Nivedini

Women's Education & Research Centre

Our Objectives

To study and research the various aspects of women's subordination in Sri Lanka in order to sensitize men and women on gender issues.

To disseminate information relating to women and create awareness and increase consciousness on feminist issues.

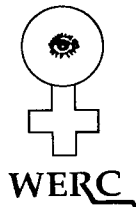To strengthen the women's network locally and internationally.

To extend co-operation to and solidarity with other oppressed and marginalised groups in Sri Lanka (such as refugees, unemployed and slum dwellers) with projects for rehabilitation and general upgrading of their lives.

To serve as a resource and documentation centre in Sri Lanka that will become part of the network of research and study centres on Women's Studies in the Third World.

What does 'Nivedini' mean?

Nivedini derives from a Sanskrit verb. It could mean either, that which is placed before you ritually and reverentially, or a carrier of knowledge with a female gender suffix 'ni' (derived from the verb vid, to know.) We use it with the second meaning.

Women's Education and Research Centre

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Contents

FROM THE EDITOR

The various articles of this issue of Nivedini are thematically linked, centered as they are on the recurrent issue of oppression of women and the vestiges of patriarchy that yet linger in their multiple manifestations, mutating and yet quiescent, in the various social sectors- religion, education, language, nationalism, in war and shockingly though, in founding peace. This issue also displays the diversity of thinking among women, their multiple approaches, positions and devised strategies. Delving beneath this verbal explication, one almost feels the lethal and potent force of patriarchy.

Elizebeth Harris's essay, "Reclaiming the Sacred: Buddhist Women in Sri Lanka" is a portrayal of the status of women in Buddhism and in pre-colonial times, through western eyes, displaying objectivity, depth of academic vision and breath of understanding by virtue of her long stay in Sri Lanka. Harris revisits early Buddhism, mapping her route through sacred texts, sermons, historical records, colonial writings and contemporary feminist thought. In spite of the many negations and deprivations women have been subjected to, specifically those who have embraced religious life, she posits the view that women are capable of attaining the highest level of perfection demanded of them. Her views are supported by a great deal of bibliographic evidence.

In 'Shackles of the Past: the Concept of Patriarchy Perpetuating in Education" Rocky Ariyaratne, provides an analysis of 'patriarchy', a term blanketing all aspects of oppression we discern in society. She echoes the current need for a redefinition of the term, for a restatement of the many manifestations and for readjustment of our strategies of defiance. The field of education, she points out, is one sphere which has remained the bastion of patriarchal values and her research evidence cites the examples from the various educational institutions, systems of management, teaching materials and methodologies which yet perpetuate the discriminatory practices. The article advocates specific strategies which could help breach the system. Her spotlighting the malady and the medication is timely in the light of greater sensi-

tivity to the issue of gender discrimination in education shown by the state and higher institutions of learning themselves.

Shanaz Ahmed's contribution "Gender in Interaction - Stereotypes and their impact on the status of women" focuses on yet another aspect of the perceived impacts of patriarchal trends in society, that on language. Her's is an extension of the broader theme of 'differences' and 'similarities' in the current feminist debates, mainly the efforts by psychologists to demonstrate that gender differences were either groundless or too small to explain the privileges that men enjoy in society and the claim of similarities is a strategy towards overthrowing patriarchy. Neuro-linguistic research has fastened on 'differences' of language production as due to biological differences but the latest feminist research harps on 'similarities' while 'differences' are dismissed as engendered by the peculiar context and individual patterns of socialization.

Mangalika de Silva's paper, 'Nationalism and Sexuality: the Intersection of Gender and Power in South Asia' provides fresh insights into the evidence of perceived inequalities and manifestations of patriarchal trends in the formulation of the concepts of state and nationalism and yet discerns certain links between gender and nationalism. She brings out the centrality of women to the building of nationhood while simultaneously highlighting the very submission of gender to the nation, tracing the essence of the problem to the undeniable manner in which biological reproduction is negotiated not only by the man and woman concerned but also by the nation's planners. The end result ,in the writer's words, is that ' the woman's body forms the boundary marking out of the ethnic 'other''. The access to the benefits of belonging to a nation/state is invariably gendered as well. Nationalism thus frequently becomes the language through which sexual control and repression are justified and through which masculine prowess is expressed and strategically exercised. Given the ways in which nations are built of sexed bodies, despite the rhetoric of equality and justice, despite the claims of the role women play in nation-building, it is a gender irony that nation remains the property of men.

The concluding article, 'Gender Perspectives in Generating a Culture of Peace', brings up the rear, firstly traces women's agency in both creating and challenging the state of conflicts in many parts of the world. This article defies the traditional notion of women as 'victims', as helpless in contexts beyond their capacity and control (intellectually and physically) , as deserving perpetual succor like the disabled or handicapped. The last century, the bloodiest and most ruthless in the annals of human history, women have proved their might, as actors in the dramatic events. While exploring this gender dimension of conflict , the article traces the masculine exploitation of the feminine, in the mass killings, rapes and planned genocides in Europe and elsewhere, even in the suicide bombings in Sri Lanka. We assume this darkest hour would portend a dawn, of peace and reconciliation, world over. We realize how indispensable women's vision, intelligence, and past experience will be in the peace process. It is urged as imperative that peace and security policies and practices be drawn up from a gender perspective and women's initiatives for peace and reconciliation be harnessed and their consensus obtained for a new equilibrium based on gender equality.

Joyce Silva

Reclaiming the Sacred:
Buddhist Women in Sri Lanka

Elizabeth J. Harris*

I begin with some quotations about the women of Sri Lanka from the writings of nineteenth-century British visitors to the island:

> We find the women generally the most bigotedly attached to the heathen faiths, of which they know next to nothing, and which are responsible in great measure for their degraded position.
> (Samuel Langdon, Methodist missionary, 1890)[1]

> I cannot well overrate its (education for girls) pressing exigency either for the social elevation of the native race, or its importance for the diffusion of Christian truth, in as much as it is over the female mind that superstition still holds its most powerful sway.
>
> (Bishop James Chapman, First Bishop of Colombo, 1845 – 1861)[2]

Langdon and Chapman were not unbiased observers. Their words were conditioned by an evangelical, Christian agenda, which saw Buddhism as a citadel of darkness to be destroyed. Their allegation was that

Sri Lankan women were more attached to this 'darkness' than men. If the missionary agenda is filtered from their words, they might be interpreted as saying that Sri Lankan women possessed a strong sense of loyalty to Buddhism and resisted missionary attacks on it.[3] Those sympathetic to Buddhism appear to have seen a similar phenomenon but they described it in a different way. C.B. Leadbeater,[4] a theosophist who spent a few years in Sri Lanka in the 1880s as a young man was able to declare,

> The mothers have used their liberties, and done for Buddha what no others in Ceylon would or could have accomplished, and the mothers are the central power in Lanka.[5]

Leadbeater here openly states that Sri Lankan women are the defenders of Buddhism.

In this paper, I seek to explore the nature of the spiritual space occupied by women in Buddhism, using Sri Lanka as a focus. There can be no doubt that many Sri Lankan women in the colonial period, which stretched from 1505 to 1948, remained loyal to Buddhism, sometimes when the men converted to the religion of those in power. It does not follow from this, how-ever, that the tradition they sought to protect was liberative for them from a feminist perspective. Now, in the last decades of the twentieth century, there are not only many women defenders of Buddhism in Sri Lanka but also some who are challenging traditional patterns of religious practice and authority and reclaiming the sacred for women. This movement is both a search for what I and many Asian Buddhist women would consider to be a liberative core for women within Buddhism's original inspiration[6] and a reflection of the worldwide influence of feminism.

Sri Lanka was my home between 1986 and 1993 and I was much involved with women's groups there. Therefore, what I present is not only the fruit of academic research. It reflects experience combined with knowledge of the Pali texts and the history of colonial Sri Lanka. My aim is to present faithfully four currents within the contemporary practice of Sri Lankan Buddhist women. In consequence, my method is largely descriptive. Yet, I also comment on the relationship between text and context,

between significant elements within the Pali text of the Theravada Buddhist tradition and aspects of traditional practice which have succumbed to patriarchy, within a country witnessing intense socio-economic change and political conflict. I will begin by highlighting some of the positive and negative strands for women within the texts and will then look at the way in which they have been incorporated into the Sri Lankan tradition. Then, I will pass to four contemporary movements seeking to foster the positive for Buddhist women in Sri Lanka: reclamation of a pre-colonial past free of gender oppression; the campaign to secure the right for women to renounce and become full members of *Bhikkuni* Order; meditation movements adopting a pro-active approach to religious practice; peace-making and justice-seeking social involvement.

The textual Tradition

Contradictory images of the feminine confront women when they delve into the Pali texts of the Theravada tradition. Those who seek to reject Buddhism as patriarchal and androcentric do not need to look far to find presentations of women as intellectually weak, sexually uncontrolled or suitable only for the role of submissive wife. For instance, the redactors of the Pali texts place these words in the mouth of the Buddha casting woman in the traditional role of temptress:[7]

> Monks, a woman, even when going along, will stop to ensnare the heart of a man; whether standing, sitting, or lying down, laughing, talking or singing, stricken or dying, a woman will stop to ensnare the heart of a man.[8]

The passage goes on to link women with Mâra, the embodiment of evil within Buddhism. It is not an isolated passage.[9] Counteracting this androcentric even misogynist strand of imagery is the material connected with the early *Bhikkhunis* or nuns. It is well known that Gotama Buddha, as his Jain contemporary, Mahavira, allowed women to renounce lay life. References to the *Bhikkunis* are sprinkled throughout the *Pali* Canon but it is on the *Bhikkuni Samyutta* of the *samyutta Nikaya* and the *Therigatha*, a collection of their poetry, that the nuns are brought most vividly alive.

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These texts, in fact, present a reading of Buddhism which is the reverse of androcentric. The nuns come across as strong, liberated women. Some claim equality with men and some are credited with communicating the word of the Buddha (Buddha vacana)[10] A refusal to accept the patriarchal gender assumptions around them can be detected in their words as conveyed in the texts. For instance, in the *Bhikkhuni Samyutta*. Mâra tempts one nun with a stereotypical image of woman's inherent spiritual weakness. He claims that no woman can hope to achieve the goal of the religious life. The nun defiantly replies,

> What should a women's nature signify
> When consciousness is firmly set...
> To one for whom the question does arise;
> Am I a woman (in these matters)or
> Am I a man, or what not am I then?
> To such a one is Mara fit to talk.[11]

Such a passage implies that wisdom and compassion, the components of enlightenment, are the potential possession of both men and women. It further suggests that gender is not relevant to the ultimate goal of the religious life – *nibbana* – and that clinging to a masculine or feminine ego is just as much a hindrance to the practice of the Dhamma as any other form of craving. However, history has obscured this strand of teaching in most Buddhist countries. The experience of many Buddhist women has not been as liberating as these teachings might suggest it should be.

The legacy of History for Sri Lankan women

The development of Buddhism's attitude to women, I would like to suggest, reveals a process of distortion as the movement activated by Gotama Buddha fell increasingly under the influence of patriarchal patterns of thought. Textual strands which contain a positive message for women have taken second place to textual emphases or traditional practices which distort or contradict these positive elements. Three examples can be taken of this. First, an empirical realism about the pressures faced by women in the India of the Buddha's day comes across in several texts of

the Pali Canon. There is recognition that the life of a woman is hard, with the pain and insecurity of childbirth and the trauma of leaving her home to enter another as wife. There is one passage when the Buddha is said to declare that the special woes of women are leaving relatives behind to go to a husband, menses, pregnancy, giving birth and having to wait upon a man.[12] I see such a passage as realistic rather than negative. The pain in the life of woman is uncovered and faced. In a similar way, one *Bhikkhuni* describes the Buddha's view as this:

> Woeful is women's lot! Has he declared,
> Tamer and driver of the hearts of men;
> Woeful when sharing home with hostile wives,
> Woeful when giving birth in bitter pain
> Some seeking death or e'er they suffer twice.[13]

Over the years, this realistic appraisal, has, I believe indirectly fed the popular belief, in Sri Lanka and other Theravada countries, that a being is reborn a woman because of bad action or *Kamma* in a previous existence. In other words, the empirical observation that a woman's life was hard because of conditioned social factors led to the generalised statement that only a being who had committed unwholesome action in the past could possibly be born to such a life.

Another distortion seems to have developed from buddhism's message concerning relationships between women and men. Several texts in the Pali Canon recognise that gender relationships hold within them the potential for exploitation and manipulation when dominated by greed. The *Aggañña Sutta* of the *Dïgha Nikāya* provides a mythological underpinning for this. It is a myth about the origins of human society, showing a process of degeneration fuelled by greed. Self –luminous beings are seen to descend to earth from a world of radiance. Their radiant luminosity and lightness is lost, however, as they develop craving for the food the earth offers. Gradually, they develop characteristics we would term human and the emergence of gender distinction is part of the process. The significant point is that when this distinction arises it leads to women contemplating man too closely and man, woman and is greeted with revulsion because it

seems to involve exploitation. Some beings, in fact, cry, 'Perish, foul one! Perish foul one! How can a being treat a being so?'[14]

The message of the *Agganna sutta* concerning gender and greed is that both women and men under the influence of *tanhi* (greed) can become exploiter or exploited, aggressor or victim. It is a message consistent with the realism shown in the texts I have a already quoted. Yet, under the influence of androcentric tendencies, such an insight can quickly change to the accusation that it is the inherent nature of woman which is the cause of the explosions of greed and craving within men. It is a view present in the Canon itself. My first quotation about woman as Mara reflects it. It is also seen in the following, well-known discussion between the Buddha and his companion, *Ananda*. When *Ananda* asks how men should conduct themselves with women, the following exchange occurs:

As not seeing them *Ananda*.
But, if we should see them, what are we to do?
No talking, *Ananda*.
But, if they should talk to us, Lord, what are we to do.
Keep wide awake *Ananda*.[15]

My third example is the traditional view within Theravada Buddhist society that a woman cannot become a Buddha. One of the roots of this is the canonical teaching that the Buddha bore thirty-two distinguishing marks, one of which is a sheathed penis.[16] The teaching which grew from this was that only a man could become a Buddha, since only a man could have a penis. As contemporary Buddhist feminists point out, however, this mark can be seen as a pointer to a sexuality rather than to masculinity.[17] The inference that has been generally accepted is the result of patriarchal preconceptions rather an objective appraisal.

These developments within Buddhism have, over centuries, led to the internalization of a negative self-image by many Buddhist women. The view that a women's birth is due to bad Kamma is widespread throughout Asia, as is the conviction that a woman can never become a Buddha. In the case of Sri Lanka, however, all is not bleak from a feminist point of view. History itself contains the positive, ripe for reclamation. Unlike Tibet and Thailand,[18] Sri Lanka once possessed a thriving *Bhikkhuni* Order (Order of Nuns), which brought women into the centre of religious life. Tradition says it was established in Sri Lanka soon after *Bhikkhuni Sangha*. It is traditionally believed that Buddhism reached the island in the third Century BCE through Ven. Mahinda, the son of the missionary Buddhist monarch Asoka of India. Mahinda established the *Bhikkhu Sangha*. The story then records the arrival of his sister, Ven. Sanghamitta, and her colleagues, who began the *Bhikkhuni Sangha*.[19]

Literary and epigraphical evidence indicate that the Order took firm root. In fact, it grew strong enough to maintain international contacts. Chinese records indicate that in 429 and 434 CE groups of nuns travelled from Sri Lanka and conferred ordination on several hundreds of Chinese women, introducing the Theravada lineage there.[20] It could also have been involved in literary activity. Some researchers have speculated that the *Dipavamsa*, a historical chronicle predating the more famous *Mahavamsa*, could have been written by nuns.[21] The Order, however, was lost. Historical records do not mention active *Bhikkhunis* after the eleventh century CE. Political instability, famine and war might have made it impossible and dangerous for women to renounce and so the Order eventually found it did not have the ten nuns needed to ordain new recruits, according to the regulations for the *Bhikkhuni* Order. There is no evidence that attempts were made to reinstate the Order from Burma, where there would have been an Order of *Bhikkhunis* at this time.

Within the lay sphere, there is also evidence that Sri Lankan women once held a strong and independent position. The records we have of Kandyan law, the law in force within the central Kingdom of Kandy, which remained independent during the Portuguese and Dutch occupations but fell to the British in 1815, show that women held rights of which their western counterparts were still dreaming. To take marriage laws as an example, a marriage could be dissolved by either the husband or the wife without much difficulty and the husband had no rights over his wife's property – all reverted to her at divorce. The *Niti Nighanduva* or The Vo-

cabulary of Law as it Existed in the last Days of the Kandyan Kingdom states,

> *A diga or Bini marriage publicly contracted, according to*
> *proper custom or by the mere consent of the parties themselves, if*
> *disagreement arise between them, can be dissolved by the husband*
> *or wife; and on this account their respective properties remain dis-*
> *tinct from each other, as their marriage does not create a community*
> *of goods. The husband, therefore, has no power whatever over his*
> *wife's estate.....* [22]

Robert Knox [23], describing Kandyan society in the seventeenth Century could, therefore, write for publication:
> Both women and men do commonly wed four or five
> times before they settle themselves to their contention [24].

and interleave in his script later:
> *If the women dislikes her husband she is free to go whom*
> *and leave him...* [25]

In a similar vein, Hugh Boyd, a British imperialist, at the end of the eighteenth century, felt able to write,

> *The Cingalese women are not merely slaves and mistresses, but in*
> *many cases, the companions and friends of their husbands...* [26]

Some women scholars in Sri Lanka, including Dr. Lorna Devaraja have made a direct leap from text to culture and have attributed the relative independence which seems to have been enjoyed by women in the Kandyan Kingdom to Buddhism. This stance must be taken seriously. Within the Kandyan Kingdom, there was a close, inter-dependent relationship between the state and Buddhism [27] and this had a direct influence on the culture of the people. Moreover, although marriage is not seen as a religious ceremony by Buddhists, it does come within the areas of life which Buddhists in Sri Lanka feel religious teaching should influence. There is strong textual backing for this. The *Sigalovada Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya*, for instance, seeks to influence lay life by insisting that both rights

and duties should be respected within human relationships, including marriage. Dr. Lorna Devaraja's claim is that the 'free and liberal' attitude towards women found in texts such as this 'had its impact on the behaviour of both men and women in Buddhist societies'. [28] She cites material from Burma and Thailand as well as Sri Lanka to support this point.

The *Sigalovada Sutta* describes six relationships and rights and duties are laid down for each. With reference to marriage, the duties of a wife are: to perform her duties well; to show hospitality to all family members; to be faithful; to protect the goods the husband brings; to do all her business with skill and commitment. The duties of the husband are: to show respect and courtesy to his wife; to be faithful to her to hand over authority to her in the home; to provide her with adornment. [29] Although the picture given does not escape strict delineation of gender roles, it challenges paradigms of wifely behavior which stress only subordination to the husband's wishes.

Another concept within the Pali texts is that of the Fourfold society. Certain Pali texts define a healthy society as one in which four categories of people exist: monks, nuns, lay male disciples and lay female disciples. Each is declared to be essential to the wellbeing of society and in some cases, the same adjectives are used for each, the women thus being placed on an equal level with men. For instance, when speaking of the four, the Buddha is recorded to have said,

> Monks, these four are accomplished in wisdom, disciplined,
> confident, deeply-learned, Dhamma-bearers, who live according to
> Dhamma-these four illuminate the Order. [30]

If the *Sigalovada Sutta* and the above-text were acted on within society, the words I have quoted from Hugh Boyd would reflect accepted norms. Given the antiquity of Buddhism's history in Sri Lanka and the close relationship between state and religion, Lorna Devaraja's argument has a firm foundation.

The positive within the Sri Lankan heritage, therefore, is a vibrant *Bhikkhuni* Order until the eleventh century CE and a legal system which promoted women's independence. However, there is evidence that androcentric strands were also present. James de Alwis, the nineteenth century Sinhala intellectual speaking about modes of address in the Sinhala language, declares with all sincerity:

I am free to admit that the Sinhalese, like other nations, have not failed to notice the frailty, the weakness, and the timidity of woman; and to coin words expressive of such qualities. The word *biri..* indicates the timidity of her mind, as *tunu anga* expresses the weakness of her frame; and *liya* signifies her dependence on man[31].

At some point concepts of pure and impure also entered Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The carrying of relics can be taken as an example. Kandy capital of the former Kandyan Kingdom, is a place of pilgrimage because it is home to an ancient tooth relic, believed to be the Buddha's. Tradition says it was brought to Sri Lanka by a woman, who hid it in her hair. However, women are rarely now allowed to carry a relic in a temple procession or enter the enclosed portion around a Bo Tree.[32] Whether myth or historical fact, the story of the tooth has had no influence on the development of traditional practice. As for the Pali textual tradition far less liberal pictures of marriage than that of the *Sigalovada Sutta*[33] can be found and it is conceivable that, in reality, these were also present within Kandyan Society in spite of the law.

The data available suggests that positive and negative constructions of what womanhood entailed existed alongside each other during Sir Lanka's history. The accounts of Western visitors to Sri Lanka in the British colonial period point to this. Such accounts cannot, of course, be accepted uncritically. They say as much about the perceiver as the perceived and suggest strong hidden agendas. Nevertheless, they can provide significant leads. Hugh Boyd, already quoted, saw the positive side. Robert Spence Hardy, Methodist missionary in Sri Lanka between 1825-48 and 1863-65, touches the negative and his words should not be dismissed simply as missionary prejudice, especially since a few of his points

are echoed by some twentieth-century Sri Lanka feminists.

We should be ready to initiate a mission against paganism, were it only for what it has done crush and degrade women...Buddhism knows nothing of the cruelty that sheds blood or takes life; but towards women it loses its apparent gentleness and is ungracious and insulting.[34]

Historically, therefore, the reality for Buddhist women in Sri Lanka is multi-layered and open to different interpretations. But what is clear is that certain liberative practices within Sri Lankan society which could be attributed to Buddhism have been lost. The Order of *Bhikkhunis* is no more and Kandyan law has been irrevocably changed through colonialism.

Contemporary Movements

During my time in Sri Lanka, I was aware that several Sinhala women who were active in progressive political, academic and social fields had opted out of Buddhism because they saw little hope in that tradition for women. Pulsara Liyanage, lecturer at Kelaniya University, can be taken as an example. At a pan-Asian interfaith conference on Women and Religion held in Colombo in 1991, she declared,

It is true that Buddhism does not seek to confine a woman behind a wall or cover her up in a veil. This relative 'freedom' is indeed seen among the Buddhist women. While we commend the tenets of Buddhism for this social advance, we must recognise the metaphorical veils and walls-that have a similar crippling effect on Buddhist womenhood[35].

Her paper mentioned the accepted belief that women should not carry relics, the usual seating arrangements in the temple whereby men usually place themselves in the front, and certain taboos surrounding menstruation. I was surprised how much it resembled Spence Hardy's perspective – stripped, of course, of his Christian agenda. She later added, reacting against women who stressed only the positive in an attempt to defend Buddhism:

As long as we do not admit to a certain amount of gender bias in the tenets of Buddhism (which in its progressive role in society) we delay to take that giant step forward towards attaining true freedom and equality.[36]

Pulsara Liyanage was born into a Buddhist family. Yet her interaction with Buddhism as a social system has distanced her from the whole of Buddhism. It is no longer relevant to her life. However, there are others who remain firmly within the Buddhist tradition but recognise that some traditional religious practices need to change. What has impressed me is the diversity of approaches present and the parallels which can be drawn between them and factors such as class, language and socio-political involvement. Much more research could be done to explore these parallels. All that is possible now is to describe what I see as the four main areas of action, named at the beginning of this paper.

The search for a Pre-Colonial Buddhist Past Free from the Oppression of Women

The person who has done the most in this area is Dr. Lorna Deveraja – a respected historian in Sri Lanka whom I have already mentioned. In her writing and speaking, she has publicised the rights Buddhist women possessed under Kandyan Law in the conviction that women were held in great respect in traditional Buddhist society. In a research paper published by the Buddhist Publication Society, she writes,

> It is not so much the equality of status but the complete desegregation of the sexes, that has distinguished the women in Buddhist societies from those of the Middle East, the Far East and the Indian sub-continent.[37]

Devaraja draws on writers such as Hugh Boyd to confirm her perspective. Her work consciously challenges Western stereotypes of the repressed Asian woman and as such is vitally important, since even the British feminist movement has not been free of such stereotypical images.[38]

It has also challenged the view that Buddhism is predominantly concerned with renunciation, by highlighting both that the Pali texts include much which is of concern to lay life and that this could have influenced cultural practices in Buddhist societies.

The danger in her work is that, in her wish to challenge negative pictures of women, Buddhism and Sri Lanka, and to raise the self confidence of Buddhist women, she is tempted to idealise Sri Lanka's pre-colonial past, overlooking the patriarchal elements which could have been present. In dealing with the Buddhist texts, she selects only those portions which are liberative to women. In drawing on Western writers, she quotes only those who commented favourably on the position of women. As I have shown, contradictory images of women appear in the Pali texts and the perspectives of Western writers on women in Sri Lanka were not always positive. The direct link she makes between culture and religion in pre-colonial society is one which deserves serious consideration, but it risks the accusation that evidence contrary to her argument is not given adequate attention. Nevertheless, her work has placed the question of Buddhism's attitude to women on the agenda in Sri Lanka and has motivated further research.

Reclaiming the Right of Women to Renounce

In Sri Lanka today, nuns exist. Women with heads shaved, wearing orange robes, can be seen walking the streets and using the buses. However, they have not received Higher Ordination (*upasampada*). It is not possible for them to do so. As I have pointed out, the *Bhikkhuni* Order lost its capacity to perpetuate itself in the eleventh century CE. The nuns are *dasa sil Mātās* or ten – precepts mothers - women who have left lay life to follow ten guiding principles rather than the 311 rules of the entire *Bhikkhuni Discipline* laid down in the Pali texts.

The Order of *Dasa Sil Mātās* stretches back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In the last years of the nineteenth century, at the height of the Buddhist Revival, some women began to wear robes, unilaterally

reclaiming the right which had been theirs in the past. During the same years, there was an unsuccessful attempt to re-institutionalize female renunciation by an American convert to Buddhism, Countess Miranda de Souza Canavarro, who came to Sri Lanka and established the *Sangamitta* Buddhist Sisterhood.[39] However, it is to Catherine de Alwis that Sri Lankans usually turn when speaking about the beginning to present Order of nuns. She was a Sri Lanka Christian who converted to Buddhism in the late nineteenth century and travelled from Sri Lanka to Burma, another Theravada Buddhist country, because she knew she could obtain a ten-precept ordination there. In 1905, she returned to Sri Lanka as sister *Sudharmacari* and set up a nunnery in Kandy, which gained the patronage of the wealthy in Sri Lanka and British people. This was the seed of the present Order, which now has up to five thousand members. Apart from the initiatives in the 1890s, well documented by Dr. Tissa Bartholomeusz in Women under Bo Tree, there is evidence that before 1905, there were some women called *Dasa sil Upasikas* (ten-precept lay followers) who shaved their heads and wore white, but there was no institutional structure to maintain them or keep them above the poverty line.[40]

Outwardly, *dasa sil mātās* appear to be the counterparts of the *Bhikkhu Sangha*. Yet their situation is fragile and uncertain. Having renounced as much or more than the monk in terms of physical comfort and public respect, they are often faced with difficulties of security, accommodation and financial resources. Some well-endowed nunneries exist, patronized by affluent women supporters. The nunnery at Biyagama, about twenty-five miles from Colombo, is one of them- a serene, beautiful nunnery where images of the feminine abound. In the forecourt, there is a statue of Sangamitta, orange-robed, holding out a sapling from the Bo Tree under which the Buddha gained enlightenment, which, tradition says Sangamitta brought from India in the third Century BCE. Then, the walls of the image house are covered with beautifully painted camoes from the lives of the early nuns. They are shown bowing to the Buddha with alms bowls slung with leather thongs over their shoulders, or listening to his teaching with heads held high. Biyagama was begun at the height of the Buddhists Revival by affluent lay Buddhists, who saw it as a means of asserting Buddhist national identity.[41] After independence, the need for

such an assertion weakened, but the Biyagama nunnery still has a waiting list of nuns who wish to join. The majority of nunneries in Sri Lanka, however, have poor facilities. In addition, as followers of ten precepts rather than the 311 rules of the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha* (Rule of Discipline), all *dasa sil Mātās* risk being accused of wearing the orange robe falsely. A voice no less famous than the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula recently stated that they were really no more than lay people and therefore should wear only white.[42] Bartholomeusz, in fact, throughout the study of female renunciation in Sri Lanka mentioned above, calls the *dasa sil mātās*. 'lay nuns'.

Some women in Sri Lanka insist that the issue of full ordination for women is not important enough to enlist their energy. They argue that, since enlightenment is neither gender specific nor dependent on ordained status, the holy life can be lived by women without the existence of a *Bhikkhiuni* Order. In their eyes, the wish to re-claim the past by reinstating the Order in Sri Lanka has more to do with a craving for status and power than with true religious practice. In addition, some *dasa sil mātās* seem to be wary of a *Bhikkhuni* Ordination because it might take away some of the freedom they currently enjoy.[43] However, there are a growing number of women, ordained and lay, who are not content with the present situation. For them, the reinstatement of the *Bhikkhuni* Order is simply a return to the Buddha's original blueprint for a wholesome society and, as such is a worthy goal.

The depth of feeling which the issue arouses cannot be understood without an appreciation of the importance of the robe. At every Buddhist gathering, the Three Refuges (Tisarana) are chanted' I go to the Buddha for refuge; I go to the *Dhamma* for refuge; I go to the *Sangha* for refuge. For *theravada buddhists*, the *Sangha* is defined by the robe. Taking refuge in the *Sangha* is taking refuge in those who wear the robe as fully ordained monastics. The struggle for the reinstatement of the *Bhikkhuni* Order is therefore linked with an urge to fuse the potent symbol of the robe with the feminine, to bring the feminine into the centre of religious·life.

The argument used by the *Sangha* in the face of calls for the reinstatement of the *Bhikkhuni* Order is that, according to the Pali Canon, ten Theravada nuns are needed to ordain new recruits and, since not even one exists, the Order has been lost irrevocably. But some Buddhist women are putting forward another argument. In 1984, Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, a Thai academic, published her doctoral thesis, *A Comparative Study of the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*. This compared the rule of discipline within Theravada schools with those which formed the basis of *Mahayana Buddhism*. She showed that the difference between the schools was negligible and that contemporary *Mahayana* nuns were following a rule of life very similar to the one which Theravada nuns would follow if Ordination was allowed.[44] Her aim was to demonstrate that, since Theravada and *Mahayana* nuns would follow almost the same rules there should be no objection to *Mahayana* nuns ordaining nuns in such countries as Thailand and Sri Lanka and that those who opposed it on the grounds that the *Mahayana* tradition was too different or decadent were supporting an untenable argument. At the same time, academics in Sri Lanka were pointing out the same thing. Dr. Hema Goonetileke, lecturer at Kelaniya University, actually visited nunneries in China in 1986 and returned to Sri Lanka to affirm that the *Bhikkhuni* Order still thrived there and that their rule of discipline was no different from the Theravada Order.[45] Since then, Dr. Goonetileke, has left Sri Lanka, but her call has been taken up by other women, nuns and lay. Important to this has been Sākyadhïtā, an international association of Buddhist women formed at the first conference on Buddhist Nuns, held at Bodhgaya, India, in 1987 and organized by three women – ven., Ayya Khema, Ven. Karm Lekshe Tsomo and Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilisingh.

I will not describe the Bodhgaya conference or Sākyadhïtā in detail. The full proceedings of the conference have been published and are a mine of information about Buddhist nuns throughout the world.[46] Further conferences have been held – Bangkok n 1991, in Colombo in 1993 and in Ladakh in 1995. From the beginning, Sri Lankan women were involved

particularly the followers of Ven Ayya Khema, who, although Western, taught and lived in Sri Lanka for many years. Ordination is by no means the only issues highlighted by Sākyadhïtā. Yet in 1988 it led some Sri Lankan women to sponsor eleven *dasa sil matas* to travel to a historic ordination ceremony at Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles. Two hundred women were ordained, among them Koreans, Japanese, Nepalese, Sri Lankan, Thais, Tibetans, Vietnamese and West Germans. In other words, women from both Theravada and *Mahayana* traditions were present and they were ordained by *Mahayana* nuns and both Theravada and *Mahayana* monks. Since then other such ordinations have been held.

Of the Sri Lankan nuns sent to America, only five persisted with the rigorous preparatory training and received *upasampadā* (higher ordination). When they returned to Sri Lanka, they were given no additional status. In fact, they found it best to hide the event. Nothing was done to train them further, In 1991, they did not even possess a copy of the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha* (Rules of discipline) in Sinhala, But the incident has served to highlight some of the weaknesses in the movement for ordination. It has shown that the *upasampadā* ceremony is of little practical use if society does not recognise it, Some women, therefore, now place more emphasis on education for nuns so that people will more readily accept them as counterparts of the monks. Sri Lankan Ranjani de Silva is now President of *Sākyadhïtā* and she sees her major work as orgnizing local support groups and educational opportunities for *dasa sil mātās*. With Kusuma Devendra, a well known speaker on Buddhism and meditation, she runs courses for the nuns throughout the country. The nuns themselves are also expressing themselves more forcibly. Ninety-four were registered at the 1993 Colombo *Sakyādhitā* conference. Simultaneous translation into Sinhala was provided. They were vocal members of all small discussion groups, several voicing their hope for a 'Theravada' higher ordination.

Pressure for the reactivation of the *Bhikkhuni* Order is a call for the feminine to be included in the Buddhist definition of the sacred. It does not unite all Buddhist women. Some sincerely spurn it, judging it peripheral to what they see as the heart of Buddhism. Those it does draw together possess a variety of motives. Some wish to follow the complete *Bhikkhuni*

Patimokkah themselves. Some are committed to claiming this spiritual path for others. A small minority may be more concerned with power and symbols of nation than spirituality. But, whatever the motive, it is an issue which will not go away.

Meditation Movements

Of a less contentious nature than the *Bhikkhuni* Order is the growth of interest among women in meditation. Before the late nineteenth-century Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka, intensive meditation tended to be a practice considered appropriate only for forest-dwelling monks. Mediation on such subjects as *metta* (loving kindness) and the Buddha was no doubt encouraged in the preaching halls of the temples, but a regular discipline of tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditation, the two main forms of meditation in the *Theravada* tradition, was alien both to lay people and the majority of those in robes. Gradually, however, it has entered mainstream, middle-class Sri Lankan Buddhism. The process has been well-documented by people such as George Bond and Richard Gombrich and I do not want to repeat their work,[47] but this article would be incomplete without mentioning the subject at all.

During my time in Sri Lanka, I made deep friendships with several women meditators. I came to see them as women who had distanced themselves from the traditional pattern of temple devotion, aimed at gaining the merit which would give them a better rebirth, in order to move towards pro-active creation of their own religious path. They had moved away from the religiosity noted by early nineteenth-century visitors to Sri Lanka[48] and had taken into themselves the positive message of *anicca* (impermanence) and *paticcasamuppāda* (dependent origination) that we can shape our own futures, regardless of gender. They were convinced that the way to do this was to work on the mind, the root of suffering, through meditation. These women did not spurn authority, but they exercised personal choice in selecting teachers. What they looked for in their teachers was clarity, depth and relevance and in this search, issues of gender, race or ordained status took second place. Traditionally accepted hierarchies were radically challenged.[49]

Most of the women meditators I knew were middle class and English-speaking. They were comfortably off and yet many were consciously non-acquisitive. I met several who, in retirement, had divested themselves of many superfluous possessions. They were impatient with members of the *Sangha* who saw them only as *dâyakas* (givers) rather than as *dhamma* practitioners. One group I knew preferred to spend *Poya* Day (Full Moon Day) in a private house together rather than in their local temple, where they would have been merely silent listeners to a day's diet of sermons.[50] Privately, they took *attha sil* (eight precepts) and wore white as they would if at the temple, but they created their own programme of meditation, discussion and reading. Rather than accept the role of passive receiver they made their own choice about what was relevant. I remember *Poya* Day conversations with them about the differences between the defilements and the fetters,[51] the importance of the state of the mind at the moment of death and whether the gods had any worthwhile power,[52] as well as lively discussions about meditation progress.

When a teacher they respect is present, however, such women are certainly willing to be receivers. Mithra Wettimuny can be taken as an example. He is a lay, male, English-speaking businessman who spends much of his time giving lectures on the virtues of *vipassana* (insight) meditation. His form of communication is sincere, direct, practical, textually based and bereft of mythological detail or metaphor. His main stress is what the earnest meditator can achieve by diligence. Yet, although he has a warm personality, his message can appear severe. On one occasion, when he had given a rather negative interpretation of the Four Noble Truths in an hour-long talk, the monk who was chairing the session pointed out that the Truths were realistic rather than pessimistic and that the Buddha did not deny the existence of pleasure, as if impelled to modify Wettimuny's approach, which had stressed the darkness of the vision of life given in the first Noble Truth of suffering (dukkah). Almost all Wettimuny's talks are to packed halls and the majority present are women. When I asked why he had so much popularity, the answer has been that he is clearer that the monks, that he is a practical person, that he knows the text. The 'this worldly asceticism' with which the Sri Lankan Buddhist Revival has been

branded seems to find its epitome in him[53] and it attracts women who want a clear message and a self-directed religious path.

Socially Engaged Women

Among women meditators, there is a sense of sisterhood, of common purpose. Yet, the practice itself tends to the individualistic, although the women prefer to meditate in groups rather than alone. Generosity, 'gifting', a word used by Mithra Wettimuny to describe any act of giving- and loving kindness are stressed. Many meditators are involved with charitable activities such as running Elders' Homes and Orphanages or giving funds for soldiers wounded in the war. The belief most commonly held by them is that the world will change if individuals work to reform their minds and that, within this, women, as wives and mothers, are central because of their key influence on the next generation. In addition, there is among some, almost an intoxication with the idea that the goal of Buddhism might be obtainable in this life. I can remember meeting one group of affluent women after they had been to an intensive meditation retreat. They were dressed simply, in white, and were radiant and almost childlike in their responses. Charismatic joy seemed to fill them- an awareness that the shackles of *dukkha* could be broken.

Challenge to social structures and the struggle to further the cause of justice within the socio-economic and political field rarely feature in the above approach. Yet it is not missing from the Sri Lankan context. Theja Goonawardhana can be taken as an example of a person who was deeply attracted to a Buddhism which is socially engaged. When I first wrote this paper, Theja was alive. In July 1995, she died unexpectedly in hospital, after breaking her hip. She was also a meditator but her stance was very different from the one described above. In her youth, she was a leftwing political activist and later a member of the diplomatic service. At the 1993 Colombo *Sakyādhitā* conference, she presented a paper on the Buddhist Aung Sang Suu Kyi of Myanmar, then under house arrest. Her main point was that Suu Kyi, in her political, non-violent involvement for a democratic society, was a living witness to the *ahimsâ* (non-violence) and *Karunâ* (compassion) at the heart of Buddhism:

She is the embodiment of political righteousness which the Buddha held tantamount to human righteousness. Both are one. We see how Suu Kyi grasped the social dimension of the precepts, laid down by the Buddha. To her, one sided emphasis on passively negative aspects of the religious life has no significance. She has in her *Maha karuna* opened her own heart to the trials and woes of human experience.[54]

The moral code of the lay person within Theravâda Buddhism includes the voluntary undertaking to observe five precepts (*pancâ sila*) not to harm living beings; not to take what is not given; not to indulge in sexual misconduct; not to utter false speech; not to take alcohol or other substances which damage the mind. In one sense, they are a code of abstentions. But they have also been seen as a guide for positive action, particularly by Buddhists committed to social engagement.[55] Not to harm life involves, for instance, positive qualities such as compassion and can lead to the 'Great compassion', often linked with enlightened beings within Buddhist, but which Theja evidently saw within Suu Kyi.

Theja Goonawardhana's talk was the only one of the conference which stressed political involvement and human rights. Most of the Sri Lankan Buddhists present avoided the issue. To take this avoidance, as normative for Sri Lankan Buddhist women, however, is to do an injustice to the groups which have formed to struggle against social injustice and poverty or against the horrors of war and the abuse of human rights. Members of such groups would argue that their social involvement is also a reclaiming of the sacred, a reclaiming of the *dhamma*, through reclaiming societal righteousness.

Precedents for struggle against violence and action for a more compassionate society can be found in the Pali texts. For example, there is the powerful myth within the *Cakkavatti Sihanâdâ Sutta* of the *dïgha Nikaya*. The myth shows a society gradually sliding into anarchy and bestiality because the monarch (today we could say 'the state') has not fulfilled the duty to give resources to the poor. It reaches a point where the people are

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killing one another as though they were wild beasts. The situation is then reversed by the people themselves. A group of citizens, realising the depth of dehumanization reached, detach themselves and seek quietness again.[56] It is a picture which speaks to socially engaged Buddhists in Sri Lanka. In the last decade, Sri Lanka has faced a form of holocaust. In the late 1980s, two wars wracked the country-one between the Indian Peacekeeping Force(IPKF) and the liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam(LTTE) in the North and the other between the government and the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP), the People's Liberation Front) in the South.[57] There were days in September 1989 when upto 300 young people were killed in 24 hours as the government, with true barbarism, tried to crush the brutality of the JVP. The war in the South is now quiet. The JVP seems to have entered the democratic process. The IPKF has left. Yet the war in the North, after a period of peace-talks which seemed to hold out great hope, still continues, this time between the government and the LTTE. There is also another war, the war of economic deprivation. Since, 1977, the country has been following an open economic policy which has created a gap between rich and poor, second only to Brazil.[58]

To take one example of women's action in this context, *Mothers and Daughters of Lanka* was formed at the height of the abuse of state power on the late 1980s when the JVP was attempting to overthrow the government by a brutal scheme of strikes enforced by death threats. It was initiated by a small group of women from different religions who felt they could no longer remain silent as their sons, husbands and friends were killed. The movement is now a federation of groups, several of which are Buddhist. What unites them is an agenda which refused to separate the religious from the secular. The rationale behind it is the one Theja expressed at the *sakyādhitā* conference – the social and political dimensions of the qualities of *ahimsa* and *Karuna* (non-violence and compassion).

Many of these Buddhist social activists are not English-speaking. They are not affluent and have little time for individual meditation. Nevertheless, they are no less in the business of reclaiming the sacred for Buddhist women. Non-violent protests and petitions concerning abuse of human rights have been on their agenda. Some are involved in health schemes, others in educational and consciousness raising programmes and yet others in helping poorly paid workers to gain their rights. The Buddhism they assert stresses interdependence and community rather than individuality. Often, they work alongside non-buddhists who possess similar will and commitment. The majority support a peaceful, non-military solution to the current ethnic conflict, as indeed do some of the meditators to whom I have referred.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a patchwork with many loose ends. I have not included individual voices from within the *dasa sil mâtâ* community and have not detailed community-based women's groups. Further work needs to be done on these. I have, however, described four significant movements within the community of Buddhist women in Sri Lanka; the recovering of knowledge about freedoms women possessed in pre-colonial Sri Lanka; the campaign for the reinstatement of the *Bhikkhuni* Order; a pro-active approach to meditation and the religious path, linked with non accumulation and social service; a Buddhist social activism, often networking with feminist and interfaith groups, concerned for the building of a just and pluralist society. Some women in Sri Lanka are involved with more than one of these. All display vitality and point to the strength of the voice of women within Sri Lankan religion. The Buddhist textual emphasis that both women and men have an equally important role to play in society is being given new life.

Notes

1   S.Langdon, *My Happy Valley* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1890) p.70.

2   J. Chapman, *Memorials of James Chapman DD, First Bishop of Colombo* (London: Skeffington & Sons, 1892), p.94

3   E.J.Harris, The Gaze of the Coloniser – British views on local women in 19th Century Sri Lanka (Colombo: Social Scientist Association, 1994)

4   Charles Webster Leadbeater was born in 1854 and originally trained for the Anglican ministry. He then became interested in Theosophy and spiritualism. He joined the Theosophical society in 1884 and eventually accompanied Helena Blavatsky to India. From 1886 to 1889. He lived in Sri Lanka and assisted Buddhists there His later career saw him rising to the top of the Theosophical Movement and occultism.

5   C.W. Leadbeater (ed.), *The Buddhist* (Colombo: Colombo Theosophical Society), 1, 1889, p. 295.

6   I write this in awareness that the language I am using is problematic and has been the subject of debate throughout the twentieth century. The text of a religion cannot be extracted from its context. Any judgement about the essence or core of a religion should take into account the debate which has arisen from the work of Ernest Troeltsch as described, for example, in M. Pye. The debate centres on whether it is possible to extract an essence or core from any religious tradition. Steven Collins illustrated how the most 'abstract forms' of Buddhism's 'imaginative representation – what we call its "idea" – are intimately connected with, and inextricable from, the presuppositions and institutional framework of Buddhist society and culture'. Yet Buddhist women in Asia are seeking to distinguish between what they see as peripheral to the message of the Buddhist of the Buddha and what they see as central. For instance, Chatsuman Kabilsingh makes a distinction between 'core teaching' and 'more mundane' teaching (C. Kabilsingh, That women in Buddhism [Berkley: Parallax Press, 1991], p. 24) while realising that this search is conditioned by the agenda of the late twentieth century and that what will be deemed the 'core' will be specific to contemporary context, I would nevertheless endorse it as a legitimate project capable of providing 'the possibility of new combinations with the concrete life of the present' (Pye p.16).

7   With exception of some of the books in the Khudddaka Nikaya, most of the teachings in the Sutta Pitaka of the Pali Canon are said to be the words of the Buddha. Studies of the hermeneutical questions connected with this include: M. Pye, "Comperative Hermeneutics in Religion'; G.D. Bond. The Gradual Path as Hermeneutical approach to the Dhamma', in D. Lopez (ed.), Buddhist Hermeneutics(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), pp.29-45.

8   All textual references are taken from the English translations published by the Pali Text society. Gradual Sayings, III, p. 56 (*Anguttara Nikaya*. III, 67)

9   For more detailed treatment of the imagery surrounding women in the Pali texts, see E.J. Harris, "The Female n Buddhism"in Dialogue (Colombo: The Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 1991-93), XIX-XX, pp 36-60; R. Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (New York:University of New York Press, 1993).

10   See:Psalms of the sisters, p. 49 (Pslam XXXVII, v. 66) in which a nun called Buddha claims equality with the *Arahat* monk Kassapa; Cullvedalla Sutta Middle length sayings, I, pp.360-68 Majjhima Nikaya I, 299-305) in which the redactors

11   Kindred Sayings, I, p. 162 (Samyutta Nikaya, 1, 129)

12   Kindred Sayings, IV, p. 162 (Samyutta Nikaya, IV.239).

13   Psalms of the Sisters, pp. 108-109 (Theri Psalm LXIII, vv. 215-16)

14   Dialogues of the Buddha, III, p.85 (Digha Nikaya. III.89).

15   Dialogues of Buddha, II p. 154 (Digha Nikaya. II. 141)

16   Middle Length Sayings, II p. 319 (Majjhima Nikaya. II.135).

17   See R. Gross, Buddhism after Patriarchy, p.62

18   The *Bhikkhuni* Order never reached Thailand but there are now between 8,000 – 10,000 white-robed, shaven-headed women renunciants called *maejis*. Some take eight precepts and some ten, but they are not considered novices (samanerikas), since there is no *Bhikkhuni* Order. The *Bhikkhu Sangha* was establish in Tibet in the eighth Century CE, but a *Bhikkhuni* Order was not transmitted due to the difficulty of nuns travelling from India to Tibet. Women renouncers in Tibet receive a novice ordination from monks. However, some nuns trained in the Tibetan tradition have received Higher Ordination from Mahayana countries or temples in the USA.

19   Sri Lankans look to the Mahavamsa, an ancient historical chronicle written by the Mahavihara fraternity of monks, as the main source of information about these early events. The coming of Mahinda and Sanghamitta is re-

corded in chs. 14-18 (see A. Guruge [trans.] *Mahavamsa: The Great Chronicle of Ceylon* [Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, 1989], pp.56-95)

20   See T. Bartholomeusz, Women under the Bo Tree (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1994) p. 20; Tsomo Sakyadhita, p. 140.

21   See G.P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (Kandy, Sri Lanka; Buddhist Publication Society, 1994) pp. 135ff., in which the author discusses the view of Hugh Neville that the Dipavamsa could be the work of nuns and T. Bartholomeusz, women under the Bo Tree, p. 18n.

22   See C.J.R. LeMesurier and T.B. Panabokke (trans.), *Niti Nighanduwa* or the Vocabulary of Law as I Existed in the Last Days of the Kandyan Kingdom (Colombo: Government Printer, 1880;repr.; Colombo; Navrang Publishers, 1994), pp.22-23. The translators of the Niti Nighanduwa claimed it had been written by a committee of chiefs under the influence of Simon Sawyers, a British civil servant who served in Kandy as Judicial Commissioner after the independent kingdom fell to the British in 1815. This has been contested by later researchers but the general view held is that the material is a fairly reliable record of law in the Kandyan Kigndom.

23   R. Knox, an Historical Relation of Ceylon in the East Indies (London: Robert Chiswell, 1681; repr.; Colombo Tisara Prakasakayo, 1958) was the first book to be written on Sri Lanka in English. Knox, a sailor with the East India company, was captured by the King of Kandy in 1660 and detained as a prisoner for almost 20 years, Although not allowed to leave the Kingdom, he was given much freedom of movement and lived and worked among the Kandyan people, His book was written after he escaped.

24   Knox, *An Historical Relation*, p. 248.

25   R. Knox An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon Revised, Enlarged and Brought to the verge of Publication as the Second edition (Colombo: Tisara Prakasakayo,1989), p. 267. This second edition of Knox's work, published in May 1989 in Sri Lanka, includes glosses inserted by Knox between the lines of the original published text during the years 1681 and 1713. The manuscript of Knox's second Edition is deposited in the Museum of M ankind, the Ethnography Department of the British Museum.

26   H. Boyd, the miscellaneous works of Hugh Boyd with an account of his life and writings by Lawrence Dundas Campbell (London: t. Cadell Jr. & W. Davies, 1800), I, p.54. Hugh Boyd, and Irishman, was involved in India and Sri Lanka at the end of the eighteenth century and was part of the embassy from the Government of Madras to the King of Kandy in 1782.

27   For example, K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University press, 1981), p. 201

28   L. Devarajah, *The Position of Women in Buddhism* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1981), p.18.

29   Dialogues of the Buddha, III, pp181-182, (Digha Nikaya. III.190)

30   Gradual Sayings.II,p.8 (Anguttara Nikaya.II.8).

31   J. De Alwis, Terms of Address and Modes of Salutation of the Sinhalese', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* 3.10 (1856-58), p. 230.

32   A helpful study is Salgadu, Custom and Tradition in Buddhist society: a look at some Dasa Sil Matas from Sri Lanka in relation to the Concept of women in Buddhism (undated Monograph at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo).

33   For Example, Gradual Sayings, III, p.29 (*Anguttaura Nikaya*, III.37) in which the Buddha is seen to advise girls about to be married that they should act towards their husband with unquestioning obedience.

34   The Revd. Robert Spence Hardy arrived in Sri Lanka as a Methodist missionary in 1825. He returned to Britain in 1848 but served again between 1863 and 1865. He became known as a Sinhala scholar and an authority on Buddhism, although it must be added that he attempted to use his knowledge to undermine the religion.

35   P. Liyanage, 'The Position of women in Buddhism" the Lived Experience'. *In Faith Renewed . II: A Report on the Second Asian Women's Consultation on Interfaith Dialogue November 1-7, 1991 Colombo*, Sri Lanka (Seoul: Asian women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, 1991), p.110

36   P. Liyanage, 'The Position of Women in Buddhism'. P.111.

37   P. Liyanage, 'The Position of Women in Buddhism' p. 18.

38   See . Burton, The White Women's Burden: British Feminists and the "Indian Woman" 1865-1915', in N. Chaudury and M. Strobel (eds), Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) in which Burton argues that middle-class Victorian feminists shared with the general populace imperial assumptions of racial superiority and saw 'the Indian woman' as an unfortunate in need of saving by Western feminist sisters.

39   See Bartholomeusz, Women under the Bo Tree, pp.24-88

40   See R. Copleston, Buddhism Primitive and Present in Magadha and Ceylon (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), p. 279. Reginald Copleston, Anglican Bishop in Sri Lanka from 1875 –1902. Remarks that there is a class of generally old and poverty-stricken women who shave their heads and wear dirty white dresses. He notes that they are not members of a Community and calls them *upasikas.*

41   Bartholomeusz, Women under the Bo Tree, pp.112ff.

42 See the Island (a daily newspaper in Colombo), 25th July 1991, in which it was reported that, at a ceremony in his honour in July 1991, Ven. Walpola Rahula claimed that dasa sil matas were not qualified to wear the yellow robe.

43   The traditional story of the founding of the Bhikkhuni Order by the Buddha states that the Buddha laid down eight extra rules for the women renouncers. The first states that nuns should bow down to monks regardless of seniority and the others, in a similar vein, give precedence to the Bhikkhu Sangh. These rules form part of the Bhikkhuni Rule of Discipline. Some nuns claim they prefer their present status to the prospect of following these eight rules.

44 See C. Kabilsingh, A corporative study of the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha* (Varananasi, India: Chaukhambha Orientalia, 1984), in which she shows, for instance, that differences between the Theravada and Mahasanghika schools occur mainly in the Pacittiya and Sekhiys sections of the *Patimokkha,* in each case the latter having more rules than the Theravada, thus disproving the allegation that nuns in the Mahayana tradition are more lax.

45   H. Goonatileke, "Vinaya Tradition in China is Theravada', in *Sunday Observer* (Cololmbo: Lake House Press, 14th June, 1986)

46   See K, Lekshe Tsomo, Sakyadhita: *Daughters of the Buddha* (New York: Snow Lion Press, 1988).

47   See G.D. bond, the Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reintepretation and Response (Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 130-240: R. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekera, Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 202-240

48 For example, J. Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of its Inhabitants with Travels in that Island (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1821; repr.; Colombo : Tisara Prakasakayo, 1983), p. 167 in which John Davy , a British army doctor who served in Sri Lanka between 1816-20, declares that "The people in general are not taught the mysteries of religion...' He goes on to say that following the Five Precepts and offering homage to the three Refugees of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha form the basis of lay religion. The same message comes from R. Spence Hardy, Eastern Manarchism (London: Partridge and Oakley, 1805), pp. 232-70 in which he describes temple devotion mainly in terms of gaining protection and overcoming the evil consequences of demerit.

49   See my 'Internal and External Authority among Lay Buddhist Women in Contemporary Sri Lanka'. Forthcoming.

50   Many lay Buddhists in Sri Lanka spend the whole day at a Buddhist temple on Full Moon Days. They observe eight or ten precepts. Each temple will provide a programme of sermons, meditation periods and *pujas* (acts of devotion) stretching from early in the morning until early evening.

51 The fetters (Samyojana) are ten in number and are qualities which hinder the path to enlightenment. They include belief in an ego-entity; doubt or perplexity and attachment to rites and rituals. The defilements (asava) are factors which "flow in" to prevent liberation and are viewed under 3 main categories; attachment to pleasures of the senses; attachment to continued existence of ignorance with regard to the true nature of existence. The word *Kilesa* is also sometimes used to denote factors of defilement.

52 Buddhists in Sri Lanka worship a range of gods. These are placed below the Buddha in the cosmic hierarchy. They are normally seen as beings who can help humans solve mundane problems, but they are not accredited with any power over questions of ultimate destiny.

53 The phrase 'this world ascetism' has been coined by anthropologists studying the nineteenth century Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka to denote the way in the which the revival met the needs of educated, middle-class Buddhists who sought a religious life which could allow them to move within the increasingly important world of commerce and profit while remaining committed Buddhists. See G. Obeyesekera, 'The Viccissitudes of Sinhala Buddhist Identity through Time and Change', in M. Roberts (ed) Collective Identities : Nationalism and Protest in Modern Sri Lanka (Colombo" Marga Institute, 1979) pp. 279-312.

54 T. Goonewarhane, (Aung Sang Suu Kyi: A Buddhist woman of Destiny of Modern Burma' (unpublished paper given at the Third International Conference on Buddhist women, organised by Sakyadhita,October 1993, Colombo)

55 The most influential international voice reinterpreting the Five Precepts in a socially engaged way is the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh. See T. Nhat Hanh, For a Future to be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Wonderful Precepta (California: Parapllax Press. 1993) in which he and other Buddhists comment on the precepts.

56 Dialogues of the Buddha, III,pp. 59-76(*Digha Nikaya iii58ff*)

57 The Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) had entered Sri Lanka to oversee the implementation of the 1987 Indo-Lankan Peace Accord which had been intended to bring peace through devolution of power. When the liberation tigers of Tamil Eelam(LTTE) refused to accpet the Accord, the IPKF found themselves in a war situation. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) was mainly a movement of youth disillusioned with the inequities within the Sri Lankan system. Their aim was to gain state power.

58 According to the International Fund For Agricultural Development's Report for 1992, Sri Lanka ranked highest in the rate of poverty increase. Rural poverty has risen from 13 per cent in 1965 to 46 per cent in 1988. See People's Memorandum(Colombo: Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform, 1994)

Shackles of the Past -
The Concept of Patriarchy Perpetuating in Education

Rocky Ariyaratne

Prior to establishing the impacts of persisting patriarchal values on our system of education, it is pertinent to clarify the term patriarchy as an ideology and provide a meaningful review of the images and concepts depicting patriarchal gender relations in the sphere of education. Of all the concepts generated by contemporary feminist theory, patriarchy is probably the most overused and under theorized. It has become a Shibboleth for all tendencies which signify male superiority. Radical feminist writers have encouraged its liberal usage, to apply to virtually every form of male domination and exploitation. Socialist feminists have restricted themselves to dissecting and scrutinizing the relationships between patriarchy and class under capitalism. In fact if patriarchy is restricted to or conceived as one of male dominance alone, it obscures the subtler ramifications and socio-cultural interlocking of the finer arrangements of gender relations. One could discuss such patriarchal concepts exerting a powerful influence on the shaping of women's subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different social contexts, in the households, labour market, class room, temple or mosque.

Patriarchy literally means predominance of the patriarch, the great father figure. The concept of patriarchy, interpreted widely, covers the power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to those of men -

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Sylvia Walby in 'Theorizing Patriarchy' depicts it as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Generally some of the areas that men are assumed to take under patriarchal control are those most intimate to womanhood, women's productive and reproductive rights, control over women's sexuality, women's mobility, property and other economic assets, as well as the institutions of the family, religion, legal, economic and political systems, media and education[Walby, Sylvia: (1989)].

The search for the origins or roots of the concept within the feminist perspective could be traced back to the 1920s, when feminist (Western Social Scientists) began to question the unequal and hierarchical social relationships in general. In fact, the search for the social origins of this concept was part of the political strategy of women's emancipation as traced by certain writers. Some of the causal approaches to patriarchy have been founded on biology. According to traditionalists views, the notion of patriarchy is utilized to justify gender differences (roles of men and women in society), as being 'naturally' based on the biological functions of each sex. Consequently, exceptions that do not conform to patriarchal structures cannot be explained adequately by these theories. As such, there is an inherent disability in these theories to account for changing life structures. Radical feminists too, take off from this point and portray patriarchy as being centred on (or caused by or related to) women's reproductive function [Petchesky, V.(1985)]. These theories too are equally erroneous on the same grounds - the basic assumption being that the differences between sexes are caused solely by the biological factors as given.

Other theories probing the origins of patriarchy, generally propounded by Marxist feminists, trace patriarchy to the advent of capitalism and they conclude the appropriation of women's labour (both in the household and outside it) by men to be the vital factor in the oppression of women[Scott, W.J. (1986)]. Labelled the dual systems theory, it has also been criticised on the grounds that patriarchy pre-dates and post-dates capitalism. A number of other theories such as those forwarded by the Socialist feminists take into account both production and reproduction

relations in their analysis. This paper does not have the scope to examine these finer nuances of capitalism/biological determinism theories found in the writings of Hartmann and Eisentein etc. Nor will it dabble with the narrow perspectives and interpretations of patriarchy by individual proponents such as Brownmiller, Mary O'Brien etc., who tend to reduce women's subordination to one critical base such as male psychology, or men's biology, or unpaid labour, or compulsory heterosexuality(Walby, Sylvia 1989).

However, it is pertinent to allude to yet other schools of thought on patriarchy which have been critiqued on the grounds that their theorizing reflect the class/ ethnic bias of the writers and cannot as such be generalized or applied as a totality. For example, most Western feminist theorists have been principally found deficient in their exclusive focus on the developed countries and their neglect of the multifarious experience of the so-called Third World Women. [Firestone, S. (1971)] As a result, these theories are selective and confined to the writers' own context, concepts and community constituencies, although being voiced as universal, do not give sufficient emphasis to differences particularly as exposed by Post Modernist critiques.[Ramazanoglu, C. (1989)] Yet other theories have been investigated for their penchant for universal categorization in that such writings do not take sufficient account of the different forms of gender inequality at various times and places or the varied experiences of women specially in relation to culture, religion, class, ethnicity, sexuality, age and other distinctions.

While an ecumenical patriarchal theory which would merge the separate and diverse strands of feminist visions and which would be applicable to all women everywhere is very inviting, it too could be seen to have its own disadvantages. Firstly, its very universality could result in the construction of a static polarity between the sexes and the old danger of biological determinism could re-surface. Furthermore, there is a distinct possibility that it could then become legitimised through theorization particularly since there is no inherent inclination in such a concept towards changing the status quo. Secondly, it then has a tendency to overlook the

exceptions that are found in any given context. Thirdly, while identifying with the broad structures presented in uniform theorizations by Walby and Bhasin for example, as being the social locations of patriarchy, it is also equally important to recognize that patriarchy is not confined to these social structures alone. For example, language systems can be seen as vital additional patriarchal sites[Wood, J(1994)]. Fourthly and primarily, these axioms do not demonstrate adequately the manner in which patriarchy is perpetuated in societies. Not only the means by which it is perpetuated from generation to generation, but also the manner in which it is accommodated in shifting life compositions.

Therefore, if the concept of patriarchy is to be applied to any aspect of life today, and if it is to be applied as a tool of analysis or dissection, it has to embody a conscious vindication of the above criticisms. At the same time for feminists, the concept of patriarchy cannot exist merely as a hypothesis, but needs to correlate with women's lives and experiences if is to be of relevance. Therefore, it needs to necessarily embody an account of the individual woman's lived experience in connection to the identified patriarchal ideologies and structures; particularly if the idea is to be used as a tool to facilitate the transformation of these same ideologies and structures. Since our critique aims at reviewing the sphere of education, as an obvious area where such concepts are being propagated, supported, and impacted upon society, it is in a sense justifiable to elaborate upon the nature and manifestations of the concept at some length.

While subscribing in general to the theory of structuralization of patriarchy as conceptualized by Walby in particular, or rather, while identifying with the various perspectives of patriarchy both social and otherwise, it is of foremost importance that the concept of patriarchy is also reappraised as the single most dominant ideology that condition both men and women in societies via these structures. The term ideology is used with reference to Louis Althusser, as representing' the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence and in relation to the idea that 'individual subjects are constructed and reproduced in ideology' and enjoys 'relative autonomy from the economic level' – Barrett, [Michele (1980)].

Structures and institutions such as the state, religion, the media, cultural practices, moral values, marriage, education and language systems etc., can be viewed as carriers of patriarchal ideology. Even language systems, though not classified as a location of patriarchy by the multiple structure theorists, can be seen as forces which condition men and women constantly. [Spender, Dale (1980)] This is why it is more pertinent to interpret patriarchy as a confluence between particular ideologies and structures which subordinate the interests of women to those of men. The authority exerted by ideologies in societies is intangible and personal. All of us are bombarded by diverse ideologies during the course of our lives, and all of us are responsible for sustaining the more dominant ideologies - such as patriarchy which condition us constantly. Consequently, even though social structures might be subject to changes, the basic principles of patriarchy in societies tend to remain static and get transformed to suit new conditions. The new generations get socialized into old ideologies through parents, educationists, media and social institutions in general and we are faced with a load of new caskets full of old wine.[ibid (1983a]

Nevertheless, this ideological base in the patriarchal structures need not necessarily make the concept of patriarchy a monolithic one. For instance, the Media, while being structured on patriarchal lines in most countries can be altered if the patriarchal ideology/ structures that sustain it can be replaced, either by another gender neutral ideology in its administrative policies, management and implementation structures and if its content and contextualization occurs under specific conditions of gender neutrality. Gender specific crimes such as wife battery, rape, clitoredectomy and sati, can be reduced in certain communities if the patriarchal ideologies of violence against women are not preserved via the media, cultural practices, language, educational system etc. If the system of education perpetuates old ideologies, the system has to change urgently, before yet another generation falls prey to its impact. One needs to break the life-cycle of an ideology: else the fruits will regenerate itself. Then, if feminists are to initiate change in societies, patriarchy must necessarily be addressed from both structural and ideological angles[Heilbrun, Carolyn. (1992)].

On a theoretical level, as stated by Kamala Bhasin,' the subordination that women experience on a daily level; that take various forms - discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence within the family, at the place of work, in society'. Patriarchy, namely, is then our own subconscious awareness of the multiplicity of disadvantages that we women experience in life in relation to men. It allows people to perceive women's subordination not as isolated events concerning individual women but as an all-encompassing system of exploitation which affect all women. As Sylvia Walby defines 'as a system of ideologies, structures, and practices in which women are dominated, oppressed and exploited'[Walby, Sylvia (1986)].

In general, gender awareness against an ideology of this sort leads to the mobilization of women in various ways, be it as private individuals or public citizens. In addition, it tends to generate solidarity among women and, serves to form and strengthen bonds between individuals. It unites women from various cultures and creates empathy with women from different time periods, indirectly providing individual models and vast support to resist and, to ultimately change patriarchal systems themselves. The concept of patriarchy has another function, particularly for feminists. It provides a platform from which feminists can unearth and highlight the diverse forms of responses that women utilize in reacting to the patriarchal power relations that they encounter daily - whether in relation to their own psychological conditioning, family, workplace, community, or society in general. Varying from individual nonconformity to mass protest, these responses to patriarchy are more vital to feminism and, for ideological and structural change in societies than the abstract conceptualization of patriarchy. In this sense, while being a crucial tool for feminist analysis and theorizing, the concept of patriarchy is a vital element in motivating women to fight for change[1]. Accordingly, on an activist level, patriarchy is employed in the feminist project of consciousness raising with a view to effectuate either organized or individual resistance. Ironically, in the long term, its value lies in unifying and strengthening the very forces that it seeks to dominate and exploit.

A glance at history will show that major changes in women's lives and experiences have occurred when women become conscious of the patriarchal values and practices that affect them, motivating them to fight for their rights. 'Forgotten' feminist writers such as Margery Kemp, Mary Wollstoncraft and Virginia Woolf from England, Jiu Jin from China, the Sri Lankan Gajaman Nona, among others, were writing against forms of patriarchy long before the theoretical construction of the term. They have all contributed greatly in establishing a historically consistent international consciousness of patriarchy. The 20th century history of women's movement shows women activists who organized themselves to fight collectively against various issues that affect women negatively, and against patriarchy as a totality[Rowbotham, Shiela(1973)]. Beginning with the 'first wave of feminism' in the form of the British Suffragettes, today there are various feminist /political organizations such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) in USA, Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, Chipko Movement in India, the Mother's Front in Sri Lanka, a variety of black women's organizations fighting against sexism and racism and, for political rights in America and Africa as well as women's organizations fighting religious fundamentalism in Asia and Arabia. This historical record of women's political activity makes it evident that the battle against the many faces of patriarchy has been a long sustained one.

Today, most countries in the world are in a state of transition - whether it be political, economic or socio-cultural. Southern countries particularly, are preoccupied with the various development policies and schemes that signify the processes of establishing Market Economies and building Capitalist States. In a number of South and East Asian countries, this has resulted in the restructuring of national policies related to the economy and development schemes, prompting legal reforms, population control, religious consciousness and even precipitating civil conflicts. In many instances this has been detrimental to the interests of women as these policies both directly and implicitly seek to control and subordinate women. In response, many feminist organizations and individuals are playing a major role in the critique and agitation against legislative policies that potentially create or perpetuate patriarchy in society. However, it is critical that there be widespread consciousness of patriarchal values and institutions if women are to effectively monitor the disparate political relations

which affect them and, if they are to prevent the reproduction of patriarchy.

Decades of agitation and protest in the Western countries have resulted in a degree of space for individual women in certain areas. Though limited changes have occurred in the public sphere - changes in the law, access to education, job opportunities, and such, in the private sphere individual women have some opening to wrest control of their personal lives. Hence, depending on their class/ race situation, they are in a position to make educated choices in adopting non patriarchal personal life styles and to gain access to a number of options and support systems; natural child birth, equitable division of domestic labour, single parent families, lesbian relationships etc.,

At the same time, this expansion of the second wave of feminism as a considerable political force since the 1960's has resulted in various counter reactions world wide. In the West it has spawned counter exercises by men to sustain their standing in patriarchy and to establish new preserves. This is particularly evinced in masculinist writings, the founding of men's rights societies, and reinterpretation of equal rights laws (particularly in the USA) in recent times. Reactionary forces particularly in Asia, have condemned feminism as a concept alien to endemic cultures and patriarchy as a decadent Western concept. Feminist proponents in Muslim fundamentalist countries have faced death as a result of their beliefs. These developments emphasise the validity of patriarchy both as a critique of women's experience as well as a political concept in the feminist project of fighting for women's dues.

As an oppressed group, women world wide have had to fight politically for centuries in order to gain education rights, property rights, franchise rights, work rights, and wage rights to name a few rights connected to the public sphere. Still, as an oppressed group, women continue to fight for cultural rights, religious rights, biological rights, reproductive rights, healthcare rights, sexual rights, food distribution rights, dress rights, behavioural rights; rights for non-segregated jobs, rights for the equitable division of domestic labour, right for a life free from male violence, right to equitable laws, right to live free from gender specific ideological notions of shame, inferiority, ridicule, fear etc.,[Parmar, Prathibha(1982)].

Thus, it becomes apparent that in order to mitigate the effects of the worst manifestations of patriarchy women have had to fight against social conditioning and value ideologies, against social practices and structures, against individuals and institutions and community socialisation. They have had to fight for both equal rights and differences. They have had to fight on a variety of general concerns and learning on gender specific issues that are indicative of the very nature of women's subordination. Learning about the global trends in women's oppression is one mode of awareness raising. Comparison of the status of women in different countries is another. The exemplification of the achievements of the developed world and the changes wrought by their own might is a useful third. It has to be conceded though grudgingly, at this point that a modicum of women do find comfort and security within the so called within the patriarchal structures themselves, just as men do.

From time immemorial, ever since learning and education came to be run by institutions and as a formal process, men have assumed control over areas of knowledge, be it law, philosophy sciences or mathematics. As Kamala Bhasin (1993) comments, the male hegemony over the creation of knowledge marginalised women's knowledge and experiences, their expertise and aspirations. In some cultures, women have been totally excluded from reading or interpreting scriptures, handed down from God the father, Jehovah, Allah or Brahma to prophets exclusively chosen for their masculine gender. Legal texts, which have assumed similar social sanction as that of the Bible or Koran, are equally appropriated by men. As women activists have claimed patriarchal thought and knowledge are characterized by divisions, distinctions, oppositions and dualisms. As Gerda Lerner argues "traditionalists, have regarded women's subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence immutable." Knowledge, in this context, is the monopoly of man and he deigns to impart

of it as, when, and how he pleases[Lerner, Gerda(1981)]. Since religious education has been largely.dominated by the high priests, patriarchs and self-appointed religious hierarchies, females have once again been excluded, ostracized and stigmatized, marginalizing their knowledge and experiences, their expertise and aspirations.

Consequently, patriarchal gender relations are epitomized in every aspect of education; the concept of knowledge, systems and institutions used to transfer knowledge, the traditional 'guru' relationship (master/ apprenticeship) and the reward system, where the guru gave his daughter in marriage to the best student. Educational systems, even today, are microcosms of the gender systems of the societies in which they operate. The function of formal education was traditionally believed to be the inculcation of appropriate behaviours and cultural norms, consciously or unconsciously imbibing gender specific messages[Conway and Bourgue(1995)]. Hence schools at whatever levels have been vehicles for perpetuating stereotyped or limited views of women and men in society[Lerner, Gerda, (1986)]. In Asian countries generally the persistence of patriarchal values and social systems impose constraints on the educational system which are detrimental to women's development.

Feminist critics, both women and a few men, have noted the sexual biases inherent in the formal school systems, and in turn reflected in the curriculum, texts, facilities, teachers, and the administration. Girls' access to education has not eliminated the misogynist bias found within Asian culture but are also reflected in educational systems that borrow from the West. Feminist writers have explored the interplay between colonialism and indigenous cultures in Southern and Eastern Asia and their ramifications in terms of gender roles, arguing that, whatever the agency of education, it is women's exclusion from participation in educational experience that limits their ability to improve their status. Those concerned with ending that exclusion have raised questions about both curriculum content and pedagogy that represent a major contribution to global educational concerns[Mercia Westkoft (1983)]. India is exemplary as an instance of retarded development of a vast population due to the exclusion

from participatory education of her women. Neera Desai has highlighted the history of women's long-postponed quest for education. She concludes that the abysmal ignorance in which most Indian women live will not be corrected by a benevolent government, epitomising patriarchal values in every aspect, but only by organized action by committed women themselves. Even in other states in Asia such as Korea, the inherited Confusian values still maintain a strict patriarchal code of values, although her industrial growth has resulted in increasing recruitment of women to her industrial labour force. Ho - Lee has pointed out that in the field of education for instance, the traditional values reflecting in the curriculum still stress conformity to such a degree that even those in Universities confine themselves to the home and hearth. The average Korean woman student cannot conjure up a vision of a professional career for a married woman.

In this context, it is pertinent to scrutinize further into the case of different countries which still display vestiges from patriarchal system of the past in their educational institutions. Surveys indicate the persistence of marked inequalities in resources, in the curriculum, school organization, in the textbooks used which loom even larger due perhaps to the dramatic increase in schooling and literacy, over the past decades [Mahes, F.C. (1983)]. With reference to Sri Lanka in particular, the system of education has perpetuated the propagation of discriminatory values embedded in patriarchal thinking and these values are explicated in the emerging body of different curricular streams. Perhaps most pronounced in the case of developing countries such as Sri Lanka are the concepts directly and indirectly transmitted through the writers of materials depicting patriarchal values.

Skelton, (1989) has reviewed current research on the subject of gender in education and the perpetuation of patriarchal ideas. She examines 'gender difference' as a perceived symptom in the educational system of a wider malaise in the social set up and focuses on the implicit messages in school texts, gender dynamics within the classroom interactions and the teacher expectations of student performances as having a major impact on gender discrimination. Her research has pinpointed that the present system of education has contributed to inhibiting girl student's confidence,

skills and abilities. Other research findings also illustrate how females receive and perceive different messages about their aptitudes and abilities from those of males which has powerful negative implications for their place in the family and the labour market.

In 1975, the DES Report of UK had recorded how girls were inclined towards Humanities subjects and boys towards Science. However it was soon demonstrated that such conclusions based on student choices in fact demonstrated the end result of the 'hidden' curriculum on these choices. There appears to be some ambiguity in these terms which demands clarification. The official curriculum in fact is the umbrella term for all items in the school timetable, including academic and recreational activities organized by teachers while the 'hidden' curriculum , the one found to be discriminatory, ie. "those aspects of learning in schools that are unofficial, or unintentional, or undeclared consequences of the way learning and teaching are organised and performe"[Davies, L and Meighan, R.(1975).

The many aspects of the 'hidden' curriculum found to be discriminatory were the teaching resources, the organization and administration, and the teacher attitudes in particular. The research on the teaching materials illustrated a great degree of gender bias. It was proved that women have been rendered insignificant or invisible in the Secondary Schools of UK, mainly in the study of English, Social Studies, History, and Science text books which acclaimed very highly the male scientists, inventors and researchers for instance. A wealth of research on text books brought to light that the vast majority of school materials were biased too, mainly the Math & French[Abraham, John(1980)].

Women have been notable by their absence and when ever they are potrayed it is always as submissive persons, with little character and intelligence[Walford G.(1980)] cites the case of physics text books, where women are represented as engaged in cooking, washing, cleaning up, girls blowing bubbles, as nurses or patients, and women as sex objects used in advertising. When women are portrayed they wore expressions of amazement, fright, dismay, mindless enjoyment and pure sensual plea-

sure. The writer describes them as 'women doing 'silly' things. Other researchers such as [Bailey A.(1988)] have cited instances of attributing 33 occupations to men and just eight to women. The anomaly she wishes to highlight is that women are habitually assigned stereotyped and derogatory roles as witch, granny, mum, princess, queen, shop assistant, teacher. Inspite of the awakened awareness, more recent research has also unearthed sex-role representations in Reading Schemes close to the traditional stereotypes. One has to admit the efforts made by some publishers to reverse the race and gender bias in teaching materials but we still have a long way to go.

Segregation by gender is yet another discriminatory practice denoting patriarchical attitudes in the management and organization of education. Segregation on gender lines dates back to Victorian times when the words 'boys' and 'girls'were engraved over separate school entrances. It is surprising that even with the advent of co- education, the practice of separating students on a gender basis is being used as a very popular and practical strategy in school organisation. Teachers are said to categorize and maintain class registers, student attendance, participation in activities, record cards on discriminatory grounds. The reasons offered by teachers is that it is convenient and routine to do so. It is also a controlling device used by school authorities such as a boy being made to sit with girls for punitive reasons. Even the organisation of games and such activities in the play grounds are conducted on segregated lines. This evidence strongly supports the contention that education reinforces the traditional and outdated patriarchal ideas among young children.

Strober M. (1980) elaborates on staffing structures depicting males holding positions of authority as school heads, supervisors, section heads and caretakers. ateachers are assumed to be all female although men are not negligible in numbers, usually holding the mathematics and science posts. Thus even in the teaching cardre, the teachers of science and math had a higher degree of status, earning greater respect than the others did.

Delamont, Sara(1980) and (1983) support the fact that children are supplied with educational materials which reinforce gender-streotyping

and both witness and take part in practices that confirm differing routes for men and women. Delamont's argument is that schools present an ambience which is more conservative about sex roles than either homes or wider society. In many other countries too, specifically in Asian and theocratic states, schools have remained the bastions of repressive culture, socializing the young into archaic practices which can no longer stand the pressures of time and dynamics of change. Text books and school organisation do reinforce notions of femininity and masculinity. All learning situations engender dynamics of its own through the classroom interaction between teacher and student. This has a crucial impact on the student since even the most gender neutral material may be manoevred into transmitting biases and prejudices while biased materials may be manipulated positively by gender-aware teachers to transmit a liberating message. Students are known to observe and monitor the judgements teachers make about their own gender differences and become socialized in to patriarchal practices.

While researching into teacher pupil interactions in the classrooms, researchers have noted that boys make greater use of verbal and nonverbal language than girls do . It is undeniable that they command more of teacher time and attention and similarly get a greater share of the blame and praise. In primary schools particularly, teachers choose topics whch are of greater interest to the boys in the class so as to establish greater control over them on the basis of their gender[Skelton C. (1989)].

Most of the research reviewed for the purpose of this study prove that teacher attitudes are almost certainly the most dominant influence on how children develop in school. The female dominated teaching staff may after all more be more accountable than they realize, for the persistence of the stereotypes, discriminatory beliefs, segregation and humiliation of women. Teachers are more impacted by gender-specific preconceptions in the assessment of children's abilities quite unaware that these attitudes make a great difference to the students [Jones L.G. & Jones L.P. (1989)] have suggested that teachers' attitudes generally boost or undermine student's confidence. Boys are generally classed as 'bright' but careless and naughty

and girls as less brillaint but more hardworking. Thus most students questioned in interviews expressed that girls lack ability and boys lack effort.

Yates, lyn (1987) provides evidence of the success of the Equal Opportunities approach to change the patriarchal attitudes of the educational system if one were to arrest the rapid reversal of the progress so far made. Feminists such as [Kelly J. (1988)] who have engaged in research into gender dynamics suggest that more serious measures are needed than merely ensuring access to school resources. They feel that active and urgent measures should be taken to place girls at the centre of the classroom in order to challenge the dominance of the male experience. In most of Asia, research has indicated the persisting bias which affects gender role development. No doubt attempts have been made through a planned national curriculum intended to expose both boys and girls to the same subjects but without reaching the desired ends. In fact children's gender roles are negatively affected, discouraging academic achievement in girls and promoting that of boys[Bourdieu and Passeron (1977)] depicted a heavy bias in the curricula towards low-income jobs for women, such as housemaids, cooks, clerks, seamstresses, waitresses, nannies while men are depicted as holding high-income jobs such as lawyers, doctors, managers or businessmen. These hidden messages can reinforce negative gender stereotypes.

In the last three decades public opinion and parental awareness has impelled publishers to reduce gender bias in text books in atleast some of the developed countries but comparatively little has changed in the developing countries. In Zambia, a study of the textbooks has revealed men's activities as profitable and admirable while the few women depicted in roles of domesticity and as ignorant, frivolous. Males were the heroes and achievers and women the servers and dreamers of better times. Strikingly enough. The same folktale prevalent in Asia, that of the milk-maid with the pot balanced on her head has a parallel with the street vendor in African tales who dreams of making a fortune selling her wares. Both predictably shatter their dreams literally by dropping their goods. The story has a negative message of the illusive dreams and elusive efforts of women in general. Countries such as Costa Rica, Colombia, Egypt, India,

Saudi Arabia have such strong biases as are being addressed at present.

The UNDP Report on Human Development 2000 mentions some of the achievements. But research shows little sustainable change. There are persistent inequalities in resources, curriculum which appear to be an indomitable barrier to women's progress in the field of education in most developing countries. In Sri Lanka particularly, researchers have identified discriminatory practices which have persisted for centuries. Such patriarchal ideas have a socializing impact on the staff and students of educational institutions.

We have so far traced the presence of vestiges of patriarchal practices perpetuating in the field of education. The attacks on this bastion has come in two waves both having had impacts on its foundation. The first wave of feminism popularized the terminology, brought it to focus but did little to undo the system. The second wave has attempted to make visible the omission of women from accessing the most organized forms of knowledge. This has created a resurgence of interest in the politics of knowledge and feminist research has brought the issue of discrimination "explosively" to the surface.

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Gender in Interaction- Stereotypes and Their Impact on the Status of Women

Shanaz Ahmed

Linguistic research illustrates how language both reflects and affects relations between men and women in society. Discourse analysis of even the most mundane of interactions reveals a myriad complexities in social relationships, and address the controversies associated with gender traits such as power, dominance, leadership, submission and resistance etc. Research also proves that although men generally dominate women in society, we cannot ascribe all gender differences to women's 'essential nature' [Tannen, Deborah, (1994)]. Others have countered by pointing out the existing deep-seated and enduring differences between male and female personalities, styles and languages [Gray, John. (1992)]. A third perspective is revealed in the complex findings of some of the recent feminist writers (Aries & others) who have reviewed and reevaluated the empirical literature on gender discourse, concluding that anyone is capable of displaying masculine and feminine styles of interaction and the style displayed in a particular interaction depends on a number of external variables such as one's status, role, goals, conversational partners and the characteristics of the situational context[Aries, Elizabeth, (1996)]. In addition, there are the conversational strategies, such as interruption, topic raising, indirectness, repetition and silence which influence the balance of power.

Among the many methodological and theoretical approaches to gender based discourse analysis, the most popular at present seems to be the

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ethnographic analysis or interactional sociolinguistics which provides a context-sensitive microanalysis based on observation, tape-recording, and transcription of language as it is used interaction[Tannen, Deborah. (1993)]. The methodology used in the majority of the studies reviewed here have been from an interactional, sociolinguistic tradition.

The research overview highlighted a strong case for the differences between the interaction styles of men and those of women. These differences were traced back to and shown as parallel to trends emerging across many different groupings: racial, national, cultural, caste, colour, age classifications. Research, for instance, exposes a greater degree of task orientation in men than in women, while women, it is claimed, show greater emotional orientation[Warfel, K.A. (1984)]. It points out that men generally emerge as leaders in mixed ability groups while women pay more attention to the face needs of their conversational partners and group members. Some researchers assert that women speak voluminously more than men do but men's conversations are assumedly more on abstract matters, though using a smaller vocabulary than that of the women[Hare – Mustin,R.T. & Marcek, J. (1988)]. It would hardly be an exaggeration to conclude that most research conducted to date reinforce the view that men and women speak differently, interpret the world and their environment differently, thus interacting differently.

A dissenting position is held by many feminist writers who assert that research data on gender based conversational interactions permit multiple interpretations, that there is no one truth. The selfsame researchers who initially pursued gender differences as being related to biological attributes have undertaken co-relational studies, demonstrating the presence of stronger similarities between the genders[Cameron, D (1992)]. The more recent research concludes that prior knowledge of the gender of the speaker does not enable us to accurately predict how a person would behave in a given situation. The pertinent doubts had been raised by feminists in the past but without much impact on the prevailing thinking of the times.

It would be pertinent to discuss here some of the motives which inspired the search for differential features and the implications of such findings for the status of women[Piliavin, J. A. & Martin, R.R. (1978)].

Piliavin and Martin among others, have traced two major forces

rarely discounted by others. Primary is the feminist desire to narrate all traces of patriarchy in society as the root cause of all types of oppression and dominance of women. Their sole obsession in research appeared to converge on the task of unveiling dangers that lurked in the most remote precincts of one's culture: song, dance, drama, language. In fact language research afforded an inexpensive and popular mode of providing substantial evidence of 'how men do dominance'[Irish, J.T.& Hall, J. A. (1998)]. It would be safe to conclude that feminist researchers successfully reinforced their arsenal against patriarchal dominance, highlighting the subtlest nuances of language as prejudicial and detrimental to the progress of women.

An avowed second motive for seeking out gender differences in the use of language has been a desire to eliminate all traces of the 'negative' evaluation placed on the different activities that are identified as feminine and to identify and reinterpret women's achievements and experiences as 'positive'. As in the past few centuries, in the present too, all actions of 'men' are held as the standard of behaviour and, women's actions are defined and evaluated in 'opposition' and by their 'otherness' to men. In all patriarchal cultures, women's achievements are measured against this self-acclaimed, universalized 'norm' and women's behaviors, linguistic and paralinguistic, are labeled 'deficiencies'[Fiske, S.T. & Stevens, L.E. (1993)]. Women's talk, thus, has been denigrated as 'gossip', as greater in volume, hesitant, lacking abstraction and depth, emotional and uncertain, while that of men is attributed with all positive features.

Against the backdrop of such research interpretations, feminists of the last decade had set to examine women's linguistic behaviors from a different and almost belligerent perspective[Ragins, B. R. (1992)]. Women's interactions in group contexts has been interpreted as an 'on-going mosaic of non-critical listening, mutual support, enhancement of self-worth, relationship exclusiveness, personal growth and self discovery'[Ragins, B. R. (1992)]. The more recent research views gender stereotyping as one of the salient factors leading to the miscommunication of feminist thought and expressions of feminist experiences, again reinforcing social prejudices and provoking repression and violence against women[Rakow, L.F. (1986)]. The re-evaluation of feminist talk and restructuring of their thought processes has led to greater recognition of their interaction as substantial, logical, instrumental and functional has led to greater appreciation of and adoption of such speech patterns in negotiating peace, resolving con-

flicts and mitigating violence[Hoffman, C & Hurst, N (1990)]. Research focussed particularly on the success of such verbal encounters, on the particular linguistic strategies that could be transmitted and 'learnt' by others and para-linguistic behaviors which add richness to encounters with women have become topical for most ongoing research in the west.

In a reversal of the tide, women's speech has been more favorably reviewed on their expressive abilities and men's speech critiqued as lacking mutual support, acceptance or solidarity, in the context of group interactions, by some of the writers of the 1990s as well. Thus men's talk has been considered 'deficient' in comparison to women's. One of the questions posed by some of the women writers themselves is whether there exists among feminist researchers a predilection for misreading the non-verbal cues accompanying men's interaction patterns, and an inclination to misrepresent and devalue their talk just as women's talk had been misrepresented for centuries and used as a means of further oppression. Perhaps the swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction is inevitable but researchers have begun to wonder whether one needs to define men and women in constant opposition to each other, polarizing the 'differences' and emphasizing the 'otherness'[Aries, Elizabeth (1996)].

As a corollary of the above line of argument, we could trace the social implications of continued devaluation of women's talk by the fact that most such negative labeling have led to stereotyping of women as prone to 'gossip', idle and frivolous talk, emotional outbursts etc. Though scientifically dismissed and empirically unverified, society perpetuates such prejudices against women as stereotypes. Such gender stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies for others in society and research highlights how the most innocuous of them may lead to an increase in domestic and social repression of women. My contention is that 'differing' attributions and evaluation we reach or project in our research may in fact become intended behaviors, guided by the perceptions of the participants themselves and influence our interactions with others. In fact the total behavioral outcome would be our generating certain linguistic behaviors that generally validate our own perceptions of the given situations and roles.

The term 'stereotype' denotes a set of beliefs about the characteristics presumed to be typical of members of a group in society, either racial, national, professional, religious, age or gender, that share certain common interests, values or characteristics. Stereotypes distinguish one group from another, by negative or positive attributes, accurately or inaccurately assigned, very often subjectively to a group. When stereotypes are accurate, they help provide useful information in forming expectations to help guide behaviour. Contrarily, when over generalized, inaccurate or exaggerated, they may lead to prejudiced perceptions, evaluations and responses to individuals[Wood, W & Rhodes, N (1992)]. Gender stereotypes are those beliefs held about women, often over generalized, and prejudicial to them. Such perceptions can be woven into the very fabric of society, through social customs, norms, religious rules, cultural myth to which all new members of a society. Individuals are generally socialized into them by parenting, peer observation, from media portrayals and other sources in the immediate environment

One is able to recognize and label participants of an interaction as male or female merely reading the transcribed speech going on our cultured impressions and perceptions of sex role stereotypes, which are virtually self- fulfilling prophecies. It is no surprise thus that gender stereotypes make us evaluate males and females differently even though they display identical behaviors, specially so when researchers use participant – observation methods[Seigler, D. M. & Seigler, R. S.(1976)]. I hope to trace the effects of gender stereotypes as self-fulfilling prophecies for behavior and pose the contention that the 'differing' attributes and biased evaluations we reach in our own research, are guided by the perceptions of the participants themselves. Stereotypes, thus, may guide and influence our own functional interactions with others. In fact, the total behavioral outcome would be our generating certain linguistic behaviors that virtually validate our biased perceptions of the given situation, roles and participants.

Individuals in a given society may be said to hold stereotypical ideas if there is a general consensus among a broad range of persons, around 65% to 90% of the population holding similar beliefs. Over 75% of the people generally agree that speech styles of men and women differ and it is demonstrated that across groups of varying ages, educational levels, marital status, and professions , there is a broad consensus about the differing personality traits associated with males and females[Gray, J.(1992)].

Research attributes certain instrumental traits to men: leader-

ship, dominance, aggression, independence, objectivity and competitiveness. Women are assigned affective traits such as being emotional, subjective, vulnerable, submission and tact. Self-assertion and aggression, though rated as a positive attribute in men, is evaluated negatively women. Critical gender research has even pointed out that definitions of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' varied from individual to individual[Beall, A. E (1993)]. Stereotyped attributes of male and female speakers were said to be pronounced in most of the research reviewed, male speakers were depicted as direct, blunt, transparent, using swear words constantly and females as gentle, submissive, polite, concerned and cooperative. This was revealed in Chris Kramer's research with high school ratings of gender talk between men and women[Wood, J. (1994)].

Aries also reports on research for assessing student's perception of whether they expect males or females to be the likely users of 17 given conversational strategies. Two of the most aggressive qualities, those of threat and aversion were selected as probable for males while those of promise, moral appeal, and altruism were selected for female users, unanimously. These stereotypes or most widely held beliefs were common to the majority population and taken together, they provide evidence of normative expectations about gender differences in interactions[Aries, E. (1987)]. Given to evaluate phrases from dyads, children in grades 1-5 had been requested to pick those more likely to be used by a man or a woman. Swearing and such aggressive terms were associated with men. Tag questions, special vocabulary and mitigating phrases were associated with women[Henley, N. M. & Harmon, S. (1985)].

The foregoing studies highlight the impact of gender stereotypes in shaping the perceptions of speakers. Gender, it has been empirically proved, is one of the powerful categories that affect our perceptions of and responses to the world. Psycholinguistic studies elucidate the processes involved in building these stereotypical thought patterns. In our routine conversations, we have prior knowledge of the gender of the speaker from visible cues, which trigger gender schemas, or cognitive structures that represent our knowledge about gender. Since the incoming information input is of a complex nature, we are compelled to depend on schemas and stereotypes to organize and further our conversations[Cross, S. E. & Markus. (1993)]. We have certain expectations of the impending event but lack substantiating grounds for rational judgement. Research evidence contends that stereotypes fill the lacunae thus created and help us form

certain perceptions which are not quite accurate representations of reality. We bend our perceptions in the direction of our expectations, not attending to certain features present but instead creating ones that we believe to be present[Geiss, F. L. (1993)]. This is more strongly felt when gender stereotypes are in question. Stereotypes are most biased in short-term encounters when participants have little time to rationalize and strongest in shaping expectations and perceptions of speakers at the commencement of an interaction. Social psychological research points to the fact that greater availability of personal information about the speaker makes it less likely that observers rely on stereotypes[Hare-Mustin, R. T. & Marcek, J. (1990)].

Gender stereotyping is of great concern to feminist researchers for a variety of reasons. Primarily they help to perpetuate and reinforce bias and prejudice against the women since stereotypes do not provide an accurate guide to our perceptions of reality. Gender stereotypes usually evoke inaccurate expectancies and men and women are expected to conform to such inaccurate 'standards'. In the most traditional or patriarchial societies of Asia for instance, women are compelled by socio-cultural practices and rituals to live upto such group expectancies. In such instances, schemas have been developed to resist change and persist in archaic practices in spite of mounting research evidence from linguistic data. The stronger the evidence gathered by feminists to discount the spurious beliefs, the wider the gathering waves of fundamentalist support of them[Hoffman, C & Hurst, N. (1990)]. The secondary effect is that gender stereotypes have a powerful impact in shaping the behaviors of men and women themselves. For instance there may be rather prescriptive laws in traditional societies which dictate behavior patterns to men and women, appropriate for different contexts, age groups, built on age old stereotypes, sanctioned by religious or state laws[Fiske, S. T. (1993)]. In some the women themselves are authority figures compelling submission and enforcing discriminatory practices. The more illiterate the women of any society are, the greater the degree of submission or self imposition of sanctions.

Deviant behavior, linguistic or otherwise, from the stereotype norms carries a heavy price in terms of physical and psychological pressures, seclusion and ostracization. An extremist regime such as the Taliban in Afghanistan are known to have imposed the death penalty on schoolteachers who were supposed to have corrupted the young by speaking a foreign tongue. Such extremes apart, men and women in daily encounters

may be evaluated negatively by their display of a stereotype speech form[Wood, J. (1994)]. Stereotype behavior may thus be self imposed or such behavior expectations have an extremely negative impact on women who aspire to positions of power traditionally held by men[Wiley, M. G. & Eskilson, A. (1988)]. These biases work to their detriment, thwart their progress and breed inequality.

Society reserves the top rungs on the employment ladder for the "masculine" stereotypes by excluding 'other' by a insurmountable 'glass ceiling'.

Stereotypes have the power to shape behaviour by serving as self fulfilling prophecies. Gender stereotypes depict women as less competent than men and so are treated into submissive behaviors linguistically, exhibiting greater dominance and hostility on the part of men[Fishman, P. M. (1983)]. Research in the last decade of the 20th Century has shown that the most blatant instances of gender discrimination and differential treatment were active in societies which displayed the most stereotypical thinking patterns, where literacy was lowest and religious dominance greatest. Research has also pinpointed that where women were fewer in a given group, their distinctiveness made gender salient [Tannen, D. (1990)]. In such instances, the men of the group would display certain expectancies for their own and women's behavior[Harris, A. (1994)]. The fact confirms how individuals generally adapt themselves to the demands of a given situation. They provide prescriptive norms of behavior which may become self fulfilling prophecies for some and grounds for resisting discrimination for others[Swim, J. K. (1994)].

The crux of the matter is that feminists engaged in the long battle for ending sexual discrimination need to address the issue of stereotypes as a root cause of persisting inequalities and increasing discrimination. Avoidance of masculine and feminine labels for behaviors is a necessary first step to ending discrimination [Gilligan, C., Rogers, A. G. & Tolman, D. L.]. The research evidence cited in the study point to the undeniable conclusion that men and women are found to display both masculine and feminine behavior depending on the situational context although stereotypes generally attribute gender differences as exclusive and biological.

Supportive, care-taker behavior is not an exclusively feminine characteristic. All teachers, guardians, parents, nurses, whether they be men or women, share the linguistic strategies for the purpose of drawing out other points of view, showing solidarity and providing comfort[Fiske, S. T

& Stevens, L. E.(1993)]. So is emotional behavior which, though solely assigned to women, proves to be a therapeutic strategy in situations of post traumatic recovery. Lack of training in such strategies make men deficient functionally. Here too, persistent biases were displayed when individuals were questioned as to their perceived beliefs regarding given roles[Fiske, S. T & Stevens, L. E.(1993)].

Present day feminists, gender researches, linguists and psycho-therapists have proffered varied theories validating our basic contention that gender differentiation of attributes and behaviors and the build up of prejudices and stereotypes have had a negative impact on the status and progress of women globally and in the developing world in particular. Already burdened by the economic and social deprivation, gender stereotypes add the emotional strain of negative self perception. Women are known to create dilemmas of the self, when one's experiences do not match up to self image they have built up. Some writers have focussed on the moral dilemma of social isolation or non-recognition and rejection of self. When individuals feel the guilt of violating social norms for sex-appropriate behavior, however unjust they are perceived to be, they feel an anxiety of an urgent kind , as if being 'out of gender'. One writer insists that ' sometimes one's gender resembles an ill-fitting garment'. Individuals discern a form of 'split-personality' in themselves and thus pay a heavy toll in facing the disapproval and discrimination in the society they live in. This is the cumulative impact of the classification of behaviors into 'masculine' and 'feminine' which do not at all match the behaviors of individual men and women one meets on the street today[Dimen, M. (1991)].

In the preceding pages we have concentrated on the assumed 'gender differences', the stereotypes which are said to bear upon the conversational interactions and the negative impact of such pervasive practices on women in society. Research has validated these claims although not much change has been wrought by the formulation of academic theses alone. There are other aspects for future research to correlate or reinforce such conclusions . A worthwhile research area to probe would be that of nonverbal or para-linguistic behaviors, which, it has been proved, mirror status differences among men and women rather than between men and women. Here too, similarities and differences would be more particularly based on the context of the situation within which it occurs. Even in the extra linguistic domain, we could envision that such differences lead to stereotypes, once again impacting negatively on the women.

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Tannen[Tannen , D. (1990)] has focussed particularly on verbal strategies significant for the study of gender, much of which she seeks to describe as the linguistic means by which men dominate women in interaction[Durant, A & Brenneis , D. (Eds) (1986)]. She problematizes the source and workings of domination and other intentions and effects. Human interaction is seen by such researchers as a 'joint production' and the resulting speech act can be considered 'everything' that occurs as a result of the context, participant, purpose and mode in conjunction with the register used. A major source of ambiguity and polysemy of linguistic strategies is however the paradoxical relationship between the dynamics of power and solidarity[Yamada, H. (1992)].

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Nationalism and Sexuality:
The intersection of Gender and Power in South Asia

*Mangalika de Silva**

The problematique

In this paper, I am concerned with a particular rendition of women as discursive subjects. More specifically, I am concerned with what women's sexuality (or more precisely its production and suppression) might have signified for the deployment of nationalist ideology and its counter historiography. My theoretical frame treats as central the question of why women's sexuality foregrounds in nationalism, a discourse which was articulated in the late 19th and early twentieth century colonial Sri Lanka, a conjuncture which marked the Buddhist revivalism, the launching of the anti-colonial struggle against the British rule towards national independence. My reading problematises, in a fundamental sense, the relationship between nationalism and sexuality; how does nationalism relate to women's sexuality or how does it appropriate female sexuality? Starting off from the theoretical terrain of Chatterjee, whose provocative essay "nationalist resolution of the women's question" left many questions to be formulated, my analysis will be mainly informed by writings, narratives and historical texts of historians and feminists in the main suchas Jayawardena, Chatterjee, de Alwis and Sangari and Vaid. This interrogation, the feminist questioning looks especially at the period of nationalist reformism in the latter and early part of the nineteenth and twentieth century in Sri Lanka and India.

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In re-examining Chatterjee's concluding political statement in his essay on "Women and Nation" in his *Nation and its Fragments*, that the ethical domain of nationalism still remains a contested site, I would draw from pioneering work of social historians and feminists to primarily challenge tradition and signifying practices that oppress and disempower women. Chatterjee argues convincingly that nationalism holds an unenviable capacity to appropriate with varying degrees of success, dissenting and marginal voices. I agree with Chatterjee in his postulation that the history of Indian nationalism is largely phallocratic. My task is to explore how nationalism as a social process subdued, subsumed or erased out women's voices, women's agency and how female sexuality became the premise on which this historical task was accomplished. My theoretical labor therefore delineates female sexuality as a contested site of power that continues to function as a regulating mechanism of social control. Enabled and informed largely by Foucault's analysis of power, I will attempt to demonstrate how our bodies are subjected in the sense that they are dominated, made to conform to particular institutional regimes and practices in that they are made productive and useful.

In so far as the disciplinary practices of femininity produce a subjected and practised inferiorised body, they must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companion of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers [Frazer, 1989: 23].

Before I turn to the main body of the text of my paper, I would attempt to briefly formulate the Althusserian/Foucauldian categories of discourse and ideology in relation to nationalism and feminist methodology. Such a reformulation is necessary in order to engage creatively in a deconstructive, retheorising and rehistoricising project of how sexuality has been constituted. For Althusser, "ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world - real, in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their condition of existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them" [Belsey,1985 : 46]. In a word, it is the necessary condition of action within the social formation. Ideology is a material practice, in the sense that it exists in the behaviour of people acting according to their beliefs. Ideological practices, as Althusser points out, are supported and reproduced in the institutions of our society (which he calls ideological state apparatuses or ISAs) [ibid: 47].

The category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology in so far as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of constituting all individuals as subjects. Within the existing ideology it appears "obvious" that people are autonomous individuals possessed of subjectivity or consciousness, which is the source of their beliefs and actions. However, individuals do not exist in a vacuum. They are socially, politically and culturally constituted. They locate themselves in a social field of power. They are shaped by what Foucault terms the "manifold relationships of force" [Foucault, 1980: 94].

An intellectual inquiry into the manifold relationships of force can provoke further inquiry into how nationalist consciousness nourished and nurtured subjectivities, which are gendered. These gendered identities are produced and reproduced in a Foucauldian social field, for power is always made productive. The production and reproduction of sexualities is mediated through discourse which, for Foucault, constitutes the "bridge between the material and the theoretical and as such is productive not only of statements, but also of the subject as both the target and object of power" [Fraser,1997: 24].

Gendered subjectivities are made/unmade through "multiplicity of force relations, a process which through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverses them" [Foucault, 1980: 92]. In this process, there is often complicity, through women's acquiescence, collaboration and internalisation of patriarchal norms of womanhood and femininity. As Foucault argues, power often operates here as the support structure in force relations that are forming a chain or a system

(albeit with disjunctions and contradictions) but equally importantly, power operates as strategies in which force relations (whose general design or institutional chrystallisation is embodied in the state apparatus and in various social hegemonies) take effect. In a word, it is the omnipresence of power which is produced from one moment to the next, or rather in every relation from one point to another, in a given socius that renders the body, the female body "which may operate as a metaphor for culture" [Bordo, 1989: 13], a "masculinised culture" [Ortner:1982] with a male community reproducing male values/norms in a patriarchy where "power is everywhere, comes from everywhere".

It must be said that relations of power are "most immanent in sexual relations" and Foucault confirms it. They are perceived as the "immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities and disequilibriums" which exist in relations amongst men and women. To understand the most crucial statement of Foucault "that there's no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives", it is useful to return to Bordo's effort to reconstitute feminist discourse on the body. The body, feminists agree, is not only a text of culture. It is rather, as Bourdieu and Foucault would have it, a "practical direct locus of social control" [ibid: 13]. Through women's dress, eating habits, manners, behavior, demeanor (rules and practices imposed by, in this case, male nationalists) "culture is made body" as Bourdieu refers to it. As such, "it is put beyond the grasp of consciousness ... [untouchable] by voluntary, deliberate transformation". Bordo goes on; "our conscious politics, social commitments, strivings for change may be undermined and betrayed by the life of our bodies - the docile, regulated body practised and habituated to the rules of cultural life" [ibid: 13].

Bordo's assertion is reminiscent of Foucault's primacy of practice and Bordo is right to point out that "through the organisation and regulation of the time, space, and movements of our daily lives, our bodies are trained, shaped and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity and femininity" [Ibid: 14]. This was markedly evident during the nationalist agitation for independence in Sri Lanka, when the pursuit of an ever changing, homogenising, elusive ideal of femininity was undertaken: a femininity that was positioned in binary oppositions, by a hegemonic social force, namely Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, a femininity inscribed on the bodies of women, bodies that were simultaneously subjected to "regulation, subjection, transformation and improvement" [ibid: 14]. It was within this particular domain – Sinhala Buddhist nationalism – which as Foucault would claim, encompasses "the network of practices, institutions and technologies that sustain positions of dominance and subordination", and by extension a power "whose central mechanisms are not repressive, but constitutive, a power bent on generating forces, making them grow and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit or destroying them" [ibid: 15]. Hence the need for an analysis of power "*from below*", particularly in the realm of femininity, the mechanisms that shape and proliferate [ibid: 15].

When applying these concepts to the debates on nationalism, it is necessary to remain conscious of the subtle and often unwitting role played by our bodies in the symbolisation and reproduction of gender, and it is within the initial Foucauldian frame of analysis (i.e., that power is always exercised with a series of aims and objectives) that the production and deployment of gendered subjectivities disseminated within an ideology of power – nationalist ideology – can be understood.

Positioning:
Women's sexuality within the discourse of nationalism

As Sangari and Vaid have noted in their insightful introduction to *Recasting Women: essays in colonial history*, feminist historiography may be feminist without being exclusively about the history of women or the numerical/qualitative evaluation of their participation in various movements. Rather it is feminist, in that it

> acknowledges that each aspect of the reality is gendered and is thus involved in questioning all that we think we know in a sustained examination of analytical and epistemological apparatus and in a dismantling of the ideological presuppositions of so called gender neutral methodologies [Sangari & Vaid, 1989:Intro].

Pioneering work of social historians and feminists has convincingly demonstrated the fact that a sexual division of labor, i.e., linking women with domesticity and the "private"– epitomised in the notion of "motherhood" – was a corollary of industrial capitalism and was systematically propagated by the emerging middle classes in nineteenth century Euro America [De Alwis,1993: 87].

Chatterjee's contribution to feminist historiography with his path-breaking essay *"the nationalist resolution of the women's question* demonstrates how trajectories of capitalism as well as colonialism were intrinsic to the production of notions of motherhood and sexuality in Bengal.

Chatterjee begins with a puzzle of why **"the woman's question"** ceases to become an issue for nationalist discourse by the end of the nineteenth century and argues that it is in fact resolved by a necessary kind of silence; a nationalist refusal to make the issue of women an item of negotiation with the colonial state. The home thus becomes the discursive site of nationalist victory where the "world" has been ceded to the colonial state. The male nationalist turns inward, reifying the home and women's place within it, as a spiritualised "inner space" that contests colonial hegemony. Chatterjee shows us how the new politics of nationalism defended everything traditional and glorified India's past. Hence nationalism's claim of agency in history, in the spiritual domain of culture. Here, the sexual differences were generated in various discursive and social practices. The nationalists argued that east was superior to the west (in the spiritual domain that is), and that the east represented the inner, which reflected the true self, (whatever that meant) which lies in the private feminised interior sanctum of home which epitomised the inner spiritual self, the true identity. "The home (private, feminine) in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world and woman is its representation, the carrier of family honour and bearer of culture and tradition" [Chatterjee,1993: 172]. Herein lie the "anxious gazes" which Foucault talks about, directed at women, in a modern regime of power, in which power is meant not to prohibit but to facilitate/produce. The gaze is mas-

culine and phallic, a patriarchal gaze that attempts to fix women into the straightjacket of chaste, devoted, religious, self-sacrificing mothers. The logic of nationalism is, in Chatterjee's phrase, "to seduce, apprehend and imprison" all phenomena within its grasp, given nationalism's omnipresence which further buttresses the admittedly Althusserian claim about nationalism that there is "no hegemony without ideology; or among the functions of ideology is the enabling of hegemony" [Ismail,1996: 18].

Nationalism was in the case of India unmistakably about national identity and pride. Its ideology however was a garb for xenophobia and racial exclusiveness [de Alwis:1993]. As Chatterjee asserts, the nationalists displaced all their notions of promiscuous sexuality on the lower classes and the Europeanised "others" by de-sexualising and normalising their mothers, sisters and wives [de Alwis,1993: 99]. However, even though middle class women were valorised as mothers, there exists a simultaneous subterranean discourse of sexuality that always undercut it. Further, as Kamala Viswesvaran, theorising on gendered sublterneity suggests, "unmarried women, lower class women, or women who could not otherwise establish respectability - that their lives were no better than other women attending to household duties themselves, without assistance of servants - might have the labels `prostitute' or `paramor' attached to them and their political motives were suspect" [Visweswaran, 1996: 89]. If nationalism located the woman's question in the inner domain of national culture, which was constituted in the light of the discovery of "tradition", then, one could understand how nationalism "as the sphere of force relations" succeeded in recasting a specific kind of middle class womanhood that was appropriate for and emblematic of an emerging nation state.

As has been repeatedly emphasised, middle class Indian women were not seen merely as the representers of tradition, spirituality and the essence of Indian culture, but were also considered the protectors and disseminators of it. Indian nationalists feared women's overt sexuality and sensuality "heightened through dress". An imitation of the west, in every aspect of life was unacceptable and indefensible as this would erase the very distinction between east and west, which was that of the spiritual

and material. The virtues of "appropriate" female behaviour were carefully worked out; modesty and decorum as "natural" and social principles provided the basis for feminine virtues. Modesty and decorum in manner and conduct were expected of women when stepping out into the public material world. By taking upon themselves the historical task of constructing an ideal womanhood, nationalists placed fetters, introduced various social injunctions regulating and constricting women's sexuality.

Sexuality hence was a political tool used not as an emancipatory or liberatory force but as a form of regulation and social control achieved and reinforced through "mechanisms of power", namely the ideology of femininity. This demonstrates the premise on which the ideological thrust of nationalism was based; particularly in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, in the formation of the present historical consciousness; the construction of womanhood by early nationalist writers whose "most enduring and successful construction was the image of womanhood in the lost past as a counter to the real existence of women in the humiliating present" [Chakravarti, 1989: 30]. This consciousness should be seen here as contradictory, ambiguous, fragmented and held together in a more or less haphazard whole. It is formed and transformed in the course of a historical process which brings dominant and subordinate classes into relations with each other [Gramsci,1971: 243]. Hence the relevance of discourse. Foucault conceived of discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. It must be reiterated that in South Asia, the contours of nationalist discourse formulated, interpreted and articulated at the high point of anti-colonial struggles have left vestiges which remain deeply embedded and rooted in our social and cultural life. Foucault's statement is apt here; "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" [Foucault,1980 :100].

"Where there is power, there is resistance" [ibid:100]. While discourse can be an instrument and effect of power, a hindrance according to Foucault, it also acts as a point of resistance, a starting point for an opposing strategy. The new woman or Avant Garde or those who defied social struc-

ture, broke the social shackles that bound them, and those who were asserting their equal rights in areas deemed traditional male preserves, came to be looked down upon, scorned and vilified. The new woman, in the public perception was "coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous" and subjected to brutal physical oppression by males [Chatterjee,1993 :127]. She was seen in juxtaposition with the ideal Indian woman who was deified for her "chastity, self sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience and the labors of love" [ibid:129] and epitomised the spiritual virtues of self sacrifice, benevolence, devotion and religiosity. One of the primary ways of transmitting these "ideal" values was through education. It was held that a new breed of educated middle class women could be moulded who could produce sons for the nation and this was carried out through bourgeois virtues of disciplining - of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness and a personal sense of responsibility, the practical skills of literacy, accounting and hygiene. The spiritual signs of her femininity became now clearly marked in her dress, eating habits, her social demeanor and her religiosity. A woman identified as westernised would invite the ascription of all that the "normal" woman (mother/sister/wife/daughter) is not; "brazen, avaricious, irreligious, sexually promiscuous". And this not only from males but also from women who saw themselves as conforming to the legitimate norm which is precisely an indicator of the hegemonic status of the ideological construct.

It would be simplistic to assume that nationalism has always the potential of exhausting its meaning; its claim to resolve the 'woman's question'. It uses more insidiously the claim of 'uplift' of women's status in order to legitimise its moral political order, a gendered order that justifies separate spheres for men and women. Men would occupy the public and women are confined to the private. Women however would step into the public, albeit in a manner that befits middle class educated respectable women without endangering their 'femininity', within the moral universe defined by men and they too would participate in public life since they inhabit a space created by nationalism. Outside this space women cannot be. For, as Chatterjee has argued in the case of Bengali social reformism, nationalism located its subjectivity in the spiritual domain of culture where it considered itself sovereign, superior to the west and hence

undominated. While an ideal of femininity was just and necessary, given modernity's potential to 'corrupt' and 'pollute' the traditional values, an ideal masculinity was being held up which equated with the goals of an emerging nation state; a masculinity that is strong, proud, just, wise, a protector of the righteous and a terror to the mischievous. The male emerges here as the protector, the upholder of all that was held traditional. The notions of purity/impurity become central to the ideal Bengali womanhood; the idea of family purity is based on the purity of a special organ of women that became heavily imbricated in the patriarchal value system. The idea of *'pativrata'*1 is based on the purity of a single organ. From this follows the ideological justification for *'satee'*2, the act of widow immolation. The fact that a woman is born to marry and to be loyal and faithful to the man who is her 'lord' has deep roots in Hindu patriarchy. The woman fulfils the social 'obligation' of a penitent as a widow, (she is expected to suppress all her desires) with the sole desire to serve him, (the dead) by preserving the family honor until she dies a frustrated old woman. This explains why there was fierce resistance to Hindu widow remarriage. Panditha Ramabai who intensely campaigned on behalf of widows as a widow herself, faced stiff opposition from *Brahmin*3 ideologues. She eventually ended up by converting into a Christian. [Jayawardena:1997] Hence. the agency of the subaltern, women, was *"silenced"*, to borrow a term from Viswesvaran. Thus the model of agency as Visveswaran suggests, "which both colonialist and nationalist authorise, is also a strategy of dominance produced in the process of silencing women" [Viswesvaran,1996: 92].

It is clear from this dialectic that the discourse of anti-colonial nationalism was in its core, a male discourse with the capacity to appropriate discordant, marginal and critical voices. Foucault would support this claim and the point must be reinforced that "power's hold on sex is maintained through language, through the act of discourse" [Foucault,1980: 83]. This brings us back to the question of women's agency in the discursive field, and more precisely to the boundaries of the discursive field within which women's subjectivities were constructed. Chatterjee makes the point that "discourse is situated within fields of power, not only constituting that field but constituted by it. Dominance here cannot exhaust the claims of

subjectivity. For even the dominated must always retain an aspect of autonomy. Otherwise power would "cease to be a relation; it would no longer be constituted by struggle" [Chatterjee,1993: 136].

If the dominated, in the context of Bengal were women who were domesticated in the name of "tradition", what agency or autonomy did women possess to challenge the male order except in being complicitous with nationalism. Women's agency should be seen here as contextual.

As has been shown for Bengal, in Sri Lanka too, the most successful ways in which women's sexuality was controlled and disciplined was by confining women within the home and interpellating them into predominently subordinate and familial subject positions such as daughter, sister, mother and wife. Sexuality, Foucault posits "as a dense transfer point for relations of power ... one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality" [Foucault,1980: 103]. Gayle Rubin defines it as a "vector of oppression" and asserts that much of the oppression of women is "borne by, mediated through and constricted within sexuality" [Jayawardena & de Alwis,1996: xvii].

The resurgence of nationalism in Sri Lanka in the latter part of the 19th century, coupled with the advent of religious fervor introduced ethics that laid emphasis on sexual virtues. The moralists of this dominant discourse of sexual morality and prudery were largely men. Women appeared as the temptresses. Since woman was the temptress, it was desirable to curtail her opportunities for leading men into temptation. Consequently more and more women were hedged about with restrictions while the women who were not respectable, being regarded as sinful were treated with the utmost disdain. Arguably, the construction of femininity in patriarchy produced twin images of women, as on the one hand, the sexual property of men and on the other, the 'chaste mothers' of their children. The appropriation of the ideology of female sexuality by Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, as the signifier of [p]reservation and [p]rocreation resulted in the further entrenching of sexual repression. Chatterjee has stated on another occasion that "interpretation (in these circumstances) acquires the undertones of a polemic" [Ismail,1996: 19]. What follows can be seen as

"production of sexualities .

Why is femininity located in the ideological space ?

Nationalism, tradition and modernity have been carriers of patriarchal ideologies. The ideologies of women-as-carriers-of-tradition, often disguise, mitigate, compensate and contest actual changes taking place. Thus womanhood is often part of an asserted or desired (not an actual) cultural continuity. Nationalism (Sinhala Buddhist) as was articulated during the time of British colonialism became freighted with many kinds of patriarchal assumptions and involved in recasting women. It defended tradition and reformulated patriarchy to entrench gender hierarchy. In this reconstitution of patriarchy, women were constructed as biological regenerators/reproducers. This role was perceived in terms of their socially constructed images of mothers/wives, sisters and daughters, defined and nurtured by imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy. As in nineteenth century Sri Lanka, reformers in Bengal attempted to give some importance to women without at any time challenging the position of power enjoyed by men within a male dominated society. The issue of women's emancipation did not figure in the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist revival, nor in nationalist discourse. In fact, the trend was the opposite as Jayawardena elaborates; "the tendency was to denounce modernisation and promote traditional attitudes to women". [Jayawardena,1982: 146] Moreover, this move to "uplift" the status of women was championed by men. Attempts to improve their own situation by women themselves was not perceived as uplift or reform but rather as an inappropriate attempt to claim a "right".

Dharmapala[4], a rabid nationalist, encouraged Sinhala middle class women to emulate the virtues of Japanese and Burmese women, (notably Buddhist countries) who were supposed to be renowned for their grace, obedience and cleanliness. He was an unabashed advocate of Sinhala Buddhist domination of the island and believed that the loss of masculinity and cultural regression of the Sinhalese people was due to the erosion of their original *Aryan* qualities. He was extremely assiduous in holding up the *Aryan* woman as the Sinhala woman's role model.

The Aryan husband trains his wife to take care of his parents and attend on holy men, on his friends and relations. The glory of woman is in her chastity in the performance of household duties and obedience to her husband [deAlwis:1993].

The Sinhala Buddhist woman was constituted in opposition to women of other religions and ethnicities. The *Saree* (an Indian drape) was chosen for Sinhala Buddhist women because Dharmapala felt it was essential for the woman's body to be a marker of her ethnicity, modesty and uniqueness - the Tamil women wore pottus, the Muslim women covered their heads. In an influential pamphlet, *The Gihi Vinaya*, (**The Daily Code for the Laity**), published in 1898, how women's sexuality and their everyday lives should be constructively regulated through practices of sanitation and religiosity were clearly spelled out, so that they could be suitable role models for their children. This religious and moral rejuvenation of women was regarded as being synonymous with the rejuvenation of Ceylonese society. It was part of a Foucauldian moral order, "a silent edifice in which family and home served as internalised mechanism of self discipline and social control" [de Alwis,1993: 93]. The insight drawn from Foucault towards a feminist critique of nationalism's appropriation of the female body is that sexuality is the effect of historically specific power relations and therefore women's experience is impoverished and controlled within certain culturally determined images of feminine sexuality. The body produced through power is cultural not a natural entity or a given [McNay,1992: 3]. Nationalism thus by de-sexualising the female body, circumscribes it. Where Foucault fails to see the effect of mechanisms of power on the female body as feminist critiques of his analysis have shown, is that he never locates women's body as the site of one of the most operational internal divisions in our society. McNay holds the view that sexual differences simply does not play a role in the Foucauldian universe, "where the technology of subjectivity refers to a desexualised and gendered human subject" [ibid: 11]. Foucault's theory of the body has its crucial limitations. Foucault's understanding of individuals as docile bodies has the effect of pushing women back into the position of passivity and

silence. It undermines their experiences. It nevertheless helps explain why, in the not too distant past, there were commands of chastity for women, a production of female frigidity, a double standard for men, the stigmatising of deviant sexual behavior, cultural and structural factors that facilitated the perpetuation of women's subordination and oppression [ibid: 46].

Sexuality: the gender subtext

As de Alwis has explicitly illustrated elsewhere, decorum became the male standard by which women were scrutinised, particularly women who crossed the familial and cultural restrictions of a patriarchal society. As future mothers, women were to preserve their dignity, which meant that any transgression on their part by virtue of their sexuality would be socially condemned. Her sexuality was held as weakness, a liability and she in turn was seen as a drag on the community. Her social identity became a locus of contestation of power between male leaders of communities compounded by ethnicity, class and caste. The moralistic backlash against women who "transgress" cultural male conventions seems centrally premised on the fact that if a woman does not conform to the norms of respectability, she is a whore. Given Foucault's notion of "manifold relationships of force" at work in the multiple fields of power, there emerges a recurrent tension, a contradiction that needs unravelling. While it is necessary to move beyond false essentialisms and binary categories of spiritual/material, it must be maintained that despite bourgeois women's efforts to embrace the markers of spirituality, in other words, "respectability", they are constantly prey to counter discourses that may simultaneously degrade and sexualise them. George Mosse, one of the first writers to articulate the relationship between sexuality and nationalism points out that it was nationalism in alliance with bourgeois morality that "helped respectability to meet all challenges to its dominance". [De Alwis,1995: 138]. Respectability, enshrined in the home and embodied in women through the confluence of patriarchal capitalist, religious and nationalist relations of power continues to be reproduced and to hold hegemonic sway over societies in South Asia. While the patriarchal gaze of the nation seeks to scrutinise the underbelly of respectability, the "public women" in

the patriarchal gaze of the nation simultaneously exist as a signifier of respectability, wife, mother, but also of degradation and debasement [ibid: 152].

There is however, an ongoing interrogation of the historical, economic and political process that reconstituted patriarchy in colonial India. For example in the collection *Recasting Women (1989)*, which provides a critical contribution in the field of feminist historiography as well as to debates on nationalism, delineates how "the underbelly of every attempt towards identity has been a rediscription of women of different classes" [Jayawardena & De Alwis,1996: xvi]. As has been amply displayed by writers of *Recasting Women* and others in South Asia, the construction of the ideal woman as representative of culture has led to the erasure of certain classes of women and certain types of labor performed by them [Ibid:IV]. This could partly be due to nationalism's insidious move to hegemonise woman as the repository of `tradition' and its inviolability has been a powerful tool of cultural defence against modernisation and westernisation.

Positioning of women: family, community and state

In Sri Lanka, the regulation of female sexuality was integral to the nationalist project. As Anagarika Dharmapala, an influential leader of the Sinhala Buddhist revival put it, "the glory of woman is in her chastity". The respectable woman was the good Sinhala woman who imbibed *Aryan* values, upheld conventions of marriage and motherhood, embraced Buddhism as a way of life, venerated her husband as her lord, produced sons of heroic stature and sacrificed her own interests for the welfare of her family and community. The ideal Sinhala Buddhist woman was *"a puncha kalyani"*, with "fair skin, long black hair, attractive body, youthful appearance and beautiful teeth" [Jyawardena & de Alwis,1996:xi]. An ideal Tamil woman is expected according to traditional values to possess the "four virtues of modesty, charm, coynesss and fear" [Maunaguru,1995:175].

The effort to make the country into a Buddhist society is inextricably bound up with the belief that Sri Lanka is by the Buddha's express wish, the land of the Dhamma, itself the heart of contemporary Sinhala nationalist ideology. The protection of Sinhala Buddhist womanhood against the degeneration resulting from any mixture of race and culture became one of the ethnic and religious duties of the Sinhala Buddhist revival.

The ideological response of nationalists to a colonialist critique of Sri Lankan tradition was to regulate/repress the sexually free woman (who is in the eyes of the nationalists was imbibing western values) and fix a rigid sexuality that epitomised submission, chastity and restraint. Sinhala nationalists were eager to represent the Sri Lankan women as "pure" and "dignified". They attempted to discursively domesticate the Sinhala woman, to draw them into the private/domestic realm to counteract the public gaze that was constantly on them. The Christian, extravagant indulgent woman emerged in the nationalist discourse as the immoral "other" of the modest Sinhala woman. She is a symbol of ignorance and shame and her community is in the brink of spiritual degeneration. The fear of a "national regression" and loss of "masculinity" was simply attributed to a "decaying womanhood". Masculinity and national hubris could be asserted in the face of subdued controlled womanhood. An assertive femininity could threaten the prospects of a newly emergent nation state protected and sanctioned by Sinhala nationalists and religious reformists. Such fears of loss of dignity and national pride were animated in relation to what was conceived of as polluted womanhood.

The Sinhala 'nation' is vilified and ridiculed for aping the decadent west as this drift without roots is attributed to the ignorance and lack of knowledge about the land's glorious history. Upper class bourgeois women who emulate western norms are debased for losing their virginity. The *Aryan* (racial exclusiveness) woman carries herself with dignity in *saree.* The cloth and jacket (*redda and hatta*) is a more civilised form of attire for women to win respect and pride. The imposition of the dress code is a form of repression of her sexuality since it is often believed that a woman's

seductiveness and sensuousness heightened through her dress would arouse a man's sexual libido. The dress code for men was not advocated as rigorously as the code for women. The sexual meaning of Sinhala Buddhist nationalists hinged on received notions of femininity and masculinity. The cultural resistance to female sexuality was a double-edged sword; while it sought to contain Sinhala woman's creative power and visibility, her identity became fixated on motherhood. The Sinhala Buddhist nationalism was therefore as much about the dominance and hegemony of Buddhism as about "mothering" the Sinhala woman compounded by class, caste and ethnicity. Upper class/caste women were gendered in the binary opposition while a majority of women in the lower rungs of the caste/ class hierarchy were seen as incapable of exuding cultural refinement. The class/caste belonging of the socially disadvantaged woman was not a matter seriously dealt with by the Sinhala nationalist. Sinhala Buddhist nationalism did not strike at the core of social/sexual inequality, which was among other things, class/caste based. The oppression of the under classes was perpetuated for it facilitated the breed and nurture of spiritually pure women with moral claims to 'nation'. The lower classes by virtue of their socially denigrated position were incapable of producing children for future 'nation'. For the bourgeois upper middle classes, reproduction became an exclusive right for it was intricately tied up with the notion of nation building and in the process ensuring a pure race. Women who were at the lowest social field were "lesser breeds", only serving the interests of their exploitative masters or upper class women. They were invariably an important source of "cheap labor" and were exploited by the rich landowning peasantry or big capitalist industrialists.

Often references to women were replete with paranoia and xenophobic fear and invoked sexually charged responses among the most virulent of Buddhist reformers and revivalists. The social, untamed and sexually uninhibited woman was a savage *"kali"*5, a destroyer of all that is good, benevolent and morally pure. The women of the lower classes were seen as culturally incapable of appreciating the virtues of freedom. They could never be culturally integrated with the dominant elite.

Class caste relations are mediated by a notion of self-repulsion or difference. Within the immediacy of caste practices could be identified a contradictory essence mediated by ideology (or religion) namely the opposition between purity and pollution. The need to maintain purity implies that the castes must be kept separate. (Upper caste/class cannot engage in menial occupation of the lower castes) There is also nevertheless intermingling of the castes, (the lower castes are the service providers). This forms the totality of caste relations as a system. Thus the ideal construct of womanhood is actualised in the immediacy of social institutions and practices. Caste is also a feature of the superstructure of ideological society and ought to be understood in terms of its efficacy as an ideological system which reflects the basic structure of material relations (productive) at the base, with its own historical dynamic; caste in other words, is 'the form in which classes appear in society' [Chatterjee,1987: 254].

The cultural context
The *Prabuddha6 Stree7* vs. muckrakers/devils

Dharmapala believed that the distinctive spiritual essence of the Sri Lankan culture could be contained and nurtured within the home by the women while men waged the battle for independence on the "treacherous terrain of the profane" [Chatterjee,1989: 175]. Dharmapala was an unrepentant unflinching Sinhala Buddhist. He took upon himself the 'divine' task of tirelessly and fearlessly advocating the sacred right of the *Aryan* (Sinhalese) to the level of the Buddha in establishing Sinhala Buddhist domination. He attempted to authenticate the *Aryan* identity of the Sinhalese. Failure to imbibe *Aryan* qualities was attributed to loss of selfhood (masculinity) and a superior national cultural identity. Therefore "she must be refined, reorganised, recast and regenerated" [Sangari & Vaid, 1989:Intro]. This idea of "recasting women" cut across ethnicity, and the simultaneous idealisation/demonisation was legitimised using binary categories. The Buddhist revivalist reformist mission of orientalising and civilising the Sinhala woman under colonialism was inspired by the noble task of "saving" her from sexual and social discrimination. Often resistance to cultures and religions of the "other" conjured up images of brut-

ishness and savagery. White women who challenged white supremacy, questioned oppressive social and religious orthodoxies with defiance and boldly rejected repressive cultural practices were harshly ridiculed. The Sinhala woman, whose search for a non oppressive identity and less exploitative way of life was treated with contempt and derision. The framework of the ideal woman posited in a binary paradigm where she is juxtaposed with the Ceylonese 'whore' became the moral standard among nationalists whose discursive 'policing' hinged on female morality; intense political conservatism, abysmal ignorance and indifference to realities enveloping women's lives with a corresponding fear of change or revolution for women, a tendency to see all problems therefore in over-simplified moral terms, with the application of 'right', 'moral', 'conduct' for women as a prerequisite for women's emancipation.

Judith Butler, in a theoretically unsettling essay, shows how the category of woman comes to be constituted by discourse: "the truth of woman is that she does not exist except as the 'other' of a discourse grounded in her radical exclusion. The body, "a woman's body therefore is a social body that has taken meanings rather than conferred them. The female body does not reconfer femininity on us, it receives femininity as its social definition" [Butler,1992: 13-18]. Male responses/outbursts to the female body and sexuality in cultural debates reinforce this notion of the construction of social female body. All men emphasise an ideal of purity, meakness and obedience for women. Women unconsciously have perpetuated this cultural and material 'policing' in a collective project in which subordination of women is historically sustained.

Indian goddess vs Ceylonese virago

The gendered notion of sexual puritanism and morality were reflection of the overt nuanced criticism levelled against women. Their freedom to be politically inclined as activists was undeniably restricted in so far as women formed part of political alliances without subverting or destabilising the nationalist agenda. Nationalism did not advocate women's involvement in colonial struggles based on a set of ethics of equality. In short, the *"resolution of the women's question"* remained outside

the nationalist program. Once co-opted into freedom movements, their femininity or female sexuality became a factor of much political contestation. `Nation' came to be constructed and nurtured on the bodies of women. For they were the metaphors, the tropes of nationalism. Women as the preservers of purity and upholders and defenders of honor and contrastingly men are pedestalised as heroised guardians.

The sexual honor of women is therefore seen in terms of how it reflects on family and community. A woman's reputation is determined not only by her chastity but also by her capacity to look after her husband and defend his interests. The sexual coding of femininity forms the ideological thrust of the nationalist project fashioned by male authorisers such as Dharmapala. This is not to argue that women did not launch struggles to break away from the accepted family roles for women and from patriarchal domination. In fact, defiance of social convention and reluctance to be subservient in politics and religion characterised the new independent woman of the period. The new woman was perceived as one who frequents the night bars, relaxes in idle gossip and derives pleasure from myopic indulgences with no sense of decency and decorum. The crack, it must be said, in the dominant patriarchal ideology surfaced with the emergence of the Avant Garde women who broke taboos on sexuality, dismantled myths of female control and subverted the masculinisation of public life. These women, however, continued to invite scorn and abuse in the male gaze. This denigration was solely because they were free of fear and shame.

The resurgence of avantgardism, which saw the emergence of women who were relegated into domains, bound of tradition stepping into public life caused an eruption in attitudes, which largely fell into negative stereotyping. It is here that nationalism was asserting itself in its most subtle form. The inner/private (family) is abandoned in search of the outer/public for collective good. Attempts to sanitise tradition that oppressed woman was nationalism's task. Demonisation of things alien to this national culture would ensure the protection of Buddhism and preservation of culture. The non Buddhist and non Sinhala groups were enemies conspiring to bring about the destruction of the spiritual life of the Sinhalese.

A woman who has failed to cultivate socially accepted norms of social behavior is lumped into the dichotomous normative framework of good/evil. The evil is synonymous with defilement of culture. Culture here equates with notions of nation, a male entity, masculine honor and purity. The defying woman through her indulgence with things profane could endanger the Sinhalese culture. Women's sexuality was so integral to nationhood, that a threat to her womanhood could endanger the sovereignty of a nation state.

The constant shifting of the meaning of motherhood is a dominant feature in nationalist discursive practice. The refusal to acknowledge and grasp the multiplicity and diversity of reality resulted in a monolithic definition of the metaphor of woman. The various subject positions point to the prevailing patriarchal ideology where there was absence of any questioning of sexual equality. It is evident that the sexual agency was of no consequence to patriarchal social order. Women were defined primarily as social objects while cultural defilement is eroticised, male power and masculinity are held up in adulation. The construction of female sexuality was as such a marked feature during colonialism that communal hysteria was often fanned by debates cantering around issues of femininity. Women became targets of attack and controversy and it led to the incitement of religious intolerance and extremism. The religious construction of the woman embodied a distinct feature; the representation and use of the female body as an instrument rather than something through which individuality can be expressed. This means that female sexuality is constituted by discourse. Women surrender to the power and domination of men and it is precisely this domination that crushes her spontaneity. Sex becomes thus disembodied and disconnected from the lived experiences of women.

In dominant patriarchal discourse, the space for women to articulate an autonomous femininity free of the oppressive gaze is restricted if not totally absent. The female body is also more directly a "patriarchal locus of social control", so that we are in a sense not what we want to be but we are made through culture" [Bordo, 1992:14]. This is because women were per-

ceived as symbols of the cultural integrity of an ethnic group and they were generally conceived of as weak and powerless. Men in patriarchal communities would fear rape of their own women by the `other' (as many essays in *Embodied Violence* testify) for they did not want their women to be `outsiders'` victims. Hence issues of rape, sexual harassment, prostitution and virginity take an emotionally charged, sexually violent and politically intense resonance.

Further, it is evident that women's mobility in religious precincts and places of worship was deemed sacrilegious. This notion is compounded by the idea that women were capable of sullying and contaminating the inner sanctity of places of veneration. This defilement is attributed to their menstrual cycles. Muslim women were not allowed in mosques for prayers. Hindu women were barred from stepping into the precincts of kovils and temples. Defilement prevented intermingling of the two sexes in public. Codes of sexual conduct to curtail female sexuality confirm the view that boundaries were clearly drawn marking out the limits of sexual exploration. Just as the social reputation of women rested upon their ability to resist or contain sexual advances, that of men depended upon the sexual conquests they could achieve. The sexual double standards still exist (ethical nationalism remains a contested site of conflict). While men are free of the burden of sexual impurity, the concept of women as upholders of sexual morality is rigorously maintained.

Conclusion

Transcending the historically inferior position of women inevitably entails challenging relations of power and constructs that dichotomise fields of power. As Laclau and Mouffe have noted "every hegemonic formation is constructed through regularity in dispersion" [de Alwis, 1995: 142]. Conceptually and politically, the act of transcending entails a feminist epistemological leap that questions essentialist, ethnocentric, homogenising, unitary categories of `private' `public' divide and identifies the social, cultural, religious, political, symbolic and sexual boundaries where women's bodies get contested. One such attempt has been

made in *Embodied Violence* which foregrounds communalism, operating within patriarchal structures of power, its varied imposition on women's bodies, the legitimisation of regulation of women's sexuality "their interiorisation and silencing which rationalised their commodification, rape and immolation" [Jayawardena & De Alwis,1996: XXIII] The myriad sources of oppression today lies in the multiple nexus of power; overt, subtle and coercive; particularly the explosive intersections of ideals of sexuality, motherhood, tradition, community and racial purity. Women's bodies become the "recording surface of repressive cultural practices and symbolic humiliation" [Ibid:XXIII].

As the writers in the provocative, insightful essays in *Embodied Violence* have painstakingly labored to demonstrate, in the context of communalising women's sexuality in post colonial South Asia, the growing militarism, nationalist violence and religious fundamentalism engulfing the region characterise the violent moment of the contemporary. They spring from a long-repressed history of complex relationships imbricated in constantly shifting nexuses of power. The editors in their excellent introduction have pointed out that the real challenge for women and for feminists at the level of critique as well as in their everyday resistance to communalised sexual violence is that often such communalised violence is deployed in collusion with the state, community and other repressive hegemonic forces; "manifold relationships of force", as Foucault would metaphorise them. In other words, arguably, there is no one single most source of oppression; instead, a multiple power axes along which women's bodies are reconfigured. Unless this historical construct is unveiled or unravelled, it continues to undermine women's experiences and delegitimise roots of women's subordination. Religious fundamentalism, among other hegemonic violent forces, is an omnipresent, omni [pre]ssing force relation that attempts to reinscribe women's bodies in the sacred space of the `nation' in the absence of any hold on political power, in trying to reconstruct a "golden, mythical, past" in order to find justification for the present use and deployment of brutality. It naturalises family, holds it sacred and uses women's bodies as "the battle ground" to appropriate institutional power. Sexuality, in times of heightened ethnic strife and religious conflict becomes the instrument through which hegemonies

and counter hegemonies compete for power and dominance. Often the icon of the "woman mother" (motherland) conjures up symbolic signifier of the "sacred inviolable border of the `nation'". Possible threat to the `nation' or the mere perception (imagined?) of a threat suffices to incite violence, which is often communalised, since the "pollution" is caused by the "other". Hence the centrality of the woman's body in communalised discourses. The woman's body forms the boundary marking out the ethnic "other" and her sexuality, the terrain or the zone where identities, national as well as gender are fought out.

Women have continued to resist/reject/challenge the manipulation of their gender identity at great risk. Repression produces resistance and this everyday resistance has increased women's consciousness of the dangers such totalising, totalitarian, fundamentalisms and all other exclusivist, hegemonic, oppressive ideologies like racism, sexism, classism and casteism pose to women. Women's experience has been influenced by the rise of religious nationalist discourse. Nationalism attempts to legitimate the collective in time and space. Part of the appeal of nationalism is that it emerges in relation to an external threat to the collective. It deploys dangerous semiotics, which appeal to the populist activist in the nationalist project. The woman's body, hence her sexuality, constitute a primary symbolic strategy or one of the main props of any attempted fundamentalist reorganisation of society. "The historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness ... and hence distinguishes the horizons of tradition from its own" [Cats Eye,1997:23]. But what is central to nationalism is an attitude in which the "historical horizon" and the present are not absolutely distinguished from each other. If such were the amorphous nature of the horizons nationalism claims to itself, then women's sexuality is not, her repressed history is not a *simulacrum*. It is real, lived experience; a site of appropriation and subordination; repression and resistance.

The "feminine", it follows from the above, therefore is a historical moment in the development of the category of sex, structured socially/ culturally and saturated with power dynamics; what Foucault calls "the most speculative, most ideal, the most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organised by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality" [Butler,1987:139]. And this category of sex as he asserts, "belongs to a juridical model of power that assumes a binary opposition between the "sexes" [Ibid:138]. The point is to *move beyond* the binary oppositions in order to *celebrate* multiple differences; to multiply various configurations of power relations so that the "juridical model of power as oppression and regulation is no longer hegemonic" [Ibid:138].

We need to challenge the binary constructions of identity and recognise the multiple subjectivities that are available to us. This inevitably entails working towards destabilisation of hegemonic productions of the self. It is time we stood "morality" on its head and reconfigured our notion of national and sexual bodies.

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Notes

1   Devotion to the husband

2   Burning of women on their husband's funeral pyre, an ancient Rajput religious practice in India that was outlawed by a British Govenor in 1829. See Hawley (ed) *The blessing and the curse of sati*, 1994. In post independence Iindia, cases of sati have been reported. The phenomenon has seen a significant increase. See Rajan, *Real and imagined women*, 1993.

3   Brahmins in the caste hierarchy in Iindia were the most powerful caste. They were mostly religious leaders and priests who were socially influential. Ranked below them were Kshatriya, (warrior) Vaishya (merchant) and Shudra (untouchable) castes.

4   A vociferous Sinhala bBuddhist nationalist who led the anti colonial independent struggle in the late 19th and early twentieth century.

5   Goddess of strength and courage. In her more demonic manifestation, she turns revengeful and destructive.

6   Sanskrit word for awakened

7   Sanskrit word for woman

Gender Perspectives in Generating a Culture of Peace

Joyce Silva *

     The year 2000 has been christened the International Year for the Culture of Peace, and not without justification. At the demise of the twentieth, a century of violence, characterised by two world wars which engulfed humanity, it is but fitting that the epitaph be written by women themselves who have withstood the worst forms of violence through it all. This article hopes to explore the gender dimension in the perpetuating conflict/violence and women's agency in the enculturation of peace: their visions, strength, knowledge and past experiences that are indispensable for generating peace and sustaining it.

     Social and psychological research points to a coherent and comprehensive interrelationship between the status of women and the accelerating degree of human violence, which it is said, is endemic to human societies. War has become a perennial problem, a challenge to the very survival of the global society. The same data goes to prove that oppression of women is a major contributor to the situation and ironically the consequence of that problem.[1] It is axiomatic that both men and women suffer the effects of the escalating states of violence; structural violence through racism, sexism, tribal and ethnic oppression, poverty and deprivation. Generally men endure the effect of direct violence in combat or war as well as crime, while women are victims less directly, but as asserted by many,

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more traumatically, due to their so-called powerlessness.[2] In addition, the latter has been subjected to domestic violence, battery, sexual and emotional abuse as well.

Absence of war does not mean peace[3]. Scholarly assertions, that termination of gender discrimination in favour of women would lead to a more peaceful world are perhaps only partially true. Disregard of women's perspectives has no doubt led to the escalation of war and conflict in society. It is also spurious to claim, as sometimes research does, that women's perspectives lean invariably towards conciliation than confrontation. Similarly it is refuted that men tend to generate abstractions such as justice and equality while women focus more on human relationships, emotions and subjectivities.[4] One cannot enunciate in the same vein, that biology and social roles of motherhood predetermine women's agency as peace makers. Experience of women throughout history bear witness to their roles as agile combatants and ferocious fighters as well as participants of rebel armies, freedom fighters and defenders of their country in defense forces. They have emerged more as 'actors' in the theatres of war than solely as 'the victims' as alleged.

It is thus pragmatic to abandon such stereotypical classifications of women's roles as "victims" and men as "aggressors". It is in a sense an opportunistic reinforcement of patriarchal values in society that violence be glorified as a virtue in man and the victims be degraded. Such images are constantly perpetuated by media, reinforced by fiction and poetry and sealed by the 'smiritis' and 'hadis.'[5] A counteracting position has been held by the feminist researchers of the past and this century.[6] Evidence of peace activities of women can thus be traced as far back as Greek history which bears the arresting testimony of women active to end wars. They have acted through Women's organisations, adopting various strategies in fighting for peace. The first women's Peace Society had been established in UK in the 1820s and a decade later in USA. In fact the 1st International Peace Congress was held in 1898 in Brussels, where women were given 'voice'. With the world on the brink of imminent war in 1900, the International Peace Bureau was born in Berne and later the end of the war sealed with the formation of the International Women's Peace Movement. Their strategies differed. In the 19th century women advocated the settling of disputes by resorting to Jurisprudence (Legal theory) and arbitration while the 20th century women were active in mediation instrumental in preventing and ending hostilities, some as informal negotiators, active

campaigners, demonstrators and even more strategically empowered leaders of countries,[7] ministers, prime ministers, secretaries of state and presidents.

The strategy for the 21st Century Culture of Peace, has been spelled out by various peace – waging institutions, among them, the Hague Appeal for Peace with its global networking capacity. In the words of Margarita Papandrean, an ardent Peace activist, our economies are distorted by the constant expectation of violent conflict with other peoples and nations and leaves no chance for achieving goals of social justice, be it for women, children or any others'. She further suggests that 'women's movements need to mainstream "peace" and use its energies and skills into changing the war systems. Women's Movement is interwined with peace'.[8] The Third World Women's organizations have formed networks such as DAWN, Women in Black, dedicated to "grassroot consciousness raising". They have researched on the close relationship between development and disarmament, agitated for a halt in arms production, organized a "NO MORE WAR" campaign near the Pentagon. Women have campaigned against the French nuclear testing in the pacific and organised a "Mothers Front" in Sri Lanka to protest with rallies and petitions to the government against 'disappearances'. The Irish Peace Women inspired by Mairead Carrigan earned a Nobel Peace Prize for her in 1977. The protest in 1988 against the cruise missiles, numbers among such peace efforts. Women have also demonstrated their research acumen in probing the means of reducing violence, abolishing wars, and creating a just and equitable society. The Institute for Training in Non-violence, Institute for Defense and Disarmament, World Priorities and Oxford Research Group have also formulated their own strategies in propagating the Culture of Peace.

Reardon has posited a four point formula in ending violent conflict between states. A first step would be pedagogic exercises in conflict management and mediation procedure for both lay and professional persons, followed by formal negotiation and arbitration, law enforcement, and finally the use of military force[9] as a last resort. Conflict resolution has emerged as a priority area in International Relations. She has urged very strongly the adoption of strategies for a change of values and consciousness. Her research has delved into human interaction, social processes and psychological factors that underlie the arms race as well as how these factors relate to masculine identity development. Research into women's way of knowing, reasoning and decision making submits tenable argu-

ments as to how these modes of thinking could be transformed, learned and applied by both men and women. Feminists have posed that women have a 'non-litigatious' dispute resolution and non confrontational negotiation techniques.

Participant observers of women's discourse patterns may be quoted here to corroborate Jeanne Vicker's claim that women generally demonstrate a preference for problem -solving through open communication, free access to information, honest discussion of differences and dialogue among all concerned. Setting aside any ratiocination, one could intuitively say that their role as peace makers in the family – i.e. meeting with and seeking the concerns of all conflicting parties – has satisfactorily evinced a family model which seeks fairness and reconciliation rather that victory and retribution. These are the decisive strategies that women contribute to conflict situations, and not being biological determinates, such tendencies can be learnt/ taught.[10]

Deviating from the polemics of the issue, such strategies may be substantiated by the global experiences in peace culture in the past and present times. We have evidence of UNDP efforts in seeking gender participation in trying to defuse conflict situations in North Ireland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Jerusalem and Cyprus.[11] In Cyprus women professionals have been working with men on a Master Plan for the divided city of Nicosia. Additionally, a Centre for Women's Studies and Peace has been set up. Sorensen has documented telling prototypes of "barefoot diplomacy" where Israeli and Palestinian women in Jerusalem, black and white women in South Africa, catholic and protestant women in North Ireland and Sinhalese and Tamil women in Sri Lanka have been working "all in dialogue and campaigning together" to achieve peaceful resolutions to their conflicts. Herein have they proved that women tend towards holistic views which focus on problems in their general context and over longer periods of time. In the global context, gendered perspectives make it possible for them to deceive the inter-relationship between equality, development and peace and the need to analyse any strategies about each within the context of the other two, and enables them to become catalysts for peace and political change.[12]

Having demonstrated that women are equipped to play an influential role through their work in grassroots organisations working for peace,

we need to emphasise their role in peace discourse and negotiations as well. In most cases women are excluded from formal peace negotiations and thus post war practices are closer to men's reality than women's. However, past experience confirms that women's roles as constructive agents in the rebuilding process are more crucial than their roles in armed conflict. The annals of post-conflict situations highlight many gendered effects of the activities during crisis escalation and violent combat periods. The impact of such actions can be correctly interpreted and analysed only in the light of objective reportage by participants, often the 'victims' themselves, who are women.[13] The personal, family, community and state level impact will need to be critically viewed.

Lourdes Sajor and Yori Matsui in 1997 had presented a lucid report on the issue of the impact of violent conflict on women. On a personal level, women are said to exhibit the most severalizing effects of psychological traumata (PTST) due to sexual exploitation, serious bodily injuries, loss of limbs or death.[14] Birth of babies conceived in rape is a multi-focal problem to the mother and the adopting community. The situation could worsen if the child is fathered by one of the 'other' ethnic origins. Such violence on a massive scale has been reported from war-torn societies in Europe and occasionally elsewhere.[15] The brutality is further enhanced when systematic rape is practised (termed 'forced impregnation') and their effects hardly discussed.

It is relevant to state here that due to different psychological traumata during violent conflict, women have different sexual and reproductive needs which ought to be differently comprehended and addressed. Some experts have also predicted that in the wake of war, post-settlement violence and armed conflict may temporarily accelerate[16] and consequently domestic violence directed at women and female children too rise.[17] At the level of household too, changes of family structure and social structures during the war is an undeniable consequence.[18] In the absence of men, women are seen to take over "traditional" male roles and duties mainly as widows or heads of single parent families with the inevitable consequence of conflict when the old patriarchal systems fall back into place and the gendered division of labour is replaced. On returning from war, be it rebel or soldier, one is bound to face difficulties in the changed family structures.[19] We need to be forewarned of the impact so as to be adequately prepared for any eventualities.

Conflict situations may have "disempowering" and "empowering" effects on women as clearly seen in the case of African women in refugee camps, where the traditionally not very powerful returned empowered from camps in Nigeria and Ghana.[20] The crucial question is how sustained these changes are in the context of the damages wrought on a women's psyche by the PTSD factors. Further to it, the demographic imbalance created by the deaths and serious injuries to males, and the increasing numbers of female headed households may limit women's marriage prospects. A masculine solution to the problem has been polygamy as a means to solving the problem of war widows and young women without partners but rarely accepted as a women's rationale. A visible impact of such a gender imbalance is the overloading of women since on them now rests the sole responsibility of food production. In this context it was seen that informal organizations of women played a supportive role in providing joint labour, mutual emotional support and recall of traumatic experiences in therapeutic discourse sessions.[21]

At the community level a myriad problems emerge due to demobilization of combatants, for the solution of which greater recourse to psychological research becomes expedient. In most post conflict situations it is assumed, without contention, that all policies for reintegration need to cope primarily with men and so men stand to gain in the reallocation of land, the payment of compensation and participation in micro-credit schemes. The reality of the Sri Lanka situation drives home the seriousness of the issue. Kreidler discusses how female combatants face additional constraints that male fighters do not, such as bringing up their children without male support. The gendered nature of such situations is more lucidly brought out in the statistical data of men using their demobilization funds in starting businesses while women use their resources for the basic needs of the children. In this context most women are left with few options for obtaining a livelihood or extra income apart from informal activities such as sex work.[22]

The fact that female combatants have challenged and defied the stereotypical ideas of femininity and traditions of patriarchy makes it even more difficult for ex-women fighters to integrate with the communities they once abandoned. Experience in Africa and Europe shows that they find themselves cut off from their own families, socially isolated and even ostracized.

Thus on a micro-level, the need arises for gender sensitive trainers equipped to tackle the consequences of PTSD, discussed earlier. More research needs be done into trauma as an outcome of violent conflicts, as its specific patterns and characteristics are hardly fully comprehended.[24] It has been proved that men and women react to psychological stress differently and that women and girl children may have greater need for trusting relationships and supportive social networks, specially in the essentially traditional societies of Asia.[25] There also arise many women's health issues and needs to be considered absolutely crucial to understanding the range and depth of suffering that women undergo in conflict and post settlement peace building.

Any gender sensitive re-integration programme which focusses on ex-combatants need to focus on men too. Both males and females may become transmitters of social diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Males may be prone to alcoholism, domestic violence, and even suicide. It is a daunting challenge to draw up programmes to account for such gender differences. It is expedient to formulate programmes which specifically enable and facilitate social inclusion and readjustment to civilian life.[26] To empower women in basic inter-group communication, the strategic use of the emotional and non-violent expression, conciliatory para-linguistic signals, therapeutic dialogue patterns and problem solving techniques are just a few of the strategies women have adopted in the past, elsewhere on the globe.

Women are generally perceived to be particularly vulnerable, economically, in conflict as in post conflict situations. As such, one needs to identify specific economic activities for women and men and support them in gender specific ways. Peace could be a sustainable alternative only if such skill training activities aim at promoting alternative options to violence and aggression as an economic activity in the aftermath of war. Men ex-combatants generally revert to banditry or other forms of violence, robbery, extortion and contract killings or in the least domestic violence, out of frustration on re-entering civil society. Even after the completion of land allocation, resettlement, and alternative employment have been provided there is the 'need to promote non-violent, aggressive forms of masculinity. Women need to be trained in coping strategies to deal with an added spill over of war, the excessive violence, once again.[27]

There is a lacunae in serious research into the conditions which need to be provided for sustainable peace. Peace does not begin when the guns are silenced, it is said. The implications, demands, obligations, and difficulties one faces in avoiding a relapse into a state of conflict, the process of healing physical and psychological damages to its citizens and mustering the financial and other resources necessary to back up the resettlement and rehabilitation of hundreds of thousands of displaced/traumatized peoples pose an almost insurmountable task for any state or a group of people. This underlines the urgency of mobilising women in the national/global agenda of post-conflict reconstruction efforts.[28] Given the factor that they have been particularly vulnerable, traditionally assumed to be less active, they need to be enlisted formally and informally involved, in every aspect of post-war recovery and development. Gender mainstreaming all peace building activities in the post conflict period is thus the one factor guaranteeing its sustainability.[28]

The final point that needs to be stressed is the reconfiguration of gender roles and positions in the post-conflict era so as to avoid their marginalisation in a world receding back to the old system. Byrne emphasizes that women's active role in war is no guarantee that a state of gender equality "will follow in a state of peace."[29] Peace has to be cultured and women's role in peace building through education, their own initiatives and their call for a new equilibrium based on gender equality is worth striving for.

Particularly in the 21ˢᵗ century, there is the need to mobilize civil society forces against the challenges humanity faces from the mounting stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction from escalating conflicts between ethnic and tribal groups who can scarcely afford to buy their 'daily bread' but receive arms to fight each other with. The increasing violations of human rights globally bear witness to the increasing vulnerability of persons before the state and the widening gap between rich and poor states in the present global economy. Thus the urgency for peace education. The Hague Appeal for Peace defines peace education as a different education, where the new generation would learn these imminent problems and be equipped with the strategies and skills to deal with them peacefully.[31] "A real culture of peace will be achieved only when citizens of the world understand global problems; have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently; live by international standards of human rights and equality; appreciate cultural diversity; and respect the Earth. Such learning can only achieved with systematic Education for Peace.[31]

The concluding point the article hopes to illustrate is how the 'gender' component has already entered the national and international peace-building process and how 'women's agency' could help maintain a durable peace. At the Fourth International Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995) the issue of greater participation of women in peace making was raised. Many other governments immediately responded to the action by resolving that a gender perspective should be part of their peace-building.[33] In Sri Lanka, efforts have been made by many NGOs to raise awareness and muster forces to engender a Culture of Peace and propagate Peace Education.[34] Mothers have campaigned through media to wean youth away from a culture of violence, prevented them from joining the army, and participated in various campaigns at the risk of incarceration. Women have participated in media programmes to educate the public on 'peace building', made TV appearances and expressed themselves in prose and poetry upholding the "culture of peace". There are numerous instances of women organizing themselves into NGOs to propagate "Peace Education" for women.[35] Through such programmes, women are made aware of the cultural values and norms that could be conveyed to one's kith and kin in the daily household interactions,(a necessary tool of socialisation).

The values thus conveyed have a more lasting effect on one's mind than volumes of books perused at a later age. Women, mothers particularly, are informed of the impact of one's choice of toys games, the books given, TV programmes they are exposed to, as a subtle means of 'brain washing' children, weaning them away from violence and discrimination. They learn alternative forms of socialisation that stress equity, social justice, respect for human rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts.[36] Most of the UN reports not only gender-mainstream their peace building activities but also assert the often unrecognised contribution women make as peace educators both in their homes as well as in their communities.[37] The conviction that peace should be approached at community and family levels is one shared by many women's peace organizations. The peace building and peace education activities of women have been identified by many women as a unique opportunity to become recognised, to achieve self realization by proving their use to society, building solidarity among women of all ethnicities and countering wartime propaganda against the "ethnic other".[38]

Women's organizations, to be effective in their new field of 'Peace, Education, require to be part of' larger organisations or networks for greater effectiveness. In Sri Lanka, the women's Coalition for Peace is one example. International networking is in fact central to their very survival. Focussing on "Peace Education" is, in a sense one way of justifying their survival by ensuring a continuos grant of funds[39] while at the same time reaching out for that gender-balanced world they had envisioned. It is pertinent to end on a note of caution that just as the gender perspective is relevant for the achievement of sustainable peace, that the failure to do so may create new social tension. It is the responsibility of women's organisations to contribute to social integration and non-violent co exist-ence of all sections, ethnic, religious and caste of society within a given state.

To conclude, I would like to cite a commentary of Federico Mayor of UNESCO made exactly a decade ago, as a fitting reminder of 'roles' we need to play for a new outlook for humanity, one of peace.

The construction of peace must begin at the moment when life begins. More than ever before, we must struggle to ensure that the inalienable principle of the right to rights applies to all citizens; more than ever before, societies must reject violence and corruption; more than ever before, all social forces – civil, military and reli-gious- must combine their efforts, skills and imagination in the search for new solutions to new problems which can only be solved by spiritual force. More than ever before, we must turn our backs on inertia and routine, and become the architects of our own destiny.

We must make constant efforts to identify and address the economic, social, ideological and political causes of all forms of discrimination, humiliation and deep-rooted inequality that can give rise to rivalry and confrontation.

If there is to be a fresh flowering of life on earth it will need to grow out of a firm alliance between culture and nature, in which knowledge and popular wisdom must play their part alongside the great advances of science and technology.

Between two Balkan wars we have witnessed two worldwide conflagrations and dozens of regional and local conflicts. It has been a century tragically marked by violence. At the same time, the good seed that lies dormant in humankind has sprouted into hope for the future, based on an awareness of our common destiny as a planetary society and the realization that we are all citizens of the world, with the rights and duties this entails.

Educating by Example

At the dawn of a new century and a new millennium let us assume the responsibilities of this new citizenship which does not conflict with our citizenship of birth, but enriches and complements it. One of the dilemmas we must overcome is the apparent contra-diction between the universal and the local, the global and the na-tional. We must respect, safeguard and nurture diversity. The elimi-nation of differences is dangerous not only in cultural terms, be-cause it leads to standarization and uniformization; worse still it contributes to the creation of an indifferent, undifferentiated world. We can only aspire to universality if we have a strong awareness of our local roots. And the more respectful of others the stronger our national identity will become. As the Spanish poet Antonio Machado put it:" a good description of your own village will make you uni-versal". And an old adage reminds us that "In the beginning was our region; the world was given to us as a bonus".

High walls which once seemed impregnable have been brought down by the irresistible force of the human longing for freedom, dignity and the affirmation of identity. But new walls have been built by the uneven distribution of wealth between and within na-tions, and by disparities arising from the production and use of knowledge and from ethnic and religious differences.

To combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, we must teach by example, Children will not take their cue from what we say to them, but from what we do. Youth, sport, music, unselfish compe-tition, learning to win and lose- all these activities, together with "history without war" must now become the core of a new kind of teaching- and nothing teaches more than love – for the world's children and young people.

Ethical Principles

If we are to construct a culture of peace, we must be inspired by ethical principles, not market forces or opinion polls, since what really matters in the final analysis is not the free market but free people. Ethics signifies coherence between what we preach and what we do, between what we say and our real motivations. And, to quote Bolivian statesman Jose Luis Tejada, we must not remain silent "when we could have spoken and should have spoken, and loudly at that". "I should have cried out when I saw that the dawn was under threat, but I felt sadness and fear." Our concern with economic deficits must not allow us to forget that spiritual deficits are at the root of the problems that beset us.

The twenty first century can be the century of" justice and dignity" proclaimed in UNESCO's Constitution. It will be a century of peace or it will be nothing; it will be a century of peace or it will be nothing; it will be a century of lasting development or it will be nothing; it will be a century of imagination and creativity or it will be nothing; it will be a golden age or solidarity and love or it will be nothing. If the twenty-first century is to be equal to our dreams and hopes and Utopia is to be made possible, we must be bold and dare to change.

The twenty-first century will come into its own if we are capable of demolishing the barriers within us that deny access to a new form of civilization. It will come into its own if we can surmount new obstacles such as those preventing the full, just and egalitarian development of women; those that hamper the legitimate aspirations of young people to play a full part in society; and those that discriminate against ethnic minorities and condemn them to wretched and hopeless lives. The Indian scholar and statesman Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan warned us of this at the very first session of UNESCO's General Conference, When he said "UNESCO stands not merely for a new set of adjustments but for a new way of life, a new outlook, a new philosophy which will inspire humanity... what is essential today is not so much the rehabilitation of schools and libraries, or shops and factories, as the rehabilitation of man. We must recreate man if we are to recreate a new world community."

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