gender and sexual politics in India. In this concluding section, I argue that gender and sexual politics warrant a more nuanced understanding of the politics of place that precludes automatic endorsement of local opposition to globalization.

Politics of place is critical to formulate oppositional praxis. That is, oppositional praxis locates itself in some place defined through an ideological, political, and geographical grid. According to Stuart Hall, “the rediscovery of place, a past, of one’s roots, of one’s context, [is] a necessary moment of enunciation” (1997, 36). He adds, “I do not think the margins could speak up without first grounding themselves somewhere” (ibid).

The opponents of the pageant grounded their critique in the nation. Their attempt re-established the contours of the nation in a period when the sanctity of the boundaries was perceived to be under threat. The Hindu Right and the progressive coalition therefore constructed their opposition to the pageant by arguing for the autonomy of the nation. Within the framework of globalization, then, local opposition was formulated as the nation fighting against globalization. However, for the two groups, the nation as “local opposition” signified different things.

For the Hindu Right, the pageant afforded the public a chance to articulate a national Hindu identity in a period of change. Women’s bodies became the trope of “mother India,” who had to be protected against the contaminating influences of globalization. For members of the progressive coalition, it was more complicated. They articulated the nation-state as their place of opposition because, to them, the pageant symbolized the imperialist power of globalization. Their concern with globalization was with the dissolution of the nation-state’s power; consequently, their opposition attempted to reassert the responsibility of the nation-state. The progressive coalition’s political opposition recognized the impossibility of doing away with the nation in globalization; they thus acknowledged that the jurisdiction of the state is the only structural unit of power still remaining with whom they could negotiate issues of rights and responsibility. In her interrogation of the state, Sunder Rajan acknowledges that “the state in India continues to have a central directive role in social and economic issues and that, consequently, political struggle is most usefully directed at the state to make it accountable in these matters” (2003, 7). Consequently, much of the opposition to the pageant focused on the funds allocated to the pageant by the federal and state governments and the deployment of security personnel.

The structure of their position, however, was predicated on the following linear argument: the pageant symbolized globalization, which encouraged imperialism, resulting in the commodification of women and the encouragement of sex trade. Within this structure, opposition to commodification and sex trade entailed implementing structural measures prohibiting events, images, and representational praxis deemed to commodify women. Since only the state has the jurisdiction to implement these measures, the progressive coalitions sought to draw the state’s attention to its responsibility toward women. Thus, unlike the Hindu Right-wing — for whom women were symbolic signifiers of the nation and therefore must be protected and policed — the progressive coalition opposed the structures of patriarchy and imperialism.

The different ways the Hindu Right and the progressive coalition linked gender with the nation-state emerged from different critiques. For the right-wing and progressive coalitions, clearly, there are both structural and discursive ways in which gender and the nation-state were linked. However, the difference I want to highlight is the way in which the opposing groups constructed their critique of globalization by connecting gender with the nation-state.

For political organizing, the position of gender prompts the question: Can radical feminist politics emerge from within nationalist discourses? Why, for instance, do both right and progressive political parties critique the pageant at the site of women's bodies and sexuality? My attempt here is not to suggest that radical feminist politics is realizable only by "wishing away" the nation.²⁹ Rather, my aim is to point out that our efforts to rethink contemporary feminist politics and praxis attempt a reworking of their imbrication within the nation-state. Such rethinking is possible through a critical look at the politics of place as played out in the opposition to the pageant. Two threads of argument follow: first, opposition to the pageant and, by extension, opposition to globalization rested on the identity of the nation as conceived in terms of desexualized womanhood. Second, this construction sets up the nation in opposition to globalization as a fixed and bounded sphere of power.

While beauty pageants clearly reinforce traditional and limited notions of sexuality and gender that, in turn, reinforce the cosmetics industry's reliance on narrow heterosexual notions of beauty, these criticisms do not account for their continued popularity or, as Mary John points out, "the aspirations and anxieties symptomatic of the desire for beauty" (1998, 375). In India, beauty pageants have gained immense popularity in the past few years. Pageants occur in schools, at community events, and as part of inter-collegiate competitions and quite successfully link beauty and femininity with group identity. This is even more evident in international beauty pageants, where each woman is representative of a nation. For instance, Rhenuma Dilruba, the Miss World contestant from Bangladesh, stated, "I was chosen from among 1,000-odd women in Bangladesh. This is to prove how liberal we are."³⁰ Through her participation as a representative of Bangladesh, she embodied, quite literally, national qualities of liberalism. In another interesting instance, Joan Rani Jeyraj, who is of Indian parentage but was born and brought up in Zambia and had recently decided to live in India, claimed, "I think I'm representative of India because I made a choice to make it my home."³¹ Representing her nation on an international stage, for Jeyraj, generates strong sentiments anchored in a complex frame of justifications and desires.

Responding to the opposition's criticism that the women who participated in the pageant were exploited, Jeyraj contended: "I do not think that the women here feel exploited. I do not think that 88 countries could have forced the women to come here. It was each one's individual choice to come here."³² The discourse of individual choice and freedom to participate forcefully asserts the agency of the eighty-eight contestants. Jeyraj attempts to counter the argument that the contestants' willingness to participate simply indicates the extent to which they have absorbed the ideas of the beauty industry. However, she simultaneously suggests that freedom and choice are unmediated by social structures and constraints. Jeyraj's comments are also mediated by the larger discourse of events such as international beauty pageants that all contestants participate in a fair contest where each is given equal consideration regardless of race and particular standards of beauty. In the 1996 Miss World Pageant, however, the fairness of competition was questioned by some of the contestants from African nations, who alleged that the Indian media paid them little attention compared with the other participants. For instance, Miss Tanzania claimed: "The Indian Press has totally ignored us (black Africans) from the day we have landed in your country. Just about everyone in the press is paying attention only to the whites."³³ Structures of racism thus are ignored in the discourse of "free and fair" participation. This challenges the "willingness to participate" discourse of the pageant by highlighting that not all contestants occupy the position of a participant within the structure of the pageant in the same way.

These dual conceptions force us to understand the contestants' willingness to participate "as neither complete victims nor entirely free agents" (Banet-Weiser 1999, 23). The opposition, however, predicated its arguments on considering the eighty-eight contestants of the pageant as victims erased of autonomy over their bodies and sexuality. This was a critical facet of the opponents' positions because it allowed the argument that women's bodies and sexuality must be controlled in public. For instance, in her response to the question about what rights women should have over their own bodies and sexuality, Nesargi, of the Hindu right-wing BJP, claimed that a woman is free to use her body "at her home. Free to do [what she likes] within the four walls ... free to do [what she likes] in her bedroom. Not before the public where youngsters are there, young children are there, where [her behavior] ... will have an impact on the minds [of the] weaker section of the society."³⁴ The progressive coalition asserted that the representation of women's bodies and sexuality in public encouraged prostitution and commodified women. For both the right wing and the progressive coalition, there is a direct link between the representation of women's bodies and

sexuality and its “effect,” and consequently there is an assumption that reception of images and representations is unmediated by discursive practices and structures and open to multiple interpretive frames.

Therefore, women’s engagement with desire and pleasure during the pageant was left out of the discourse of the opposition. Instead, a desexualized Indian womanhood became emblematic of the nation and was an effective icon to protect the nation against globalization (John 1998, 373). A desexualized iconic figure does not threaten the nation with sexual transgression. This desexualized narrative was most particularly evidenced in the rhetoric of the Hindu Right, which held that women’s modernity is acceptable but that Westernization, because it was symbolic of uncontrolled sexuality, was not. Conversely, while the progressive coalitions were critical of the conceptions of womanhood adopted by the Right, they too did not consider women’s agency and sexuality. In turn, the primary arguments about women’s sexuality concerned commodification and the threat of sex trade. In effect, then, for the progressive coalition, women remained desexualized. By fashioning resistance to globalization in terms of desexualized icons and symbols, the Right affected a slide whereby resistance was predicated on erasing women’s autonomy over their bodies and sexualities.

The construction of resistance at any level that is contained by, or predicated on, structures of oppression or suppression at other levels is problematic from the start. Equally problematic are the assumptions of political hierarchy whereby gender and sexual politics are put on hold *in favor of* the priority of local resistance to the overarching force of globalization. The underlying assumption here is that gender and sexuality can be put on hold or that gender and sexuality are not already constitutive of globalization and of local resistance. The political hierarchy in this context, then, is a ruse used for denying agency to gender and sexuality. These issues have been raised in the context of the struggles for women’s rights and the structural place of the women’s movement within nationalism (McClintock 1997). Therefore, conceptually progressive politics, when it is framed in terms of local resistance to globalization but is still dependent on adherence to hegemonic structural positions within a “new” patriarchy, is politically dangerous and theoretically precarious.

My second thread of argument entails examining geography and the politics of location that was played out in the opposition to the pageant. Events like the pageant have significance because they allow the public to deepen the contours of national imaginings and to augment notions of homogenous identity. The possibility of imagining the nation, according to Gupta, “involves the creation of a new order of difference, a new alignment of ‘self’ in relation to ‘other’” (1997, 196). This self/other distinction

was fundamental to the construction of a politics of opposition. It entailed a dynamic drawing of boundaries that enclosed the nation from the outside influence of globalization. These boundaries of the nation, as I have argued, were predicated on the construction of the nation in terms of desexualized womanhood. In the construction of the self/other distinction, the other is rendered outside the boundaries and is therefore always suspect. For instance, in her study of refugees, Malkki points out that attachment to place is naturalized, while displacement is pathologized (1994). Drawing on this construct, attachment and belonging to a nation is naturalized, whereas borderlands of the nation occupied by those who transgress or are refugees are suspect. It is this construction of the self versus the other that is reminiscent of India's persistent desire to craft its own modernity. Particularly in the perceived threat from globalization, the construction of the nation entails fixing or solidifying identity of the self, of constantly defining boundaries and borders that mark the self/nation from the other/global.

The pageant symbolized a threat to the self, so the defense was based on fortifying the self as the nation against the outside. In so doing, the nation became defined and prescribed through fixed contours. This self/nation–other/global distinction raises the question: Who in the nation feels invaded, and who is protected by fortifying the nation's boundaries?³⁵ Particular structures of class, caste, gender, and sexuality are implicitly assumed to stand for the nation. These structures fix the location of the opposition where other configurations of these structures become erased. Furthermore, the concern with the threat from the other becomes a trope that can be leveled against a multitude of others. Additionally, the concern with perforated boundaries assumes that the boundaries around the nation have not been made and remade throughout history in a process that propels the articulation of multiple modernities. Lastly, the nation/global distinctions are gendered so that the nation is coded as enclosed and feminine while the global is coded as free floating and masculine, mirroring the public/private divide. If we envision a more emancipatory politics of place, rather than viewing the politics of place as the production of fixed locations, we may consider, to use Caren Kaplan's terms, location as an "axis."³⁶ In such a formulation, the nation can be envisioned not as fixed and enclosed but as dynamic and open.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the pageant was considered iconic of globalization by the state and the organizers as well as by the opposition to the pageant. The pageant and the opposition effectively opened to scrutiny the

debate about women's sexuality and autonomy that was taking place in a period of tremendous political and economic change. The concern with rapid change in the country was contained and controlled through a focus on women's bodies and representation. For the opposition, the symbol of desexualized womanhood fortified the nation and effectively secured the borders and boundaries of the nation against sexual transgression. In so doing, the opposition to the pageant refashioned gender and sexuality to fit new forms of patriarchy that were structured to accommodate the concern with the "contaminating" influence of globalization in India.

Politics of opposition fashioned through new forms of oppression, such as in the case of the pageant, are deeply problematic. This framework, I argue, was based on a particular politics of place that viewed the nation as ideologically and symbolically fixed and immutable. The structure of such oppositional praxis forecloses the possibility of considering globalization and the nation as mutually constitutive spaces where location is not fixed but an "axis." Insisting on generating a nuanced politics of place stems from my concern against the assumption of "pure" spaces of agency or oppression on either side of globalization or local opposition. Therefore, public spectacles such as the pageant are important sites of political intervention because they create the possibility of articulating new spatial geographies.

If the pageant articulated a discourse of cultural protectionism, then by the time the BJP was in power in 1998, the right-wing rhetoric surrounding the nuclear tests sought to craft an image of virile nationhood capable of defending itself. Despite the differences between the "beauty and the bomb," their juxtaposition, argues Sangari, offers an "explanation of why the official Hindu Right, which framed the bomb as an antidote to cultural invasion and condemned the beauty contest as cultural invasion, is now as schizophrenic about beauty contests as it is about *Swadeshi*" (2004, 162). The next chapter explores the manner in which cultural sovereignty is deployed in the discourse of masculine heteronormative sexuality as a counterpoint to the loss of political and economic control.

Nuclear Tests and National Virility

Gender and Sexual Politics of Militarization

Millions of Indians have viewed this occasion as the beginning of the rise of a strong and self-confident India. I fully share this assessment and this dream. India has never considered military might as the ultimate measure of national strength. It is a necessary component of overall national strength. I would, therefore, say that the greatest meaning of the tests is that they have given India shakti, they have given India strength, they have given India self-confidence.

Former Bharatiya Janata Party Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in an interview with Prabhu Chawla, Executive Editor of *India Today*, 25 May 1998.

Introduction

The examination of the politics of cultural nationalism in previous chapters focused on the manner in which attempts to preserve sovereignty translated to fortifying gender and sexual boundaries against transgression. In this chapter, I explore more fully some of the nascent issues raised earlier, particularly those concerned with national pride and capability. Here I am concerned with the ways in which these discourses intertwine with masculinity to articulate national capability and status. For instance,

during the Miss World Pageant, efforts by the event managers, Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited, and the state were focused on projecting India's capability in hosting an international event to prove that "we can do it better than a western country" (Sanghvi 1996). In this chapter, I explore the articulation of the nation in globalization and contrast feminized rhetoric of protection, purity, and contamination with masculinized rhetoric of capability, strength, and virility.

Echoing Bachchan's sentiments, former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee claims that India's nuclear weapons capability gives India self-confidence. This chapter is also directed at exploring this discourse of self-confidence and capability in cultural nationalism. Both the pageant and the nuclear tests, suggest Kumkum Sangari, "function as symbols of international acclaim ... supported by relatively mobile sections of the middle class ever anxious to prove 'equality' with the 'west'" (2004, 164). Thus, when on May 11, 1998, India detonated three nuclear devices followed by two more on May 13, this crossing of the nuclear Rubicon was received among wide sections of the Indian public with enthusiasm and celebration.¹ Chandan Mitra, the editor of the English daily *The Pioneer*, wrote in a front-page editorial that the nuclear tests symbolized an "explosion of self-esteem." Despite the retribution sure to come in terms of sanctions and criticisms, Mitra continued, "these were outweighed by what they [the nuclear tests] will do to the nation's self-esteem" (1998).

The nuclear tests were conducted five months after the general elections in which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a new government with an alliance of thirteen regional parties. In its 1998 election manifesto, the BJP stated that it would "re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons."² Soon after forming the government, the BJP kept its electoral promise and detonated nuclear devices in the Pokharan desert in Rajasthan. The show of strength and military prowess has always been a core tenet of Hindu nationalists. Hindutva's nuclear ambitions contrasted with India's earlier position of nonproliferation during Nehru's era; by the 1970s and 1980s, however, nonproliferation gave way to what has been characterized as a position of "ambiguity" (Bidwai and Vanaik, 2001). The 1998 tests were India's second nuclear test; the first was conducted during Indira Gandhi's regime in 1974. Initial response to the 1998 tests was an overwhelming 90 percent endorsement, which quickly faded after the first heady days.³ Yet the popularity of the tests and the saturation of the discourse with terms like "pride," "security," and "global presence" was symptomatic of a political shift that indicated greater receptivity of the Hindu nationalist vision of the country.

Between 1974 and 1998, successive governments were reluctant to conduct tests but were, at the same time, unwilling to consider participating in an international treaty that would foreclose the possibility of India exercising its nuclear option. India's position on nuclear testing began to shift during the controversy surrounding the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in mid-1990. After the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 and the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, it was not until 1991 that additional effort was made in the direction of nuclear nonproliferation. In early 1994, when the forty-four countries that either conducted nuclear research or had nuclear power reactors were asked to ratify the treaty, rumblings of dissent began to be heard across India. Over the next year and a half, the discourse surrounding CTBT in India centered on several criticisms, particularly the argument that the treaty was fundamentally flawed because, in its current form, it favored existing nuclear weapons states like the United States.

The vicious criticism of US imperial control of nuclear weapons status drew together historic adversaries such as the Hindu Right and the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM). Achin Vanaik and Praful Bidwai remark that “the general elite ‘common sense’ that emerged from this deeply distorted debate was that the CTBT was not only against Indian interests, not only thoroughly deficient in itself, but also a US-led ‘trap’ aimed particularly at containing nuclear threshold countries like India, Pakistan and Israel, especially India, which unlike the other two, is no US ally” (2001, 307).

The debates surrounding CTBT were significant because they both fueled India's general tenor of distrust and its growing suspicion that its political-economic sovereignty was increasingly being controlled by superpowers such as the United States. In 1995 India was two years away from celebrations that would mark fifty years of independence from colonial rule, and efforts to signify distance from imperial control took on an added valence. The 1998 tests come at the end of this trajectory, and I argue they were attempt to signify India's sovereignty in a global world that is increasingly seen to be dictated by the West. Because they were couched in rhetoric of strength and independence, the tests tapped into middle class constructions of nationalism toward the end of the century in globalizing India.

I suggest that the nuclear tests were indicative of what I call “fetishized sovereignty.” They represent the displacement of control of unstable political-economic conditions in the country onto demonstrations of militarized strength. While previous governments faced similar losses of political-economic control, the Hindutva regime's use of the atomic bomb to consummate their ambitions created a much more serious situation. Furthermore,

the conjuncture between the ascendance of the Hindu Right and the growth of middle class nationalism generated a context in which the tests take on added import. Following Michael Taussig's usage of "totem" to understand state fetishism (1993), I explore the bomb as a "totem fetish" imbued with the power to restore India's emasculated masculinity. This restoration of masculinity, as I explore in the chapter, is a project in which Hindu nationalism has been particularly invested.⁴

I begin the chapter with a detailed history of India's engagement with science during the colonial period, which is marked by distancing indigenous science from Western science. It is in the construction of nationalist science during colonialism that I discern the traces of the contemporary discourse surrounding India's nuclear program. The second part of the chapter focuses on the contemporary political-economic circumstances in which the 1998 tests occurred. I show that the tests were not a response to a perceived security threat; rather, they functioned as a way to solidify the tenuously held coalition government led by the BJP and to displace concerns about India's loss of economic control by reviving India's military strength. I intertwine the discourse surrounding the bomb with a history of Hindutva's militant ambitions, including the deeply gendered and sexualized repertoire of this narrative. I conclude by considering how the discourse surrounding the bomb consolidates middle class nationalism and colludes with the Hindu Right.

History of India's Nuclear Program: Postcolonial Engagements

The history of India's nuclear program needs to be understood in the context of a discussion of science in colonial and postcolonial India. During the colonial period, the British Raj justified its authority to rule based on its control of Western science and knowledge. Western science and rationality were counterposed against traditional practices that marked the colonial subject as being bound by superstition and irrationality.⁵ Science and rationality appeared in the British empire's attempt to consolidate territorial control of the subcontinent in the early nineteenth century through the construction of an elaborate bureaucracy in which the Indian populace was trained to serve as intermediaries of colonial rule.

During this time, extensive surveys, maps, and censuses served to narrate the subcontinent through the language of science. Gyan Prakash notes that the British were aware of India's complex diversity in terms of territory, language, and religion; and they were not intent on "replaying on the Indian stage the European drama of modernity" (1999, 6). Rather, they sought a negotiated conversation between tradition and modernity and between the colonizers and the colonized in which the indigenous

Western-educated elite played a role.⁶ Prakash notes that the indigenous elite were “enchanted by science ... saw reason as a syntax of reform, a map for the rearrangement of culture, a vision for producing Indians as a people with scientific traditions of their own” (ibid.).

Nationalism in this context was about establishing Indian science and reason as independent from Western forms of knowledge. The “cultural authority of science” during the nineteenth century took the form of multiple institutions and publications in which Western-educated elite participated to create a discourse of science and reason in colonial India. The Asiatic Society founded by the British in 1829 became one of the main centers of knowledge on India, engaging the Bengali elite and fostering the study of indigenous traditions of mathematics, medicine, and religion.

The *Bhramo Samaj*, also established in 1829, focused on reform of Hinduism. Bhramo Samaj schools taught natural science, and its journals translated textbooks on geography and physics into Bengali. Among the early nineteenth century reformists to engage with reason and enlightenment thought were Rammohun Roy — who was influential in passing the act that made *Sati* (widow burning) illegal — and Ishwarchnadra Vidyasagar — who campaigned for female education and widow remarriage.

This period spawned the birth of associations and societies that promoted science in India. For instance, the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (1838) generated public lectures on science and anatomy; the Mahomedan Literary Society (1863) delivered talks on scientific instruments and experiments; and in 1876 Mahendra Lal Sircar established the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, proclaiming that science was intrinsic to national progress. The Bengali elite that engaged these societies comprised the *Bhadralok* (elite educated men) who, as Prakash puts it, “regarded scientific knowledge and a scientific attitude as signs of enlightenment and education” (1999, 55). By the end of the century, the regard for science had spread and manifest itself as part of the cultural milieu; scientific publications appeared in multiple languages and literatures.

As science came to command cultural authority, Hindu reformist groups in places such as Allahabad and Banaras engaged with it. One of the most influential Hindu reformists was Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, who founded the *Arya Samaj* movement. Arya Samaj was built on efforts to reform Hinduism by resurrecting the *Vedas* (ancient Hindu religious texts) and arguing that Vedic texts were based on the laws of nature; it argued for an essential core Hindu identity, which was contrasted against the identity of the colonizing other. These notions of essential difference

were fed by Indian romantics who contrasted Eastern spirituality against Western materialism (see endnote 5).

The articulation of the difference between the East and West was a central conceptual framework among Hindu reformists and formed the basis of cultural nationalism. This nationalism, Thomas Blom Hansen points out, “grew not out of ‘Indian Culture’ as such but out of the specific process through which Indian elites began to inhabit and make sense of received romanticist notions of authenticity and deep cultural difference between the East and West” (2004c, 42). Articulating the encounter as a “moment of departure,” Partha Chatterjee characterizes this particular stage of nationalist thought as one of “awareness and acceptance” whereby the “superiority of the West [lay] in the materiality of its culture, exemplified by its science, technology and love of progress. But the East is superior in the spiritual aspect of culture” (1993, 51). Elsewhere, Chatterjee spatializes the encounter between the East and West by locating the uncontaminated spiritual domain in women and the home — under colonialism, women and the home were inner, private spheres that contrasted with the outer, public space of colonial encounter (1994, 137).

At the turn of the twentieth century the debate on science in India manifested itself through the differences in the positions adopted by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The differences between Gandhi and Nehru on this issue are complex and require a much more nuanced discussion than I will provide here. But I mention it to underscore the centrality of the debate on science and nationalism at the height of anticolonial nationalism. These debates also reveal the way in which Nehru saw the role of science as central to national sovereignty.

Known for his stringent critique of Western civilization’s attachment to materiality, Gandhi famously argued in *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule) that “the English have not taken India. We have given it to them” (1938, 31). Indians, he argued, were seduced by Western materiality, thereby making themselves subjects of the British empire. His critique of Western materiality was formulated in terms of his critique of mechanization in which he claimed “machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin” (1938, 63). He argued that a dependence on goods made by machines located outside India, be it cloth from Manchester or other machine-made products, would take India further away from self-sufficiency or Home Rule. This argument for Home Rule is particularly manifest in his campaign for *Khadi* — home-spun cloth that would move India away from reliance on cloth made in Manchester. Gandhi’s critique of machinery was ultimately based on its use for profit rather than human

welfare. For Gandhi, notes Prakash, colonialism was a consequence of Western acquisitive materiality (1999).

In contrast to Gandhi, Nehru saw mechanization and science as necessary for Indian progress and sovereignty. If India were to compete in the global world of nation-states, then India needed to become modern and self-reliant. Chatterjee, in *Nationalist Thought*, sees Nehru's reliance on modern economic systems as a way to gather sufficient wealth for social justice (1993, 133). For Nehru, Chatterjee says, "the 'scientific method' also meant quite specifically the primacy of the sphere of the economic in all social questions" (1993, 139). While asserting the importance of science, and even going so far as to suggest that India must learn from the West about scientific method, Nehru nevertheless remained deeply influenced by the romanticist notion of India's spiritual core. In *Discovery of India* Nehru wrote,

Science has dominated the western world and everyone there pays tribute to it, and yet the West is still far from having developed the real temper of science. It has still to bring the spirit and the flesh into creative harmony. In India in many ways we have a greater distance to travel. And yet there may be fewer major obstructions on our way, for the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past, though not its later manifestations, fits in with scientific temper and approach, as well as with internationalism. (1960, 391)

For Nehru, science had corrupted the Western world with its turn toward a vulgar materiality. In contrast, Indian spirituality would protect the nation from the domination to which the West had become subject. It is through this blend of spirituality with science that Nehru crafts an "Indian modernity." Most accounts that explore the divergence between Nehru and Gandhi highlight this point. For instance, Chatterjee characterizes the "moment of arrival" as the surrender of Gandhi's communitarian logic to that of Nehru's modern state (1993).⁷

Growth of the Nuclear Program

While the debates prior to 1947 were characterized by attempts to craft an Indian modernity as distinct from the West, postindependence debates were characterized by an anxiety with economic development. Laden with the significance of being developmentally behind, the discourse of modernizing India was rife with references to "catching up" with the first world. A thoroughly modernist discourse saturated with developmentalist paradigm came to permeate the state's agenda for the newly independent nation. In these discourses, world ranking, stages of development,

and temporal measures of progress all showed the nation was persistently lagging behind.

Itty Abraham suggests that science and technology function as “fetishes” in postcolonial anxiety with development (1998, 8). Nuclear reactors, dams, and steel mills become sacred embodiments of progress and as fetishized objects of modernity. Thus, during the Constituent Assembly debates on atomic energy in 1948, Nehru claimed that human civilization had witnessed tremendous progress such as the steam engine, and that India “became a backward country” because it was not at the helm of such scientific advances (quoted in Abraham 1998, 28). However, Nehru continued, having already learned to use steam and electric energy, the world was poised to harness atomic energy, and India’s future growth into a modern nation was inextricably linked with such endeavors.

Nuclear physicist Homi Jehangir Bhabha was a key participant in the debates about atomic energy and the creation of the Atomic Energy Commission. Bhabha’s influence on science and the development of atomic energy in India began after his return from England in 1939. In the period after his return, a close friendship between Nehru and Bhabha was fostered by a common vision that science was intertwined with nationalism.⁸ Bhabha established himself with the state as well as the scientific community with his appointment as the chair of the Board of Atomic Energy. The Board was created by the Council for Science and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1946 just prior to India’s independence.

Following independence, the concern with national sovereignty strongly influenced the constituent assembly debates on atomic energy. However, after the violent uses of nuclear power at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the use of atomic energy for defense came under scrutiny and contention. The debate on nuclear power questioned how Nehru’s vision of atomic energy for development could be separated from its use for national defense. Furthermore, if the nuclear program as Nehru had claimed was to be used for development purposes then what was the need for such strict secrecy? It is on this contradiction pivots, as Abraham shows in the exchange between Nehru and S. V. Krishnamurthy Rao during the Constituent Assembly debates, Nehru’s investment in the use of atomic energy for defense and thus ultimately the need for secrecy (1998, 49–51). Within the state, the effort to maintain control and secrecy on atomic energy led to the creation of the Atomic Energy Bill, which moved all matters related to atomic energy under the purview of a central agency within the government.

Soon after the Atomic Energy Bill was passed in the Parliament in 1948, Bhabha advised Nehru that a centralized body be set up to maintain

absolute secrecy and control of atomic energy research in the country. The Atomic Energy Commission thus came into being, with Bhabha as the chairman. The commission was composed of three members: Bhabha, K. S. Krishnan — who was the director of the National Physics Laboratory — and S. S. Bhatnagar — the director general of CSIR (Abraham 1998, 61).

In 1962 the Atomic Energy Act was revised as India's nuclear program grew, conferring even more authority on to the Atomic Energy Commission and "tightening the secrecy and central government control over all activities related to atomic energy" (Perkovich 2000, 38). The increased secrecy and control reflected the growing unease with issues of national security within the country. In part, these insecurities were realized in the latter half of 1962 when the Indian military became engaged in a bloody war with China and was defeated. The sense of vulnerability was further exacerbated when China conducted its first nuclear test in October 1964. The humiliation of losing the war to China and the news of the successful Chinese nuclear test motivated a series of debates on testing a nuclear device. However, it would not be until May 1974 that India conducted a "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion" (PNE).

The reasons India delayed — despite the fact they had the ability to test a nuclear device — were complex. Abraham suggests that the delay was because of the successive deaths of Homi Jehangir Bhabha and Jawaharlal Nehru — figures who were key in the nuclear establishment (1998, 143). Vikram Sarabhai, who succeeded Bhabha as chair of the Atomic Energy Commission and secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy, had a radically different vision of the nuclear program than had Bhabha and other key members of the nuclear establishment.⁹ After Nehru's death, his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, departed from Nehru — who had never entirely closed off the possibility of a nuclear defense option — and announced on several occasions that despite threats of aggression from China, India would not move toward a nuclear weapons program. Instead, they would work toward eliminating such weapons. The change in domestic leadership combined with an international political milieu that was moving firmly toward a global nuclear disarmament program attenuated the growth of India's nuclear ambitions.

In May 1965, India presented five conditions for effective global disarmament at the UN Disarmament Commission.¹⁰ These conditions summarize India's argument that the focus and burden of responsibility be shifted away from nonnuclear states to those possessing nuclear weapons. Because it highlighted the colonial nature of nuclear weapons states mandating the terms of disarmament to nonnuclear weapons states, India won favor among nonaligned and the formerly colonized nations.¹¹

The shift from categorical opposition to nuclear weapons to what Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik call the “No Bombs Now” position began with the demise of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and the beginning of Indira Gandhi’s reign as prime minister (2001, 68). This change in position was further evidenced when, in 1968, “the question shifted from whether India should *actually* produce nuclear weapons to whether India should sign the [Non-Proliferation Treaty] relinquishing *the right* to produce weapons” (Perkovich 2000, 134). The debate on the future of India’s nuclear program was further highlighted in 1968 when a watered-down version of the treaty that clearly favored the nuclear superpowers was offered for ratification. In some ways the bias of the treaty made India’s decision easier: India did not sign and instead intensified its nuclear program, which eventually led to the 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion in Pokharan.

The 1974 nuclear tests emerged from a consolidation of several factors. In 1971 India successfully defeated Pakistan in a war that led to the separation of east and west Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. The timing of the 1974 tests was linked to the favorable political climate generated in the wake of nationalist euphoria following the war. Another explanation for the tests that is more germane to the domestic political negotiations at the time was that the tests were strategically used by Indira Gandhi to deal with an internal crisis within the Congress party and to bolster her waning credibility. Both reasons suggest that the 1974 tests were significant because, as Achin Vanaik remarks, a new modulated form of “nuclear nationalism” was born.¹²

Soon after the 1974 tests, the newspaper headlines hailed India’s triumph. The country had defied the superpowers and gone nuclear. They exclaimed, “Indian Genius Triumphs”; “A Great Landmark”; and, as an article in the *Indian Express* reported, “India’s nuclear blast has catapulted her into the front rank of nations. No longer is she dismissed as a ‘pitiful giant’” (Perkovich 2000, 179). Lal Krishna Advani, the president of *Bharatiya Jan Sangh* (the precursor to the Bharatiya Janata Party), said that the test was “one of the most heartening bits of news in recent years” (ibid.).

After the initial euphoria of the 1974 tests, domestic reaction became much more muted. Internationally, the Peaceful Nuclear Explosion was criticized and led to the withdrawal of aid from the Canadian government. Over the next decade, successive governments would distance themselves from the 1974 PNE,¹³ except for the BJP and other parts of the Sangh Parivar for whom the nuclear tests were symbolic of national virility, strength, and sovereignty. It would be twenty-four years before the BJP could finally consummate their long-held position on India’s nuclear weapons program.

BJP and the Bomb: Rhetorics of Virile Nationhood

“We have to prove we are not eunuchs.”

The response of Bal Thackeray, chief of Shiv Sena, the ruling right-wing Hindu government in Mumbai, to India’s declaration of nuclear weapons capability in May 1998.
India Today, 25 May 1998.

Feminist discourses on the military have highlighted the profoundly heteronormative masculinity of the enterprise (Cohn 1987; Khattak 1997; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Enloe 2000; Chenoy 2002). This analytical framework is also drawn from feminist critiques of nation and nationalism that designate men as the nation’s protectors and women as its repositories and boundaries. In this gendered habitation of the nation, the military arsenal available to men for protection is celebrated as a sign of national strength and resoluteness. Bal Thackeray’s statement that India’s nuclear tests were a sign of national virility can be understood as part of this paradigm that links militarization, masculinity, and nationalism. But there is additional import to Thackeray’s statement that is worth unraveling. It points to multiple registers; a response to emasculation from the colonial encounter, a vindication of the Hindu Right-wing’s long-standing position on nuclear weapons, and finally a comment on previous governments that had chosen not to exercise India’s nuclear option.

In 1964, after China detonated its nuclear device and India continued to pursue its commitment toward nonproliferation, the Hindu nationalist publication *Organiser* argued, “The eunuch government decided years ago in its *ahmistic* [nonviolent] idiocy to spend crores on nuclear power but not to use the same crores on developing the nuclear bomb. We had the chance to do it before China did it and so we could [have shown] that we meant business and that we were ahead of China. In our criminal folly we missed it” (quoted in Perkovich 2000, 68).¹⁴ The comment was directed at the political parties in power — whose continued position on nuclear nonproliferation was seen as a sign of their lack of sexual potency — and was also a pointed reference to Mohandas K. Gandhi’s anticolonial strategy of nonviolence, which was antithetical to Hindutva’s militant nationalism.

Elite response to Chinese nuclear tests and the decision by the state to not test nuclear weapons contrasted sharply with those expressed by the Hindu Right. The public opinion survey conducted by *Indian Express* claimed, “The consensus of responsible thinking is that India should not rush into a mad race for nuclear arms ... that India cannot afford to get into a programme of manufacturing and stockpiling atom bombs without serious repercussions on its economy” (Perkovich 2000, 68). The opinions

expressed by the Hindu Right and those expressed by the middle and elite classes were markedly divergent in 1964. By 1998, these positions had become much more proximate.

In the thirty-four years during which the receptivity to India's nuclear option shifted, the political landscape changed dramatically. Three major developments in particular are worth reiterating. The dramatic rise of the Hindu Right beginning in the early 1980s, coupled with the waning dominance of the Congress Party, forced the terms of political debate to engage with Hindu nationalism. Economic liberalization policies pursued during Rajiv Gandhi's era drew attention to the middle class, who found their needs resonating with the Hindu nationalist rhetoric. Finally, the continuing economic reforms of the early 1990s heralded India's political economy into a phase of neoliberal policies of globalization.

It is in the context of these developments that India's nuclear tests need to be understood. Despite these changes in the political landscape, it would not be until 1996, when the BJP came to power for thirteen days, that the efforts to cross the nuclear threshold were set in motion. What is significant about this is that previous governments did not exercise the nuclear option. In other words, the change in the nuclear doctrine occurred only when the BJP came to power. It was two years later, when the BJP was back in power in 1998, that — within forty days of assuming office — India detonated three nuclear devices in Pokharan.

The BJP justified the nuclear tests by claiming that Pakistan and China were credible threats to national security. This argument had little validity given that India had already defeated Pakistan in previous military engagements and successive governments had lived in relative peace with China since 1964. In fact, quite contrary to this rhetoric of threat from Pakistan, the BJP itself made threats to Pakistan after the nuclear tests. The Hindutva hardliner, Home Minister L. K. Advani, claimed that India would pursue a proactive policy on Kashmir by tracking militants within Pakistan territories who incited violence in the valley.

If it was not a sense of impending regional insecurity that propelled the 1998 tests, then what political purposes did they serve? It is significant that it was only during BJP rule that the tests were conducted even though the technological and scientific wherewithal had existed for some time. Thus, it was not for want of material or technology that previous governments did not conduct the tests; rather, one must look to the broader political and discursive framework within which the tests occurred. Within the context of this project, the tests function as a site, a flash point, which reveals the contours of the debate on national capability and strength. In other words, the discourses around the tests reveal the construction of India's

identity at the end of the century. My attempt to tease out the discursive framework of this discourse is directed at understanding the construction of the nation that the tests consolidated. What engagement with modernity did the nuclear tests facilitate? Why did the nuclear tests, popularly understood as a sign of India's global stature, hold such currency among the middle and elite classes? What does the public euphoria that followed the tests mean? What can we understand about the hypermasculinity of this discourse? What anxieties did the tests resonate with and assuage in globalizing India?

There are two parts to my argument. First, the tests need to be understood in the specific context of the BJP coming to power and the broader Hindutva project that has valorized military strength since its inception in the early twentieth century. Thus, in the first part of the next section I trace the manner in which the Hindutva project has entailed a profoundly spatial discourse in its construction of the Hindu rashtra. This construction of a Hindu nation is derived through a deeply gendered narrative of virile Hindu men protecting the motherland against invasion. I attribute the demonstration of masculine pride and of restored virility following the tests to the nation's colonial history of emasculation and the manner in which the Hindu Right was able to harness and deploy this sense of impotence in contemporary India. While these discourses of the nation and masculinity are neither new nor particularly novel, what is different is their receptivity in contemporary India. Deployed during the rise of the Hindu Right to power, they profoundly resonated with sections of the middle classes in contemporary India.

In the second part, I unpack this resonance by looking at the politics of middle class nationalism. Here I examine the middle class aspiration in globalization to understand the tests as a symbol of Indian achievement on the global stage. I also attempt to understand the politics of *Swadeshi* (literally, indigenously made) to tease out the tension between international recognition and the quest for national sovereignty and difference.

Hindutva's Militant Ambitions

In 1953 in a speech to high school students, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, one of the most influential Hindutva ideologues, urged the audience to welcome the "secret and science of the atom bomb to India and make it a mighty nation" (quoted in McKean 1995, 89). The growth of the nation through military strength has been one of the core tenets of the Hindutva movement. As early as 1941, Savarkar called on all Hindus to join the military, proclaiming, "Hinduise all politics and militarise all Hindudom" (quoted in McKean 1995, 71). *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS)

(national volunteer corps) training camps (*Shakhas*) are structured on this ideology, and they recruit young men to be schooled in physical combat and Hindutva ideology. The ritualized structure of combining ideological training with physical fitness is based on the belief that the nation needs to be physically prepared to defend itself against invaders and ideologically prepared for the Hindu *Rashtra* (nation-state).

Hindutva justifies its militancy through reiterative discourses of threat. Directed predominantly against Indian Muslims and Christians, who are always already suspect of sedition against the nation, the threat perception is used to justify the brutal violence directed at these communities.¹⁵ In this perception of constant threat, Hindu militancy is understood as the right of patriotic sons to defend the motherland. The reasons for the nuclear tests echoed the same discursive logic of threat. In his speech to the nation, Atal Bihari Vajpayee argued that the “government is deeply concerned about the nuclear environment in India’s neighborhood. These tests provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount.”¹⁶ Vajpayee’s justification deteriorated Indo-Chinese relations and did not stand up to scrutiny, given that there was no increase in hostility or provocations with either Pakistan or China prior to the tests.

If not for the unconvincing arguments of change in external threat perception, then, the tests were motivated by the BJP’s commitment to its core ideological belief in a strong and militant Hindu nation-state. In an effort to achieve this Hindu nation-state, the Sangh has deployed an extensive strategy of converting public space into Hindu space (Jaffrelot 1993; van der Veer 1994; Hansen 2004c; Oza forthcoming [b]). This strategy began to be manifest most clearly in the early 1980s in response to the building of mosques and dargas in western India with monies sent back from countries in the Gulf by Indian Muslim laborers. Allowing the construction of mosques within the Indian landscape represented for Hindu nationalists an extremely egregious instance of a threat to national culture. These anxieties with Muslim takeover were further exacerbated when, in 1981, about 1000 Scheduled Castes in a village in Meenakshipuram (a district in Tamil Nadu) converted to Islam, escalating existing paranoia about Muslim populations outnumbering Hindus.

In response to these anxieties, the Hindu Right initiated a campaign to integrate the multiple Hindu traditions under one Hindutva umbrella. This ideological consolidation would foster territorial integration, allowing the movement to conflate national space with Hindu space. In a way, the tests followed the same logic. The BJP hoped that the 90 percent approval rating for the nuclear tests would translate to electoral gains.¹⁸ In terms of

the larger political project, it was hoped the popularity of the tests would translate to an increase in the Sangh's reach beyond the traditionally held northern and western states.

The strategy of controlling and defining national space in religious nationalism is not new. Indeed, van der Veer argues, the "movement and definition of space and territory are central elements in religious nationalism" (1994, xii). This strategy of defining national space in Hindu terms was initiated by the "cultural" wing of the Sangh Parivar, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP), which organized the *Ekatmata Yatra* (pilgrimage of unity or one-ness) in November 1983. The deliberate construction of these processions as *Yatras* allowed the Hindu Right to draw on the significance that pilgrimage holds within religious discourse. Consisting of three main processions, each named after mythical chariots from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the routes literally covered the length and breadth of the country.¹⁹ The processions were accompanied by forty-seven smaller processions that connected with the main processions at particular places, generating a web that mapped the country as Hindu. Consequently, as van der Veer points out, "pilgrimage was effectively transformed into a ritual of national integration" (1994, 124).

By the end of the 1980s, bolstered by the extremely popular national telecast of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics, the Hindutva campaign renewed its efforts to build a Ram temple on the site of Babri Masjid. A sixteenth-century mosque constructed by a general of the Mughal emperor Babar, the Babri Masjid was claimed by the Hindu Right to have been built over a destroyed Ram temple. The Hindu Right's campaign to reclaim Babri Masjid — which is located in Ayodhya and is the site of the kingdom from the epic *Ramayana* — was framed as an effort to bring back the moral and just rule of "Ram Rajya."²⁰ In the dispute, Babri Masjid stood in contrast to the Ram temple as symbolic of Muslim aggression. The long, bloody, and protracted campaign to build the Ram temple in its place became symbolic of an effort to restore Hindu honor and pride.

The dispute over Babri Masjid was, of course, not about the Masjid or the temple. Instead, it was an attempt to use the site as a small-scale local manifestation of a larger national crisis. It functions therefore, according to Satish Deshpande, as a *heterotopia*, that enables "people to see themselves reflected in some utopia" (1998, 273). Consequently, sites such as Babri Masjid not only function in the limits of the particular space they inhabit, but generate the possibility for the local to calibrate the national. For Deshpande, the significance of the local as a heterotopia "is not ... in terms of what it is able to achieve within its own spatial limits, but rather

in the possibilities it creates for inserting such localities into a larger grid of ideological dissemination and political action” (ibid.).

The success of this strategy of ideological dissemination was once again deployed after the nuclear tests in 1998. Ashok Singhal, the president of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, announced that a *Shakti Peeth* (seat of divine power) would be built at Pokharan to commemorate the great event. The *Peeth* “would symbolize the resurgence of India as a powerful nation” (Mishra 1998). In a strategic move, the BJP attempted to associate the sense of India’s achievement as a nuclear superpower with its regime. With this one event, the BJP could mobilize sentiments of pride and patriotism that resonated with large sections of the Indian populace, drawing in even those who did not necessarily agree with the BJP’s politics. Rita Manchanda (2002) suggests that the deliberate discursive slippage from Indian nation to Hindu nation was orchestrated systematically by the media that participated in the construction of the militarized Hindu identity. Within this public domain, two simultaneous goals were achieved: the first entailed the legitimization of a militant Hindu identity, and the second entailed a discrediting of secular and leftist political critique.

The construction of the militant Hindu identity in the public sphere has its concomitant part in the expression of heteronormative masculinity. When the BJP won the elections in 1998 and began a new era of Hindutva politics, K. S. Sudarshan, the current *Sarsanchalak* (supreme leader of the RSS), decreed that the “real national regeneration should start with the molding of man, instilling in him the strength to overcome human frailties and stand up as a shining symbol of Hindu manhood” (1998). Forty days later, the BJP announced the nuclear tests and the rhetoric of pride and patriotism that was rife with references to masculine virility. The tests stood for the culmination of India’s destiny to be a global superpower. Shedding its garb of socialism and pseudo-secularism (as the Sangh had often accused Congress-era politics of being bound to), India had finally embraced its place in the world. India’s position on nuclearization during the Nehru era, its failure to test nuclear weapons after China’s test in 1964, and its “ambiguity” all reflected what the Sangh has considered symptomatic of a “soft” state. In contrast to its historic “soft” image, Seshadri Chari, the editor of the Sangh’s publication *The Organiser*, claimed that after the nuclear tests “India stands erect.”²¹

The references to resurgent masculinity as a consequence of the tests were linked to the Sangh’s mission of portraying virile Hindu men as the nation’s protectors. This was evidenced in the Sangh’s attempt to cleanse the nation of foreigners. The *Yatras* and the demolition of Babri Masjid were some of the most visible attempts among many others to eradicate

the nation of foreign presence.²² With these symbolic victories, Corbridge suggests, “the BJP-VHP could present itself as the savior of Mother India: a mother that had been raped by the Muslims and the British (the ‘two invasions’ referred to by the Hindu nationalists), and whose honor could only be restored by men and women who resisted the emasculation of the Hindu community” (1999, 235). Idealized in the figure of the king-god Ram as warrior, Hindu masculinity was measured by its ability to militate against emasculation at the hand of foreigners. The nuclear tests fit within this ideology of Hindu men protecting the nation against invasion.

There is a reiterative masculine fixation with taking revenge against the emasculated nation in Hindutva discourse. The construction of this emasculation has its roots in the colonial encounter. Mrinalini Sinha, in her detailed work *Colonial Masculinity*, understands the construction of what she calls the “manly Englishman” contrasted against the “effeminate Bengali” as a relationship constructed through the “specific practices of ruling” at the end of the nineteenth century (1995, 2). She points out that British imperial designations of martial and nonmartial Indians generated a (British) ordering of subjectivities that sought to not only generate Indian masculinity but simultaneously to invent British masculinity as well.

Tanika Sarkar explains that the production of masculinity and emasculation during colonialism shaped dominant conceptions of womanhood and domesticity within middle class Bengali homes at the end of the nineteenth century. Separation between the domestic sphere and the outside allowed the “home ... to substitute for the world outside and for all the work and relations there that lay beyond personal comprehension and control” (2001, 38). The home then stood for a critique of the colonial order and the man “became within the home what he can never aspire to be outside it — a ruler, an administrator, a legislator or a chief justice, a general marshalling his troops” (ibid.). In this domestic realm women were to remain pure and subservient, the “true patriotic subject” of the “embryonic nation” (43).

Within the Hindu nation, then, women’s position is primarily defined in terms of relationships to men: as mother, wife, sister, daughter. In the early twentieth century, with the consolidation of Hindu nationalism in the formation of the RSS, women’s participation in Hindu nationalism changed. Although women’s roles continued to be circumscribed through their relations with men, Hindu women articulated their need to form a parallel women’s wing of the exclusively male RSS. Consequently the *Rashtriya Sevika Samiti* was formed in the 1930s.²³ The history of women’s participation in the Sangh needs greater detail than is possible to include here — suffice it to say that women’s participation within Hindutva was justified

by redeploying the narrative of threat. Hindutva claimed that women needed to be physically trained in order to defend themselves against Muslim men's "insatiable lust." Paola Bacchetta suggests in her reading of the history of the *Samiti* that it began in response to the Indian women's movements in the 1930s, which were demanding rights and equality. During that time the *Samiti*'s concern was that these "Western" ideas would overshadow the "real" (Hindu) roles of women as sister, wife, and mother. The *Samiti* was thus justified because it forestalled "the potential of Hindu femininity to stray into feminism." (2004, 8)

Through much of the twentieth century, women's participation within Hindutva has grown, and some women have attained significant positions of power within the organization. Despite the fact some women have moved from the domestic, private spaces into the public, this trajectory cannot simply be understood as a "positive liberating force" (Sarkar 1995). In spite of public visibility, women continue to define their primary role and understand their allegiance to the nation through their relationship to men. In this framework, the domestic space continues to be women's primary responsibility within which they must remain pure and uncorrupted.

Concomitant with women's purity in the home is men's sexual purity. The preservation of semen has been a dominant leitmotif of the Indian (Hindu) male public sphere.²⁴ The stoic, celibate figure whose exercise of self-control is indicative of discipline is valorized as the ideal citizen for building the nation. Of course, this figure is most famously embodied by Mohandas K. Gandhi. Gandhi exhorted India's youth to exercise self-discipline and chastity and to focus their energy on rebuilding India. In his analysis, Joseph Alter argues that Gandhi's exercise of discipline and control over his body was part of a larger political exercise of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) that encompassed Gandhi's engagement with public health, religion, and politics (2000). Hindu nationalism draws on this culture of austerity, van der Veer says, "but transforms its ideas of physical strength and spiritual purity by relating these ideas to a more political vision of the social hygiene of the nation" (1994, 72). Within this construct, the loss of semen came to be associated with loss of strength, which resulted in a weak patriotic figure unable to protect the nation. Sexual abstinence in the Hindutva paradigm was asked for as a way to discipline the mind and body against "Western" and alien forms of enticement. This narrative of celibacy, however, did not translate to the lack of sex; rather, procreation of more Hindu sons was encouraged, particularly against the resurgent anxiety of hyper-fertile Muslims who could outnumber Hindus.

While both Gandhi and Hindu nationalists advocated celibacy and discipline, for Gandhi the practice of self-discipline was part of his practice of

ahimsa, which he saw as a response to the emasculation of the nation under colonial rule. Conversely, for Hindu nationalists nonviolence was a sign of emasculation and vulnerability to domination. For instance, Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's assassin, justified his act at his trial by saying, "I firmly believed that the teachings of absolute *ahimsa* as advocated by Gandhiji would ultimately result in the emasculation of the Hindu community and thus make the community incapable of resisting the aggression or inroads of other communities, especially the Muslims" (quoted in van der Veer 1994, 96). Hindu nationalism, therefore, articulates a celibate Bhramanical sexuality in which the preservation of semen is tied to virility and strength, both of which find their expression in a militant warrior identity.

As patent displays of military strength, the nuclear tests fit within Hindutva response to the emasculated nation. It is in this sense that Bal Thackeray, the leader of the right-wing Shiv Sena, responds when he claims that that tests are proof that India is not a land of eunuchs. The deep resonance of this statement cannot be understood without knowing the colonial and postcolonial construction of masculinity. In the next section, I explore the reasons why the nuclear tests fulfilled middle class aspirations of India's worth in a globalizing world.

Globalization, Middle Class Nationalism, and the Bomb

The economic liberalization of the early 1990s led to what Himadeep Muppidi characterizes as a vibrant debate on the "politics of the global in India." Confined not only to discussions about the fiscal and economic efficacy of the reforms, the debates about India's current phase of globalization spilled over to questions about "the nature of the Indian self, about Indian national identity, and about the desirable relation to the rest of the world, particularly the west" (2004, 33). In this debate, anxious concern about surrendering economic sovereignty of the nation vied with celebrations of pride over India's latest encounter with global capital. The contours of this discourse are extremely circumscribed, circulating primarily within the middle and elite class public spheres. As a result, in Sunil Khilnani's words, "those situated at different locations in Indian society have produced their own distinctive conceptions of the nation" (1999, 2). In the discussion I outline below, the "idea of India" is debated within middle class conceptions of the nation.

The collapse of Nehruvian ideals and the degeneration of the Congress Party through the 1970s and 1980s along with economic stagnation and rampant corruption generated a tarnished image of the nation. This image of a stagnant, tired economy contrasted starkly with the vibrancy of the East Asian economic "tigers" and their rapid growth. With the primacy of

developmentalist paradigm, national worth was measured in terms of economic progress — a dynamic that established a hierarchy among nation-states that placed India at the bottom of the scale.²⁵ The improvement in communication technologies and the introduction of color television by Rajiv Gandhi in the mid-1980s brought with it greater knowledge of technological advancement in the West. It generated what Thomas Blom Hansen calls “foreign technology fetishism” that symbolically froze virtues of efficiency, dependability, and reliability, locating them in Western countries (2004b, 297). At the same time, however, it also “intensified a desire to be recognized in the world and to move upwards in the imagined global hierarchy” (1996, 603).

The neoliberal policies of reform introduced in 1991 were packaged (in part) to fulfill these long-held middle class aspirations. It is these aspirations that an investment brochure produced by the Ministry of Tourism tapped into when it claimed, “India today is a whole ‘new’ country. Vibrant. Active. Alive ... You can feel a sense of urgency permeating just about every sector. A determination to catch up.”²⁶ The reference to “catching up” is indicative of the resilience of the old developmentalist paradigm in which nations will pass through “stages of development.” According to the brochure, India was at the threshold of joining the rest of the developed economies.

For the middle class, one of many signs of their mobility — and by extension the nation’s — was the availability of “foreign made” consumer durables. The 1991 reforms lowered tariffs, flooding the market with products that had previously been out of reach. During the 1990s these consumer durables became an index of mobility among the middle classes and a sign of their “catching up.” Yet, even as consumer acquisitiveness symbolized mobility and achievement, it was only a superficial aura concealing the material reality that few, even among the middle classes, had access to the commodities so coveted (Lakha 1999). Beneath this veil was instability, growing income disparity, unemployment, and government corruption.

Between 1994 and 1997, while economic indicators showed a robust 6–7 percent GDP growth, other indicators of stability such as food grain production and the consumer price index presented a different scenario. The Alternative Economic Survey (Delhi Science Forum 1997) reported that, despite good monsoons, food grain production during the eighth plan (1992–97) fell below the rate of population growth, which meant that large sections of the population went hungry. Along with this was steady inflation that raised the prices of food at a higher rate than other commodities.

In 1997 India celebrated fifty years of independence from British colonial rule. Amidst the celebrations were countless magazine and newspaper

articles that assessed India at fifty. Writing for *Frontline*, the economist Amartya Sen commented that India had fared only “moderately well” and that social inequity remained widespread. He lamented the

illiteracy, the lack of health care, the absence of land reforms, the difficulty in getting micro-credit if you belong to the rural poor, and, of course, the pervasive gender bias between men and women that make the problem of social inequality so large in India. These are India’s main failures and I think that our achievements — in particular, the maintenance of democracy and continued process of moderate economic growth — are enormously compromised by these factors.²⁷

These staggering social inequities were further exacerbated after 1991 when the state withdrew its commitment to basic infrastructure development and social services. Even a World Bank report acknowledged that there was a decline in the government’s financial commitment to direct capital spending (social services and infrastructure): “as part of the fiscal adjustment, direct capital spending by the Central Government (excluding defense capital) fell from about 1.4% of GDP in 1990–91 to 0.7% of GDP in 1997–98, representing nearly 40% of the cut in its deficit.”²⁸ In their more critical appraisal of the reforms, Corbridge and Harriss argue that “the reforms in India have encouraged a new regime of private capital accumulation which is increasing levels of dependency and volatility in the Indian economy” (2000, 161). Income disparities also increased as some were paid astronomical sums by multinational corporations and others received salaries that had not risen, despite changes in pay commissions, to any commensurate level.

It is in this milieu of growing instability that the BJP began to assert its presence in the electoral landscape. The BJP drew attention through the 1990s to the political and economic instability in the country, laying the blame at the ruling Congress-led coalition government. Highlighting Congress’ deceptions, the BJP tapped into the sense of betrayal felt among the electorate and presented themselves as the “clean” alternative that would bring stability to the country. In their 1998 election manifesto, the BJP critiqued Congress liberalization policies and offered an alternative in *Swadeshi* — an economic policy that according to the BJP puts “India first.”

The BJP’s electoral campaigns also emphasized traditional values that resonated deeply with the middle classes’ anxieties about the “corruption of Indian culture.” Uncensored satellite television and a consumption culture had generated growing concern about a breakdown of Indian values.

Within the home, the sanctified domain of the middle class private sphere, satellite television programming was the portal from which the corrupt outside breached the confines of the inside. In this milieu of anxiety, the BJP came to be understood as a political party that would safeguard threatened Indian traditions.²⁹ Thus, the BJP crafted its electoral campaign in a manner that appealed to the material aspirations of the middle classes as well as to their anxiety about a culture under threat. It is in the interstices of these aspirations and anxieties that BJP was able to deploy cultural nationalism as a response.

An economy besieged by extreme differences in income, political instability, retreat of the state from social services, and concern with the sanctity of Indian culture all combined to generate a sense of insecurity. Added to this were the stringent terms and conditions of the loan by IMF and the World Bank combined with vulnerability from global capital trends that lessened state control of the country's economic future (Chosudovsky 1993). Hansen suggests that waning sovereignty in this context of instability was compensated for by "the re-invocation of older cultural nationalist strategies aiming at equality through assertion of difference, unity and strength" (1996, 613). Cultural nationalism, then, is a strategy of displacement of concern for the insecurities generated through globalization to concerns of patriotism and strength. The BJP's definition of cultural nationalism claims "BJP is convinced that Hindutva has immense potentiality to re-energize this nation and strengthen and discipline it to undertake the arduous task of nation-building. This can and does trigger a higher level of patriotism that can transform the country to greater levels of efficiency and performance."³⁰

The sectarian agenda of Hindutva, asserts the BJP, will energize the nation to "greater levels of efficiency and performance." Thus, these cultural nationalisms "have in many different ways sought to compensate for the loss of economic or strategic importance of their nation in the world, or the loss of coherence and efficiency of the ruling political project, by the worship of strength, masculinity, cultural purity and radical difference from the west" (Hansen 1996, 613). The 1998 nuclear tests, I suggest, are part of this strategy of cultural nationalism that emphasized military strength and sovereignty in globalizing India.

This performance of militant strength and restored virility surrounding the nuclear tests symbolize what I call "fetishized sovereignty" in the age of globalization. I understand the act of fetishizing as a process by which the conditions of political reality are concealed from scrutiny. William Pietz, reading Marx, explains the process of fetishization of money:

The object [money] that had been an accidental means to achieving some desired end becomes a fixed necessity, the very embodiment of desire, and the effective, exclusive power for gratifying it. The human truth of capital is that as a means that has become an end, it is a socially constructed, culturally real power-object: it is the instrumentalized power of command over concrete humans in the form of control over their labor activity through investment decisions. Capital is a form of rule, of social government. It is this political truth that the chiasmic personification-reification structure of capitalism fetishism conceals. (1993, 147)

Money-capital stands as the displaced signifier of value. It is this “displacement of value” with which I engage here. The bomb becomes embodied with the sacred and secular power of sovereignty, displaced from its discursive and material place in the political, economic, and cultural histories. As a fetish, the bomb acts as a “totem” — a sacred object with magical powers to restore that which is ailing among the faithful (Taussig 1993). The bomb as totem represents an artifact that will enable restoration of strength, virility, and independence. Thus, the bomb, because it diverts attention to displays of strength and control, is an attempt to compensate for the loss of economic sovereignty.

While India’s fetishized sovereignty enacts the demonstration of strength and control over the contours of a globalizing nation, it also demands that the nation be given international recognition as a postcolonial state in the throes of modernity. The quest for international recognition and respect relates to the continued engagement with science and modernity that dates back — as I demonstrated earlier in the chapter — to the early nineteenth century. The insistent reiteration of scientific knowledge was an effort to demonstrate India’s distance from its colonial past and its engagement with modernity. Postcolonial nationalism was performed by distancing the nation-state from practices representative of civilizational degeneracy while simultaneously grasping tenets of science and modernity in an effort to be recognized among the league of nations. Within Hindu nationalism there was great effort to claim that scientific findings existed in ancient Indian (Hindu) texts. During the nuclear tests, for instance, one of the physicists, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, who later became the president of India, claimed that unlike other scientists who acquired their education in the West, he was “completely indigenous” (Perkovich 2000, 424).

The claims of indigenous science were made in an effort to be acknowledged as being at par with the West. The effort to be recognized by the West, however, was not about becoming a cheap imitation of it. In fact, extensive efforts that date back to the colonial narratives of difference have

been made to distinguish Western materiality from Indian spirituality. Hansen suggests that Hindu nationalists reasoned that emphasizing deep civilizational differences between India and the West would lend India greater admiration. Additionally, Hindu nationalists argued, “in order to gain respect from the West and from its neighbors, India must be strong and powerful” (2004c, 231).

For Hindu nationalists, the nuclear tests were precisely the expression of India’s strength that would gain the respect of the West. For instance, S. Gurumurthy, the convener of *Swadeshi Jagran Manch* (SJM),³¹ claimed “The US President Clinton banned nuclear tests. The next day France decided to have one and within a week China actually exploded its 43rd bomb. In his heart, Clinton will respect these countries” (quoted in Hansen 2004a, 308). Even as respect and acknowledgement from the West was hoped for, Hindu nationalism adopted anticolonial rhetoric to fiercely demonstrate their independence from the West. Thus, after the nuclear tests, Brajesh Mishra, the then principal secretary who later became the national security advisor, claimed that while the tests were not conducted in response to the United States, it nevertheless sent a message that “the nation could not be pushed around” (Perkovich 2000, 417).

After the United States and other countries imposed sanctions on India in response to the nuclear tests, the anticolonial rhetoric was again deployed. In a show of bravado, the BJP responded to the threat of sanctions, claiming “India [is] not worried about sanctions”³² and “India will face down sanctions.”³³ The strategy for “facing down” US sanctions was to “fast-track” several multinational contracts. The BJP-led government granted eighteen companies the rights for oil explorations, of which eleven went to US companies. Multinational companies were granted 89 percent equity in Indian ports, in effect divesting the government of any control (Delhi Science Forum 1997, 96). Paradoxically, then, in an attempt to demonstrate independence by claiming that the sanctions could not be used to dictate India’s military sovereignty, economic sovereignty was further compromised. Commenting on military versus economic sovereignty, Vinod Raina says, “It should be obvious that sovereignty is no longer attacked only militarily, but that in a market-based globalized world, it is being increasingly undermined, particularly in countries that have opted for a non-self-reliant path and are internally weak, through trade and economy. Heavy investments in defense and the maintenance of a nuclear arsenal can only enhance the economic insecurity of a country like India, while providing an illusion of territorial invincibility” (1998, 67).

This triumphant discourse of independence, strength, and global achievement surrounding the nuclear tests served to further consolidate

middle class nationalism. While it is difficult to determine what comprises the middle classes, the National Council for Applied Economic Research, which conducted the Market Information Survey of Households in the 1990s, determined that the middle class/consuming class was composed of between 100 and 350 million people (Kulkarni 1993; Tharoor 2005). Within this bracket, however, are significant differences between consumers in the top percentile versus those in the bottom, with marked differences in mobility, income, and consumption patterns. Although proportionally small to the country's total population, in absolute numbers the middle classes are a significant market.

The genesis of middle class identity in the contemporary period was marked by Rajiv Gandhi's liberalization policies in the mid-1980s, which made the middle classes finally feel acknowledged and vindicated. However, it was toward the end of the decade, with the Mandal Commission report, that the political power of middle classes became apparent. The Mandal report recommended 27 percent of jobs in institutions of higher education and government be allocated for Other Backward Castes (OBCs). In response, the upper caste and middle class protested, at times violently, staking claim to jobs and educational opportunities to which they felt entitled. Although in actual numbers only about 50,000 jobs were at stake in the increased allocations, the ferocity of the response brought together the middle class and upper caste in a manner that was unprecedented and historic.

For the BJP, whose power had been steadily increasing through the decade, the Mandal controversy forced them to choose between the middle class-upper caste and OBCs. Any attempt to appear sympathetic with the middle class-upper caste, however, would jeopardize the BJP's attempt to increase its base among OBCs. Thus, in response to the Mandal Commission report, the BJP set into play a strategic countermove by ramping up efforts to construct the Ram temple at the disputed Babri Masjid site.³⁴ The effort was a diversionary tactic because the BJP did not want to openly oppose the Mandal report for fear of alienating OBCs — who comprise 52 percent of India's population. Yet, any support of the controversial report also threatened to undermine the BJP's traditional base within the middle class and upper caste constituency. The Babri Masjid-Ram Temple conflict, then, served to shift focus from the battle between OBCs and the upper caste to Hindu victims of Muslim aggression. For the majority of the middle classes, who are also upper caste Hindus, the Babri Masjid conflict successfully generated empathy for Hindu victimization. The Mandal controversy, therefore, was a pivotal political moment because it not only consolidated middle class nationalism but also it further infused it with existing middle class sympathies to Hindutva's ideological rhetoric.

In the mid-1990s middle class sympathies toward the Hindu Right were further consolidated in the context of the political instability and economic vulnerability already discussed. Weakened borders and the visible presence of “foreign” and “outside” influence raised the specter of the loss of India’s identity in the rapidly changing landscape. The middle class’s material vulnerability to the liberalization policies found expression in the need for stability and security. To the middle classes, the nuclear tests served as displays of India’s strength and resoluteness that temporarily assuaged anxieties of stability while simultaneously tapping into sentiments of India’s emergence as a world power.

It is the nuances of vulnerability and pride — perhaps even arrogance — that reveal the traces of colonial emasculation and contemporary betrayal that I want to tease out in order to explore middle class nationalism. I am aware that the complexities of the composition of the middle classes defy the possibility of defining constructions of nationalism in any overarching manner. Thus, what I offer here are vignettes that may be familiar and associated with some of the middle classes. These vignettes make visible the interstices between pride, betrayal, and emasculation through which the nuclear tests solicited middle class allegiance.

For the vignettes I draw on a series of advertisements that appeared in the mid-1990s and engaged directly with the “the meaning of India.” While at first it seems a rather paradoxical register for the articulation of middle class engagements with India’s identity, I contend that there are two reasons why these advertisements are ideally suited. First, the advertisements are for a consumer electronics company called BPL, for whom the primary targets are the middle classes who would invest in these products as signs of status and mobility. The creative focus of these advertisements was to engage directly with these middle class ambitions. Arvind Rajagopal, in his study of middle class engagement with advertising in globalizing India, says it “is through advertising that economy and culture come together, in narratives that help accumulate surplus by representations of desired values” (1999, 57). Second, because the ads are for an Indian company in competition with foreign companies, the advertisements appeal to post-colonial sentiments of Indian independence and status.

William Mazzarella argues that advertisements “cannot help but intervene in the visual and discursive articulation of national cultural identity” (2004, 28). The advertisements I engage with here appeared in the context of a liberalized market where BPL had to compete with foreign companies for a share of the consumer technology market. Given the history of “foreign technology fetishism,” BPL was concerned that consumers would associate foreign-made with superior quality and choose imported over



Figure 5.1

domestic brands.³⁵ In the 1990s, therefore, a distinctive parameter within the advertising and marketing field became available to define a product as uniquely “Indian” (Mazzarella 2004, 150). The efforts to impose an Indian image and value onto BPL’s products therefore echoed the larger question of India’s identity.

The print advertisements appeared in several newspapers and magazines and featured Amitabh Bachchan, the megastar of Indian cinema. The use of Bachchan was a brilliant and strategic manipulation of his iconic stature as the “angry young man” who fought government corruption and deception in films from the 1970s and 1980s and who later became a suave corporate figure in the 1990s.³⁶ Bachchan was a thoroughly Indian hero. Using Bachchan as “India’s hero,” one of the advertisements reflected on the persistent narrative of comparing substandard Indian against superior foreign products. There was a deliberate discursive slippage between commodity and nation, essentializing in the foreign products the qualities of German efficiency, French sophistication, and American design. The stark advertisement glibly began with the headline, “I’d love to be an American,”

and enjoy the power my country holds. I’d love to be an Englishman, watching my language spreading through the world. I’d love to be a Frenchman, a native of the world’s fashion capital, art capital, wine capital. I’d love to be Brazilian, whenever the World Cup is on. I’d love to be Italian, reveling in my country’s inimitably styled sports cars. I’d love to be German, thorough, professional, efficient, punctual. I’d love to be Australian, fighting till the last ball. And winning. I’d love to be Japanese, proud of what my country has achieved in just a few decades. I’d love to be from Spain, where the world goes for a holiday. I’d love to say

I'm from Switzerland, and that no one can beat us at banking. I'd love to be Caribbean, teaching the world to reggae and relax. I'd love to march ahead with a billion countrymen, like the Chinese. I'd love to be an example-setting Singaporean. I'd love to be proud of my country. I'd love to make people envious just saying I'm Indian. I'd love to make you believe it's possible. I'd love to make you believe in yourself.

The advertisement echoed the developmentalist paradigm that permeated Indian imagination during the 1970s and 1980s, exposing the sentiments of failure. Yet, it ended with the possibility of hope embodied in believing that BPL products could “be the best,” allowing Indians to start “believing in themselves” and becoming “proud of their country.” Throughout these advertisements there was no mention of the products, and nowhere in the text and layout was there any indication of what was being marketed. Yet, even in the absence of the commodity itself, product consumption was fetishized into a sentiment of belief in the nation.

Exposing the lack of belief in the nation, another set of advertisements self-reflexively chided Indian (middle class) thinking:

We Indians. Why do we have a need to impress all foreigners? ... Why do we assume imported is better? Why do we think local means cheap? ... Why do we never get mentioned for having the killer instinct? ... Why does it take us 16 years to get a medal at the Olympics? ... Why do we think “anywhere abroad” is a better place? Why do we feel good when others say India has potential? Why do we act as if having potential is an achievement? ... Why are we down in the third world, when we all know we could easily be up there? ... Why don't we believe in ourselves?

Yet, the issue was not a lack of belief, if anything there was too much belief, just of the wrong sort. Concerning the plethora of beliefs in superstition and tradition, one of the advertisements demanded a “change” to “modern” beliefs:

Our ability to believe ... We believe drinking too much tea can make us dark ... if somebody jumps over us, it'll affect our height ... putting a black dot on your baby's cheek wards off the evil eye ... We believe a fluttering eye is an omen ... We believe in the power of horoscopes to find us a compatible mate. When we believe all this may actually be possible, when we don't find such wisdom strange, then what is it that keeps us from also believing in ourselves, for a change?

In contrast to the lack of belief “in ourselves” were presented India’s contributions:

My country’s contribution to the world: 0. Where would mathematics have been if our ancestors hadn’t discovered zero? ... What would be world be doing without meditation? Without yoga? ... And today, who would have been in place of all our thousands of doctors in America and the UK? ... Who would have guessed a few centuries ago that India would become a poor, third-world country? And who knows what India will become in the next century? Who knows what may happen if we believe in ourselves?

The advertisement exposed the manner in which a nation’s worth in the world is measured by the extent of its achievements. Juxtaposed against the earlier narrative of the accomplishments of other countries, national worth was shown as being indicative of the “innate” ability of its citizens. This is why the advertisement resorted in the end to an individual belief in self that, unmediated, would translate to belief in the nation. Thus, the last in the series celebrated Indian ingenuity, listing achievements that would make “us believe in ourselves”:

Have you noticed how we think? ... We find washing machines perfect for making lassi ... We know how to fix irrigation pumps to hay wagons and make an affordable rural vehicle ... We can launch satellites on shoestring budgets. We can make supercomputers on our own. And we still don’t think we’re good enough. We still don’t think we can surprise the World. We still don’t think we can believe in ourselves.

These advertisements appeared before the 1998 nuclear tests, yet they indicate the investment in India’s achievement on the global stage. I have attempted to show through the advertising vignettes how the sentiments of pride and the “explosion of self-esteem” in response to the tests consolidated middle class identity and nationalism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the nuclear tests served the purpose of navigating a minefield of discourses on modernity, control, difference, and sovereignty. It recalibrated the terms of debate, displacing it from the lack of political and economic control over a globalizing nation onto a debate about cultural nationalism that asserted Hindu sovereignty. For the BJP the debate was an attempt to strengthen its tenuously held coalition and build on the enthusiastic reception of the tests. The tests

appealed to Hindutva hardliners because they symbolized the fulfillment of long-held aspirations and worked to mute the opposition, most of whom were reluctant to voice a critique of the nuclear tests for fear of appearing unconcerned about the nation's security. For the middle classes, the tests served to momentarily displace insecurity with political-economic concerns onto a cultural nationalism that engaged with narratives of strength, pride, and global presence. Throughout, I suggest, these displacements were woven through with gendered and sexualized ideology that resurrected a "Fannonite ideology of the repressed" where men are called to reclaim their manhood by both shielding women against the outside and foreign and simultaneously displaying their own strength and control (Yuval-Davis 2004, 187).

Following India's nuclear tests, Pakistan responded by detonating five nuclear devices on May 28 and one on May 30 in the Chagai hills in northwestern Baluchistan. Subsequently, the tensions in the subcontinent increased dramatically. India and Pakistan exchanged nuclear threats a reported thirteen times, leading to a US call for restraint. Efforts to ease the tensions in the area led to initial talks between India and Pakistan in September 1998. Five months later, a further thaw in relations led to a formal invitation from Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Atal Bihari Vajpayee for a state visit.

In February 1999, Vajpayee crossed the border between India and Pakistan at Wagah. This was the first visit to Pakistan by an Indian prime minister in over a decade, the last being by Rajiv Gandhi in 1989. The event itself, more symbolic than substantive, was filled with celebration and the exchange of goodwill and indicated progress in the relations between the two countries. The Wagah meeting also opened the possibility for relatives who had been separated by partition to visit each other. These diplomatic moves need to be contextualized as part of the maneuvers that the BJP needed to make as a national party presenting itself as moderate and "clean" and at the same time not alienating its traditional base within the Hindu right-wing movement.³⁷

The sense of optimism following the Wagah meeting did not last. In May 1999, infiltration and occupation of the hills near Kargil by Pakistani troops sparked a series of confrontations between Indian and Pakistani troops that ultimately led to the third war between the two countries (Swami 1999). In the months that followed, after intense military engagement and extensive casualties on both sides, India won the war with the control of Tiger Hill. The war fueled the firmament of jingoistic nationalism, deteriorating even the limited space of dialogue that had opened following the Wagah border crossing.

In an era of heightened media reporting, the war was brought “live” from the frontlines and extensive coverage of soldiers’ deaths generated volatile sentiments that mixed grief with patriotism. Anand Patwardhan’s wonderful visual documentary *War and Peace* deftly captured images of masochistic nationalism — from young men signing their name in blood, to images of gods and bombs sharing the same platform, to the re-enactment of the capture of Tiger Hill complete with its culmination in the raising of the phallic-like bomb amidst a crescendo of lights and music. The nuclear tests and the Kargil war served to narrow and congeal the terms of nationalism and generated further challenges for those who sought to rupture nationalism’s constraining bounds.

CHAPTER 6

Epilogue

This book traces public debate about globalization in India through three sites. These sites offer a way in which to understand the contours of the “idea of India” in globalization and identify the publics invested in this discourse. The three sites are court cases against the state and private channels, the 1996 Miss World Pageant, and India’s demonstration of nuclear weapons capability. These sites span a decade of dramatic political and economic change that was initiated by the institution of neoliberal policies of economic reform that changed India’s encounter with global capital. The three sites demonstrate the links between the Hindu Right’s rise to power and middle class narratives of the nation in the context of economic liberalization in India.

I argued that the nation-state compensated for the destabilizing effects of globalization by attempting to effect control over cultural identities. For instance, the court cases alleged that women’s sexualized representation on television programs threatened the cultural integrity of the nation. Securing the nation thus entailed evoking laws that specifically related to border violations. The Miss World Pageant was a tangible site at which to locate globalization in India. The pageant made visible the alliances between multinational capital, domestic elite groups, and the state. For

those opposing the pageant, the event offered a forum to articulate the concerns of globalizing India.

In both the court cases and the pageant, women's bodies and sexualities are the site on which control and order were maintained. Women's uncontrolled sexuality in these narratives was symptomatic of unchecked rampant globalization. Control was demonstrated by attempts to censor and shield women's bodies from contamination. If, in the cases of television and the pageant, one sees the contradictory impulses of the state in its attempts to mediate its borders, then the discourses of nuclear tests define the masculine heterosexual nation as capable of protecting and reasserting its geopolitical boundaries. The tests symbolize *Shakti* (power) and coincide with Hindutva discourses of the nation. Here, national strength and capability are demonstrated through discourses of masculine strength and virility.

The nuclear tests inaugurated the BJP's reign, which over the next five years attempted to achieve its goal of converting India into a Hindu *Rashtra* (nation-state). The most violent manifestation of this goal was evidenced in March 2002 during the Gujarat pogrom (Oza forthcoming [b]). The nuclear tests became symbolic of Hindutva vindication and commenced an era in which they ruled the political and economic spheres with impunity. In this concluding chapter I briefly document India's political economic history from the BJP's reign until the 2004 general elections when the BJP was defeated (despite all indications that they would win). In the same period a geographical triad emerged between India, the United States, and Israel that served each of their narrow parochial agendas. I conclude this chapter by briefly considering the politics of local resistance by juxtaposing scales of global, political, and economic alliances, such as those between India, the United States, and Israel, with the nuances of national politics.

Following India's nuclear tests in 1998, the United States imposed sanctions on India and urged its leaders to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. In the years following the sanctions, India attempted to get back onto the United States' list of "favorable states." After the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, in an effort to seek India's support for its war on terror, the United States changed its position on India's nuclear status and made a tacit agreement to lift sanctions. Speaking in India in 2003, Richard Haass, senior official of the US State Department, said, "I would simply say we're realistic and America has lifted most of the sanctions that were put into place after India tested nuclear weapons ... Obviously the United States approaches India differently than it approaches North Korea or Iraq" (Shukla 2003).

The political alliances between India and the United States following the September 11 attacks were symptomatic of the formation of a

geo-political triad between India, the United States, and Israel was based on a shared vision of threat and security (Oza forthcoming [a]). For the Hindu Right-wing, the US war on terror sanctioned the demonizing of Muslims as terrorist suspects, justifying its own internal effort to deal with Indian Muslims.¹ In one of the most brutal instances of orchestrated violence against minorities, Hindu activists killed over 2000 Muslims and left 150,000 homeless in March 2002. The Hindu activists justified the pogrom against Gujarati Muslims with an incident in which a traincar carrying Hindus returning from Ayodhya was burned. Hindu nationalists claimed that the train was burned by Muslims in Godhra, a small town just inside the Gujarat border. Several reports by independent and international fact-finding missions document proof that the killings in Gujarat were pre-planned with the tacit, if not complete, support of the state; it was, indeed, a pogrom.²

The Gujarat pogrom was part of a larger systematic campaign to commit violence against minority communities and to disenfranchise secular and critical voices. These campaigns included changing school textbooks to claim that Hinduism was innate to India. Recognizing the economic and political influence of diasporic communities, the Hindu Right established overseas branches of its organization. These groups, particularly in the United States and UK, have been very successful in raising funds for Hindutva-supported projects in India.³

While Hindutva has historically demonized Muslims, their campaigns came to have particular validity after September 11, 2001. In particular, the shared discourse of the “Muslim terrorist” generated international alliances. India offered the United States support and also drew on tactical knowledge from Israel during their conflict with Palestine. India has historically supported the cause of Palestine; however, in 1991 it formally initiated relations with Israel. Not coincidentally, 1991 was also the year that the UN General Assembly repealed its 1975 resolution that equated Zionism with racism (India supported the repeal). These diplomatic maneuvers manifested themselves in bilateral trade that increased to \$1.27 billion. There was also an increase in military cooperation between the countries, as India spent an estimated \$2 billion annually on Israeli military technology and equipment (Waldman 2003).

While the diplomatic thaw in the relationship was initiated when the Congress was in power in 1991, it was with the BJP that the link between India and Israel achieved particular significance. Toward the end of the decade, the BJP made extensive efforts to build alliances with conservative Jewish lobbies in the United States. As part of its strategy to draw on the Hindu diaspora, BJP External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha asked

people of Indian origin to “emulate the Jewish diaspora by bringing all their organizations under one roof to work towards a common goal.”²⁴ Close political alliances and the sharing of strategies between the BJP and Likud grew out of a common discourse of threat. According to Jason F. Isaacson of the American Jewish Committee, the close ties between the two countries exist because both “face the common threat of Islamic extremist terror” (2002).

For the United States, the ties between India and Israel served its strategic interests. While the United States is bound by its laws to impose sanctions against countries that test nuclear weapons, it was not necessarily averse to India’s nuclear status. India’s growing power and geographic location works as a strategic bulwark against China. For the United States, lifting sanctions imposed after India’s nuclear tests was indication of India’s new status in the United States’ political grid of “us and them.”

The portents of this triad — that share the discourse of a common enemy and are tethered by military and economic ties — was cause for grave concern. Hope came in the way of the unexpected defeat of the BJP government after the general elections in May 2004. Its campaign, which focused on “India shining,” failed to convince the majority of the poor that India was shining for them (Oza 2004). Excessive focus on foreign investment and neglect of the plight of hundreds of farmers who had committed suicide in recent years starkly exposed state priorities (Sainath 1996). The results of the electoral process were encouraging: the largest proportion of Left political parties were elected since independence, significant political figures of the Hindutva government were defeated, secular parties had key victories, and chief ministers were defeated in states that focused on foreign investment at the cost of poverty alleviation. Yet, despite the formation of a coalition government with the support of the political Left, the progressive coalition’s commitment to genuine social change for the majority is not in evidence.

Political opposition and local resistance within the opposition to globalization changes with shifts in national politics but continues to demand careful consideration of the manner in which the “local” is craft. For instance, in my consideration of the opposition to the pageant, I suggested that some of the arguments made by the progressive women’s groups seemed to echo those of the Hindu Right. With the defeat of the BJP, these arguments do not have the same legitimacy and valance. However, we still need to consider the manner in which local opposition was understood through a discourse where the protection of women lent itself to the protection of the nation against the corrupting influences of globalization.

In concluding this book, I want to raise some questions about resistance. I caution against an automatic valorization of the local and of local resistance as always already progressive or radical. I unpack the ways in which the local becomes determined as a site and as a fixed location in relation to other scales.

Corroborating other accounts of globalization, I have shown that rather than producing sameness, global capital adapts to the particularities of the local — feeding on, rather than papering over, difference. In 1995, the Indian magazine *Advertising & Marketing* ran their cover story on strategies that global brands needed to develop to market to the Indian palate (Pande and Annunzio 1995). Consumer durables, fast food, clothing, television programs, and many other registers of multinational presence in India have honed their products to fit the Indian consumer's taste. The National Council for Applied Economic Research, which conducts the Market Information Survey of Households, supplies marketing and advertising gurus with profiles on the changing tastes and habits of the Indian consumer.

“Local” emerges in these narratives of capital as particularity and specificity attached to places. Demographically determined and culturally specific, the local is a site at which capital must adhere to particular strategies. It is understood as a location with tangible traits. At the other end, those who inhabit the local invent and guard their culture against the global. An anxiety-laden discourse of contamination, commodification, and corruption propels efforts to safeguard the intimate cultures of the local. It is from these concerns that stemmed the strategies of resistance against the multinational cable and satellite companies as well as the pageant. And as I have argued, the nuclear tests are governed by similar logic.

The manner in which the *local* is produced, determined, created, and defended by both multinational capital and by those who seek to protect it generates its counterpoint in the *global*. In this global-local dyad, the “local” tends to be understood as the place where authentic politics reside and from where resistance is authored (Featherstone 2003, 405). It is the “place” from where politics can be spoken, agency exercised, and rights and culture defended. Local, however, tends to be an ambiguous location, which — depending on the adversaries — can be extremely circumscribed in scale to neighborhoods and communities, local governments or municipalities, to even the nation. Conventional understanding of the local, as Saskia Sassen shows, rests it within a jurisdictional hierarchy with the national and the global. Sassen is critical of this hierarchy and argues that global processes located/constituted within the nation initiate the partial “unbundling” of the nation such that “international professionals and

immigrant workers operate in contexts that are at the same time local and global, disrupting conventional hierarchies of scale” (2000, 226).

As globalization disrupts the coherence of scale, such that the local and global are already constitutive of each other, then conventional parameters of state sovereignty need to be rethought. Again, as Sassen says, “Economic globalization does indeed extend the economy beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and hence reduces the state’s sovereignty over its economy. But these boundaries are not simply geographic; they are also institutional and located inside the national rather than at its geographical borders” (ibid.). It is this miscegenational commingling of the local with the global that generates parochial anxieties. The three sites show efforts by different actors to respond by securing the boundaries of the nation. In each site, the nation was articulated as distinct from the global (often conflated with Western). The protection of national “culture” and the demonstration of strength were valorized and justified against the compromise of its integrity.

When the nation is defended against the global, what form of local resistance is generated? The sites in this project are not representative of the spectrum of opposition but offer a look at some of the dominant debates circulating within middle class public spheres. As such, they ask us to think about the validity and credibility that these arguments of protection were able to garner. Which dominant narratives are solidified in the uncritical coupling of the local as national? Which publics are evoked in the defense of the local? In these sites, middle class and Hindu idioms of nation, gender, and culture were defended and protected. If the nation is persistently in the process of construction, then what constructions of the nation are built in its defense? I have attempted to show that middle class and Hindu constructions of the nation dominate the discourse.

There is a need to think through the manner in which local and global are spatialized, particularly when gender is evoked. The defense and protection of the gendered nation requires securing its boundaries. My effort here is not to suggest that local resistance is not valid, rather it is to ask for caution against romanticizing it, especially when it is collapsed into conventional juridical boundaries such as the nation. Under conditions of such extensive collective disenfranchisement, our struggles for justice need radical rethinking of location and boundaries.

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Endnotes

Chapter 1

1. The Hindu nationalist movement in India is a highly organized and systematic group of organizations called the *Sangh Parivar* (family of organizations), whose political and ideological goal is to create a unified Hindu nation-state. *Hindutva* is the ideological and political discourse of the *Sangh Parivar*. The political alliance that held the reins of power in India from 1998 to mid-2004 was dominated by the Sangh's political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). For an extensive history of the Hindu nationalism movement, see Jaffrelot 1993.
2. In her interrogation of the state, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan acknowledges that "the state in India continues to have a central directive role in social and economic issues and that, consequently, political struggle is most usefully directed at the state to make it accountable in these matters" (2003, 7).
3. The qualification of "most" here is deliberate and drawn from analysis of *Hindutva's* women's subjectivity. Tanika Sarkar, among others, points out that while women as symbolic of nation and community is an oppressive construct, for the Hindu right-wing women this is the source of identity and a central feature of their role — as mothers of the nation and women who serve the patriarchal nation-state. Within *Hindutva* discourse Hindu women's bodies were imagined as pure spaces that escaped the corrupting influences of colonization (1995, 186). This discourse of purity continues to inform the subjectivity of Hindu women particularly in strategies to protect themselves.
4. The *Ramjanmabhoomi* movement literally translates to "the movement to liberate the birthplace of Ram." The conflict centered on the disputed site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. See Jain 2001.

5. Amitabh Bachchan was the megastar of Bollywood cinema. His roles as the angry young man strongly resonated with the sense of political disillusionment. Bachchan's popularity also coincides with the growth of subaltern organizing efforts such as Dalit (untouchables) and people's movements.
6. Saffron is the color of the flag to which the Hindutva movement pledges their allegiance.
7. For a detailed discussion of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics and the Hindu Right, see Rajagopal 2001.
8. *Akhand Bharat* translates to "unified undivided India that includes parts of Pakistan and Bangladesh," the achievement of which is one of the goals of the Hindutva movement.
9. Quoted in Thapan 2004, 415.
10. I expand on this in great detail in chapter 2.
11. While it was in the 1980s that the Hindu nationalist movement gained significant power, the genesis of the movement can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. For an extensive history of the Hindu nationalism movement, see Jaffrelot 1993. Composed of a broad base of organizations (the Sangh Parivar) the movement's ideological and political goal is the creation of a pure Hindu nation-state. The more than sixty organizations that form the Sangh Parivar are guided by three main branches of the Hindutva movement: the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) (the national volunteer corps) forms the umbrella structure through which members of the community are brought into the fold, the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) is the political wing of the Hindutva movement, and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) (World Hindu Council) makes links with the Hindu religious community in India and coordinates efforts in reaching the Hindu Indian diaspora. The Sangh's discourse asserts that Hindus are the original inhabitants of India and casts Christians and Muslims as foreign, contaminating, and dangerous.

Hindu nationalism was deeply influenced by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who was the ideological spearhead of the Hindutva movement in the early twentieth century. In his influential book, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* Savarkar asserts that the essential qualifications of a Hindu are based on two criteria: First, "to him [*sic*] the land ... is his fatherland and motherland the land of his patriarchs and forefathers" (1923, 110). The second is that "a Hindu is a descendant of Hindu parents, claims to have the blood of the ancient Sindhu and the race that has sprang from them in his veins" (*ibid.*). Savarkar repeatedly seeks to prove that there is an innate connection between land, blood (race), and religion of Hindus in Hindustan (another name for India). It is this construction, in which Hindus are direct descendants of an "intrepid band of Aryans," that serves to legitimize the claim that India belongs to Hindus and thus all those who came to India later (i.e., during the the Mughal invasion and British colonization) are aliens. Consequently, Muslims in India become the "other" and embody the persistent threat of invasion, sedition, and suspicion.

Hindutva defines its campaign as an effort to restore India to its past glory, exemplified during the Vedic golden age. This restoration entails cleansing the motherland of alien and contaminating bodies, which includes the corporeal bodies of Christians and Muslims as well as noncorporeal “bodies” such as monuments and shrines. Hindutva discourse further asserts that Hindu temples and shrines were destroyed by the “invading” empires, and that mosques and other monuments were built in their place. The effort to create a pure Hindu *Rashtra* (nation-state) therefore entails resurrecting Hindu temples and shrines that they believe were destroyed the Mughal empire. The most significant of these campaigns coalesced around the *Babri Masjid*, a sixteenth-century mosque that the Sangh believes is the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. The political movement around the Babri Masjid gave rise to the *Ramjanmabhoomi* movement (the movement to liberate the birthplace of Ram) and became the focal point of mobilization for the Sangh particularly in the 1980s. On December 6, 1992, *Kar sevaks* (temple volunteers), Bajrang Dal activists, and members of the *Sevika Samiti* (women’s wing of the Sangh) demolished the Babri Masjid. The image of Hindutva activists atop the crumbled structure of the Masjid remains a haunting symbol of Hindutva victory and the public denunciation of secularism. The demolition of the Babri Masjid resulted in brutal violence between Hindus and Muslims across the country, often with state complicity.

One of the most startling aspects of the destruction of Babri Masjid was the active engagement of Hindutva women. Amrita Basu (1995) explains the roles of prominent women whose discourses openly incite violence against Muslims. The shrill voice of Sadhvi Rithambara recorded onto tapes communicates vitriolic incitement of hatred toward Muslims. In addition to the involvement of women, Hindu right-wing violence, particularly following the destruction of the Babri Masjid, found favor among the middle classes. Corbridge and Harriss suggest a sense of “threatened social order” brought on by the change in the political economic landscape of the 1980s generated the discursive space where Hindu nationalists could assert their presence (2000, 123). The threatened social order had generated the sense among the middle classes that “they had acquired economic status but not corresponding social status [and] there is an anxiety to bring the two into consonance partly through religious observance and congregational activities” (125). In this context of anxiety Hindu nationalists offered a sense of order and entitlement to middle class Hindus.

12. Beginning with the early 1980s, the political context shifted in India, allowing for the consolidation of power by the Hindu Right. This shift was marked by Indira Gandhi’s return to power and what appeared to be her public acknowledgement of the Hindu Right. Soon after assuming the office of the prime minister, for instance, Gandhi made several well-publicized visits to Hindu temples and shrines. Of particular significance was her presence at the inauguration of the Bharat Mata temple in 1983. The Bharat Mata is the deity to whom the Sangh pledge their allegiance (McKean 1995).

13. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are communities that have for generations been ostracized and excluded from the caste system. As a consequence of their exclusion they have been accorded special status by the Indian constitution.
14. The Shah Bano case involved a 1985 Supreme Court judgment that awarded a divorced Muslim woman alimony settlement contrary to Sharit law by invoking Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In response, Muslim clerics, organizations, and parliamentarians criticized the government's involvement in Muslim personal law. With the Muslim vote bank at stake, Rajiv Gandhi passed the regressive Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill in February 1986 (Pathak and Rajan, 1989).
15. According to Pavan Varma the middle classes were dominated by the upper castes. He says, "education was a common thread that bound together this pan-Indian elite ... Almost all its members spoke English, and had had some higher education beyond school" (1998, 27).
16. The Alternative Economic Survey reports that for the year 1997–98 the Consumer Price Index reported an increase of 8.9 percent over the year (Delhi Science Forum, 1998, 10).
17. Morley and Robins, among other theorists of globalization, cite television as one of many "information" flows that characterize the new global landscape. They say, "We are seeing the restructuring of information and image spaces and the production of a new communications geography, characterized by global networks and an international space of information flows; by an increasing crisis of the national sphere" (1995, 1). This deterritorialization of media is generating questions about the link between identity and place that is part of a "wider process of fragmentation of public space and public sphere" (4–5).

Chapter 2

1. The figure of the vamp in Bollywood cinema was reserved for women in whose subjectivity resided the corrupting intrusion of the West. The vamp served as temptation and as a symbolic counterpoint to the virtuous heroine who embodied "Indian" cultural values.
2. Despite critical feminist intervention in the production and deployment of dyads such as tradition and modernity and public and private, such dyads nevertheless persist in discursive and structural ways to gender spaces.
3. This construction of "catching up" and being "behind" draws on development discourse of the 1960s and 1970s and the persistent sense of attempts to catch up with the developed world and to emulate, in some senses, the miracle economies of the Asian tigers.
4. Satya Saran, Editor of *Femina*, Interview by Author, April 14, 1997, Bombay.
5. Satya Saran, Editor of *Femina*, Interview by Author, April 14, 1997, Bombay.

6. *Outlook's* readership of 1.5 million needs to be understood in the context of *India Today*, which began in 1975 and is one of the oldest news magazines with a readership of 5.9 million.
7. "Bold and beautiful" is a reference to the American soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* that became popular in India after the introduction of satellite television.
8. A *shalwar kameez* is a common attire worn by women consisting of a long tunic over loose pants.
9. While it can be argued that India has always been part of the global market and has had to negotiate with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), what I am pointing to is that since economic reform, India is being cast as being on the threshold of dramatic change that will position it favorably in the global market. In other words, advertisements such as NIIT's reframe India's position vis-à-vis the World Bank and IBM as an active player rather than a passive recipient of funds and structural adjustment policies. Much of the "favorable" status of India has to do with the availability of relatively inexpensive, highly skilled labor and, in this case, of computer software-trained professionals who were hired in America as H1-B (temporary workers) during the Internet boom of the 1990s. Since the 1990s India has also emerged as one of the largest off-shore software sites for US companies.
10. Headlines of these articles were alarmist, claiming, "TV Behind the Fall of Social Values" (*The Asian Age*, September 30, 1996, 3) and "Parents Resent Violence in TV Films" (*The Hindu*, May 11, 1994).
11. In 1991, when satellite television was first introduced to the country during the 1991 Gulf War, satellite signals were available free to anyone with a dish and a decoder. Because of this free access to the satellite signal, the state had no way to establish control and police access.
12. "Adult Channel to Be on Air by End of this Month," *The Asian Age*, August 26, 1996, 5.
13. Bhaskar Roy, "Political Consensus is against Murdoch's Entry into India," *The Times of India*, June 27, 1996.
14. *Parliamentary Proceedings*, Lok Sabha, The Government of India, April 26, 1994, 433.
15. Sushma Swaraj, BJP Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Interview by Author, April 1, 1997.
16. "Pooja Gets Clean Chit," *The Pioneer*, May 2, 1997.
17. In the latter part of the 1990s, STAR began to expand its programming to include Hindi.
18. Abhilasha Kumari, quoted in Center for Media Studies (1994, 8).

Chapter 3

1. I borrow the term "cartographic anxiety" from Sankaran Krishna (1996).

2. Leela Fernandes (2000) points to the discourse through which the global is negotiated through national imaginings and the manner in which this discourse is displaced onto women's bodies.
3. The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a statutory body in the government of India to protect and promote women's rights in the country.
4. The following is an incomplete list of controversies about women's sexual representation in the 1990s:
 - 1993: Attempts to ban the song *Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai* (What is behind the Blouse) from the film *Khalnayak*. After this, other songs with double entendres faced similar censorship attempts.
 - 1994: Three civil writ petitions are filed in the Delhi High Court against the state and satellite and cable television companies. Among the petitioners is the National Commission for Women.
 - 1994: The Center for Media Studies and the Media Advocacy Group released two studies on the impact of obscenity and vulgarity in the media.
 - 1996: Controversy surrounding a "Tuffs" shoes advertisement that showed two nude models embracing with a snake around them.
 - 1996: Sushma Swaraj, Minister for Information and Broadcasting (during the thirteen days that the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party was in power) bans three television advertisements that she considered objectionable.
 - 1996: Controversy surrounding the Miss World Pageant.
 - 1997: M. F. Hussain's painting of the Indian goddess *Saraswati* in the nude led to attacks on his tapestries by the Hindu Right.
 - 1997: The Bollywood film actress Pooja Bhatt is charged by the Mumbai High Court because a computer-generated image of her in the nude appears in the magazine *Stardust*.
 - 1998: Women prohibited from working after 8:30 pm in Mumbai night clubs and as cabaret dancers.
5. For a detailed history of television prior to the introduction of satellite and cable television, see Chatterji 1987, Mankekar 1999, and Rajagopal 2001.
6. Pendakur (1989) argues that Doordarshan was an "instrument of state propaganda" and Rajagopal (2001) suggests that television at the end of the 1980s was central to mobilizing Hindu nationalism.
7. For a detailed study of the epics, see Arvind Rajagopal 2001.
8. AsiaSat-1 was owned by Hutchison Whampoa (a Hong Kong-based conglomerate), China International Trust & Investment Corp, and Britain's Cable and Wireless company.
9. Atkins (1995) suggests that the reason that Li Ka-shing was willing to sell controlling stock of STAR TV to Murdoch was because of a deteriorating relationship with China and because of China's objections to STAR's coverage of news. According to Atkins, Li has significant business interests in China that he did not want to jeopardize by holding on to STAR.
10. Because the state-run (and therefore considered, biased) Doordarshan is the one defining "quality programming," the extent to which this strategy has been successful is debatable.

11. The crafting of an Indian image is evidenced in multiple spaces, from the political rhetoric of “Swadeshi” to visual images and advertising. For the construction of an Indian image in advertising, see William Mazzarella 2003.
12. *Parliamentary Proceedings*, Lok Sabha, The Government of India, December 13, 1993, 157.
13. *Ibid.*
14. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, The Government of India.
15. This is the term that Mankekar (1999) uses to describe the dynamics of television viewing in the families in her study.
16. Interview by Author, April 16, 1997, Mumbai.
17. Interview by Author, April 15, 1997, Mumbai.
18. Interview by Author, April 15, 1997, Mumbai.
19. Interview by Author, April 15, 1997, Mumbai.
20. Interview by Author, April 15, 1997, Mumbai.
21. Interview by Author, April 15, 1997, Mumbai.
22. *Parliamentary Proceedings*, Lok Sabha, The Government of India, April 26, 1994, 433.
23. *Civil Writ Petition in the Matter of Ms. Nirmala Sharma and Others versus the Union of India and Others* (The High Court of Delhi, 1995), 4. Hereafter, CWP, Sharma.
24. Articles 14, 19, and 21 are classified under fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution. Article 14 refers to the right to equality before the law, Article 19 refers to the protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech etc., and Article 21 refers to protection of life and personal liberty.
25. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *Response to the Civil Writ Petition in the Matter of Ms. Nirmala Sharma and Others versus the Union of India and Others* (The High Court of Delhi, 1995), 9.
26. Private channels during the 1990s were not allowed to uplink from India. In 2000 the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) allowed uplinking from India of news and current affairs channels. Since then there have been further revisions, and in December 2005 the I&B ministry consolidated guidelines that now allow all channels to apply to the state for uplinking. According to these guidelines, only those channels approved by the state will be granted uplinking licenses.
27. *Central Board of Film Certification response to the Civil Writ Petition in the Matter of Ms. Nirmala Sharma and Others versus the Union of India and Others* (The High Court of Delhi, 1995), 8.
28. This petition was coupled with the Nirmala Sharma petition. Hereafter, CWP Seth.
29. The Constitution of India, Article 19 (1) (a).
30. As mentioned earlier, in 1996 the BJP banned a series of advertisements deemed indecent, prohibited women nightclub workers in Mumbai from working after 8:30 in the evening, and members of the Hindu Right burned

tapestries of the painter M. F. Hussain for painting the Hindu goddess Saraswati in the nude.

31. Center for Feminist Legal Research, *Shifting Boundaries: A Report and Commentary on the Workshop on Women, Law and the Media* (New Delhi: CFLR, 1994), 12.
32. See examples from the previous chapter for magazines that draw such direct connections.

Chapter 4

1. *Times of India* (New Delhi), October 24, 1996.
2. Emerging geographic literature examines space and structure intersectionally. See, for instance, Laura Y. Liu 2000. For a critique of resistance, I particularly draw on Lila Abu-Lughod 1990.
3. For an interesting account of the production of the global through nationalist imagination, see Leela Fernandes 2000.
4. Dipanker Gupta (2000) argues that modernity in India has been misrecognized as “cars, gadgets, and technological progress.”
5. I develop this point further in chapter 5.
6. Aishwarya Rai and Sushmeta Sen, who won the 1994 Miss World and Miss Universe contests, respectively, became national icons to be emulated by thousands of young women. Since then, Indian women have won in 1997, 1999, and 2000, generating a huge cosmetics and beauty product industry in the wake of these contests. *Femina* magazine (the organizer of the “Miss India” contests) celebrates beauty and fashion as the mantle of the “new Indian women.” For *Femina*, Meenakshi Thapan suggests, the glamorous well-groomed body also serves as “a commercialized product for consumption in an international marketplace” (2004, 420).
7. Salim Lakha (2002) argues that the BJP coalition’s economic policy has more similarities with its predecessors than differences. Its attempt to mold Swadeshi to conform to its economic policy has drawn criticism from other members of the Sangh Parivar who question the BJP’s commitment to genuine Swadeshi.
8. This divergence between rhetoric and policy was particularly demonstrated in the conflict around the Enron power plant in Mumbai. *Swadeshi Jagran Manch* (SJM) activists demonstrated against the contract between the BJP government in Maharashtra and Enron. The at-times violent confrontations finally ended with the scrapping of the project in August 1995. Following pressure from the Mumbai-based Hindu right-wing party, *Shiv Sena*, the BJP renewed negotiations and signed the redrafted contract in January 1996. For a critical assessment of the Enron project in India, see Arundathi Roy 2001.
9. The Dunkel Draft is named after its author Arthur Dunkel, who was the director general of GATT. The draft emerged in an effort to resolve the halted negotiations of the Uruguay GATT negotiations, especially those concerning agriculture.
10. ABCL press release, November 4, 1996.

11. Miss World Organization press conference, 4 November 1996, New Delhi, India. Emphasis added.
12. For similar arguments about eroticized land, see M. Jacqui Alexander 1994.
13. Amitabh Bachchan was one of the biggest superstars of Indian cinema during the 1970s and 1980s.
14. This engagement of national worth in globalization is explored in greater detail in chapter 5.
15. ABCL press release, November 14, 1996, "Miss World Spectacle," Bangalore, India.
16. ABCL press release, November 14, 1996, "Miss World Spectacle," Bangalore, India.
17. Interview by Author, November 16, 1996, Bangalore, India.
18. *Times of India*, October 7, 1996. One hundred million rupees is approximately 3 million US dollars.
19. CITU pamphlet distributed at a mass demonstration against pageant, November 17, 1996, Bangalore, India.
20. AIDWA press release, November 16, 1996, Bangalore, India.
21. I would like to acknowledge Laura Liu for drawing my attention to this point.
22. Pamphlet distributed by the Active Opposition Association, Bangalore, India.
23. Pamphlet distributed during a CPI(M) (Communist Party of India Marxist) and AIDWA demonstration, November 17, 1996, Bangalore, India.
24. Ibid.
25. Pamphlet distributed by Mahila Sangharsha Okkuta, Bangalore, India. 11/7/96.
26. Since structural adjustment in 1991, more attention has been given to the impact of the reforms on women's labor (Shah et al., 1994).
27. *Times of India*, October 25, 1996, 1.
28. Gender is constantly being fixed and unfixed; by highlighting the pageant I do not mean that there are not other spaces, but rather that the pageant was a critical space in the contemporary moment.
29. My use of "wishing away" is drawn from Leela Fernandes's comments at a panel discussion on "Developing Women's Studies: Confronting the Legacies of Colonialism, Imperialism and Racism" at the University of Pennsylvania conference, "Unleashing Our Legacies: Exploring Third World Feminisms," March 1998.
30. *The Hindu* (Bangalore), November 24, 1996.
31. *Express Magazine* (Delhi), November 17, 1996.
32. *The Hindu* (Bangalore), November 24, 1996.
33. *Asian Age* (Mumbai), November 18, 1996.
34. Interview by Author, November 20, 1996, Bangalore, India.
35. Doreen Massey directs this question to those who perceive a threat to home and homeland in globalization. See Massey 1994.

36. Kaplan, Caren. 1996. "Postmodern Geographies: Feminist Politics of Location." In her *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. 143–187. Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press. 183. AU.

Chapter 5

1. I borrow the term "Rubicon" from Achin Vanaik (1998).
2. "Our Nation's Security," BJP election manifesto.
3. Poll conducted by Indian Market Research Bureau. "Most Indians Hail N-Test – Opinion Poll," *The Hindu*, May 13, 1998, 14.
4. Charu Gupta (2001) explores the construction of Hindu sexuality through a discourse of purity and perversion in colonial India.
5. The range of orientalist scholarship about India was extensive and complicated with several narratives, among them those of Charles Wilkins, who translated the Bhagwat Gita; William Jones, who started the Asiatic Society of Bengal; and Alexander Hamilton. Added to these were German scholars such as Max Müller, who produced a romanticist discourse on India that designated Indian culture as steeped in spirituality and divinity. In this discourse, India was fundamentally differentiated from the West by contrasting (what was argued as) India's high spirituality against Western vulgar materiality. Indian nationalists and reformers as diverse as Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya as well as Jawaharlal Nehru were deeply influenced by romanticist orientalist discourse.
6. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Prakash understands the discourse of science among the elite in India as a process of translation rather than as hegemonic control of knowledge by the British. He suggests that the process of translation entails the "undoing of binaries and borders" (1999, 51).
7. Prakash, however, disagrees with this assessment. He argues instead that "the nation-state was not a 'surrender to old forms of the modern state': the politics of the state did not simply outmaneuver the logic of community; Nehru, the modernizer did not just sideline Gandhi the non-modernist after having utilized him for mobilizing masses. The nation-state was immanent in the very hegemonic project of imagining and normalizing a national community — The state materialized the imagination of India as a pre-political community; it actualized the community's universal life in the political domain" (1999, 202).
8. The close friendship between Nehru and Bhabha spanned many years. Both were educated in the West and came from wealthy families with extensive political influence.
9. Figures such as Raja Ramanna; M. G. K. Menon, director of TIFR (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research); and Homi Sethna, who headed the plutonium reprocessing plant, all were close associates of Bhabha and shared a similar understanding and had similar goals for the future of India's nuclear establishment.
10. These conditions were (1) nuclear superpowers must not transfer nuclear weapons or nuclear technology to others; (2) nuclear superpowers must not

use nuclear weapons against those countries that do not possess them; (3) nuclear superpowers must safeguard the security of countries threatened by nuclear weapons states; (4) there must be tangible progress towards disarmament, including a comprehensive test ban treaty; and finally, (5) nonnuclear powers may not acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons (Perkovich 2000, 103).

11. The UN Disarmament Commission decided to shift the treaty negotiations to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee. Five of these nations were from NATO, five from the Warsaw Pact, and eight from nonaligned states. These were, respectively, the United States, the UK, Canada, France, and Italy; the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania; and Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden, and the United Arab Republic.
12. Achin Vanaik “Ideologies of the State: Socio-Historical Underpinnings of the Nuclearization of South Asia” (unpublished monograph, n.d), 3.
13. During this time there were other unsuccessful attempts at creating international agreements on global nuclear disarmament. The “Delhi Declaration” involved five continents and six nations; and a plan put forward at the UN General Assembly’s Fourth Special Session on Disarmament called for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. For further details, see Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik 2001, 70
14. A crore is a unit of value equal to 10 million rupees.
15. A 1999 Human Rights Watch report documents the rise in anti-Christian violence by the *Sangh* since the BJP came to power. Human Rights Watch, “Politics by Other Means: Attacks Against Christians in India,” 1999, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/indiachr/>.
16. “3 Nuclear Tests by India,” *Asian Age*, May 12, 1998, 1.
17. The approval rating following the nuclear tests was taken from an *India Today* MARG poll. There were 1,635 people polled in 12 cities across the country. *India Today*, May 25, 1998, 25.

The BJP had earned only 26 percent of the popular vote in the 1998 general elections.

By accusing the BJP in particular of political opportunism, I am not suggesting that other political parties such as Congress are absolved of it. Congress has a long history of pandering to particular constituencies for votes. However, the BJP plays a significant role within the *Sangh*, whose larger political project is to craft India as Hindu. For all the opportunism and the weak ideological positions that one can accuse the other political parties of, they do not have a comparable political agenda.

18. The first procession started in Kathmandu, Nepal, and ended in Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu; the second was from Gangasagar in Bengal to Somnath in Gujarat; and the third was from Haradwar in Utter Pradesh to Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu.
19. The use of *Ramayana* worked remarkably well for the BJP; the epic had a ubiquitous popularity with its discourse of the Hindu nation realized through Ram Rajya (used by the BJP to appeal to the idea of a nation imbued

with the qualities of justice and the ethics of the ancient kingdom). The epic's message of the victory of good over evil works as an "antidemonic" tale and is easily appropriated by the Hindu nationalists to legitimize the struggle of Hindus over Muslims (van der Veer 1994, 174).

20. Editorial, *The Organiser*, May 24, 1998.
21. Elsewhere I have discussed the manner in which the Hindu Right's trajectory to power has been invested in a geography of increasing violence that seeks to eradicate national space of Muslim presence. See Oza (forthcoming [b]). For the manner in which this spatial strategy was deployed in the reconstruction after the Gujarat earthquake, see Simpson 2004.
22. Since then, parallel women's organizations of the usually masculine domains within the Hindutva pantheon have emerged. For instance, *Durga Vahini* (the women's wing of the VHP) and *Mahila Morcha* (BJP's women's organization).
23. Sanjay Srivastava's work is a departure from the more well-known research on masculine sexuality that focuses on semen conservation. He seeks to map out the other spaces within the metropole where sexuality circulates within a "subterranean civil society" (2001).
24. This is not to suggest that the measurement of national status does not continue to this day. The developmentalist paradigm persists, albeit packaged in a different discourse. For instance, instead of using measures of development, civilization and democracy are used.
25. Investment brochure published by the Director General of Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism (n.d.).
26. Amartya Sen, "How India has Fared," *Frontline* (Special issue "India Independent: 50 years") August 9–22, 1997.
27. World Bank, India: 1998 Macroeconomic Update, 11.
28. The BJP's 1998 election manifesto makes its position apparent: "While the world shrinks, India will have to provide against such danger in our society too." The manifesto continues, claiming

Fortunately, at the family and social levels, the age-old *Dharma*, which is distinct from religious practice, acts as an extra-political normative moral order. But the normative moral order of *Dharma* needs to be protected and preserved, as it is already under pressure. With this end in view, the BJP says that it will strive for a national consensus — with the involvement of all sections of the Indian society — for a voluntary moral standard for the media because the media plays such an important role both in fostering and prejudicing such a moral order. The inherent idea behind such a moral code may be summarized as including:

Promotion of family values and extended family relationships to preserve the family as a basic socio-economic and socio-cultural unit.

Promotion of the importance of religious faith in molding human life, with due understanding that religions should not conflict; nor need there be uniformity.

Projection of regard and respect for women and motherhood.

Criticism of political parties and personalities, without eroding the self-confidence of the nation.

Promotion of interest in Indian traditions, history, literature, arts, and values as a source of emotional support and as a link with the nation's past, which will thus strengthen the civilizational and cultural roots of the country and its people.

Using entertainment as an embodiment of the traditional Indian view of *Navarasa*, so that it does not degenerate into a source of amoral living.

Encouraging the healthy development of an open and scientific mind, the spirit of adventure, and patriotism among the youth.

29. BJP 1998 election manifesto.
30. Part of the *Sangh Parivar*, SJM is dedicated to fighting globalization and liberalization by promoting Indian industry and economic interests.
31. Kay Benedict, *Asian Age*, May 13, 1998, 2.
32. *The Hindu* (Chennai), May 14, 1998, 1.
33. The BJP's countermoves to the Mandal Commission report were initiated with a *Rath Yatra* (chariot procession) from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodhya to build the temple. Since Babri Masjid was still a disputed site, V. P. Singh's government prohibited the continuation of the Yatra, and Lal Krishna Advani, who was leading the Yatra, was arrested in Bihar. Predictably, Advani's Yatra was accompanied by Hindu-Muslim violence, the most extensive being in Bhagalpur, Bihar, where most of the Muslim population was killed. The political agitation around the Mandal Commission and the arrest of Advani led to the collapse of the V. P. Singh government when the BJP withdrew its support. However, the BJP had succeeded in using the political agitations around Advani's procession to redirect the issue from upper caste hegemony to Hindu victimization.
34. BPL's advertising package introduced their campaign saying: "Ever since the liberalization and opening up of the Indian economy began, there has been considerable discussion on whether Indian products and brands would be able to survive the onslaught of foreign products and brands. To continue to succeed we recognize that we need to continue to do what we have done for over 3 decades ... Give our customers world class products and services ... We have never had any doubt on our ability to do just that. We have great faith in our nation, in the potential of its people and in ourselves."
35. In her interview with a BPL executive, Nilanjana Gupta says Bachchan was used because he had become an icon who projected pride in the country, and his image symbolized "global Indian citizen" (1998, 101).
36. Sections within the Hindu Right were cautious, if not outright critical, of the Wagah meeting. For instance, the Vishwa Hindi Parishad (World Hindu Council) advised Vajpayee on the eve of his visit to Wagah that he should consider traveling across the border in a tank. On the other side of the border, the conservative Jamaat-i-Islami, which draws considerable street support in Pakistan, led protests during Vajpayee's visit.

Chapter 6

1. Praful Bidwai (2003), a syndicated Indian columnist, articulates the implications of the United States' discourse on terror for India: "since September 11, terrorism — strictly of the non-state, and preferably Islamic, variety — has become a powerful shibboleth which is not easy (or popular) to attack. Given today's Islamophobic climate, particularly in the United States, many Indians who would have preferred to be fence-sitters on the issue of religion and politics, now sympathize with the view that there is an 'organic' link between Islam and terrorism, and that Indian Muslims are partial to jihad."
2. There are over forty independent reports about the pogrom, including reports by international human rights agencies such as the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. These reports are available at <http://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports.php>.
3. See The Campaign to Stop Funding Hate. 2002. *The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the U.S. funding of Hindutva* (India: Sabrang Communications and France: South Asian Citizen's Watch), and Awaaz: South Asia Watch Limited. 2004. *In Bad Faith? British Charity and Hindu Extremism*. London.
4. Diplomatic correspondent. 2003. "Emulate the Jewish Diaspora," *The Hindu*, January 10.

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In the 1990s, the forces of globalization exploded in India: a formerly tiny middle class quickly expanded, international trade burgeoned, and privatization of state-controlled industries and sectors proceeded apace. Globalization poses particular challenges to nations and national identity, and nations have responded to the myriad and complex forms and forces of globalization in contradictory ways. In India, nationalism grew in strength and the major Hindu nationalist party took power for the first time in decades.

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Rupal Oza is Director of the Women's Studies program at Hunter College, City University of New York.

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