

Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlour?
Globalization, Cultural Nationalism and Feminist Politics
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Debates on globalization in India tend to harden into polarized rhetorical stances - either uncritical celebration of globalization by the dominant consuming elites or a condemnation, equally lacking in nuances, by "anti-globalization" forces, which range across the political spectrum, from Right to Left. This essay speaks to some of the issues circulating around these debates, and explores significant disjunctures and contradictions on both sides.

To begin with, the boundary between the sides is more blurred than might appear from the rhetoric. Some sections of the pro-globalization consuming elites referred to above, are also part of the support base of the supposedly anti-globalization Right. However, left-wing anti-globalization critiques seldom unpacks these tensions, and tends to conflate the anti-democratic majoritarian politics of the Hindu Right with corporate globalization. Growing communalism is thus assumed to be tied to and drawing from the globalizing forces, and further, India's nuclear bomb is also given a specifically Hindu Right colour. As a result of this conflation, counter-hegemonic political practice, specifically feminist politics, fails to recognize the full complexity of the forces we are dealing with - we miss out both on the real dangers as well as on potential opportunities. Although I address material generated largely in debates in India, it is not far-fetched to assume that there are strong resonances with similar debates in other postcolonial societies, marked as they are by a shared uniqueness best characterised, following Partha Chatterjee, as "our" moment of modernity, a term I explain below.

Indeed, there are three terms that I need to clarify before I continue - "postcolonial", "modernity" and "our modernity." At least two of these terms have been rather over-debated, and here I intend simply to point to where I stand, assuming the prior existence of those debates. I use "post-colonialism" not simply as "after" colonialism, but in another well-known sense, as the discourse of oppositionality which the encounter with colonialism brings into being - post-coloniality thus begins from the very first moment of

colonial contact (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1999:117). Second, with reference to "modernity", I find useful Sudipta Kaviraj's outlining of "the historical constellation of modernity", as generally understood to consist of three primary processes - a) capitalist industrial production; b) political institutions of liberal democracy and the evolution of a society based on the process of individuation; and c) a gradual decline of communal forms of belonging yielding place to the modern form of interest-based voluntary associations (Kaviraj 1995:98). Third, when this modernity is encountered through colonialism, it assumes a particular form that Partha Chatterjee calls "our" modernity (Chatterjee 1997:263). While modernity was equally disruptive in Europe, the way these other societies entered into modernity involved a double violence – that of an alien structure of power embodying in addition to the disruption of modernity itself, the violence of imperialism. The relationship with modernity in such societies has therefore had a specific character - local elites on the one hand and subaltern groups on the other, entering into differentiated negotiations at two interrelated levels, with colonial authority and with modernity, each group developing different degrees of investment in the twin, related projects.

When we look at the articulation of resistances to globalisation in those parts of the globe that have been colonized, we find that some anti-globalisation arguments position themselves as identical to "tradition"; others, to "nationalism"; and with many, the two are linked, that is, the Nation *is* Tradition. The challenge for feminist politics as a radical critique of capitalism and dominant culture, is to disaggregate the strands of these assertions and to carve out a different space of resistance. This task is complicated by the fact that, as I have already suggested, the kinds of positions outlined above do not simply fall into the Right/Left opposition, particularly when it comes to nationalism, a value asserted by both sides equally vociferously.

I

A useful entry point into the questions I have gestured towards, is the recent drive by some militant groups in Kashmir to enforce the veil for Muslim women in the state. This drive is over a year old now, and began with an ultimatum issued by a little-known militant group in Kashmir, the Lashkar-e-Jabbar. The group announced that all Muslim women in the valley of Kashmir would have to wear the burqa (a form of hijab) and those who did not would be "punished". There followed attacks with acid on the faces of

unveiled women, and threats to shoot after the deadline passed. Apart from one major women's organization, Dukhtaraan-e-Millat, which supported the call, all other militant groups denounced this ultimatum, and raised doubts as to the existence of the group calling itself Lashkar-e-Jabbar, suggesting it could be part of the Indian state's strategy to discredit militancy in Kashmir. However, the threat was real, and many women have taken to the burqa who didn't wear one till now. After what seemed like a lull, once again the drive was intensified in 2002, this time in the name of another organization. In this phase, the threat was no longer distant - three young women were killed for being unveiled.

Mehbooba Mufti, the leader of what was then the opposition party in Kashmir, (now in power after the recent elections) who herself adopted the head-scarf after she joined politics, came out with a strong statement against forcing such dress on women. She said, "When women come out to demonstrate, their headgear is always missing, they even have torn clothes, there is no purdah at all. Then nobody has a problem. But when one of these women is on her way to school or office, she has acid thrown on her in the name of vulgarity. It is nothing but hypocrisy" (Jaleel 2001:9) This is a woman from a politically powerful family, emphasising the way militant groups use the subversive agency of women in "extraordinary" moments, as a counterpoint to the expectation that in "ordinary" moments these very women will be compliant to tradition. But this is also a woman who when she entered public life, decided to conform to what "tradition" demanded of women by wearing the head-scarf.

For those struggling to protect democratic rights in India, this is yet another attempt in several over the past few years to control women's dress and behaviour in the name of cultural purity. With the increasingly free circulation of images from western consumerist culture through television channels as a result of lifting of restrictions in the era of "liberalisation", concern has been expressed at various levels about the threat to "Indian" culture. Organizations of the Hindu Right such as the Bajrang Dal and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (both with close links to the Bharatiya Janta Party, leading the alliance currently in government), have been trying to enforce dress codes for women in universities, claiming that sexual harrassment would decrease if women dressed "respectably" and according to "Indian tradition." Interestingly, the Lashkar-e-Jabbar in Kashmir also "appealed" to unveiled "Hindu and Sikh sisters" to wear a bindi

(a dot on the forehead) in order to be spared from attack.¹ Clearly, when it comes to the marking of female bodies with cultural signs, the right wing is united across ideological lines. Additionally there is the characteristic homogenization of the Other (in this case, the non-Muslim), for the bindi is not worn by Sikh women.

It is by now a phenomenon well recorded by feminist scholarship and politics, that communities vest their honour in "their" women, and that cultural policing begins with marking and then drawing women "inside" the community ((Sarkar and Butalia 1995; Mernissi 1991). Particularly when a community feels its identity or existence is under threat, then its proud assertion of identity is always marked on the bodies of "its" women first. For instance, the increasing numbers of Muslim women wearing burqa in the state of Kerala, where this practice was rare, is often dated from the demolition of the Babri Masjid, a 400-year-old mosque, in 1992 by the Hindu Right, an act that is widely perceived to have decisively reshaped the contours of India's secular and democratic polity (Basheer 2003). This phenomenon is not restricted to minority communities alone; majority communities too respond to the threat of "western" culture in this way, as is evident from the violent reactions to the holding of the Miss World contest in India from the Hindu right and in Nigeria from the Muslim right. But this is something feminists have written and talked about for a long time now. What I am interested in here is another aspect of this phenomenon. Let me take up a statement made by a young Muslim woman in Kashmir who took to the veil after the threats. In an interview with a journalist critical of the diktat, she said that she had never worn a burqa before, that it made her terribly unhappy, and that she felt restricted and bound. "I used to go the beauty parlour regularly," she said plaintively, "but now I don't have to bother about my face." This statement is also put in a bold blurb across the article, so that it is what first strikes you, the poignancy of a young girl declaring sadly that she no longer has to bother about her face, because she has been imprisoned inside a burqa. However, at another point in the interview, she conceded that she felt safer in public, because men were more respectful "It can be liberatory", she said, "you can go wherever you want to go" (Jaleel 2001:1)

So there you have it - the burqa offering a refuge from sexual harrassment and some of the restrictions in mobility faced by young girls, and the beauty parlour standing in for the realm of self-expression, emancipation from enforced veiling. A painful seesaw for a feminist to be trapped on! Is cultural policing any less effective when not backed by a

gun but by societal consensus? Or any less restrictive on the "beauty parlour" side of the equation? When Brazilian women die on plastic surgeon's tables, or when American teenagers risk death and eat less and less in order to stay beautifully thin, is that cultural policing too, or an expression of "free will"? If that young Kashmiri girl could continue to go to beauty parlours, would she have been much freer to express "herself"? I must emphasise that this is by no means a simple rhetorical question, but a significant dilemma. Consider the increasing numbers of middle-class Indian women, who would have been housewives with no income of their own, who are now setting up beauty parlours in their homes. In doing so, they become small entrepreneurs (government documents recording loans given for this purpose list it as a "non-traditional" method of income generation, along with enterprises like desktop publishing and managing public phone booths.) Presumably, these women then acquire a slightly greater degree of control over resources than they had as housewives. However, the mushrooming of such beauty parlours reflects also the new overwhelming pressure on even women from traditional backgrounds to "look good" in the new way, and to spend time and money doing so.²

There is a peculiarity to this moment in history, particularly when one is located in a post-colonial democracy like India. In the face of a renewed and relentless moral rhetoric through the 90s from the Right, which targets women as the repositories of cultural purity, one kind of critical response has been from the globalized elite, celebrating "choice", "individual freedom" and "women's right to their bodies". For instance, a story in *The Wall Street Journal* about beauty contests in Pakistan was titled "Lifting the Veil from Pak Ramps" (Fong 2002:18). Thus, when the Right has attacked beauty contests and celebrations of Valentine's Day as being "western" and "morally corrupting", the westernized Indian elites have reasserted pride in our "modernity", and "our women's" confidence on the international stage (several Indian women have been Miss Universe and Miss World in the last few years). In this debate, the Left seems to have fallen into the trap of equating "anti-globalist/anti-imperialist" with "nationalist". In the process, it has taken positions similar to those of the Right. For instance, the two state governments that banned beauty contests in 2001 were the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh and the Left Front-ruled West Bengal. Neither party made the move from the perspective of a critique of the commodification of women's bodies, rather, the justification was in terms of "cultural purity" in both cases.

The challenge for feminist politics in this context is the working out of a different space for a radical politics of culture, one that is differentiated from both right and left-wing articulations of cultural and economic nationalism, as well as from the libertarian and celebratory responses to globalization from the consuming elites. Do we need to recover an older feminist and Marxist critique of commodification that will address both kinds of cultural policing - the coercion of the right-wing, as well as the hegemony of the "free Western world"? Or will that older critique need to be substantially refashioned?

The all-too-familiar binary opposition of Tradition/Modernity has faced substantial and by now well-known lines of critique. Nevertheless, there continues to be a way in which critiques of modernity are perceived as set up only from within the site of tradition, and critiques of tradition from within modernity. The political task is precisely to deconstruct this binary in order to demarcate (and recognize) a third, or at least, "other" site from where we can scan our landscape. From this site it becomes possible first, to remind ourselves that Modernity and Tradition are not always two clearly distinguishable moments. What is called Tradition, especially in postcolonial societies, is unavoidably located within Modernity, irretrievably constituted by modernist discourses. Neither pole of the opposition remains hermetically sealed from the other. There is a vast body of scholarship which demonstrates that "custom", "religious practice" and so on have been decisively fashioned by colonial administrative fiat, and continue to be reinvented continuously.³ Yet these categories continue to be engaged with, both intellectually and in political practice, as if they were "primordial".

Second, we recognize, from our vantage point in the "other site", that critiques of each do not only come from the other. That is, modernity comes under attack not only from tradition but from opposing tendencies within itself, and similarly, tradition is challenged not only by the language of rights and modernity, but is internally contested in its own terms. A politics of radical democratization would have to recognize the specific oppressiveness of both Modernity and Tradition. For feminists especially, this is a crucial step to take because in postcolonial societies tradition seems to offer a refuge from the alienation and commodification set in motion by modernity. One kind of critique of the new ways in which forces of modernization oppress women can be and is very often cast in terms which valorize a reconstituted tradition. Take, for example, the "Islamic feminist" defence of the

veil as a mode of challenging the commodifying western (and male) gaze. Fadwa El Guindi puts it this way in the context of Egypt - "it [Islamic feminism] is feminist because it seeks to liberate womanhood; it is Islamic because its premises are embedded in Islamic principles and values. Yet in some senses, the liberal Western-influenced feminism of the aristocracy and the Islamic one are not far apart. Both are about the emancipation of women. The early feminist lifting of the face-veil was about emancipation from exclusion; the voluntary wearing of the hijab since the mid-seventies is about liberation from imposed, imported identities, consumerist behaviours, and an increasingly materialist culture" (El Guindi 1999:184) El Guindi also explicitly locates the mid-seventies as the period from which western imperialist demonization of Islam goes on the ascendant (El Guindi 1999:131-2).

But of course, at the same time feminist critique has to be aware of the oppression which is institutionalised by Tradition, and against which it is the values and institutions of Modernity which offer weapons of critique. Thus despite decades of feminist scholarship and politics, we continue in many senses, to be trapped inside the swing of this particular pendulum, unable to make a critique of Modernity and Tradition simultaneously. Consider another instance, one cited by South African scholar Thandabantlu Nhlapo at a conference, in order to illustrate his attack on the pretensions to universality of the modernist discourse of rights. He referred to the case of a Beauty Queen debarred from SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) events because she declared at a Press conference that she would celebrate her victory the traditional way, by slaughtering an animal. Nhlapo used this incident to outline a defence of the rights of communities to their traditional ways of life against the overwhelming homogenizing drive of Modernity.⁴ As I see it however, this is a good example of what we may call the prison of the pendulum between Tradition and Modernity. What is at stake in this episode but rendered invisible in Nhlapo's telling of it, is modernity, not only as the force eroding the traditional rights of communities to their ways of life but as the force objectifying the female body. Nhlapo remains unaware of the paradox involved in defending the "traditional" forms of celebration of the community in this specific context - what the woman in question is celebrating of course, her beauty contest crown, exemplifies the commodification and alienation of the self, particularly of the female body, which is typical of modernity.

The point I wish to make is that Modernity can be shown to be running counter to an emancipatory ethic in several ways, and Tradition is only one of the lenses through which

this may be made visible. In fact, Modernity itself offers the values which can form one basis of attacking it - autonomy, equality, and freedom are archetypically modern values, which Nhlapo has invoked in the instance above. Our political practice needs urgently to work on the delineation of the "third space" from which a critique of the oppression of both Tradition and Modernity can be made.

A passing reference here would not be out of place, to the fascinating ways in which beauty contests, sponsored by giant multinational companies in "Third World" countries, occupy contradictory and shifting positions on the grid of Tradition/Modernity. There is a considerable amount of feminist scholarship along these lines, on beauty contests in South East Asia and Latin America.⁵ In India, we see the phenomenon of women from traditional, middle to lower middle class families, who would have been "married off", aspiring to beauty crowns and modelling as a career. If they are successful, they then totally escape the patriarchal controls of the family, and live in the style of "liberated", wealthy women - their love affairs in the public eye, they are the darlings of the media, and are unconcerned about middle-class public opinion. They are confident, have control over their earnings, many of them invest for a soon-to-come future in which they will no longer be models, and move into business ventures of different kinds. On the other hand, the ideal they explicitly stand for, especially in the winning round of the beauty contests, is that of "womanhood", especially "Indian womanhood", which is represented as a perfect mix of tradition and modernity. The answers they give to the question of what they aspire to be has to be in terms of acceptable womanly virtues - some kind of nurturing, caring answer is expected of them. An interesting incident from the history of Indian participation in international beauty contests is the story of Madhu Sapre, a top model today. In the period before a spate of Indian women began to win Miss World contests, Sapre missed the crown by a whisker, becoming merely first runner-up. The innumerable analyses in the English media, of her failure to win the Miss World crown focused again and again on the "wrong" answer she gave to the question in the final round - "What would you do if you were the leader of your country?" Sapre, a champion of her state (Maharashtra) in badminton, replied that she would build the best sports facilities so that India could excel in the international arena. This was unanimously and endlessly identified as a "selfish" answer to have given, which cost her the crown. Every single finalist since then, has given an answer that involves children, old people, the poor, or all three.

It is also not a coincidence that Indian women started winning international titles all of a sudden in the 1990s. A much-analyzed phenomenon, it has been pointed out by journalists and feminist scholars that the great Indian middle class was created in that decade, with the new structural adjustment policies putting into place greater purchasing power for a relatively small class, which in absolute terms given India's population-size, was quite large. India opened up as a consumer market for multinational companies, with cosmetics in particular being specially targeted at Indian colouring and requirements. International beauty contests became a way of wooing hitherto untapped markets in Asia and Africa (Sangari 2002:154-5). A second, less commented-upon factor is the conscious strategy adopted by Satya Saran, the editor of *Femina* (the magazine that sponsors the Indian contest, and the winners of that to the international one.) Writing after the spectacular string of successes began, she explained how they started to select the "international look", which was very far from the Indian idea of beauty - taller, thinner, and the colour of the skin did not matter, indeed, "dark" might even be an advantage on the international stage. Another change that was made is significant. Earlier, the Miss India contest featured the winners of preliminary contests in the states. However, as Saran pointed out, the winner from a small town was likely to be much less sophisticated than even the top ten contestants from a cosmopolitan city like Mumbai. After the restructuring, regional representation was given no weightage, and if all the top contestants were from three big cities, that did not matter. This meant that a particular type of "look" was expected, and the large variations that one could expect to see in a contest featuring women from different parts of the subcontinent, was deliberately ended. One more instance of the homogenization we have come to associate with globalisation.⁶

However, as the above discussion illustrates, homogenization is not the only result of globalization, which unleashes complex, often contradictory forces. In the next section I will examine how globalization can be flattened in being understood as either simply empowering or simply oppressive.

II

The complexity of the negotiations between tradition and modernity is particularly evident in the phenomenon of migration from the global South to the North, and the transformations within these relocated communities. Naila Kabeer's book on Bangladeshi women workers addresses the apparent paradox that while women

garment workers in Dhaka have entered garment factories and work unveiled, Bangladeshi women in the garment industry in London are almost entirely confined to homeworking. One of Kabeer's main explanations for this is that women in Dhaka come from diverse geographical backgrounds into a relatively anonymous urban setting while the women in London came mostly from one province, Sylhet, where society is extremely conservative, even by Bangladeshi standards. In London, they tend to settle in one part of East London because of community networks drawing new migrants into that area where Bangladeshis have become concentrated. This concentration and regrouping of the community is of course, set within a context of growing racist hostility which leads to the familiar phenomenon of drawing "our" women "inside." Men then, work in the factories and women at home - with the additional labelling of women's labour as unskilled, and men's as skilled. Kabeer argues that the processes of globalisation by which garment factory sweatshops get located in countries like Bangladesh empower women who, despite exploitative conditions of work, find their options increased. She suggests that the "agency" of women is enhanced by the effects of globalisation in the South (Kabeer 2001).

However, Kabeer's significant argument that seems to run counter to feminist wisdom on globalisation, misses a critical component. It therefore, stops the pendulum too easily at the Beauty Parlour, as it were. In the scenario she outlines, there are, it seems to me, two axes at work which map on to each other, not only in London but also in Dhaka – tradition/modernity and home/not at home – but which produce contradictory results: anonymity and dispersal of community in Dhaka, regrouping and reassertion of community in London. Is it possible then to suggest that the critical distinguishing element here, is not the *economic* operation of globalisation which after all, takes the Bangla immigrants to London as much as they bring women to factories in Dhaka, but the *cultural* hegemony produced by globalisation which is more violently experienced *in* the West than in a poor country like Bangladesh. In India, with a much more numerically significant middle class which is the target of multinational companies, where the experience of this cultural hegemony is being experienced right "at home", the phenomenon of cultural nationalism is more evident. Indeed, even within Bangladesh, the reassertions of community would take place at the points where cultural hegemony is experienced as a threat, regardless of the anonymity produced by factory production. In other words, the factory women in Dhaka are not forever immune from re-traditionalising

moves - as and when "western" or "Indian/Hindu" culture gets perceived as a threat in Bangladesh, either through television or the growing presence of middle-class consumers, the familiar moves to mark out "our" women as different will come into play.

We move now to an argument that presents globalisation in another unidimensional mode, but from the opposite direction. That is, the mode that presents globalisation as uniformly oppressive, especially because of what is presented as its seamless compatibility with the politics of the Hindu Right in India. Kumkum Sangari, in a paper titled "The Beauty Queen and the Bomb" correctly points out that both the defence of the beauty contest by the new Indian middle class as well the opposition to the event from the Hindu right "hinge on nationalism and carry an overt anti-feminism"(Sangari 2002:156) She then goes on to delineate the two responses as corresponding to "two distinct historical moments" - the Hindu right representing "the era of merchant capital, which favoured extraction through maintaining precapitalist relations in colonized formations", during which " 'backward' enclaves cordoned from the market and 'the west' became synonymous with authentic indigenous culture", and the new middle classes representing the "' modernized' enclaves" that in the current period are becoming the "epicentre of authentic culture" (Sangari 2002:156) This close connection Sangari draws between such a narrow understanding of political economy, and the two contradictory responses to beauty contests/globalisation, becomes impossible for Sangari herself to sustain as the argument proceeds, for the contradictions are too many. After all, the new middle class also forms part of the Hindu right's support base, and this is partly the reason why the Prime Minister leading the right-wing coalition applauded the successes of Indian women in beauty contests. This fact is too easily dismissed by Sangari as a "division of labour in the Hindu right between 'moderate' parliamentarians and street-smart vandals", with the former supporting structural adjustment and liberalisation policies, while the latter maintain the myth of Hindu rightwing nationalist claims through overt opposition to "some of its epiphenomenal forms." The latter (whom she exemplifies by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal) she holds, "no longer even mention the economy" (Sangari 2002:158).

This is not in fact the case. There is certainly a division of labour in the Hindu Right, but it works differently. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal generally focus on "culture" while it is the Swadeshi Jagran Manch that deals with the "economy". The latter

is specifically devoted to raising the emotive slogan of *swadeshi* - a term from the era of the struggle for independence, which refers to a nationalist economy. This organization as well as other wings of what is called the Sangh Combine - the loose conglomeration of different Hindu right-wing formations - continuously puts pressure on the government to roll back liberalisation policies on the World Bank prescription.⁷ Indeed, Hindu right-wing organizations have teamed up with Left organizations on more than one occasion in Delhi and Mumbai to stage massive demonstrations against globalisation.⁸

On the other hand, the CPI(M)-led Left Front government in West Bengal has been proactive in inviting foreign capital and has shown considerable alacrity in implementing all the structural adjustment policies required for this programme to be successful. For instance, the general Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has clarified on several occasions that the party is not against multinational companies such as Coca Cola coming with investments into the country.⁹ The CPI(M) Chief Minister of West Bengal Buddhadev Bhattacharya said in a recent interview, "The world needs new understanding...we have to understand capital and its requirements. Capital is very important." In the same interview he said that jobs would have to be created "not in the old sense" but through encouraging entrepreneurial energies.¹⁰ His government has endorsed a contract system for workers and is committed to selling off the state's sick industries.¹¹ The complexities and contradictions in the attitude of the Left towards globalization is something Sangari does not touch on at all. The silence in her paper about the Left implicitly suggests that the Left is "really" anti-globalisation as opposed to the hypocritical stance of the Right. However, if the "schizophrenia" on this issue that she attributes to the Hindu Right (Sangari 2002:162) is equally evident on the Left, then surely we have to give up trying to understand these contradictory responses in terms of a pathology, that is, as the "abnormal" condition of schizophrenia?

A quick detour to consider a more striking illustration of leftwing nationalism as a response to globalisation, might illustrate this point better. Consider Left responses to the position taken by the governments of the "Third World/developing countries" on the "social clause" of GATT (which includes universal standards on labour, environment and human rights standards). The social clause is generally opposed by these governments as it will reduce the trade advantage, that is, "cheap labour", enjoyed by Third World countries. In a provocative paper, Aditya Nigam outlines the very strange scenario that unfolded on this

front. In 1995, the Delhi Declaration was adopted by the Fifth Conference of Labour Ministers of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries, which expressed "deep concern about the serious post-Marrakesh efforts at seeking to establish linkage between international trade and enforcement of labour standards through the imposition of the social clause" (Nigam 2001:160)¹² The social clause attempts to impose labour standards (such as ending child-labour, enforcing minimum wages, right to organize) as a pre-condition to trade¹³. The Indian government's position, denouncing the linking of labour standards to trade as an attempt to neutralize the Third World's trade advantage of "cheap labour", had the backing of all the major Indian trade unions (including both left- and right-wing trade unions) attending the 32nd session of the Standing Labour Committee held a few months earlier. Reporting on the trade union conference, the official organ of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said that "the social clause is a singular issue on which there is unanimity not only among trade unions and employers, but also on support to the government on wanting to reject the US move" (Nigam 2001:162). The central trade unions went to the extent of appealing to the Fifth Conference of Labour Ministers (referred to above) to resolutely oppose the linking of labour standards to trade as a non-tariff protectionist measure.¹⁴ Thus, as Nigam points out, the position taken by the trade unions was not at the level of a strategic agreement among themselves, but amounted to an unconditional declaration of support to the government: "It did not matter that precious little had been done by the government on this front for close to five decades...What mattered was the 'fact' that imperialism was blackmailing the 'nation' and 'the working class' was historically destined to play its 'anti-imperialist role'"(162). Nigam further points out that the response of Indian trade unions is also illustrative of the higher degree of hegemony of the organized, public-sector workers (enjoying relatively better working and living conditions) over the trade union movement in India. In several other Third World countries such as Malaysia, Peru and many African countries, the situation is such that even mainstream trade unions find it difficult to take a straightforwardly nationalist position on the social clause, which in effect would mean defending "our" bourgeoisie's right to cheap labour (Nigam 2001:164).¹⁵

So we are left with a picture in which at some points we see left and right-wing governments succumbing to structural adjustment and at others, left and right-wing nationalist protests coming together against the social clause and the "western culture" represented by beauty contests. And at other points, the Left and the Right come together in nationalist pride over the bomb - one of the first reactions to India's nuclear

explosion was from the CPI (M), applauding Indian scientists for their "achievement". The Left emerged in open opposition to the bomb only after Pakistan's reciprocal nuclear explosions a little later.¹⁶ In a fascinating discussion, Sangari argues that while the bomb revolves on an "axis of masculinity" and the beauty contest on an "axis of femininity", "both are rooted in feelings of relative deprivation" - "National accumulations of beauty and the capacity for violence can redress all economic and social problems" (162). The narrative here is persuasive and insightful, but the problem is that Sangari follows the general trend in India of left opposition to the bomb, in characterising it as "embedded in a Hindutva vocabulary" (168), conflating the "Hindu Right" with "support for globalisation/beauty contests and the Bomb." However, although the actual bomb was exploded by the Hindu rightwing-led coalition government, India's nuclear policy was not originated by the Hindu Right, which has merely inherited a longstanding nationalist project of "putting India on the world stage", a project to which both Right and Left have contributed.¹⁷

Thus, it is not very useful to try to understand the effects of globalization (or right-wing politics in India) as a function of the political economy alone, nor to assume that there is a pure anti-globalization position on the Left and a necessarily compromised one on the Right. As we have seen, the responses vary from *government* to *party* to *trade union fronts* of the Left and Right, and to collapse the several distinct strands into two homogenized positions is to lose a sense of the textured nature, both of globalization as well as of responses to it.

In this context, I find insightful Frederic Jameson's identification of "five levels of globalization" - "the technological, the political, the cultural, the economic, the social". This exercise helps in "taking an inventory of their ambiguities", as he puts it (Jameson 2000:49). In the Indian context, Kancha Iliah offers a parallel argument in which he suggests that while globalization in the *economic* sphere "has offered an expanded and varied life for the rich and made the poor poorer," in the *cultural* realm it has "opened up a new channel of hope for the historically suppressed masses", that is, the lower castes that he calls "Dalit-Bahujan." He characterises the access of these castes to English as a means of coming into contact with "the world's egalitarian knowledge systems." While "western" culture threatens the Brahmin, it liberates the Dalit-Bahujan - "Cultural globalisation negates the Brahminic myth of purity and pollution." (Iliah 2003:10). Both

Jameson and Iliah offer the potential of complicating our understanding of globalization and its effects.

However, Jameson's project, after identifying the different levels of globalization, becomes that of demonstrating their "ultimate cohesion"(49), and in the process of doing so, he tends to iron out their ambiguities. As we will see in the next section, this move takes us more or less back to the moves that conflate anti-imperialism with nationalism. I will argue later in this paper that nationalism is only one of the platforms from which to counter the imperialism of corporate globalization, and it is certainly not the most just or productive one, from the point of view of attempting a radical critique of capitalism.

III

In conclusion, let us return to the question of framing a space for a radical critique of capitalism and dominant, patriarchal culture. In the light of the discussion above, I suggest that such a project would have to take into account three dimensions:

a) The complex nature of political subjectivities as they are constituted at this moment. Let me suggest just two instances as an illustration of these complexities. First, consider a contradiction that we have not adequately confronted in our politics, the contradiction between our belief in the need to assert and protect the autonomy of the individual citizen, and our simultaneous belief in the operation of the hegemony of dominant power-laden values that makes "freedom to choose" so problematic. That is, the values that "we" consider to be desirable are not hegemonic in society, and therefore, the freedom to choose most often simply reasserts dominant values. Consequently, democracy, with its assumption of the rights-bearing citizen endowed with "free will", poses a problem for us until the values we hold to be crucial are hegemonic in society. When for instance, a woman chooses to abort a foetus because it is female, or to acquiesce to a marriage in which her natal family will be bankrupt by dowry requirements, or to participate in a beauty contest, what operates is not "free will" in the feminist/modernist sense, but at the same time, it is a complicated situation that cannot simply be characterised as *lack* of free will.

Second, an unqualified defence of the notion of universal human rights has become increasingly problematic. Such a defence is all too often linked in the current world

scenario, to the United States of America as global champion of universal human rights. The universalism espoused by philosophers like Martha Nussbaum, for instance, includes the idea that nations which have adopted the norm of "universal human capabilities"¹⁸ should "commend this norm strongly to other nations", using whenever necessary, "economic and other strategies to secure compliance" (2000:104). The fact remains unremarked upon, that the only nation in a position to "secure compliance" today is the United States of America with its selective regime of sanctions and human rights conditionalities protecting the interests of American and multinational corporations all over the world.¹⁹ Thomas Friedman puts it succinctly when he says that "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist...and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."²⁰

In the new unipolar world, the question of universal rights appears in the form of an unavoidable choice - barbarity or civilization. In public discourse, the debate is all too often seen in terms of three positions - pro-human rights, pro-intervention by the US; anti-human rights, pro-religious fundamentalists/dictators; and those who don't care either way - "It's not our business, let Milosevic/the Taliban do what they want." But there are voices that raise another, more disturbing issue, that US action usually ends up strengthening the Milosevices and the Taliban-like forces, and swamping democratic opposition *within* those countries on a tide of resurgent nationalism. For instance, leading peace activist in Serbia, Veran Matic, editor-in-chief of Belgrade's Radio B92 banned by Milosevic, wrote in *The Guardian*, "I sat in a Belgrade prison on the first day of the NATO attack on my country...NATO's bombs have blasted the germinating seeds of democracy out of the soil of Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro and ensured that they will not sprout again for a very long time...The free media in Serbia has for years opposed nationalism, hatred and war. As a representative of those media and as a man who has more than faced the consequences of my political beliefs, I call on President Clinton to put a stop to NATO's attack on my country..." (Menon and Nigam 1999:1021).

Similarly, can we be indifferent to the specific moment at which the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) was recognized by the USA as heroines? For decades they had struggled against the Taliban, with no support or recognition from anywhere. Suddenly, when the US launched its "war on terror", RAWA became the

staple of CNN broadcasts. At the time representatives of RAWA emphasized that they opposed American bombing of Afghanistan, as it was part of the strategic agenda of the US government and not of the struggle that RAWA had long conducted. They also pointed out that the Northern Alliance whom the US backed, was no less oppressive and patriarchal than the Taliban. Nevertheless they were appropriated into the battle as allies of the US in the war on terror and used to legitimise US state policy.

What these two instances suggest, in the context of negotiating the contradictions generated by globalization on the one hand and cultural nationalism on the other, is the need for feminist politics simultaneously to deconstruct both the "freedom of choice" presented by "the beauty parlour" as well as the "nationalist" resistance to globalisation offered by "the burqa." In the process, we might well end up using the idea of the autonomy of the individual to challenge cultural nationalism and conversely, using the idea of historical, temporal and spatial specificities to challenge the homogenizing drive of globalisation. In each case, the danger exists of falling back into the capitalist myth of the "freely choosing individual" or conversely, into the opposite one of internally consistent "cultures". The crucial recognition however, is that no subject position is closed, no hegemony is complete. This recognition has to inform and transform our political practice.

b) The need for an uncompromising critique of the nation-state. Frederic Jameson states baldly, despite several caveats later in the same article, that "the nation-state today remains the only concrete terrain and framework for political struggle" (65). He holds on to this idea despite his recognition of the US "coopting" the language of nationalism and using the language of universalism to defend its specific national self-interest. He further recognizes that the universal and the particular are embedded as a contradiction within the existing historical situation of nation-states inside a global system. This latter recognition is perhaps the deeper philosophical reason, Jameson concedes, why the struggle against globalisation can only partially be fought on national terrain. Nevertheless, Jameson tries to rescue nationalism by engaging in an exercise familiar to those who follow Indian historiography - by distinguishing between " 'good' nationalism" which is "the great collective project" of attempting to construct a nation, and " 'bad' nationalism" which is the attempt to win state power with the aim of national bourgeois hegemony - "Nationalisms that have come to power have therefore mainly been the bad ones". In addition, Jameson believes "it is misleading to confound nationalism with phenomena like communalism,

which strikes me rather, as a kind of (for example) Hindu identity politics, albeit on a vast and indeed, national scale" (64)

On the contrary, I would argue that nationalism is itself one of the earliest forms of identity politics. It is not self-evident that "identity" politics can only refer to "smaller" identities *within* the Nation, although this assumption is a familiar one in Indian historiography. For example, one set of Indian historians argues that the rise of religious, regional and other particularistic identities is a result of "the degradation of nationalism to an ideological ploy for the reinforcement of the interests of the ruling elites" (Josh, Simeon and Agarwal 1990). The assumption here is of a genuine nationalism that would be democratic and secular. This assumption marks even analyses such as that of Purushottam Agarwal, that recognize that what is called "communalism" is not so much a particularism vis-à-vis the nation, but simply another modern project of nation-building (Agarwal 1995:32). For Agarwal then goes on to distinguish the communal project of nation-building from the secular on the basis of the (assumed, not demonstrated) "democratic" orientation of the latter, as opposed to the authoritarian orientation of the former.

However, I would emphasize that no project of community formation can be assumed to be inherently or *a priori* democratic. On the contrary, "the nation" can only represent dominant, majoritarian values - minorities reasserting "their" culture can never claim the legitimacy of representing the nation, whether it is Muslims in India or Indians in the US. Further, historically the "secular" nation too has constituted the citizen through equally anti-democratic measures. In the classic case of France, Eugen Weber writes of the "acculturation" process in the 19th century by which the inhabitants of the area that became France were made "French", that is, "the civilization of the French by urban France, the disintegration of local cultures by modernity and their absorption into the dominant civilization of Paris...Left largely to their own devices until their promotion to citizenship, the unassimilated rural masses had to be integrated into the dominant culture as they had been integrated into an administrative entity. What happened was akin to colonialism..."(Weber 1976:486).

In the Indian context, secularist discourse has been intimately tied to a notion of "development" that is predicated on the large-scale sacrifice of sectional interests in the greater interest of the "Indian citizen". Hence the massive displacements of populations in

irrigation, power and defence projects. As had already been extensively documented by the 1980s, this "development" has benefited specific sections of society and specific regions of the country.²¹ The highly centralised, capital intensive and high-technology based development model adopted by the Indian elites requires the homogeneous subject constructed by the discourse of citizenship. In response, the struggles against being marginalised have involved posing specific identities and particularity against the universalising thrust of development discourse.

In such a context, the assumption of an easy link between anti-imperialism and nationalism is deeply problematic from the point of view of a democratic project. We who would practice democratic politics cannot afford to be unreflexive of the founding moment of discursive violence that both presupposed and produced "the nation", nor of the repressions and marginalisations on which hegemonic nationalist discourse is predicated, at any point in history, and on any part of the globe - even in Cuba and China, offered by Jameson as "the richest counter-examples of the way in which a concrete nationalism could be completed by a socialist project."(2000:65) No project of nationalism is ever "completed" - it is frozen at some point or the other through a coercive apparatus backed by the sanction of violence, that prevents the further articulation of other voices and identities with similar aspirations.

As we have come to recognize, the "demise of the nation-state" in the era of globalization is a myth. The nation-state is at once being reconstituted in all its oppressive aspects simultaneously with its retreat from development/welfare responsibilities. Whether the US, India, or Bosnia, or Rwanda, the discourse of xenophobic and jingoistic nationalism is in full volume, and the nation-state's repressive face is very much in evidence towards the dissident and/or marginalized voices

within it. The so-called "retreat of the state" is only visible in sectors in which it previously had some responsibility for health, education and so on. This "retreat" is in fact a proactive step making it easier for global capital to penetrate - restrictive measures to control labour mobility and trade unions are very much in force, and new measures are being enacted, empowering the state in all sorts of ways to ensure a healthy climate for investment. Indeed, the delegitimation of the state's authority only pertains to whatever positive effects (from a democratic point of view) were generated in anti-imperialist struggles, simultaneously with the reinforcement of every negative, repressive quality we associate with the state. As a result of this complex process, what can be called a

"democratic" response is itself very much more complex than our experience so far has prepared us for.

This is why both kinds of reactions - of turning to the nation-state to reassert the old authority, as well as on the other hand, assuming its demise and celebrating globalisation - are entirely misplaced. I should therefore clarify that the argument made above, rejecting the nation-state as a position from which to critique imperialism, is the very obverse of corporate globalization's post-nationalism "from above", in which the sovereignty of the nation is sought to be bypassed in the interests of global capital. Rather, the kind of post-nationalism I refer to is better described as being "from below" - that is, the cross-border solidarities of women's movements, movements for the rights of minorities, pro-democracy and peace movements.

c) The third dimension required for a new kind of radical politics is a critique of "multiculturalism" which currently involves a reification of "religious" and "cultural" communities. The debates on multiculturalism tend to capture communities as constituted by "cultural" boundaries that are more or less fixed. A typical instance is the statement by Amy Gutman, who sets out the problem as one of how public institutions should recognize the identities of "cultural" and "disadvantaged" minorities which she says, "are often based on ethnicity, race, gender and religion"(1994:3) "Gender" is simply one of the identities listed here, with no understanding of how gender can in fact complicate the other three identities. Take for example, this statement a little later in the same essay - "Recognizing and treating members of some groups as equal now seems to require public institutions to acknowledge rather than ignore cultural particularities, at least for those people whose self-understanding depends on the vitality of their culture" (1994:5) Here "cultural particularities" cannot possibly refer to gender, for much as we may wish it, "women" have no recognized "culture" specific to them, and nor do they form a community in the sense in which it is used by Gutman. On the contrary, gender is often one of the axes on which the assumed "vitality" of cultures is *internally* challenged, for this "vitality" too often depends on demarcating an oppressive space for "their" women. It seems to me inadequate therefore, to identify the problem for liberal democracies as Gutman does, as one of whether they should "respect those cultures whose attitudes of ethnic or racial superiority, for example, are antagonistic to other cultures" (1994:5) This problem involves only the *external*

relationship of different communities to other communities, while the problem of gender (or say, caste in India) is *internal* to the very constitution of the community itself.

That is, the real dilemma is that the very "vitality" and identity of "the community" so often depends on denying autonomy to sections within itself. Within the boundaries of a "multicultural" politics, recognition involves only *external* recognition by the state of different communities and by communities of one another. Thus, French feminists would understandably hesitate to support the French government's prohibition on wearing the headscarf in schools, fearing that such a prohibition would feed into processes marginalising and demonizing the Muslim community in France. But there are voices *internal* to the community that are critical of the marking of "their" women by the community in specific, coercive ways. These voices may be delegitimized within the community, not strengthened, by open support for the French government's policy from the mainstream feminist movement.

In short, feminist response to this mode of constituting the community (of drawing "their" women in and marking out women's bodies in specific ways) has to be mediated by a recognition of the complex dynamics involved - both of the threat to minority identity in a multicultural society with a substantial majority community, as well as of the internal coercion involved in the very constitution of this minority identity. This recognition problematizes both the straightforward "feminist" response which could simply feed into racist (in the West) or Hindu (in India) stereotyping of minorities as reactionary and backward, as well as the "multicultural" response of "respecting differences."

Thus, the recognition of the complexity of "cultural" identity in a globalized world requires us to challenge both the reification of cultural boundaries by the advocates of multiculturalism as well as the unproblematic assertion of "universal" rights by its opponents. Jurgen Habermas, for example, speaking from the second side, terms constitutional protection of group rights as "questionable from a normative point of view." He argues that such protection is supposed to serve the recognition of their *individual* members, it should not become the "preservation of the species by administrative fiat" (1994:130) He, or Jameson, would assert the need for a greater universalism - Habermas of "demos" and Jameson of "class", as opposed to "ethnos". I venture to suggest that the critique of the reification of cultural communities should take us in the

opposite direction - towards a greater fracturing of universalism. Our politics and our democratic institutions must take on board the destabilizing implications of communities constituting themselves continuously around different axes, of which the "cultural" is only one. Other forms of community exist, building themselves around political ideals, but these are rarely recognized as such - communities built around sexual identity, displacement by development projects, language-based communities that undercut national boundaries, and so on.

If Jameson's "five levels" of globalization are to be taken seriously, we need to move in the direction of characterising "globalization" as a complex articulation of differentiated, sometimes mutually contradictory processes. The intersection of these processes can produce spatially and temporally differentiated moments that generate constraint as well as freedom - whether any given moment will produce constraint or freedom, cannot be predicted in advance. A radical transformative politics cannot afford not to recognize the full significance and the potential offered by this unpredictability.

Let me present a series of instances to illustrate the complex nature of the field that a radical politics has to confront. Forces of globalization can work against those of the religious right - why for instance, has corporate India come out so strongly and publicly against the ethnic cleansing attempted by the Hindu right-wing government in Gujarat a year ago? Because an India torn by violence is not an India in which investments are secure. Or to take another instance, the national daily newspaper *The Indian Express*, which has conducted one of the most hard-hitting and thorough campaigns against the Gujarat carnage, and which has taken a strongly secular position both editorially, as well in all its stories. This newspaper however, is also one of the strongest voices in favour of globalization, and consistently approves of anti-poor measures such as "cleaning up" Delhi by removing hawkers and vendors, banning begging, and so on. The two sentiments - pro-globalization and anti-religious fundamentalism - are perfectly compatible with each other. Why, for instance, has the increasingly popular Valentine's Day become a target of violent attack by the Hindu Right in India? For feminists who have been critical of both the notion of "Romance" as well as of the consumerism underlying Valentine's Day, the Hindu Right's opposition brings into relief another aspect - the potentially subversive power of two *individuals* "in love" - oblivious (perhaps) of caste, class and religious identities. This potentially subversive character of Romance is certainly a threat that the Hindu Right takes

very seriously. Similarly in Iran, the island of Kish became a free-trade zone in 1989, and since then, the strict rules regarding clothing and intermingling of the sexes have been relaxed for both foreign and domestic tourists. Occasionally, the authorities have to "tighten up" to avoid interference from the hard-liners, but by and large, Kish is "known as an oasis of luxury and laxity" (Fathi 2002). Conversely of course, corporate globalization can appropriate feminist slogans into traditional images of women - for instance, many consumer goods advertisements on March 8th this year celebrated the "Day of the Wife."

Some other messy alignments - How are we to understand the active presence of the Hindu right in some of the movements against big dams, for example in the Tehri region? Their rhetoric draws on "Hindu" imagery, but in order to defend traditional ways of life against destructive modern development, as Mukul Sharma's work shows (Sharma 2001). Sharma himself attributes a "communal" motive to the Hindu right's involvement in such movements. Even if that were the "real" motive, surely the active participation of the Hindu right in an ecology movement generates both possibilities equally - if there is a possibility of its succeeding in communalizing the movement, there should be an equally strong possibility of the ecology movement restricting/transforming the Hindu Right's "communalism". We cannot assume either eventuality in advance. Conversely, there is a pro-Dalit/lower caste voice that is strongly pro-globalization and pro-big dam, because for lower castes, "tradition" and the coerciveness of traditional occupations can only always be oppressive (Omvedt 2001, Prasad 2000).

In the face of such complex intersections of the "reactionary" and the "progressive", there are no clear-cut strategies to offer - indeed, the specificity of "our" modernity is precisely that an overarching, ever-valid strategy is no longer available to us. The clearest conclusion we can arrive at is that the "other" space that feminism seeks to define will have to be marked by the continual refusal of choice - between Tradition and Modernity, between universal rights and cultural specificities, between individual uniqueness and community identity, between capitalist consumerism and demonization of desire. As the different levels of globalization intersect at different spatial and temporal moments, different and unpredictable energies will be generated that cannot be known in advance. Our politics has to be flexible enough to seize the moment, whenever and however that moment may occur.

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¹ News report, *The Indian Express* September 5 2001, P4

² The beauty parlour as an ambiguous space of empowerment and objectification has been studied extensively by feminist scholars. See for example P Black "'Ordinary people come through here': Locating the beauty salon in women's lives" *Feminist Review* Number 71, 2002; P Black and Ursula Sharma "Men are real, Women are made up: Beauty Therapy and the Construction of Femininity" *Sociological Review* 49 (1) 2001. In an unpublished paper, "Men at work: An inquiry into the survival aspects of men in beauty work", SM Faizan Ahmed, through a study of men who do "beauty work" in two cities of India, has suggested that the care of the body is in many ways, a form of unalienated labour that links work and worker through an ethic of care, offering the potential of subverting dominant constructions of masculinity.

³ See for instance, Lata Mani "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid eds., *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* Kali for Women, Delhi 1989; Radha Kumar *The History of Doing* Kali for Women, Delhi 1993 Chapter 2; Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India" in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pande eds., *Subaltern Studies VII*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1992; Dipesh Chakravarty, "Modernity and Ethnicity in India: A History for the Present" *Economic and Political Weekly* December 30 1995.

⁴ Conference on Cultural Transformations in Africa: Legal, Religious and Human Rights Issues, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, March 11-13, 1997.

⁵ See, for instance the essays in Coleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk and Beverley Stoeltje eds. *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests and Power* Routledge, New York, 1996.

⁶ Local beauty contests have proliferated since the run of successes began, but only the winners of the Femina-sponsored contests go to the international one.

⁷ "Swadeshi hawks attack PM's reforms" *The Indian Express* December 12 1998; "Rashtravirodhi aarthik neetiyan ko chalne nahin dega Sangh" (The Sangh will not allow anti-national policies to be implemented") *Jansatta* March 13 2000.

⁸ For instance in Mumbai on April 25 2001, and in Delhi on February 27 2003. See Smruti Koppikar "United Colours of Politics" *The Indian Express* April 27 2001.

⁹ "Surjeet rules out probe into Cola row", *The Hindu* February 8 2003, P 7

¹⁰ "Regarding industrial policy there is some friction between government and the unions." *The Indian Express* June 10 2001.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² All documents cited by Nigam in this section are from a dossier prepared by Centre for Education and Communication, New Delhi *Social Clause in Multilateral Trade Agreements (A Dossier on Social Clause)* 1995.

¹³ The pressure on advanced capitalist countries to impose labour standards on the poorer states has a complex origin, for it reflects both the anxiety of organized labour in the former, at the flight of capital to poorer regions of the world and the resulting fall in employment, as well as the need of corporate capital to neutralize the trade advantage of the "Third World" bourgeoisie.

¹⁴ KL Mahendra "A Protectionist Measure" in J John and Anuradha Chenoy ed. *Labour, Environment and Globalization* Centre for Education and Communication, New Delhi, 1996, P 47. Cited in Aditya Nigam op cit P 162.

¹⁵ The complexity of the responses to globalization is underlined by Nigam who argues that at least five different positions on globalization can be discerned - a) The pro-globalization, pro-social clause position of the Western powers b) the anti-globalization, anti-social clause position of the Indian trade unions and Left parties c) the pro-globalization, anti-social clause position of the Indian elites, Indian government and the World Bank d) The anti-globalization, pro-social clause position of some representatives of the unorganized sector in India as well as trade union voices in other Third World countries like Malaysia, Peru etc. and e) the ambiguous stand on globalization, combined with a pro-social clause position of some major NGOs working on child labour. Ibid P 168.

¹⁶ In a book that follows a similar line of argument to Sangari's in linking the bomb to the agenda of the Hindu Right, Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik put it this way - "...only the left came out (*after initial hesitation and confusion*) against the tests." *South Asia on a Short Fuse* OUP Delhi 1999, P 107. Emphasis added. What the hesitation and confusion was about, is not explained.

¹⁷ India's "ambiguity" about the bomb after its first nuclear explosion in 1974 left open the possibility of any subsequent government deciding on the nuclear option. The United Front coalition in power immediately before the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government that exploded the bomb, and which had included the CPI and the CPI(M), also claimed some of the "credit" after the 1998 explosion, by saying that it had already made the first preparations for the bomb. See Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik op cit P 107.

¹⁸ Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's well-known spin on "rights"

¹⁹ For a fuller critique of Martha Nussbaum, see my review essay of *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) - "Universalism Without Foundations?" *Economy and Society* Volume 31 Number 1 February 2002.

²⁰ *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Anchor Books, New York, 2000) P 64. Cited by CT Kurien "Globalisation - An American Perspective" in *The Hindu* April 5 2001.

²¹ See Pranab Bardhan *the Political Economy of Development in India* OUP Delhi 1984; the collection of essays in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Special Issue on Development and Displacement) June 15 1996; and *Lokayan Bulletin* March-April 1995.