

ARCHIVING THE NATION-STATE IN FEMINIST PRACTICE: A SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Prologue

Postcolonial nation-states carry not merely the marks of their erstwhile political and cultural experiences of colonisation but also the 'burdens' of nationalism. These include a certain anxiety about their territorial and political status that refuses to engage with interrogations of the nation-state and insists upon confining thinking within a set of givens: defined boundaries, which make up what a civil rights activist called 'cartographic nationalism',¹ sovereignty of the nation-state form which is beyond question, and a cultural unity defining the 'essence' of a people, and thus legitimising the making of the nation-state as a *territorial* formation. For the postcolonial nation-states of South Asia, the anxieties are so numerous that critiques of the nation-state have taken more time than warranted to make their way into civil rights activism (where they are fairly consolidated now) and much longer into scholarship, a process that is finally underway.

Feminist scholarship on the nation-state too has had a late start in our region but Indian feminism stands out even within South Asia for its failure to grapple with fundamental issues around the nation-state from a decidedly feminist perspective. This has meant that theorising militarisation and internal repression, even conflict between 'communities' and regions, has taken far longer to emerge in India than it has in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. An important question for me in recent times has been to try and understand why this has been so: over the years, I have come to have misgivings about the peculiar burdens of postcolonial nationalism specific to India where the Indian middle class believes, and has been led to believe from the inception of the nation-state, that 'our' nationalism carries the imprimatur of a pure and liberatory patriotism pitted against an evil, racist colonialism; further, that it was untainted by the 'selfish' and 'communal' demand for the partition of the sub-continent on religious lines. The nation-state in India is thus constructed as an example of a 'higher' nationalism based upon the principles of secularism and democracy, features absent in the nationalism of Pakistan. Both men *and* women subscribe to these assumptions often explicitly but, even more often, implicitly. Consequently, we have rarely listened to the

voices speaking—and which have been speaking— to us from the margins of the postcolonial nation state of India from its very inception. In this paper, I examine some issues that mark the relationship of Indian feminism to Indian nationalism in the postcolonial phase and explore the ways in which pioneering work on feminism and nationalism in Asia suggests lines of enquiry that can help us understand not just our own politics of location but the limits nationalism places in mobilising resistance against the repressive practices of nation-states in South Asia.

Kumari Jayawardena's pioneering book on feminism and nationalism in Asia (*Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*) is well-known and it opened up research and writing on the area in Asia. As I see it, the most important contribution of this book, as indeed of all Kumari's work, is that she never loses track of class and the manner in which she delineates the class basis of nationalism (and therefore of the postcolonial nation-state) is one of relentless interrogation. By bringing into focus the active relationship between capitalism and the bourgeoisie-led anti-colonial, nationalist, and independence movements on the one hand, and between capitalism and the women's movement on the other, she suggests the parameters as well as the limits of women's consciousnesses and their emotional and material investments in both class and nation as postcolonial creations in South Asia.² In her account of the rise of the bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka, Kumari's chapter on gender offers a powerful analysis of the centrality of the women's question to both the making of the bourgeoisie and the ideology of the nationalists—i.e. to the nationalist bourgeoisie, and thus to the making of the bourgeois family with its attendant ideology of bourgeois morality that underpins family and gender relations. In Sri Lanka, the project of bourgeois family morality and the nationalist Buddhist woman was best articulated by Bhikkhu Angarika Dharmapala.³ Nira Yuval-Davis points to the links between the rise of the bourgeoisie, family morality and nationalism in other regions of the world.⁴ It is this class that both defined nationalism and the cultural basis of the nation; that the process by which certain aspects of the culture were selected, privileged over others, and constructed as 'authentic', while others were marginalised and/or excluded was conducted by this class is by now well-known and well-documented in the scholarship on nationalism.

Feminists in South Asia have pushed the argument further, been acutely sensitive to the processes of tradition-making and have contributed richly to our understanding of the 'invention' of tradition and the centrality of women's identity in constructing the identity of the nation, across South Asia. What I want to suggest, however, is that even as feminists have been very strong in critiquing the cultural basis of nationalism, they have not been as mindful of the class (and caste) and regional bases of this nationalism and the implicit assumptions that have shaped our own ideologies of nationalism,

nation-states, and their territorial arrangements, as reflected in borders and boundaries, and the way we ourselves have been constructed to invest in our own nation-states in this process.

Kumari's engagements with feminism and nationalism have taken other directions too: in *The White Woman's Other Burden*, Kumari⁵ explores a terrain which has virtually been a monopoly of feminists in western academia, perhaps because we were preoccupied with our own colonial histories and the history of our foremothers. Always 'dispassionately passionate,' Kumari's location in Sri Lanka, with its own complicated legacy of multiple ethnicities, colonialism and cosmopolitanism, has enabled her to recover a rich history of white, western women's engagements with the projects of feminism, nationalism and class in South Asia from the parameters of a newly-forged feminist constituency and of a shared politics in the different regions of South Asia. Thus, Kumari also made a sustained attempt not to *confine* feminism within a narrowly defined nationalism but show how women have transcended and crossed over from their birth-based identities—in the making of which they have had no choice—as white, English, or mixed. These crossings, when antagonisms and conflicts were internal to different segments of erstwhile colonised states, actually point to directions which can, indeed must, be taken in the present so that our feminisms do not become part of the hegemonic projects of the nationalisms of the nation-states within which we are inscribed.

Part I: South Asian Feminist Interventions

I.1. Pakistan

In the year 2001, at a Women's Studies conference in Lahore, a session on 'Women in Conflict' was planned. It was after all the thirtieth anniversary of the Pakistan government's military action in erstwhile East Pakistan that had led to the liberation/secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan. The military action had resulted in a bitter legacy for those who lived through the bloody days that divided the women of undivided Pakistan;⁶ a number of the women who found themselves facing this bitterness in East Pakistan, and had even sworn never to go to Pakistan after what happened in 1971, were present at this conference in Lahore: the session was being chaired by Hamida Hossain, a native of Sind in Pakistan, married to a Bangladeshi and now a citizen of Bangladesh, and the first paper on 'Women in Conflict' was to be read by Amena Mohsin from Bangladesh whose father was in the Pakistan army in 1971, had been posted in Lahore and was, therefore, interned, with his family, in the Lahore cantonment

for the duration of the war. Amena took her matriculation exams from this location: as a house arrestee, as it were. She was now active in Conflict and Peace Studies and had been involved in the negotiations between the Bangladesh government and the leaders of the Chittagong Hill Tracts movement for a resolution to the conflict.

As the session began, all the participants of this South Asian conference stood for a few minutes in memory of those who were killed, raped and suffered the ravages of the war of 1971. We stood not in silence but to the strains of Nayyara Noor's poignant rendering of Faiz's '*Hum to thehre ajnabi kitni madaraaton ke baad, phir banenge ashne kitni mulakaton ke baad, kab nazar mein ayegi bedaag sabze ki bahar, khoon ke dhabbe dhulenge kitni barsaaton ke baad*' (hospitalities exchanged, yet we remain strangers, after how many meetings will we become intimate? When will we sight the spotless green? After how many rains shall the bloodstains fade?) written on his visit to Dhaka in 1974. Every one of us, from Pakistan, from Bangladesh and from India, carried our own particular burden of memories and we followed up the standing in memory with a strongly-worded resolution demanding that the Pakistan government apologise to the women of Bangladesh for the sufferings they caused to them in 1971. We realised that we shared a wound that healed to an extent through this act despite our recent histories. A shared bond was articulated in that experience, both in the conference and outside it, as we recalled the isolations of that moment and others—when women stood and acted against the grain. I will never forget Tahira Mazhar Ali's account of 1971 when only a handful of women and men came out to the streets of Lahore to protest the military action on East Bengal and the hatred to which they were subjected by the hyper-nationalist crowd on the pavements branding them as anti-national betrayers of the 'nation.' I remember not only recalling many moments of such isolation in the last few years, but also thinking to myself: could we in India have done what we did in Lahore that day? Could we cross boundaries and identities to *publicly* acknowledge wrong caused by our government in the name of national security and territorial integrity and demand an apology from it?⁷ Further, do we know how to distinguish between political action and rhetorical self-flagellation, the latter of which does not take us anywhere? What is the nature of the relationship between us as women in the women's movement and our nationalisms, our conceptualisations of the nation-state and our feminist perspectives?

Feminist engagements with the nation-state, rather than merely the state, have been a product of crises, of conflicts. These crises are the result of the distinctive, uneven histories of nation-states in south Asia and feminist engagements with nation-states across the region have also been uneven: in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, for example, interrogations of state power from a feminist perspective came much earlier than in

other countries of the region. The militarisation of civil society, and the relationship between militarisation, patriarchy, and fundamentalism placed women dramatically in the eye of the storm in Pakistan before the rest of South Asia. The critical position of women caught in the midst of armed conflict was central to Sri Lankan feminist engagements with the state since the middle of the 1980's. Similarly, the state and its links with fundamentalism were written about in Pakistan and Bangladesh before such conceptualisations made their appearance in India. A summary of these engagements in feminist scholarship would be useful to issues I would like to explore in the second part of this essay.

I have argued elsewhere that the nation-states carved out of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 witnessed a crisis of legitimacy roughly around the same time—about a generation after the states had become independent of colonial rule.⁸ What is evident is that South Asian states had failed the aspirations of 'the people' as the crises mounted and manifested themselves on all fronts: economic, political, social and regional. Governments, comprising the political elites, responded by an increasing use of authoritarian force, from clamping civil emergencies as in India, to military coups as in Pakistan, to language and region-based movements in what ultimately became Bangladesh, and in Sri Lanka. In India, too, the regional autonomy movements were continuous whether or not they were acknowledged by the state and the ruling political elites. South Asia exploded in violence in 1971 with the war of liberation/secession drawing Pakistan, India and the Bengali Pakistanis into a war that ended with the independence of Bangladesh and the formation of a new nation-state. For the democratic movements in all these states, but especially in Pakistan and Bangladesh, nationalism and patriotism had perforce to be redefined. The suppressed question that Indian elites never openly engaged with is that the territorial arrangements of 1947 could be re-negotiated if the people's cultural and economic aspirations were not fulfilled. India was satisfied with taking the position that the break-up of Pakistan into two independent states - in which she had played a part - was an inevitable consequence of the falsity of the two-nation theory based on a religious identity alone. This validated the purity of her nationalism and the falsity of other nationalisms in the sub-continent. That the events of 1971 were an index of the relationship of a state with its 'own' people, indicative of the crisis of the state itself, is not a lesson any of the states learnt in 1971.

But 1971 aggravated the internal crisis in Pakistan, and, by 1975, the country had already seen thirteen years of military dictatorship. So when General Zia-ul-Haq assumed power in 1977, it was not a new phenomenon for Pakistan.⁹ What was new, however, were the strategies that Zia used to legitimise his power—an open recourse to fundamentalism, pegged entirely on women. In the first speech he gave after the

military takeover, he made a reference to *chadar* and *char divari* as the concepts around which women must define their lives¹⁰. As one scholar has put it, the media was used to exhort an Islamic way of life:

*Significantly the yardstick by which the presence and/or absence of Islam was measured was by the position of women: their dress code, their behaviour, their role and function in society.*¹¹

Further, it was argued that technically, and in so far as the bid for power is concerned, sexual control can extend beyond visible and known areas of morality. In reality, then, the government's puritanical and single-minded concern with the purification of society through Islamisation operated at two levels:

1. *It served to deflect attention from the troubled issue of legitimacy faced by the martial law regime by focussing on the discourses of religion and cultural revivalism.*
2. *The forms of sexual control, ranging from government directives to female government employees to dress modestly and wear the chadar to the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinances in 1979 which enjoins Islamic punishments for rape, adultery etc have made possible a whole series of state interventions by the state in multiple areas of public and private life*¹²

The effect of these changes has been the systematic devaluation of women within the social order and the advantages of such a shift to the martial law regime have been significant:

*By linking sex and sin and focussing on the woman as the source of temptation, the group in power has shifted attention from 'real' issues like poverty, unemployment, nepotism and corruption in high places and the question of their own legitimacy, onto the body of the woman, which is depicted explicitly as the terrain across which male power games are played.*¹³

While the slogans of *chadar* and *char divari* were the means by which the military rulers simultaneously legitimised themselves through the "piratisation of religious terminology and consolidated themselves in the domain of public discourse," it did not take long for women in Pakistan to realise that the same slogans as well as the "valorisation of the myth of the silent, invisible and enslaved woman" and the denigration of the vocal or the working woman, would push women back and deny them their uncertain but hard-fought gains of the past few years.¹⁴ They were among the first to

take to the streets and break the silence around the martial regime of Zia-ul Haq. It is not surprising that there was brutality and violence in the police action against the women demonstrating against the Hudood Ordinances in front of the Lahore High Court in February 1983.¹⁵ The women's movement in Pakistan was born as a resistance to the law, so there can be no dilemmas on feminist engagements with the law in Pakistan as long as the Hudood Ordinances and other such patriarchal and fundamentalist laws continue to be in operation. It is imperative to note, then, that the Pakistani women's movement has been decidedly anti-state, anti-fundamentalism and against the militarisation of the state and civil society from its very birth in the 1980s.

The specific histories of the militarisation and Islamisation of society as ways for the nation-state to survive in Pakistan¹⁶ and the manner in which such processes have shaped the question of women's autonomy and their everyday lives have been confronted in action, and theorised in feminist scholarship, within a critique of political economy; this body of work has been an important contribution to South Asian scholarship. Given the nature of the challenges thrown up from the ground, it is not surprising that almost every feminist scholar, whether or not a specialist in the subject, has written about the relationship between the state and fundamentalism, the state and Islamisation, and militarisation and patriarchy. The resistances by women to these developments have also been the subject of feminist accounts, even though such writing has also had to face a backlash.¹⁷

Much of the richness and creativity of these resistances still remains only in the oral narratives of feminists and needs to be documented before it is lost forever: I will recount only two aspects of the resistance by women which I have not seen mentioned in written accounts: the first was the women artists' resolution circulated in the artistic community during Zia's regime, but not published till much later, where they resolved not to accept the state's injunctions to abandon figurative art and refuted the imposition of *chadar* and *char divari* upon women;¹⁸ the second was Iqbal Bano's refusal to accept the dress code prescribed for women in public: she not only wore a sari at her performances - which was regarded with disfavour by the military regime - but also did not cover her head. Every one of a certain generation in Pakistan remembers her singing of Faiz's '*Hum dekhenge*', to a packed audience in the early 1980s which was received with wild jubilation as she used Faiz's words and her rebellious persona to challenge the authoritarian militarised state power of Zia as an earlier regime had jailed Faiz in the 50s in the infamous Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case.¹⁹

Challenging state power directly in Sind was also a critical aspect of the Sindhiani Tehreek, a mass-based women's movement which allied itself with Sindhi nationalism, and took to the streets along with other groups in the movement for the restoration of

democracy. The critique of Punjabi elites and Urdu language hegemony which the Sindhiani Tehreek shared with the democratic movements in Sind was accompanied by a movement against the feudal, patriarchal power within Sind and this movement with its strong links with rural women and creative strategies in coming to the support of women in distress needs to be visibilised in feminist scholarship more widely in South Asia.²⁰ It is an important legacy to hold on to at a point of time in our history as feminists moving, as we seem to be, into a culture of NGOised 9 to 5 activism.

Feminist scholarship in Pakistan has scrupulously examined nation-state rhetoric and policy: Saba Gul Khattak has subjected state policy to scrutiny in a sustained body of work, some of which I shall examine here to provide a sample of the kind of issues that have been taken up for consideration: Saba links foreign and domestic policy discourses to argue that during the Zia years in Pakistan, policy-makers used Islam and masculinity to fight off a constructed threat from India and communists at a time when Pakistan was supporting the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in collaboration with the US. The extent to which civil society was mobilised to support Afghanistan and the emergence of what came to be popularly called the 'Kalashnikov culture' took its toll even on discussions amongst civilian groups; intolerance coupled with a gun culture reigned supreme in Pakistan under the name of safeguarding Islam.²¹ Such developments went alongside prescribed discourses for the domestic realm: use of hyper-masculinist symbols for the ideal Muslim man; the creation of a hierarchical relationship between the protector and the protected, and the defence of the nation within this paradigm. The struggle of East Pakistan for independence was presented as a demand from an unreasonable, non-martial, effeminate people who deserved to be ruled by the martial races of West Pakistan; the demand by the western powers to inspect the nuclear facility was not only tantamount to the loss of national sovereignty but an invasion of the sacred, domestic space with its constitutive notions of honour and shame:

*We can bear anything, even the demolition of the fencing round our houses, but we cannot bear the opening of our nuclear facilities. To us the nuclear programme is similar to the honour of our mothers and sisters, and we are committed to defend it at all cost.*²²

Towards the end of Zia's regime, he convened a conference of 150 prominent persons which concluded that the greatest problem facing the country was national survival. Such anxieties about the nation-state were not confined narrowly to a military regime but had a much wider reference as Saba shows in another essay where both the army generals and the civilian Bhutto heading the state shared a masculinist rhetoric: the sanctity of shared blood sacrifice for the nation, martyrdom and undying loyalty.²³ As

Saadia Toor argues in another context, Zia brought together militarisation, fundamentalism and patriarchy to negotiate the internal crisis of the nation-state. Islamisation, Toor argues, was used to secure consent and to counter the bankruptcy of bourgeois institutions in the country which irreparably damaged the unwritten social contract between the postcolonial state and its citizens, particularly minorities [and women].²⁴

Though explored very summarily here, the complex feminist analysis of the crisis of the postcolonial nation-state in Pakistan and its increasing recourse to a military-run Islam with a range of ideological positions/manoeuvres is perhaps unique in south Asia, as I have not come across such analyses for the other nation-states in the region.²⁵ Even so, feminist scholarship has not to my knowledge explicitly addressed regional/nationality movements in a substantial manner. The contestations of the nation-state around linguistic and ethnic contradictions have been more central in framing issues for feminist scholarship in Sri Lanka so I will now turn my attention to Sri Lankan feminist writings on nationalism, the nation-state, and to the two decade-old militarised conflict there.

I.2 Sri Lanka

Amongst the South Asian states, Sri Lanka has had the most acute threat to the ideology and the real existence of the nation-state since the formation of postcolonial states in our region. The specific history of Sri Lanka is that it is a small state caught up in a complicated relationship to a much larger India, the country of origin of its sizeable 'minority' of Tamil speakers, both concentrated in certain regions such as the North East and East Central parts of the island and dispersed over other areas as plantation labour. Since the sixties, but more acutely from the early eighties of the twentieth century, it has witnessed a regional/linguistic/ethnic movement leading to a militarised conflict between Tamil speakers and the majority community of Sinhalese which has no parallel in South Asia. Dealing with the range of violences that increasingly marked this conflict became an imperative for feminist scholarship in Sri Lanka. A striking feature of this feminist engagement with the nation-state and the conflict endemic to it is that not just feminist scholars and women in the women's rights movements have written about nationalism, militarisation and gender but, together, these two segments - when distinguishable as separate segments - have carried the arguments into the popular media by writing a collective column in a newspaper under the pseudonym 'Cat's Eye,' universally acknowledged by friends as an initiative of Kumari Jayawardena, who kept it going for many years. Over a number of years, 'Cat's Eye' carried feminist critiques of nationalism, war, army brutalities, including rapes and killing of women, as part of the

conflict, sport as a substitute for war, cricket and nationalism, masculinity and war, and the death penalty among other issues conventionally regarded as 'feminist'. A notable feature of this writing was its South Asian perspective with frequent references to Pakistan and India, making it a great example of a South Asian feminist opinion. I will use the articles collected in *Cat's Eye: A Feminist Gaze on Current Issues* along with other essays by Sri Lankan feminists to pick up certain themes useful for the purpose of this essay.

Almost all the feminist writing explicitly examining nationalism and the making of the nation as a gendered project from the early nineties critically engages with issues of history, culture or identity.²⁶ The themes of nationalism, war, motherhood, women's participation in the war as cadres of the LTTE or the Sinhala state, dislocation, internal displacement, the militarisation of civil society, the lives of women as refugees or as mothers and wives of the 'disappeared' have all been subjects of Sri Lankan feminist scholarship. There is no way that I can do justice to the range of this writing in this essay, so I will pick a few issues for a more detailed analysis as a sample of the work that I am drawing upon to think about the 'burdens of nationalism' for feminists.

Using the figure of the mother to legitimise war is a trope long used in patriarchy. As Serena Tennekoon observes: "Male military heroes and their "supporting" cast of mothers and admiring wives and lovers are invoked to condone the insanity of organised male violence."²⁷ Both Tamil and Sinhala nationalisms have at different points evoked the mother figure to sanction the war in Sri Lanka. In an important analysis of constructions of motherhood that feed into the ongoing ethnic conflict, Malathi de Alwiss looks at the school curricula of the Sri Lankan state which includes a play on a Sinhala king and the role his mother plays in preparing him for war against the Tamils; the play was introduced into school text-books in 1952 and has stayed on in some form in the material used by schools. In another story in the curriculum, Buddhism, Sinhala-ness and making sacrifices for the Sinhala nation are brought together to evoke the sentiment that what is at stake in war, both then and now, are commitments to 'country, race and religion'²⁸. The queen mother is an example to all Sinhala mothers in the way she turned her son into a true Sinhala nationalist and patriot. The construction of the moral mother of history slides easily into the wife/mother of the soldier in the Sri Lankan army in a poster, and the Sinhala mother's sentiments expressed in poetry to her son who is exhorted to die in battle only after first handing over the gun to another, even as she proclaims that she will send her heroic second son too to battle.

Malathi de Alwiss connects the famous army poster put out by the state with the queen mother of the school text-books and the mother in the Sinhala poem cited above, published in a women's magazine:

[All three] share a common ideological terrain [as] all three women can speak of sending sons to war—with authority and moral righteousness – because it is they who gave them life in the first place [...] Such idealised images as warm tears, blood turned into milk [...] are harnessed in writings and other forms of public discourses such as war songs and political speeches²⁹.

These make up what de Alwiss terms the binary of moral mothers and stalwart sons to serve the motherland. Other scholars have also explored motherhood, especially the use of the grieving mother image to protest state repression in the context first of the violence associated with the JVP movement in the form of disappearances or encounter killings of sons and then the takeover of this position in various mothers fronts, first by Tamil women and later even by Sinhala women whose soldier sons cannot be traced.

Sitaralega Maunaguru argues that the moral or brave mother who sends her son to war can be countered or counter-positioned by the social mother, who speaks for peace.³⁰ Motherhood can thus be deployed in a variety of ways: to shame the government, to interrogate the growing impunity of state actors who violate legal and constitutional norms through a recourse to arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances as well as to create a climate for peace. However, in using the space of motherhood for protest, there is a playing out of the 'essentialised and homogenised cultural scripts of [their] society' making for a complicated relationship with a strategy that evokes 'a natural order and family and society' for feminists. Yet these contradictory manoeuvres can also be deployed for other ends which demand a return to normalcy and peace between warring factions of the state. Expanding on de Alwiss, Sitaralega Maunaguru argues:

By accepting this responsibility to nurture and preserve life, which is valorised by the Sri Lankan state, they [mothers] reveal the ultimate 'transgression' of the state as well: the state that has denied women the opportunities for mothering through a refusal to acknowledge life by resorting to violent repression. It was this contradiction that the women of the north who organised themselves as the Mother's Front, and the Association of Mothers of Missing Youth, operated to use their 'motherhood' as a political force.³¹

Although there were problems in sustaining the idea of the mother as figure of peace in the war-torn North, the construction of motherhood appealing for peace represents an important moment of protest which contradicted the image of the mother calling for

war.³²At another level, feminists have also tried to counter 'Mother Politics' with what Neloufer De Mel calls 'Woman Politics' by focussing on the resistance of women and the cross-border solidarity and support between resisting women, going beyond narrow nationalisms. This is an important mode to interrogate both essentialised images of the heroic mother of sons in the service of the motherland and its counter, the nurturant mother calling for peace.³³

An area of concern for feminist scholarship in Sri Lanka in the context of massive levels of violence has been to look at other dimensions of the workings of nationalism and the militarisation of society especially since the war began in the 1990's. As the LTTE consolidated itself to claim the status of the 'sole spokesman' of Tamil nationalism by violently exterminating all internal opposition to their standpoint, women's support for the cause of Tamil nationalism has moved into a different phase with a significant level of participation in direct combat. The phenomenon of the 'new woman' liberated from traditional roles in a fairly conservative Tamil society has been written about both by proponents of Tamil nationalism and by Sri Lankan feminists. Further, what are the implications of women who stand up against a fascist, authoritarian closure of debate, and a brutal stamping out of the dissenting voices of Tamil women who do not endorse the LTTE position?³⁴ What is the nature of the relationship of the female cadres in the LTTE to the organisation; are they equal participants in any meaningful sense? Have they successfully surmounted the patriarchies prevalent in Tamil society?³⁵ One scholar has termed their new status as one of 'ambivalent empowerment'.³⁶ Others have explored the emergence of the 'virgin warrior' who dies with a cyanide capsule rather than a *tali* (the symbol of a married woman) tied round her neck. Most powerfully, this new figure was articulated through the image of the killer of Rajiv Gandhi. What is significant is that while the LTTE claimed no responsibility for the killing, it suggested that it had been done by an IPKF rape victim, a statement that was taken little notice of by the media. Sitaralega Maunaguru, however, is struck by the metaphor of rape as the rationale for the killing of an important political persona: the concept of revenge, whether the symbolic rape of the motherland or an actual event has a powerful resonance:

The concept of revenge, the purification of oneself, and the courageous nature of the Tamil woman are all fused into one: the highly symbolic act of killing an important political figure [...] the raped woman is considered one who has lost her chastity: the super virtue of a Tamil woman. She is not only violated but also polluted. She cannot regain her purity by any means except by negating her polluted body [...] the woman killing her oppressor using her polluted body as a weapon performs the above two functions [...] she not only takes revenge

*against the enemy but also performs an ancient purificatory ritual—
the agnipravesam, or immolation by fire.*³⁷

In this powerful analysis of militant women and their mobilisation in the cause of Tamil nationalism, Sitaralega uses history, tradition and myth to make very important connections that help us to understand the power of nationalism and women's agency, a theme that feminists have had to theorise in Sri Lanka.

The wider conception of the relationship between feminism and nationalism as contradictory or ambivalent has also surfaced, most visibly in the pieces authored by the 'Cat's Eye' collective. The interventions have been numerous and on such a large range of issues that, in the book, they have been arranged according to themes; three themes titled 'The Body Politic', 'Bureaucrats and Bigots' and 'Sports, Sex and Silly Points' provide a representative set of articles to look at. The pieces on cricket are not only delightful, they constitute a sharp indictment of an obsessive emotional investment in sports and its surrogacy for nationalism, jingoism and a war mentality. One of the articles uses a Pakistani feminist psychotherapist, Dureh Ahmed's, deconstruction of the game to make the point that it is only south Asian feminists who have 'cast a cold eye [on the game] to raise a dissenting voice and to deplore the nationalist frenzy attached to the sport'.³⁸ As part of the perennial problem of which country's team to support, given the force of the 'loyalty to nation' test associated with it in popular discourse, one piece in *Cat's Eye* asks pertinently—why not support the country with the best human rights and women's rights record? In keeping with the concern for human rights and women's rights, there are pieces on the need to do away with the death penalty, but the call for justice against the unstated assumption of impunity in cases of rape, disappearances and torture, and the critique of jingoism and the manufacture of history, also means that the *Cat's Eye* feminists bore the backlash of the jingoists. A most important argument from the perspective of this essay is the piece titled 'Ultra Nationalists and Feminists' a response to the comments made by the *Cat's Eye* collective on the appointment of the Sinhala Commission to examine the question of the devolution of power. *Cat's Eye* notes the critical comments in the press to their piece:

We have been accused of being on the other side of the fence and of being spokespersons of Tamil ultra nationalists and separatist forces. All untrue. We are on the same side of the fence with those who believe in peace, democracy, human rights, women's rights, minority rights and a pluralist society[...]

Cat's Eye problematises the use of sacred geography by the Sinhala Commission since this is surrendering to the old forms of the state:

We oppose all politics of identity whose goal is to reinforce sameness rather than celebrate diversity. This certainly applies to the ultra nationalist politics of the LTTE as well as the politics of Sinhala chauvinism [...] it is essential to find ways of being in common rather than falling into a politics of nostalgia.³⁹

The column then goes on to cite the work of Romila Thapar in deconstructing the politics of the invention of tradition and the need to separate myth from history in order to scientifically understand history as social process.⁴⁰

In sum, Sri Lankan feminists have provided powerful scholarly analyses of the processes triggered off by a hyper-nationalist nation-state's instrumental use of ethnicity and language to consolidate majority support for itself, as well as engaged in an everyday politics that gives an opportunity for the feminist gaze to try and shape discourses on nationalism, state accountability, democratic rights of the people, and the violence of the war in the public sphere.

I. 3 Bangladesh

The specific postcolonial history of the Bengali Muslims who 'seceded' from Pakistan has shaped Bangladeshi feminist engagements with the nation-state, both at the moment of its birth and during its later evolution, in terms of the relationship of the state to its minorities and to its women, whether among the minorities or in the majority community. Women, as a group, have been subjected to the insecurities of a search for a viable nationalism and a national identity by a repeated targeting of their conduct as defying normative standards set by those in control of power within the nation-state. The irony of the 'rape' of Bangladesh by fellow Muslims within the 'nation,' by the army, was not lost on the feminists. The state's instrumental use of the rape of Bangladeshi women for the whipping up of nationalist sentiment, mobilising support for the embryonic nation-state both nationally and internationally, and their erasure after the mobilisation had been achieved, has generated a strong feminist critique of the State. As the years rolled on, the *bironganas* (heroic women) of 1971 found that not only did the state do nothing for them, society stigmatised them. While they contributed to cementing the nationalism of a fractured nation (which was not unanimously behind the political resolution of the language question and the demand for a fair representation of the Bengali people within Pakistan taking the form of a new state) and led to the forging of

a 'brotherhood of men' to speak for the new nation, they themselves were soon forgotten except as metaphors for war and suffering.⁴¹ One of the documentations prepared by the Ain-O-Salish Kendro details 19 testimonies of women who were raped and the indignity and stigmatisation they have continued to suffer since then, epitomised in the words of one of the survivors: 'Even today, my husband insults me by referring to those past happenings and calls me a whore.' As the Introduction to the volume by a number of feminists in Bangladesh points out:

History may narrate, just in one sentence that such-and-such woman was raped in the 1971 war, but the long years of suffering, insult and injury that they have had to bear year after year is a painful history which is never documented in any history book. [Given that the state has used these women for their own propaganda purposes and then forgotten them], these women fight a different battle all through their lives [...] for women this violent sexual treatment at the hands of the state becomes doubly disorienting as it exacerbates and magnifies the woman's already subservient position in society and culture.⁴²

The experience of the movement for liberation and the goals of secularism and democracy which animated the discourses of the call for independence in Bangladesh have left other legacies, especially for women. As the history of post-liberation Bangladesh unfolds, the search for a national identity has also led to the adoption of more Islamist measures coupled with a strategy of falling back on military coups to gain state power. Women's resistance to the growing threats of a 'fatwa' culture were led by a doyen of 1971, mother of a martyred son, Jahanara Imam, who spearheaded a people's tribunal that demanded the trial of the Islamisist collaborators with Pakistan in 1971 for their joint responsibility for the war crimes⁴³. The same forces were now issuing 'fatwas' that legitimised the attacks on women perceived as 'stepping out of the bounds of social norms'. There were 1500 cases against mullahs who passed fatwas⁴⁴ and a Supreme Court judgment held them illegal. The struggle of the women's movement against patriarchal forces using religion as a peg remains an ongoing concern for women in the movement as well as a field for feminist writing.⁴⁵

Feminist scholarship in Bangladesh has tried to look at the post-liberation development of the nation state both in terms of its ideology and actions. Militarisation and internal conflict have impacted women in specific ways and the women's movement in Bangladesh has also fought against internal repression. It has been argued by feminists that although the formation of Bangladesh has not left it with any major border dispute, there has been a strong military presence since its birth as a nation. Also, the imposition

of military rule has been a significant factor in political rivalries and this has led to a substantial militarisation of civil society with about half its total existence under some or other military regime. Part of the rationale for militarisation is the way liberation has been perceived in gendered terms, where men fought to create the nation and laid down their lives in sacrifice, while the atrocities against women and the role played by them are erased in the fourteen-volume official history on the making of the nation. Once normalisation returned, the state concerned itself with the wranglings for power and the rehabilitation of men.⁴⁶ Later, the militarised regime turned its full power on the Chittagong Hill Tracts when the region advanced its long-standing demand for autonomy. Bangladesh came to be regarded as a classic example of a national security state.

These factors have spawned a number of resistance groups in civil society, including women's groups like the Hill Women's Federation, one of whose activists, Kalpana Chakma, was abducted by the army and murdered. The abduction brought women's groups together across Bangladesh. Some of these processes have been analysed by feminist scholars and I will end this section with the work of two of them, who I believe brought their own specific personal histories to their scrutiny of the workings of the nation state.

Meghna Guha Thakurta's study of the struggle of the Chakmas based on interviews is a poignant account of the experience of conflict and living under army rule: of the permanent sense of fear, the disruption of everyday life as people were forced to repeatedly take to hiding in the jungles, the witnessing scenes of or being subjected to torture, the dailiness of sexual harassment by army personnel but also of the analytical capacity of Kalpana Chakma who brought together the extraordinary conflict of the moment with the longstanding inequalities of gender within the community of the Chakmas. Meghna's analysis recognises the complexity of the 'Women and Conflict' question as it is played out in Bangladesh. While outrages perpetrated by the army have led to more protests by the women's movement against state violence, there have also been divisions within the women's movement around the accord with the state, with some women being deeply uncomfortable with what are perceived as challenges to state sovereignty in the demand for autonomy; the movement as a whole has, therefore, been reluctant to address issues of militarisation and nationalism in a frontal manner.⁴⁷

Some of the issues discussed above have, however, been frontally addressed in the work of Amena Mohsin who has used her location as a teacher and scholar of International Relations to subject theories of state security to a critical feminist gaze.

Amena offers a sharp indictment of the way the early nation-state handled the *birongana* issue, with the very 'father of the nation' Mujib-ur-Rahman condemning the women and the children born to them as polluted.⁴⁸ The proper role of women during conflict outlined by male nationalists is that women should send their men into battle to defend and protect the honour of their motherland for the protection of women and children. They should do this strictly as supportive mothers, emotional and dependent wives and lovers. Amena, who, as we noted, was interned in Lahore during the war in 1971 recalls the rhetoric of manliness evoked in the popular media:

I still remember a song played repeatedly on Pakistani Radio sung by male singers in 1971, with the mocking words that war was not a game for women. The reference was indeed to Mrs. Gandhi [...]⁴⁹

Amena's essay then turns to examining the popular 'feminist' position of associating women with peace as an essentialist formulation of women's role as nurturers turning them into 'natural' advocates for peace. Using her own information based on interviews, she complicates this position to argue that it is women's location on the margins of the structures of power that gives them an edge in thinking about war. She cites numerous examples of women who stayed on protecting their homes while their men fled, holding on to these spaces through all sorts of adversities, even sleeping with the enemy when necessary, for their children to come back to occupy their rightful place and thus turned the notion of protector and protected on its head. Amena points out pithily:

I leave it up to you to draw the lines between the protector and the protected in these instances [...] wars are games of men, hence their roles as sacrificers appear in the pages of history. Women appear as footnotes and symbols. Such constructions [...] not only fail to recognise and acknowledge the active role played by women in security parlance but also relegate them as inferiors in need of protection, thus strengthening the gender bias in security discourse.⁵⁰

Elsewhere, Amena has added that for the women with whom she had spoken, the nation was only understood as the home, conventional borders and boundaries had less relevance for them than the home, the community and the village they had remained in even when everyone else had abandoned it.⁵¹

Amena has also argued that the question of women's relationship to experiencing violence, and then resisting its many facets is based on an understanding of violence as a continuum that must be analysed at all levels. Women's perspectives on security, conflict and peace thus attempt to move out of the state-centricity of 'realism' and call

for an analysis of violence at various levels—individual, national and international. She critiques the case that some women have made for women to fight in the armed forces as this would enable them to be actors and agents rather than victims. Instead of this position, she argues that it is the meanings attributed to service to one's nation and to a notion of citizenship that glorifies dying for one's country as the noblest form of duty that need to be challenged. If women's notions of peace and security are different, they cannot be built upon the insecurity of others. Since violence is multidimensional, Amena argues, security has to be multidimensional too.⁵²

Part II: Feminism and Nationalism in Post-colonial India

Another Prologue

Mahasweta Devi, the archetypal writer with a social conscience, wrote a powerful story titled 'Dopdi' about two decades ago; the story centred around a tribal woman suspected to know about, or be part of, a militant, underground, left-wing resistance group and is arrested and raped by the police. In the morning, she is to be presented before the government official in charge of the operation, but when the policemen come to collect her and take her before the 'saheb,' she refuses to put on her clothes. When she is presented before the horrified officer in her naked state, she challenges him with the statement—"Alright! Go on, counter me!" and the story ends on that note as she taunts him with her violated body.⁵³ Dopdi's actions have since become a metaphor for feminist and subaltern resistance and the story has been picked up for many scholarly analyses, the most famous of these provided by Gayatri Spivak.⁵⁴ The wonderful Manipuri actress Sabitri Devi performed a stunning dramatic version of this story in the form of a play staged in Manipur, captured powerfully in the film *Lightning Testimonies* by Amar Kanwar on sexual violence in post-partition India. Dopdi has moved from being a metaphor to a dramatic political figure expressing the anger, anguish and outrage of a group of real women. That is what we have witnessed recently in Manipur, a place occupying the margins of our consciousness—if at all it is in our consciousness.

In July 2004, the army picked up Manorama Devi from her home in Manipur, took her away to an unknown destination, raped her and shot her dead⁵⁵. Her body was found in the fields the next day. Under the workings of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), in operation in the northeast since 1958, the army has complete immunity from civil courts and has over the last fifty years functioned outside the ambit of law. The discontent over army violations in the region exploded in Manipur after the rape and killing of Manorama Devi. There were demonstrations and *bandhs*, yet most of India characteristically took little note of what was happening in Manipur. Then one

day a group of Manipuri women stripped themselves naked and demonstrated in front of the headquarters of the army in Imphal daring the army to come and rape them: they held banners that screamed: 'Indian Army rape us'; 'Indian Army come take our flesh.' Suddenly, and predictably, the media in India picked up the pictures and the account of the demonstration from the local media; finally, the rest of India sat up and took notice. All over Manipur, and other states of the Northeast, as well as in many cities across India, civil rights groups demanded the unconditional withdrawal of the AFSPA. Given the violence of the events triggered off by the incident, including the self immolation by a protestor,⁵⁶ some response by the state became imperative: first the state in Manipur, and then at the centre, announced measures to placate the outraged response from the people. Among the measures was a committee to review the AFSPA and the Act was withdrawn in seven constituencies in Imphal, despite opposition from the Centre. It remains in force in Manipur as in many other states and the findings of the Commission set up to review the Act are yet to be made public.

The questions for some of us as civil rights activists and feminists is: why did it take so long for army atrocities to be noticed by the media? Why did the earlier protests after numerous rounds of atrocities die out? How informed were feminists in particular of the repressive dimensions of the nation state as it has sought to stamp out the demands for autonomy endemic to the region and manifested right from the time of the end of colonial rule and the creation of the nation-state of India? Why was it necessary for a group of women to strip themselves and protest against the use of rape to establish what domination means in a daily sense to people involved in a movement for autonomy in the consciousnesses of women in other regions of the country, for them to take note of what has been happening in the North East?⁵⁷ And even as all this was hitting the media, how many of us have become aware that there is by now an over six year-long fast unto death happening at this very moment by a courageous woman, Irom Sharmila, who has been demanding the lifting of the AFSPA since 2000, and that she was till recently being force-fed in a hospital, and that the state controls and decides who can have access to her?⁵⁸ Both Sharmila and the women who protested the killing of Manorama, as well as the mothers of the 'disappeared' in Jammu and Kashmir that I will discuss below, represent different ways such as shaming, mourning and fasting, by which the abused female body is being used by women to protest repressive state practices.

The women who stripped themselves in Manipur in protest against the AFSPA's cover of immunity that would deny justice to the Manoramas of our country were forcing the attention of the media by forcing attention upon themselves; they were doing so because they were faced with an unbridgeable gap between the citizenry and

the acts of the Indian army against which there was no redressal; they were not only forcing the attention of the nation-state but also of democratic civil society and the women's movement in India. It is in this context that we need to ask: what does feminism and nationalism mean to women in different parts of the nation-state of India? Have we consciously addressed such questions to enable us to take positions against the coercive apparatus of the state as part of the women's movement as well as in our scholarship? More than ever, since July 2004, these are questions that must be confronted and I shall make a beginning for myself by looking at some moments in the post-colonial history of India to see what the various strands of thinking and action offer to us for an understanding of the manner in which the nation-state in India has dealt with questions of sovereignty, autonomy, democracy, and the rule of law.

II.1 Mridula Sarabhai and the ethics of anti-nationalism

I will use the forgotten and marginalised persona of Mridula Sarabhai to begin to articulate a possible politics that can emerge from an attempt to answer some of the questions raised in this essay. Early on, I had a hazy picture of her, fed by popular constructions of a well-intentioned but somewhat muddle-headed woman who espoused the cause of the Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah. Later, I became aware of her role in the rescue of abducted women and their restoration to their 'legal' guardians during and after the violence of the partition and my interest in her grew.⁵⁹ But it is only now, only in writing this paper, that I have become aware of the real import of Mridula Sarabhai and the legacy she has left us. If only we grasp the meaning of her uncompromising commitment to democracy, secularism, justice for all and a possible nation based on these principles we would not opt for the form of a nation-state.⁶⁰ Less well-known than other women who participated in the nationalist movement, she alone among them refused a position of power within the state and ultimately went to jail in furtherance of her principles: independence for her was not merely the end of colonial rule but more a set of values that would lend meaning to freedom as she understood it, even if that meant that she was stigmatised as anti-national and unpatriotic.

A brief biography is necessary before we can focus on the issues that Mridula Sarabhai became involved in: she was born in 1911, the eldest child of a wealthy and illustrious business household in Ahmedabad, some of whose members had become involved with the national movement through their association with Mahatma Gandhi. Her aunt, Anusuya Sarabhai, had gone off to study in England partly to escape the enforcement of conjugal rights arising from a conventional child marriage that would tie her down; there, she became acquainted with the Fabian socialists and when she finally returned to India, she was active in a strike of textile workers even as her

brother, Mridula's father, was positioned on the other side as a textile mill owner.⁶¹ The strength to stand by locations opposed to even intimate others may have influenced Mridula later in her life when she was virtually alienated because of her uncompromising stand in support of Sheikh Abdullah and the Kashmiri people. She had known Gandhi since she was a child of six, was deeply influenced by him, was drawn into the Congress party in Gujarat, and ultimately became close to the socialist wing in the Congress, and to Jawaharlal Nehru in particular. Her fiercely independent spirit and her uncompromising integrity got her into 'trouble' repeatedly with the stalwarts of the Gujarat Congress, on one occasion because she refused to accept the principle that the local unit of the party must vote as a bloc as this was anti-democratic in her view.⁶²

Mridula began to wear khadi as a girl of twelve and was once refused tea at a restaurant in Shimla as part of a family visit when everyone else was acceptably dressed, in accordance with the fashion of the day for Indian elites. She participated in the boycott of liquor shops in the agitation against foreign goods, and then in the Dandi march; her courageous actions thrilled the young and influenced other young women to join satyagraha. But she was not a mindless follower of Gandhi and took issue with his decisions which she suggested were not always democratic.⁶³ According to one observer, of all Gandhi's women disciples, Mridula saw him with the clearest eyes and would often say to him, 'I am no Gandhian, remember!'⁶⁴

It was the work not the person who held her allegiance; as she put it, she placed honesty to herself above allegiance, whoever the person she was associated with during her stormy political career. Mridula was also repeatedly jailed during the national movement but used the occasions to leave a jail diary describing her experiences of prison life. In one of the many entries that describe jail life, she wrote that she was put in charge of keeping the toilets clean in the Sabarmati jail and so was nicknamed General Officer Commanding of the Toilets! Prison also meant sleeping on the floor with ten or twelve others so that if you turned at night, you touched another person's body. There was no privacy, day or night. Despite her sheltered early upbringing and the hardships of prison life, Mridula refused to be released on parole when her brother was dying, even as everyone else in her family who was in prison for offering satyagraha took it, because one had to give a bond and that was against her principles; instead, she demanded her unconditional release which the colonial state denied her at that point.⁶⁵ The postcolonial state was to do the same to her later over the stand she took on Kashmir, that is, put her in jail and make her release conditional upon good behaviour, which, of course, she refused to accept.

Mridula's inability to work within the confines of organisational imperatives because of the compromises it entailed made her a lone worker, even though she had amazing

organisational skills. She differed from the Congress leaders in Gujarat because of their attitude towards gender, their communal biases, and the pragmatic way they handled power.⁶⁶ Her strengths as an organiser and dedicated worker ultimately were used in what was termed as 'peace' work. In continuation of her work in the Ahmedabad riots of 1941, she participated in the defusing of communal tensions in Noakhali and Bihar, accompanying Gandhi during his stay there in 1947, helping in relief and rehabilitation work. Earlier, she had faced Jat mobs in western and central Uttar Pradesh who were trying to attack Muslims, going into the midst of the mob to persuade them to resist from pursuing their attack. These experiences led directly to her life-long commitment towards amity in Hindu-Muslim relations.

When Partition came, Mridula was drawn into the work of restoring abducted women and children to their families which she threw herself into with characteristic zeal. This work too led her to controversy, as always, but precisely because she had goodwill among Hindus and Muslims, and was respected even in Pakistan, she managed to continue right until 1953 when the Kashmir crisis took over her life in a way that she and her political work came to be totally transformed; Mridula's stand was a critical component in the making of a public sphere in the context of the early postcolonial nation state, ridden as it was with internal contradictions.

For most sections of the Indian middle class, Kashmir is a problem created by Pakistan and its prioritising of Muslim religious identity as the sole basis of nationalism, in contrast to India's secular polity which is based on a pluralist national identity. What gets erased in this construction is the long struggle for independence *within* Kashmir from a feudal-monarchical rule of an oppressive social and political system. The people of Kashmir had, since the 1920's, long before the formal end of colonial rule, launched a struggle for new social relations, land reform, the end of monarchy and the establishment of the rule of the people. Towards this end, a movement was launched in Kashmir, led by Sheikh Abdullah, against the rulers who were regarded as doubly illegitimate as apart from being anti-democratic and oppressive towards the people, they had 'purchased' Kashmir from the British, which was clearly not an acceptable way of governing people. During this phase, leaders of the movement had prepared a draft constitution for the future; they also launched a Quit Kashmir movement in 1946 against the ruler on the lines of the Quit India movement of the Congress against the British in 1942. Sheikh Abdullah was arrested for these activities, so when independence came in 1947, the Sheikh was in jail; the ruler procrastinated in signing the instrument of accession either with India or Pakistan, unlike other rulers. He was trying to gain the maximum leeway for his political agenda of retaining the substance of his rule and negotiating both with Pakistan and India at the same time. For others in Kashmir, the

dream of freedom meant a special status which was neither accession to India or to Pakistan but *azaadi* within as well as a neutral status in relation to both nation-states, akin to Switzerland caught between Germany and France.

Finally, circumstances created by the Pakistan-backed tribal invasion of the state of J&K, led the ruler to sign the instrument of accession with India, but it was accompanied by the promise on the part of India to ratify the accession through the holding of a plebiscite, deferred to a time when the will of the people could be genuinely ascertained. This moment has never come and over the years, the Indian government has taken to regarding elections as a substitute for ascertaining the will of the people. Elections themselves have had to be manipulated to keep a pliable government in power and this has created a serious rift between the people of Kashmir and the central government in Delhi.⁶⁷

Sheikh Abdullah and his supporters made the argument that the accession by the ruler itself was illegal as it is the people alone who can determine their constitutional and political status, and the basis of such an agreement could not be some 'illegal' sale deed between the British and a corrupt ruling dynasty of the past. This position was supported by Jawaharlal Nehru and other members of the Congress party, including Mridula, in the days before 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru was even prevented from entering Kashmir to express solidarity with the Quit Kashmir movement against the ruler in 1946. However, Sheikh Abdullah's position on the autonomy of Kashmir created a gradual rift between the Kashmiri movement, which he led, and the Congress government in New Delhi in the early 1950s. Finally, ill-advised by a coterie of hardliners, Jawaharlal Nehru who had been a personal friend of Sheikh Abdullah's, apart from a political comrade, ordered the latter's arrest in 1953 and thus it was that the Kashmir problem came to stay;⁶⁸ the arrest marked the beginning of a series of anti-democratic moves made by the centre against the Kashmiri people, the consequences of which we are still bearing, albeit in dramatically new ways.

Mridula was in Amritsar, doing work with abducted women when Sheikh Abdullah's arrest was announced. She had been a focal point of the Friends of Kashmir group who had tried to counter right-wing propaganda against the administrative and economic measures taken by Sheikh Abdullah as Prime Minister of J&K, especially on the passing of land reforms without compensation to the *jagirdars* who were mainly Hindus; the tenants, on the other hand, were mainly Muslims, so the reforms were portrayed as a communal action on the part of Sheikh Abdullah. Egged on by right-wing mobilisation, the situation in Kashmir had deteriorated leading to the developments of faction-fighting within the government of Kashmir, leading to the centre's decision to arrest Sheikh Abdullah. Nehru issued a statement in the Indian Parliament on August 10, 1953

justifying the arrest as necessary in the 'interest of peace' which was threatened in various ways⁶⁹ and Mridula hit back by issuing a statement to the press on August 13, at a time when no one else of importance seemed to want to protest. She was outraged by the vitiated atmosphere in which rumours abounded and the condemnable role of important political persons and the press in creating such a climate which paralleled what had happened in Pakistan earlier in the case of the great Gandhian and freedom fighter Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. She wrote:

Today one is reminded of the torrent of campaign that [...] has been started against that brave leader [...] They tried to hide their power politics on the ground of national security and dubbed him as an Indian agent. Let us not degrade ourselves and follow such a path and swallow all that is being said about Sheikh Abdullah [...] I would plead with the leaders, colleagues, the press and the people to rise to the occasion and behave as decent opponents [...] and if charges are to be levelled let it be done in a court of justice and not behind the backs of those who cannot defend themselves.⁷⁰

The issuing of this statement in an atmosphere suffused with intrigue, betrayal, and charges of acting against national security to support Sheikh Abdullah was to invite the wrath of the general public, the new puppet government of J&K, and the Indian government. Within hours, Mridula's reputation was jeopardised and a campaign was launched against her from within Congress circles. In the meanwhile, demonstrations in Srinagar were put down ruthlessly. Sheikh Abdullah bemoaned the end of 'Bapu's India' with the Kashmiri people having to face bullets. In such a situation, he regarded Mridula's espousal of the Kashmiri cause as an act that recalled Krishna's support to the Pandavas in the Mahabharata war.⁷¹ Later, he wrote to Mridula that he was pleased that Bapu's soul would be proud of what she was doing.

Regardless of the vicious campaign against her, Mridula continued to support the cause of democracy and a philosophy of what she called 'trust begets trust'. She smuggled petitions from those jailed in Kashmir and when she found that the hyper-nationalist press refused to carry her statements, she took to writing 'circulars' which were sent out widely and came to be an alternative way of reaching people. Her position was quite straightforward: either Sheikh Abdullah should be charged and tried or he should be released, as his imprisonment, based on a falsehood, violated the Indian Constitution. She also argued against the existence of the Preventive Detention Act which empowered the government to detain a person for five years without a trial.⁷² India had already lost her prestige in acting as it did in the minds of the Kashmiri

people and so it was absolutely necessary, in her view, to restore the civil liberties of the people of Kashmir forthwith.⁷³

Never one to give up what she believed, Mridula continued to argue for the release of the detained leadership, including the figure of Sheikh Abdullah. But Mridula herself was now dubbed anti-national, partly because Pakistani leaders picked up on her statements and used them to their advantage in international fora. In 1958, Mridula was drawn into the Kashmir Conspiracy Case as a suspect, her house searched, and a whisper campaign against her began with renewed vigour. Mridula wrote that the weapon of the law was being used to ostracise her. Finally, when she was detained, the government claimed that this was done in order to prevent her from indulging in further anti-Kashmir propaganda! The charges against her, meriting arrest, included support for Sheikh Abdullah and his followers, the claim that she herself was in regular touch with people hostile to the security of India, and that these activities were calculated to prejudice the relations of India with foreign powers, and thus threatened the security of India. Mridula appealed against her detention to various authorities, including the Supreme Court, but to no avail: no one would listen to someone who was stigmatised as anti-national and, in any case, it was widely believed that national security demanded her incarceration in the best interests of the nation.

A year after being held without trial, her old teacher and the doyen of the old Congress socialists, then leader of the Praja Socialist Party, Acharya Kripalani, characterised her detention in Parliament as an undemocratic and unconstitutional act. This was India not Russia, he said, and added:

I cannot understand a former General Secretary of the Congress being held under the Preventive Detention Act. Do we hold, like the totalitarians, our best men[sic] under suspicion? Has Miss Mridula done something treasonable? She would not betray the country. Let her be tried. Let there be a fair trial, otherwise there will always be an impression in the minds of people that she was engaged in treasonable activities against the Government.⁷⁴

The worst blow came from Nehru who dismissed the 'bundles of paper' sent by her as proof of her being a bit touched in the head. Whatever her earlier history may have been in the service of the nation, she was now cast, retrospectively, as someone whose judgement had always been suspect⁷⁵ and, at this point, she was harming the country, though the great leader was kind enough to exonerate her of the charge of treason. Nehru cast himself as something of a tragic hero who was forced to act

against dear friends in the cause of the nation, despite the pain it caused him. Then he quoted some lines 'that came to his head' from Shakespeare:

*And to be wrath with those we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.⁷⁶*

It seems that the madness was working on Mridula's brain; her actions were so anti-national and harmful to India that she had to be put away where she could no longer cause damage to the nation.

Having read the text of the debate in Parliament that so vilified her, Mridula responded with a petition from jail to the Lok Sabha. She took no offence at the suggestion that she continued to be an 'immature girl' (she was 47) as that was the way the old often treated those who were younger than them. But she asked with persistence:

If the authorities were so sure of their stand that I had been spreading lies, why did they not take the opportunity to detain me under the Preventive Detention Act and get a thorough investigation made into the cases which have been dubbed as lies?

[...] On personal considerations one should have given up working for the people of Kashmir. But to me the service of the nation has a larger meaning [...] and in that process one has to be prepared to get annihilated completely [...] That is the lesson I learnt at the feet of Bapu and Nehru. In the context of Kashmir, it is the national and emotional integration which can be achieved by the co-operation of the people on the basis of trust begets trust.⁷⁷

Mridula got no reply from the august parliament to this petition. Her own engagement with the Congress party for thirty years had ended when the Gujarat Congress took disciplinary action against her for her anti-national activities as a journalist on the ground that her circulars on Kashmir were treasonable. Mridula's attempt at explaining her actions as part of the peace and communal amity work which she had been doing since 1946 made no impact on the Congress leadership.⁷⁸ No one understood or respected her position on the postcolonial nation state as a system that was to be made capable of internal dialogue, dissent and a re-imagining of territorial arrangements inherited from its specific colonial past; thus, the moment for exploring an alternative set of possibilities and practices was irretrievably lost by the first generation of the post-independence political class.

Mridula spent some eight months of her prison term of almost two years in solitary confinement, and wrote that she found little difference between imprisonment by the British and the nationalist governments. When her father fell seriously ill, the government offered to release her on parole. Once again, she declined on principle as she refused to give the required undertaking that she would do nothing unlawful, saying she had done nothing unlawful anyway, and her detention was, in any case, illegal.

When she was finally released unconditionally, she continued with her support for her Kashmiri friends and went on to organise the defence for those imprisoned in the Kashmir Conspiracy Case. This was followed by one more round of custody when she was interned in Ahmedabad in 1965 under the Defence of India Rules. She was then adopted by Amnesty International as a 'prisoner of conscience' for her non-violent espousal of the cause of human rights. Her lobbying for the unconditional release of Sheikh Abdullah and a peaceful, negotiated resolution finally found some takers in Parliament and outside it with Jayaprakash Narayan, among others, taking over the campaign and mediating in a discussion with Sheikh Abdullah.⁷⁹

When she died in 1974, the Kashmir problem was far from resolved. On hindsight, we can see that if there had been more Mridulas, less obsession with territory and borders, and more concern with integrating peoples together, Kashmir may never have moved into the phase of violence still being played out today. From Mridula's point of view, she had been trying to extend Bapu's experiment to find out "an instrument for individuals and natives of free countries to resist internal forces of disruption of democracy" in her support for Kashmir.⁸⁰ It was this stance that led to the establishment declaring her mad, to be put into an asylum. Resistance to a blind nationalism and the demands of loyalty from its citizens by a nation-state in South Asia in the postcolonial period was indeed a madness if it was the position of a single individual, and that too a woman. That is a chastening thought but also a chilling reminder of the power of nation-state ideology, of the fragile nature of nationalisms of South Asia.

When I look back on the last years of Mridula's life, I am struck by the fact that I was already then a teacher, and had close friends among the socialist network who espoused the cause that she had been fighting for; some of these socialists had even taken on the Kashmir issue in a mediating capacity and yet there was little public recognition of Mridula's long struggle in support of Kashmir in the media, or even in ordinary conversation that was happening around me. Both Gandhi (symbolically) and Nehru whom she cited as her mentors, still dominated the public sphere in the 60's and 70's and yet no one talked of Mridula. All I can recall is a hazy connection of her name being associated with some kind of a 'bee in her bonnet' about Kashmir.

Why was it so easy to erase the dissenting voice of Mridula from the public sphere? Nationalism and patriotism, strong sentiments in the post- Independence phase were intensified after the India-China war, the Indo-Pak war of 1965, and finally the liberation of Bangladesh (with Mrs. Gandhi being portrayed as a Durga who won the war against evil) and these sentiments dominated the attention of the media and mainstream political discourse in the sixties and seventies. Even those of us, like me, who gravitated in the direction of opposition to the state did not really have a strong sense of the internal contradictions of the nation-state from the point of view of territorial arrangements. Almost certainly this was because it was the class question that dominated and determined the nature of political opposition to the state in the 1970's and so, for us, Mridula left no direct legacy that linked up to the concerns of the day. This was true even for those of us who had recognised that the postcolonial nation state had failed, or at least failed to respond to the aspirations of the mass of the Indian people. The slogan of the day, '*Yeh azaadi jhoothi hai*'⁸¹ (this freedom is false), though pegged on economic questions, could have included the political aspirations of the 'regions', since it harked back to the anti-colonial struggle and the movement for independence which had led to the birth of the nation-state of India in 1947; yet the question of governance and autonomy did not resonate with the meanings they acquired in the 80's and thereafter, forcing the Indian middle class and the intelligentsia in particular to take note of them.

II.2 Fact-Finding and the Critique of the Nation-state

Critical issues and events in the late sixties and seventies unfolded, first in the form of the emergence of peasant and adivasi movements in the late sixties—a consequence of the unsatisfied hunger for land among the rural masses—which interrogated the elite nature of the state, and, later, the clamping of Emergency in 1975, in response to political unrest in a variety of forms. Both were manifestations of the crisis of the post-independence nation-state in India and were challenges to the middle class since the repression to which the Indian state resorted during this phase was unprecedented. The university was the field of action for students and teachers, some of whom were rounded up, and this shook us to the core.

Ultimately, when Emergency was lifted, state repression against peasant activists and political opponents of the regime in power were central to the emergence of the civil rights movement, and later the women's movement, in both of which many of us got involved. These developments led to wider links being established between activists working in these different fora and fed directly into a loose coalition of democratic resistance groups that have allowed for the re-thinking and conceptualising, for the

first time, the social and political bases of the nation-state in India and its repressive dimensions in maintaining unity at any cost. A series of such links meant that the nationality question had to be addressed as a distinct feature of understanding the basis of the nation-state and its repressive and anti-democratic manifestations in the North-east and in J&K. Again, like Mridula Sarabhai, it is through Nandita Haksar (originally a student of mine who soon became, and continues to be a well known Human Rights activist and lawyer) as an individual woman who became involved with the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) that I personally became 'conscious' of what was happening in the North-East. Nandita has occupied many cross cutting locations: a feminist with a left background, a civil rights activist and a staunch opponent of communalism. When the repression against the Nagas of Manipur reached alarming proportions, the NPMHR began to approach civil rights activists; the university was a site for many dialogues not only on repression but also on the nationality movements active in the North-East.⁸² Through such interactions a women's fact finding team was constituted to go to the villages of Manipur following a massive round of army atrocities in Ukhrul in 1982. The difficulties between an individual engagement with an issue and a collective feminist/women's position on repression by the state in a region, by then well-sedimented as anti-national in the minds of what is called 'mainland India,' the North-East, surfaced in a way that has shaped, to an extent, feminist engagements with nationalism in India.

The group that constituted the fact-finding-team were drawn from senior and respected women in left/secular parties and civil rights groups. Perhaps the first of such civil society groups to go to the North-East, the team met a large number of people who had experienced army atrocities as well as officials in the civil administration and army officers stationed in the region. The report was extremely well-documented, graphically portraying the atrocities against the people especially against women, and the sense of terror experienced by them under the rule of the army, which was well protected by the clauses of the AFSPA.

Both rape and sodomy were reported, apart from other atrocities⁸³. Yet, when it came to finalising the report and making it public two of the team members declined to sign the report as they could not bring themselves to sign a document that would indict the army.⁸⁴ The report was published without their names but these debates on the army and its use in the name of national security were not debated in public by women's groups so the issues it generated never moved forward in thinking about the relationship between feminism and nationalism in a post-colonial context.

The nationality question in the North-East and movements for autonomy however continued to be manifested in a variety of ways and came to be analysed in numerous

writings, especially after the Assam movement raised questions about insiders and outsiders in the region, and sought to delimit citizenship in an ethnically complicated region. At the same time questions of violence against women, and especially rape by the security forces in the wider context of patriarchies—both internal to local communities and in more specifically militarised ways by the state— has been analysed in the writing of a feminist scholar from Assam, Aparna Mahanta who has had a long engagement with democratic movements in the North-East. She has suggested that rape has been conceptualised at a political level by movements for autonomy in the region as distinct from its connotations with shame in other regions where the perpetrators are not also seen as the *political* enemy:

[In the context of such conflicts] rape is the most common allegation that is made, or at least is the one that draws the most media attention...The delegation of rape to the personal, as a matter of individual or family honour, by the Indian legal system has been contested by the women's movement. More specifically, in the NE since the 1960s in the context of military operations where the rapists were themselves the instruments of the Indian State, rape has been treated as a 'public' political issue.⁸⁵

This works both constructively and otherwise; while democratic movements may use it to seek accountability from the state, as in the case of Ukhru and later Oinam, when the NPMHR took the matter to court as part of a larger human rights issue, political parties used it to emphasise women's vulnerability and push them back from the political sphere. Aparna herself has stressed the need to find local examples of mobilisation and support for women assaulted by the armed forces which does not deny agency, including political agency, to them. ⁸⁶

Linking the movements for autonomy in the North-East with the movement for *azaadi* in Kashmir in terms of continuing engagement, have been 'normal' for civil rights and other democratic-left groups, as well as the few feminist groups that did respond to state repression in the context of the nationality question. From the early 1990s, Jammu and Kashmir returned to the attention of the political world following the rise of a militant movement for *azaadi* or freedom. Civil society groups and democratic rights activists however responded, almost immediately after the popularly supported movement for *azaadi* began, following, once more, an outrageously manipulated election. They initiated a series of reports on human rights violations to document attempts by the state to crush the demand for *azaadi*, backed by militancy. Almost immediately, the first all women's fact finding team went to Kashmir; it included

Nandita Haksar who already had considerable experience in documenting violations and thinking about democratic movements, the autonomy question and the operations of a militarised state in the North- East.

The first women's team spent a week in the valley in June 1990 and produced a solid report on conditions in the valley since the phase of militancy and the state's response to it began; it was set firmly within a framework of what militarisation meant to people living between 'two sets of guns'.⁸⁷ Its terms of reference were to 'investigate the impact of the militarisation of the Kashmir Valley on the lives of the people there, especially the women'. Militarisation was a new phenomenon in the valley, even though the presence of the army was normal since it was a border region, and there had been three wars between India and Pakistan. What was unique to 'militarisation' as understood in this report was its takeover of civil society and the subordination of the civil administration to the security forces; this too without any formal transfer of powers or the invocation of special powers. This was before the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was formally applied in Jammu and Kashmir.

The report went on to examine the 'law and order' justification given by the government for the new militarised situation, refuting it on the ground that the terror let loose by the security forces was damaging the very secular foundation of India; action by them was no longer directed at the militants but instead the security forces were treating the entire Kashmiri people as enemies.⁸⁸

While the report did examine the consequences of the militarisation of civil society through the acts of the militants, and their statistical breakdown of deaths included killings by militants, the focus of the report was on the militarised state and its chapter heads bear this out.⁸⁹ The chapter which specifically focussed on women's experiences of militarisation is framed in terms of a feminist understanding of women caught between two kinds of coercive structures, and tackles fundamentalism head on before it moves to examining the militarised state:

Women in the valley have no channel for expressing their anger at fundamentalism. They have been forced into silence. One woman [who] wrote in a local paper was threatened...Yet the Kashmiri Woman has made her opinion known;...writing under assumed names they have told the militants that they support the struggle for freedom but not the oppression of women.⁹⁰

Kashmiri women were not only faced by fundamentalism and the imposition of the burqa, against which they protested, but were also now the target of military violence;

of brute force on a large scale which included rape and sexual assault by the security forces, in front of fathers and brothers. Four cases were documented in detail after visits to the scene of the violations. Then, following the detailing of the gruesome experiences, the report ends with the plea for a return to constitutional norms. In stark contrast to a section of the press baying for stringent measures, including the use of government propaganda and greater powers to the security forces, the women's team concluded with these words:

We vehemently disagree with such a sinister solution to the problem. [Our cases show] that the use of security forces for internal security has not only antagonised the people of Kashmir from the armed forces but also from the rest of the country. It is a politically bankrupt approach which resorts to military solutions to political problems.

In the name of unity and integrity of India, Indians cannot be deprived of their inalienable fundamental rights...A political emergency is no ground for lawless action. It is in fact time to assert the spirit of the Indian Constitution and protect the human rights of people.⁹¹

What is notable in the tone of this report is its positioning against militarisation, its commitment to democracy, its belief that secularism is on trial in Kashmir; the negation of the constitutional rights through violations taking place in Kashmir is seen as 'against the people of India,' of which Kashmir is still considered a part. The question of autonomy and self-determination was for the moment skirted in a formulation that positioned itself against atrocities from a civil and human rights perspective, albeit with a feminist understanding of an oppressive state's violence towards women.⁹²

Even before the Report was completed, the AFSPA was promulgated in Jammu and Kashmir. Soon after, the state was placed under President's rule and so the elected government of Jammu and Kashmir ceased to function. Atrocities by the security forces continued unabated and human rights violations were simultaneously documented. With no internal checks and new impunity available to the security forces, violence against women intensified. In 1991 a remote village witnessed an all-night terror raid on women, where some 30 women in the village were raped. Kunan Poshpora has come to symbolise sexual violence against Kashmiri women and caught the attention of the national and the international media. A two-member women's team including Amiya Rao, a senior and well respected civil rights activist whose personal activism started long before independence, visited Kashmir and demanded an enquiry into the rapes at Kunan Poshpora.⁹³ The Press Council of India sent an enquiry team, headed by a respected male journalist, B.G. Verghese, who had a good civil rights supporting

record. Alas, when the report was made public, he exonerated the army, arguing that the allegations were fabricated and motivated in order to 'defame' the army. The nation, and the army became synonymous; the version of the army was the version of the press and the sexual violence against women counted for little.⁹⁴

In 1994, as violence continued even under the watchful gaze of President's rule another women's team went to the valley of Kashmir. This team was admittedly a 'women's initiative' and its central focus was the experiences of women caught between what they called the 'gun and the burqa'. Moving and poignant accounts of how women cope with violence, the many facets of their location as both victims and resisters, fill the testimonies in the report. The report also carried some stunning and evocative visuals by the feminist artist/photographer Sheba Chhacchi who has documented the women's movement in all its richness and complexity. Significantly, the team members took the view that as women, who share a common history as feminists and active members of the women's movement, their deepest concern was for an end to the violence in Kashmir. They sought to reach out across barriers created by nations, states, culture and ideology. But perhaps because feminists have been strong advocates for regaining control over their own lives, they also said that the team shared an agreement on the principle of self-determination and that the Kashmiri people must decide their own future⁹⁵.

The team spoke to a large number of women, men and children. The report documented the trauma, of the way women coped and tried to find ways of healing their psychological wounds; how farewell greetings had changed from '*Khuda Hafiz*' or 'God be with you' to '*sahi salamat laut aana*,' or 'Come back safe', as violence had taken over everyday life; as in hospitals doctors noted the increase in spontaneous abortions; as cases of mental stress increased manifold times according to the staff of a government psychiatric hospital; the tragedy of the disappeared and of the families who did not know whether their loved ones were alive or dead as well as the peculiar phenomenon of the half-widows that enforced disappearances had generated. Women's active support for militancy was documented as was the investment by some women in a radical, Islamic, pro-Pakistani militancy to oppose the 'Indian state'. Significantly it tried to attempt to understand not only the militant but also the 'jawans' the ordinary soldiers of the paramilitary and military forces regarded as the killers but who too were being killed, surrounded as they were by the hatred of those who they were allegedly protecting. These jawans were the sons of peasants and artisans whose earnings supported their families; now they were being brutalised and dehumanised, becoming killers without conscience, pawns in the hands of state power: but they too wanted peace and many of them left offerings at shrines for blessings ⁹⁶.

The team visited three villages where rapes had been reported and obtained first-hand accounts, one of these was Kunan Poshpora, the village which the Press Club team had certified as housing liars. Subjected to severe media attention, the women who have been raped were being stigmatised and taunted for what happened to them even by the men of their own village. Only Asiya Andrabi, of the radical Islamic women's group called the Dukhtaran-e-Millat could see the acts of the forces as serving a purpose. She said: 'We thank the forces for their excesses. The more atrocities they commit the more people will be willing to take to arms for the struggle'. The team members of the Women's Initiative in 1994, as women who heard these testimonies, exhorted other women in 'India', who would hopefully read what they had written, with the words: 'As sisters, neighbours, what we have heard and witnessed cannot rest lightly on our conscience. We call upon all concerned parties: stop this killing' ⁹⁷.

Killings have unfortunately continued through various regimes up until the moment of writing this essay: President's rule was followed by elections, mostly rigged and, occasionally, relatively free, through ceasefires and undeclared wars, even through what is called peace talks but are in reality only a time for hard bargaining between men occupying different locations of power. There are many local initiatives at 'peace-work'; more fact finding and more reports, but even so there has been no defusing of the violence in Kashmir. When I visited Kashmir, for the first time in my life in 2002 - as part of another of those fact finding teams - the reality of living in Kashmir was brought home to us so many different ways: a girl who wanted desperately to be a doctor but could not be because of the 'abnormality of the times' said that things would become normal only when 'we', meaning women like us, *made* that happen; team members who reached inaccessible areas and were provided information found later that their informants faced 'reprisal' rape ⁹⁸; and two of us had to take cover in a college that we had visited when the school with a visiting politician next door was hit by a sniper bomb attack.⁹⁹ That was part of everyday life in Kashmir.

The difficulties between an individual engagement with an issue and a collective feminist/women's position on repression by the state in regions by then well-sedimented as anti-national in the minds of 'mainland India,' that is the North-East and Jammu & Kashmir, surfaced in a way that has shaped, to an extent, feminist engagements with nationalism. Suffering and trauma have been documented in fact-finding reports by civil rights and women's rights groups from the early 90s and more recently in studies sponsored by NGOs involved in peace initiatives. Women whose family members have gone missing in enforced disappearances have come to Delhi to speak, and weep, before 'sympathetic' people to mobilise women and men to demand state accountability and an end to the impunity granted to the security forces through the cover provided

by the AFSPA. As the testifiers put it, despite going to the courts repeatedly to seek an answer from the state authorities about the whereabouts of their missing relatives, they get no relief from the courts, only fresh dates for the court to hear the cases and an endless round of postponements. The women have refused compensation offered by the state for the missing relatives because that grants *de facto* immunity to the security forces (as one of them put it: "did the sky eat them up or the earth take them in?") and this they will not give to the state because theirs is a struggle for accountability, not for money. Theirs is a long, almost hopeless, non-violent struggle for justice which few people, including the media, are willing to take note of because it does not make for 'attractive' sound bytes.¹⁰⁰

By Way of a Summing Up

I began this essay calling for an examination of the relationship between feminism and nationalism as a point from which to look at South Asian feminist scholarship on it that we could all learn from. Although this piece that I have written is really an overview, rather than an in-depth analysis of the way women have looked at postcolonial nationalism that have informed our understanding of the nation-state, it has been a journey of realisation for me. I began with a sense of concern that feminist scholarship had not really engaged with the practices of the nation-state nor subjected it enough to feminist scrutiny. I can see now that there have been many moves on our part to resist the mechanical investment in the ideology of nationalism which dominant discourses have demanded of us. It is true that the postcolonial nation-state was premised on the linking of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, and anti-colonial nationalism, with which the women's movement of the pre-independence period was also suffused. As Kumari Jayawardena's work shows, such factors set the parameters by way of the expanses and the limits of women's consciousnesses, and made for their emotional investment in both class and nation as specific types of postcolonial creation. But I can also now see that there have been journeys that many South Asian feminists have made, propelled by the historical circumstances in their respective countries, especially in the last few decades, that has forced them to interrogate their own nation-states and the idea of nationalism.

In Part One of this essay, I looked at the interventions and the scholarship in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and in Part Two, I examined the feminist engagement in terms of political 'practice' with nationalism and the nation-state in India, which is yet to generate theoretical 'scholarship' on the subject though the Women's Reports have taken the lead in 'theorising' the issues outlined in this essay, by strongly critiquing state practices. This production of knowledge is yet to receive its

due in postcolonial scholarship, feminist or mainstream/malestream, obsessed as it is as of now with colonial state practices.

In summing up, I want to analyse the strengths and the limits of this engagement and the feminist scholarship generated in recent years around the themes of nationalism and the practices of the nation-state, keeping in mind the ethical horizon I set up through the figure of Mridula Sarabhai in Part Two.

Indian feminists have been critical of the class character of nationalism in the colonial period¹⁰¹ and of the postcolonial Indian state for its repressive actions against the people's movement for land, wages, environment, sharing with men their concerns on these issues. They have also focussed considerable attention on the violence of the state towards marginalised women, especially when enacted by state functionaries in terms of the continuing use of sexual violence by the police and security forces to humiliate and abuse women and the communities to which they belong. Some of the finest work has come in exploring sexual violence during Partition, breaking the silence around the issue, and thus gendering Partition Studies which was virtually a non-existent field till the feminists opened it up with their work.

This work amounted to a very important critique of the nation- state, at the very moment of its birth in India and Pakistan, showing up its deeply patriarchal and paternalist character in establishing control over abducted women and forcibly aligning women with the boundaries of the new nations, based on the religious identity of the woman. This gave women no choice in the decision of where they would like to be located, given that the very same states had failed to protect them against the sexual violence in the first instance.¹⁰² Unfortunately, this early lead has not been followed up by examining the nation-state in the sixty years since then, in India at any rate. What has been slow in developing is a feminist understanding of nationalism, the militarisation of civil society in areas of internal conflict, and of the autonomy question which has been the ground from which such conflicts have sprung.

Some Indian feminists are responding with anger or anguish at the perceived 'failure' of the women's movement in taking a more forthright position against state repression and in thinking about the internal organisation of the nation-state, the failure of democracy, the forcible submission of diversity to the principle of unity in nation-state practices in the much-publicised unity-in- diversity formula ostensibly to be the unique contribution of India to nationalism in South Asia. We have sought to rethink sovereignty and citizenship from a feminist perspective, that is to re-conceptualise the nation- state itself.¹⁰³

As feminists, we have reached a critical moment in India in going beyond the very fine critiques of right-wing Hindu nationalism, communalism and the gendered violence it has spawned, to engage with other questions around the nation state.¹⁰⁴ The feminist focus on the right-wing Hindu nationalists' capture of state power in the 1990s has brought a critical edge to our new concerns. The issue of India going nuclear in 1998, within a few months of the Hindu nationalist, right-wing-led coalition coming to power, soon telescoped into wider global developments with 9/11 and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, making us think about militarisation with a new urgency.¹⁰⁵

Women's groups put out a statement on the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq which articulated a feminist critique of war.¹⁰⁶ Late in 2001, the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December nearly led to war between India and Pakistan and a terrifying media campaign against those arrested by the police which included a teacher of Delhi University who had been a colleague and comrade of many of us in democratic initiatives in the university. Also charged in the conspiracy to attack the Indian Parliament was the wife of another accused whom the special trial court judge sentenced for eight years for allegedly putting her loyalty to her husband above her loyalty to the nation and thus betraying the nation.¹⁰⁷ The jingoistic nationalism we witnessed at this stage and the frightening hatred unleashed against the accused by the media and a totally communalised civil society including the University, hatred too for those who supported some of the accused and demanded fair trial, the suspension of civil rights under black laws passed in the wake of the incident, the painful alienation of the families of the accused, all these were a reminder of the power of nationalism and its instrumental use by those controlling the state in our regions.¹⁰⁸ The media's handling of the case has been the context for a very decisive feminist formulation of the need to look at the demand for autonomy/independence in Jammu & Kashmir and the North-East and the repressive actions of the Indian state, supported in the main by those who dominate the Indian public sphere, from a core element of feminist thinking:

Let us look at the long and bitter conflict [in Kashmir] from a feminist perspective. Does it not occur to you that forced unions between peoples or nations are very similar to forced unions between men and women? A marriage between a man and a woman, imposed by a patriarchal structure against the wishes of the woman, (or the man) results in the family being based on resentment, bitterness and hatred. So does a union between two peoples forced by a state....¹⁰⁹

The rape of Manorama Devi by security forces and the demonstration by Manipuri women who stripped themselves to challenge the power of the state, as well as the

quiet, unknown and more than six year-long fast unto death by Irom Sharmila against the AFSPA, that still continues, have all shaken the women's movement in India. This is the moment for us to go beyond our segmented engagement with regions such as the North-East where we extol the actions of women who protest against the patriarchal violence of the family, and community, but hesitate to condemn the patriarchal violence of the state with the same enthusiasm. The Manorama incident has created a new urgency and sparked off a long overdue initiative with Saheli, a women's group in Delhi, first making a formal submission to the Committee to review the AFSPA and then taking the lead in mobilising a joint statement against the AFSPA¹¹⁰; they have also supported Irom Sharmila in her struggle to lift the AFSPA and demonstrations by Manipuri women against the AFSPA in Delhi on the eve of Republic Day in 2008 and more recently with Burmese women refugees. The Indian Association of Women's Studies conference in 2005 passed a resolution against the AFSPA and demanded its lifting; it also passed another resolution against the increasing levels of militarisation and state repression against movements in various parts of the country.¹¹¹ Perhaps we stand at a new threshold in shaking off the 'burdens' of nationalism from a feminist perspective, a process during which we must remember the indomitable anti-nationalist commitment to the difficulties of standing by one's truth and speaking in one's voice beyond not just the stifling, insecure nation-state form, but the limits of endurance, embodied in the forgotten voice of Mridula Sarabhai.

Notes and References

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As will be evident to the reader, I am drawing heavily on my own experience of thinking about the issues examined in the paper; in a sense, therefore, this paper is a personal archive—of memories of events and of reading the works of people I have met and engaged with over three decades. Since the paper was regarded as too long, it has not been published in its full form as it appears here, although parts of it have appeared as 'The Burdens of Nationalism: Some Thoughts on South Asian Feminists and the Nation-State,' in Neloufer de Mel and Selvy Thiruchendran eds. *At the Cutting Edge: Essays in Honour of Kumari Jayawardena*, (New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2007) and as 'Archiving

Disquiet: The Nation-state in Feminist Praxis,' in Ujjwal Singh ed. *Human Rights, and Peace: Ideas, Institutions, Movements*, (New Delhi, Sage Books, forthcoming).

¹ K.Balagopal, PUDDR meeting on the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Delhi, 2004.

² Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, London, Zed Books: 1986.

³ Kumari Jayawardena, *From Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka*, Colombo, SSA and Sanjiva Books, 2000.

⁴ Nira Yuval Davis, cites George Mosse to link the rise of the bourgeois family morality to the rise of nationalism in Europe at the end of the 18th century in her book *Gender and Nation*, (London, Sage, 1997) p. 24.

⁵ Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Woman and South Asia During British Rule*, New York, Routledge, 1995.

⁶ This paragraph is a personal account based on my perceptions of the session held on 25th March 2001. A number of women from India attended this memorable conference including Dr. Saradmoni and Alice Thorner, both doyens of the women's studies movement in India.

⁷ Not all was reconciliatory in the seminar after the connectedness and solidarity of the experience of Nayyara Noor's rendering of Faiz at the conference and the unanimity of the resolution we passed. When the discussions on the rapes of Bangladeshi women began tensions surfaced: there was an agitated debate on who began the rapes whether Bengalis against Biharis or the Pakistani army against the Bengali women. For a similar set of arguments see Sarmila Bose, 'Anatomy of Violence: East Pakistan in 1971,' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40: 41, October 8, 2005, pp. 4463-4471 and 'Losing the Victims: Problems of Using Women as Weapons in Recounting the Bangladesh War,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38, September 22, 2007, pp. 3864-3871 for a contested analysis of patterns of violence in 1971. She specifically states that she came across no mention of rapes either by the army or by the Bengalis but I have met a well-known artist in Dhaka who made public the sexual violence she experienced. Sarmila's argument has been strongly challenged by Akhtaruzzman Mandal and Nayanika Mukherjee, 'Research on Bangladesh War,' I&II, *Economic and Political Weekly*, no. 50, December 15, 2007, pp. 118-121.

⁸ Uma Chakravarti, 'Persistent Structures and Everyday Challenges: Women's Movements in South Asia,' in Sabyasachi Bhattacharjee and N.N. Vohra eds. *Looking Back: India in the Twentieth Century*, National Book Trust, 2002, pp.191-216.

⁹ For an excellent summary of a feminist perspective on the history of the post-colonial state in Pakistan and its repeated recourse to military rule and then to Islamic fundamentalism within a context of capitalism and US hegemony in South Asia see Nighat Said Khan in Nighat Said Khan ed., *Up Against the State* (Lahore, ASR, 2004) pp.ix-xxi. For a political analysis of these years see Mazhar Ali Khan, *Pakistan: The Barren Years* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1998). This is a collection of Mazhar Ali Khan's editorials and columns in the newspaper *Viewpoint* and covers the years between 1975 and 1992.

¹⁰ *Up Against the State*, op.cit, p.xiii.

¹¹ Neelam Hussain, 'Military rule, Fundamentalism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan, in Nighat Said Khan ed. *Up Against the State*, p.24.

¹² *Ibid*, pp.30-31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹⁵ The case of Fehmida, a woman who had eloped, but whose partner, Allah Bux, had been charged with kidnapping and rape as is the practice in South Asia, is an example. The father of the girl who had filed the complaint tried to take it back but was not allowed to do so by the state which regarded the case as a crime against the state, acting as the guardian of morality. Since Allah Bux was already married, the two were charged with adultery and the man was to receive stringent punishment and the woman a hundred lashes. This interpretation of the incidents brought home the reality of the Hudood Ordinances and became a trigger for the birth of a new phase of the women's movement and the birth of Women's Action Forum (WAF) which has branches in many cities in Pakistan (*Ibid*. p. 24).

¹⁶ Zia ul Haq is reputed to have said, 'Take Islam out of Pakistan and make it a secular state; it would collapse.' Cited in Naila Kabeer, 'The Quest for National Identity: Women, Islam, and the State of Bangladesh,' in Deniz Kandiyoti ed., *Women Islam and the State* (Philadelphia: temple University Press 1991) pp.115-143, p.117.

¹⁷ See for example Farida Shaheed and Khawar Mumtaz, *One Step Forwards Two Steps Backwards* (London: Zed Books, 1986), the review of the book by a 'Marxist' with the assumed name of Babar Ali, 'Elitist View of Women's Struggle in Pakistan,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 14, 1988; Kumari Jayawardena's response ' "So Comrade What Happened to Democratic Struggle?" Thoughts on Feminism and the Left in South Asia,' and Hamza Alavi 'Pakistan: Women in a Changing Society,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 8, 1988 and June 25, 1988 respectively.

¹⁸ See Salima Hashmi, *Unveiling the Visible :Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan* (Lahore: Action Aid, 2002) pp.193-195 and Farida Batool, *Figure: The Popular and the Political in Pakistan* (Lahore : ASR publications, 2004) p. 68.

¹⁹ Personal communication from Nighat Said Khan; a recent book on theatre traces the alternative theatre movement and the 'texts' produced by a movement that was avowedly anti-state (Fawzia Afzal Khan, *A Critical Stage: The Role of the Alternative Theatre in Pakistan* (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2005).

²⁰ See the interview with Mariam Palejo and the documenting of the Sindhiani Tehreek, a rural women's movement by Nighat Said Khan and Rubina Saigol, in Nighat Said Khan ed., *Up Against the State*, op.cit., pp. 192-232.

²¹ Saba Gul Khattak, 'A Reinterpretation of the Statist Discourse in Pakistan (1977-88)' in Nighat Said Khan, Rubina Saigol and Afiya Shehrbano Zia eds. *Locating the Self: Perspectives on Women and Multiple Identities* (Lahore: ASR Publications, 1994, pp.22-40) p.31.

²² Ibid., p.34.

²³ Saba Gul Khattak, 'Gendered and Violent: Inscribing the Military on the Nation State', in Neelam Hussain et.al. eds. see below, p.43

²⁴ Saadia Toor, 'The State, Fundamentalism and Civil Society', in Neelam Hussain et.al. eds. *Engendering the Nation State* (Lahore: Simorgh, 1997) pp.111-146, p.124.

²⁵ In recent years militarisation of the state apparatus and the repeated recourse to army rule has led to considerable resistance in the context of agrarian contradictions as the army has taken control of some of the best cultivable lands in the Punjab and is functioning like an exploitative landlord; a strong movement for statutory rights as tenants has been a feature of the rural scene. Women have played a major role in the struggles and faced the repressive militarised might of the state with great courage; see the write up in the Simorgh diary for 2004 and Rubina Saigol's unpublished report titled *At Home, or in the Grave: Afghan Women and the Reproduction of Patriarchy*, Working Paper no. 70, Islamabad, SDPI, 2002.

²⁶ For example, Malathi de Alwiss, known for her work on gender, some of it explicitly on war and resistance, has also dwelt on the making of bourgeois family morality, and the anxieties of the nation in the making about the sexuality of Sri Lankan women in a wonderful essay titled 'Sexuality and the Field of Vision: The Discursive Clothing of the Sigiriya Frescoes' (in Kumari Jayawardena & Malathi de Alwiss ed., *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (New Delhi, Kali For Women 1996); Selvi Thiruchendran brings in the way lullabies and laments in traditional Tamil poetry—

which is the main subject of her book— is transformed to include lamenting for the dead in the war in *Feminist Speech Transmissions: An Exploration Into the Lullabies and Dirges of Women* (Colombo: Women's Education and Research Centre & Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 2001).

²⁷ Serena Tennekoon, 'Macho Sons and Man-Made Mothers,' *Lanka Guardian*, Vol. 8, No. 15 1986.

²⁸ Malathi de Alwiss, 'Moral Mothers and Stalwart Sons: Reading Binaries in the Time of War,' in Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin eds. *The Women and War Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) pp. 254-271, p.258.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.261.

³⁰ Sitaralega Maunaguru, 'Gendering Tamil Nationalism: The Construction of 'Woman' in Projects of Protest and Control,' in Predeep Jegannathan and Qadri Ismail eds. *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka* (Colombo: SSA) 1995, pp.158-175, pp. 167-168.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.167.

³² *Ibid.* pp.168-169.

³³ Neloufer De Mel, *Women and the Nation's Narrative: Gender and Nationalism in Twentieth century Sri Lanka*, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 2000, pp. 233-279.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.225-27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, 'Agents or Victims? The Sri Lankan Woman Militant in the Interregnum.'

³⁶ Darini Rajasingham, 'Ambivalent Empowerment: The Tragedy of Tamil Women in Conflict,' in Rita Manchanda ed., *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency* (New Delhi, Sage, 2001) pp.102-130.

³⁷ Sitaralega Maunaguru, *op.cit.* p. 171.

³⁸ Malathi de Alwiss ed., *Cat's Eye: A feminist Gaze on Current Issues*, Colombo, Cat's Eye Publications, 2004, p.159.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133-134.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 134-137.

⁴¹ As Cynthia Enloe has argued, men fight for women and children, in their name and since they do, systematic rapes in war are aimed not primarily at the women-but at the enemy collectivity (as cited in Darius M. Rejali,'After Feminist Analyses of Bosnian

Violence' in Lois Ann Lorentzen and J.Turpin eds. *The Women and War Reader*, New York, New York University Press, 1998, p. 28). This applies very well to the rape of women in the course of the Bangladeshi war of independence, and the reprisal rape of women by the Pakistani army.

⁴² Shahin Akhtar et.al, *Narir 71 Juddho Poroborthi Kattho Kahini*, (71 For Women and Factual Stories After War) Dhaka, ASK, 2001, Indra Nath Chaudhuri, 'War and Women in the Making of Bangladesh,' *Book Review*, Vol. 26. No. 10, October 2002, pp.33-34.

⁴³ Meghna Guha Thakurta, 'Minorities , Women, and Peace: A South Asian Perspective,' in *Nivedini: Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 10, May-June 2003, Colombo, pp24-20, p. 26

⁴⁴ Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia*, New Delhi, Kali For Women, 2001, p. 71.

⁴⁵ Shelley Feldman, '(Re)presenting Islam: Manipulating Gender , Shifting State Practices, and Class Frustrations in Bangladesh,' in Patricia Jeffrey and Amrita Basu eds. *Resisting the Sacred and the Secular: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, New Delhi, Kali For women, 1999, pp.33-52, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Amena Mohsin, 'Gendered Nation, Gendered Peace,' Unpublished paper cited in Anuradha Chenoy, op.cit, p. 64.

⁴⁷ Meghna Guha Thakurta, 'Women's Narratives from the Chittagong Hill Tracts,' in Rita Manchanda ed. op.cit, pp. 252-293, pp.286-87.

⁴⁸ Speaking about the children born of the rapes, Mujib said, 'Send the children, who have no identity of their father, abroad. Let the children of human beings grow up like proper humans. Besides, I do not want to keep the polluted in this country (Amena Mohsin, 'Conceptualising International Security: Where are the Women?' in *Nivedini, Journal of Gender Studies*, op.cit., pp.71-87, p. 78).

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.81.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.82.

⁵¹ Oral presentation at Lahore conference cited above, 25.3. 2001.

⁵² Amena Mohsin, 'Conceptualising International Security,' op.cit., 85-86.

⁵³ The word counter here could be the short form for encounter, a term made popular by the police which often kills a person in custody and then claims to have had to kill them in an encounter. Here it stands for more: whatever it is the police can do to a woman like her, it cannot break her spirit or make her bend.

⁵⁴Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York, Routledge, 1987.

⁵⁵ As reported in the local press [*Sangai Express* 22 July, 2004] Manorama is alleged to have been shot in the vagina and was perhaps dealt this special form of humiliation as a message to her supposed organisation and to her suspect community; mere rape was not enough of a punishment and further this act would also destroy evidence of the rape itself. It was also alleged that she was an explosives expert—thus she was represented as having crossed over into an area of male skills, making her a doubly transgressive woman of the ‘other’ community.

⁵⁶ A student leader set himself on fire on independence day. He had left a suicide note saying ‘it is better to self immolate than die at the hands of the security forces under this Act (Sushanta Talukdar, ‘Manipur on fire’ *Frontline*, September 10, 2004, p. 4-11).

⁵⁷ A pamphlet war went on between women students and male students at St. Stephens College, a bastion of elite male privilege, triggered off by demands for more hostels for women students in 2004-2005. What is significant is that a sympathetic reference to Manorama by women students in an early pamphlet led to an angry response from a male student defending the need for the clauses of impunity for the army in the AFSPA in the name of national security. The university remains a site for debating nationalism and national security from a feminist perspective. See correspondence under email address: campaignforgirlshostel@yahoo.co.in

⁵⁸ *Liberation*, November, 2004.

⁵⁹ See Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries* (New Delhi Kali For Women, 1997) and Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence* (New Delhi, Penguin, 1997) for a discussion of Mridula Sarabhai’s work during the violence of the Partition in the sub-continent.

⁶⁰ This section on Mridula Sarabhai’s position on the Kashmir question and her support for Sheikh Abdullah is based on the only scholarly work on her, Aparna Basu’s aptly titled book *Rebel With a Cause* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁶¹ Anusuya Sarabhai was a woman of independent means and the family was liberal enough to not cut off the access to such means whatever the women did, on the grounds that if these women had been born sons they would have inherited their respective shares; thus Mridula too later took stands on issues that no one else in the family supported. *ibid.*, pp.17-28.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁵ Ibid.,pp. 43-53; prison life gave her the opportunity to think about marriage which she concluded was mainly an institution to transmit property, one in which a woman herself became the property of the man (p. 50).

⁶⁶ Ibid., Pp. 59-61.

⁶⁷ *Grim Realities: Of Life, Death and Survival in Jammu and Kashmir*, Report of the Joint Investigation team: Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, Human Rights Forum, Organisation for the Protection of Democratic rights, People's Democratic Front, People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi, 2001, pp.53-57.

⁶⁸ Aparna Basu, op.cit., pp. 149-166.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 171.

⁷² Ibid.,p. 178.

⁷³ Ibid., p.180.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 206.

⁷⁵ Nehru said that he had known her for forty years and suggested that she was immature—though courageous, a courage that could go wrong because of the immaturity, thus dismissing the politics that she stood for; her immaturity and foolhardiness was so anti national and causing so much harm that it was no longer possible to keep her without restraint (Ibid., pp.206-207).

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

⁷⁹ In 1964, Jayaprakash Narayan wrote an article in the newspapers refuting the official government position that elections in J&K made the holding of a plebiscite unnecessary, and that if a verdict of the Kashmiri people was to be sought it would mean the disintegration of the Indian nation. He not only dismissed this fear as 'silly,' but argued that this position was based on the assumption that the states of India are held together

by force and not by sentiments of common nationality, an assumption too that made a mockery of the Indian nation, and a tyrant of the Indian state [*Hindustan Times*, 20.4.1964].

⁸⁰ Aparna Basu, op.cit., p.234.

⁸¹ This is based on Nandita Haksar's recall of the late sixties and early seventies when she was a student and later a civil rights activist.

⁸² See for example the preface of *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights* by Nandita Haksar and Luingham Luithui (New Delhi: Lancer Press, 1984) where they refer to some of these discussions leading to the production of the book of documents on Nagaland: 'This book is a product of a friendship which began in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Over cups of coffee in the canteen, the steps of the library, some of us Indian and Naga students began discussing questions of Naga nationalism, overcoming initial reservations.'

⁸³ *Nagaland File*, op.cit, pp.208-231.

⁸⁴ Personal Communication, Nandita Haksar, 27.10.2005.

⁸⁵ Aparna Mahanta, 'Patriarchy and State Systems in North-east India: A Historical and Critical Perspective,' in Kumkum Sangari and Uma Chakravarti eds. *From Myths to Markets Essays on Gender*, Shimla and New Delhi, Indian Institute of Advanced Study and Manohar Publishers, 1999: pp. 341-367; 360. It is significant that rape forms one of the most important issues of documentation to highlight the strategy used by the state of 'taming women to tame men' in endemic conflict prone regions. See for example *Accused Indian Army: Women's Testimonies from Northeast* (Tirupati: Committee for Violence Against Women, 2003).

⁸⁶ Aparna Mahanta, op.cit. pp. 360-361).

⁸⁷ The report of the women's team, titled *Kashmir Imprisoned* (New Delhi, Committee for Initiative on Kashmir, July 1990) is a classic example of examining the specific experiences of women within the framework of what is happening to the whole society. It bears the stamp of what women civil rights activists can bring into a report on civil rights violations—a concern for the whole and for its parts, looking at the margin and the margin within as it were.

⁸⁸ *Kashmir Imprisoned*, op. cit. p 3.

⁸⁹ The chapter heads of the report are 'Terrorism versus Militarisation'; 'The State, the Law and the Security Forces'; 'Militarisation and Violation of Human Rights'; 'Fundamentalism, Militarisation and Women's Rights'.

⁹⁰ *Kashmir Imprisoned*, op.cit. pp.46-47.

⁹¹ Ibid. pp. 67-68.

⁹² Reports that are jointly written by a group of people with differing political positions often work with an internal consensus which hides the positions of some members. The consensus has to be derived from what is acceptable to the members at that point of time. This report took an unambiguous position against army atrocities, unlike the experience of the Ukhul report cited earlier. But addressing the nationality question was postponed, at least for the moment.

⁹³ Amiya Rao and Aparna Rao, *Impressions of the Recent Visit to the Kashmir valley*, mimeo, April 1991.

⁹⁴ I recall a stormy meeting at the Press Club of India where we confronted B.G.Vergheese for the conclusions he derived from conversations with army authorities; the personal sense of betrayal we experienced as women let down by the press, even by its 'best' specimens when it comes to acknowledging sexual violence, is not something I will ever forget.

⁹⁵ *Women's Testimonies from Kashmir: The Green of the Valley is Khaki*, Women's Initiative, 1994, p.3.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.3.

⁹⁸ *Grim Realities*, p. 60.

⁹⁹ Uma Chakravarti, 'A Kashmir Diary: Seven Days in an Armed 'Paradise'', in Urvasi Butalia ed. *Speaking Peace: Women's Voices From Kashmir*, Delhi Kali For Women, 2002, pp.113-148.

¹⁰⁰ Meeting organized by the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons Kashmir, Delhi, 25.9.2005; A support group was set up in Delhi to mobilize opinion outside Kashmir on the issue of enforced disappearances at the hands of the security forces. The APDP also participated in a public hearing on disappearances in Jantar Mantar, New Delhi (the only available space the nation-state in India now grants to public protests in the capital; far from a fifty-fifty democracy, (Ramachandra Guha's claim) perhaps we have 50 square metres of democracy if we see democracy from the

margins). This 'eruption' of the APDP into the public arena—often witnessed in Srinagar but seen for the first time in Delhi in 2006—was a poignant articulation of the social memory of human rights violations by the state.

¹⁰¹See Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi: Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past,' in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Woman: Essays on Colonial India* (New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1988); Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife Hindu Nation*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

¹⁰²Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997; Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, Delhi, Penguin, 1997, and Veena Das ed. *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990.

¹⁰³Nandita Haksar, Plenary speech, XIth National Conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies, Goa, 3.5.2005.

¹⁰⁴These writings are too numerous to enumerate here. Following 2002 in Gujarat two interventions in particular were Tanika Sarkar's 'Semiotics of Terror in India: Muslim Women and Children in Hindu Rashtra' *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 13, 2002 and the report of the Feminist Tribunal on the Gujarat violence titled *Threatened Existence: A feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat*, December 2003.

¹⁰⁵See for example Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia*, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 2002; Kumkum Sangari, 'New Patriotisms: Beauty and the Bomb,' in Rada Ivekovic, op.cit., pp. 153-170; Kumkum Sangari, Neeraj Malik, Sheba Chhachi and Tanika Sarkar, 'Why Women reject Nuclearisation,' in Smitu Kothari and Parvez Hoodbhoy eds. *Out of the Nuclear Shadow* (New Delhi: Rainbow Publishers, 2001, pp. 152-55).

¹⁰⁶Pamphlet written by women's groups titled 'Why Women Oppose War,' in Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Joseph eds. *Terror Counter Terror: Women Speak Out* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2003, pp. 278- 83).

¹⁰⁷Uma Chakravarti, Nandita Narain and Neeraj Malik, 'Parliamentary Attack Case: Some Thoughts on the High Court Judgment,' *Revolutionary Democracy*, 10: 1 (April 2004) pp. 81-82.

¹⁰⁸Nandita Haksar, 'The Many Faces of Nationalism,' & Shuddhabrata Sengupta, 'Media trials and Courtroom tribulations: A Battle of Images, Words, Shadows,' in *December 13: A Reader, The Strange Case of the Attack on the Indian Parliament* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2006, pp. 1-29 and 29-56 respectively).

¹⁰⁹ Nandita Haksar, *Framing Geelani, Hanging Afzal: Patriotism in the Time of Terror*, New Delhi, Bibliophile South Asia, 2007, p. 167.

¹¹⁰ Committee to Review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act: Hope of Repeal or Whitewash Exercise,' *Saheli Newsletter*, Jan-April 2005, pp. 4-5; the statement of women's groups was signed by 18 women's organisations. Both before and after this article the Saheli Newsletter carried pieces on the Manorama incident. See *Saheli Newsletter*, May- August 2004 and May-August 2005.

¹¹¹ See Report on the XIth National Conference of the IAWS held in Goa on 3-6 May, 2005.

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