The “Nation” in War

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A Study of Military Literature and Hindi War Cinema

By

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-5531-6, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5531-0

In loving memory of

My husband

Lt Col G R Viswanath

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing is always a lonely enterprise. However, several people have walked alongside during this journey of mine and richly deserve my deep gratitude. Professor Sarla Palkar, my Ph.D. supervisor was generous with her sustained guidance and support through the years it took to complete this book. My sincere thanks are due to Professor P C Kar for his interest in my work. Dr Darius Cooper has been a great friend sending me books and other reading materials from San Diego. My debt to Professor Rajeswari Sunder Rajan is far too great to be adequately acknowledged. Her comments on a paper I had written way back in 1996 gave me the confidence to venture into the complex and tantalizing world of research. I thank her for reading this book and writing the blurb. Special thanks are due to my late principal Dr S C Srivastava who took the initiative to get me a Teacher Fellowship from the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. My colleagues P Joseph, Sonu Daryani and Aruna Rao at Tolani College of Arts and Science, Adipur, Kutch ungrudgingly took on the extra work load during my study leave. I must acknowledge the valuable inputs of Lt Gen N S I Narahari, PVSM, ADC (Retd) who spared time for discussions on military literature. Thanks are also due to Col S S Suhag who provided me with access to the library usually restricted to Army personnel of the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers School, Baroda. I am grateful to Col K P Singh for sharing with me material on the Kargil conflict. I am deeply indebted to Profs Indranil Bhattacharya and Bed Giri for writing the Foreword and the blurb respectively. A warm thanks to the editors, especially Amanda Millar, at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their guidance.

Some parts of the book have been published earlier as papers in edited volumes. I thank the editors, Profs Bed Giri, P C Kar and Jasbir Jain for permission to use them in this book. The reading for this book was done at several libraries such as the erstwhile American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore, Centre for Contemporary Theory, Baroda, Hansa Mehta Library of The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and Electrical and Mechanical Engineers School, Baroda. I extend my gratitude to the staff of all of these.

I am deeply indebted to the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York for granting me the Writing Fellowship for a part of the chapter on military literature. I am thankful to the resource persons for their comments on my paper presented in the workshop held in Sri Lanka in 2005.

Life wouldn't have been half as beautiful as it has been without the laughter and endless conversations shared with dear friends such as Drs Nandini Manjrekar, Elizabeth Rohlman, Rajan Barrett, Bini B S, Bela Desai and Ms Mokshada Kar. Several other friends, all of whom cannot be named for obvious reasons, richly deserve my deepest gratefulness. Can one really thank one's family enough? If yes, my parents, sister and her family deserve my deepest gratitude for always being there. My father taught me there is joy in reading and my mother ensured I cultivated the discipline it entails. My romance with books has been enriched by a combination of their lessons. My mother-in-law was an influential presence in my life. I know she would be proud of me wherever she is. My children Tushar and Sudhir taught me how to use a computer; were as enthused by my project as I was and have been what children generally are, our very raison d'être. Sudhir has spent long hours painstakingly formatting the book. Special thanks are due to my daughter-in-law Meha Sohni for the cheer and joy she brings into our lives. My husband Lt Col G R Viswanath who could not see the completion of this book due to his untimely demise was a reassuring figure in my life every time I felt overwhelmed by circumstances. To his memory, I dedicate this book. My pet Boogie Brilliant Starstreak taught me not to worry and be happy!

FOREWORD

The narratives of war and conflict are deeply connected with evolving discourses on the nature and manifestation of nationalism in India. Hindi films on war have been occasionally examined by scholars from film studies, along with those from other disciplines in humanities and social sciences. But looking at Hindi films, in conjunction with other forms of war narratives like military memoirs and conflict reportage is a new approach that needs to be applauded. Gita Viswanath has taken on the challenge of bringing in diverse narratives within a concrete theoretical framework. Apart from the dominant filmic narratives of post-colonial cultural nationalism, independent India has seen a surge of military literature spawned by three wars and a series of war-like conflict situations. While some of these have consciously towed the statist line, a few of them have subtly interrogated entrenched hierarchies and ideological structures. In the absence of an anti-war literary or philosophical tradition, as in the west, Indian war narratives have largely remained in the margins of postcolonial discourse. A substantive and theoretically grounded study of Indian war narratives has been a notable exclusion in post-colonial studies. This book attempts to fill that gap through a series of well-argued theoretical propositions and through interrogation of a wide range of texts from Indian cinema and military literature.

The book is a serious intervention in the uncharted territory of 'war studies,' enriched with insights from her grounding in literature and film studies, from politics and culture studies. Her scholarship effortlessly straddles the elusive space between disciplines, connecting them through exhaustive research and a meticulously laid-down conceptual framework.

The theorisations are self-referential, a quality largely missed in academic prose in the field of humanities and social sciences. I am happy that Gita has meticulously traced the evolution of the nationalist discourse from the nineteenth to the early 21st century. She takes her reader through the changing nature of the debates and discourse on nation-state and nationalism, almost in the manner of a critical historiography. I am sure young scholars researching Indian nationalism will find the second chapter of the book both useful and illuminating.

Gita grounds her main argument on the idea of 'discursivity of nationalism' (nation being a discursive rather than a territorial entity) and follows the theoretical trajectory of the nationalist discourse. She traces it back to the works of Ernest Renan, Benedict Anderson, the subaltern historiography of Shahid Amin and Ranajit Guha, leading to the detailed explication of the nature of Indian nationalism by Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty. To illustrate the 'statist' and gendered nature of war narratives, Gita invokes the feminist scholarship in the area, especially the well-known works of Judith Butler and insights derived from Lynne Hanley's reading of women's war memoirs. Postcolonial theory on nationalism finds echo in the works of military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz who had emphasized the dialectical interaction between various kinds of forces and ideas, precipitating into armed conflict. The various texts deployed by the author, create a layered, polyvalent discourse that aligns with Prasenjit Duara's contention of history as a 'series of multiple and often conflicting narratives produced simultaneously at national, local and transnational levels.' Within this schema nation is more complex than a static entity constructed along the lines of the 'material' and the 'spiritual', but a domain where contesting representations of the nation create a complex polyphonic discourse.

In the third chapter of the book, the author perhaps for the first time in scholarly history examines a fascinating array of war literature from both colonial and post-colonial period. She broadly divides them into two categories – insider and outsider literature. The former being written by men in uniform and thus perceived to have the insider's knowledge and insight; the latter written by 'witnesses' who do not don the military uniform, but bring in the 'outsiders' perspective. It is interesting to encounter the memoirs of Captain Lakshmi Sahgal, a member of the women's regiment of the Indian National Army, with the matter-of-factness of her narration and the ironing out of personal details usually associated with military memoirs scripted by male officers.

Filmic narratives, however, cannot be bound within the formal limits of 'insider-outsider binary'. Popular cinema can successfully appropriate the 'insider position' by drawing on first-hand experience of former combatants and perpetuating 'statist' ideologies and as the author succinctly articulates – taking upon itself 'the burden of narrating the nation'.

The fourth chapter of the book, for me, is the piece de resistance. It brings together a series of known and lesser-known filmic texts like

Haqeeqat and *The Terrorist* and connects them to the politics and aesthetics of the generic war narratives from Hollywood. In doing this the book takes an interesting conceptual leap by maintaining that war narratives both commodify and fetishize 'land', land being a metonymic extension of the concept of the nation.

Gita has opened up the field of study of war and war narratives and given it a new lease of life. In the era of perpetual 'low intensity conflicts', matched by the simultaneous emergence of neo-nationalism and anti-national separatist movements, narratives of war will also take new and unknown forms. I am sure the theoretical groundwork done in this book will be a pioneering effort in her chosen discipline. I congratulate the author and hopefully look forward to see the book in its published form.

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November, 2013

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I

This book seeks to explore the notions of nation and nationalism as they emerge in war narratives, specifically military literature and war films in popular Hindi cinema. Nation being a discursive entity as much as a geo-political one, it would be interesting to examine how the discourses of military literature and war films construct the subject, namely "nation".

The Indian nation faces a multi-pronged attack from neighbouring countries that seek territorial aggrandizement, the forces of liberalization (economic and cultural) and from secessionist forces within the nation. In the face of such an attack, a plethora of discourses engages seriously in constructing an idea of the Indian nation and reinforcing the notion of an Indian identity. The nation may have come into existence as a political entity in August 1947 but the nation as a cultural, social, and economic entity is constantly in the making. This gives the title of this study 'The "Nation" in War' a dual meaning, one the nation as a territorial unit under the perceived threat of an external enemy and two the nation as a discursive terrain, with multiple discourses attempting to gain hegemony.

This study seeks to examine the notions of nation and nationalism in war narratives. However undesirable they may be, wars have been a part of human civilization. Aggression and conflict along with love and compassion form an integral part of interactions between human communities. War in one form or the other has been fought from the stone ages through the medieval and modern periods to the present postmodern era. Every nation has its moments of insecurity when it is attacked by an external force or questioned internally by historically marginalized groups that for one reason or another do not feel the sentiment of oneness, crucial for nation-formation. War calls for a total allegiance to the nation. Differences arising from caste, class, gender are seemingly overshadowed in war. Love for one's birthplace or patriotism, as it is called is a dormant

sentiment that surfaces during a war.

This introductory chapter will outline in some detail the conceptual framework within which to locate the main issues to be dealt with in this study. Drawing upon the seminal work of Benedict Anderson and other scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Eric Hobsbawm, Partha Chatterjee, Kumari Jayawardena and Nira Yuval Davis, I proceed with the now established notion of nation as a contested category. The obsessive desire to grapple with the idea of an India has persisted in the national imagination despite the idea of a postnational or global world gaining currency. Nationalism generally associated with freedom struggles of colonized countries and hitherto restricted to textbooks has been exhumed and brought into focus in the globalized world. Precisely at a time when Third world countries have opened their borders, boundaries, and markets for the free flow of capital from First World countries, blurring to an extent the idea of nation as a distinct territorial and cultural space, the notion of nation wages a battle to survive. This chapter will also enunciate the similarities and differences between military literature and popular cinema and further provide a justification for the use of particular texts.

The formation and consolidation of nation-states as one of the most advanced forms of human communities occurred in Europe and America from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Since then, conflict over territory, overthrow of colonial powers, ethnic rivalry, and the like have been important causes of war. A socio-cultural and political institution such as the nation-state is at times believed to be the basic cause of war in the twentieth century. The desire for territorial aggrandizement, the megalomania of political leaders, and the goal of cultural hegemony are seen as some of the sources of conflict in this era. The Indian sub-continent has its own long history of war. The wars between Chandragupta Maurya and Alexander, Babar and Ibrahim Lodi, Tipu Sultan and the British are some examples. This study entails an understanding of how the idea of India as a nation emerges in the war narratives of the postcolonial period.

The artifacts selected for examination are military literature and war films from popular Hindi cinema. This book would attempt an understanding of nation, nationalism, cinema, war and gender with the help of insights provided by cultural and postcolonial studies. It would then proceed to analyze the representation of war, the popularization of the military hero, the mobilization of sentiment, and the eclipse of the woman in war films and military literature. Through an exploration of the above

issues, I submit that it is possible to arrive at an understanding of the term, "nation." Some of the issues that will be addressed and problematized in this book would be as follows: How do war films and military literature construct the category of nation? How is the family constructed in the texts under investigation? What narrative modes are deployed to create consensus for war? How do war narratives further the statist agenda? What is the link between the war waged by the national army and that by the insurgents?

II

We may ask ourselves, "How is the nation represented in war discourse?" The search for an answer to the question posed would first require a thoroughgoing problematizing of the concept of nation. For this reason, the study purports to begin with the enterprise of understanding the complexity of nation as a conceptual entity.

In recent political debates the category of nation has not only received unprecedented attention but is also being interrogated. This brings into focus related concepts such as nationalism, nationality, patriotism and so on. Politically, nationalism is a movement that demands statehood in order to grant legitimacy to a collectivity that imagines itself as a nation. Scores of books have been written on the subject of nation and nationalism. Benedict Anderson expanded the scope of the subject by treating nation as an imagined community, not as an objective entity. To him, nation was imagined through cultural forms.

Since Anderson, studies on nation and nationalism have changed tracks from the political to the cultural arena. The idea of nationalism as a political/historical phenomenon has been enhanced by its formulation as a discursive phenomenon. Scholars today understand the nation as coming into existence in and through a range of discourses. The nation is characterized as a narrated rather than a cartographic entity. Nationalism then is a mode of narrating the nation. Homi Bhabha focuses on the textuality of the nation in all his writings. His contribution to the nation-nationalism debate enables me to read films and military literature as texts that invoke the nation.

Anderson stresses the role of print-capitalism in imagining a nation. According to him, the two main forms of imagining in eighteenth century Europe were the novel and the newspaper. We may contextualize Anderson's thesis and ask, "How then may the large numbers of illiterate

Indians imagine the nation? Through what modes of mediation does the nation get imagined for them?

These are some fundamental issues that Partha Chatterjee takes up against Anderson in his works. His extensive oeuvre on the topic of nation and nationalism has greatly enhanced our understanding of the Indian nation as a cultural category. In his Preface to the Omnibus Edition comprising three of his best-known works (*Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, *The Nation and its Fragments*, *A Possible India*), outlines the aim of his first book which is "to write the 'ideological history' of the Indian nation-state from its conception to its fruition (1999:v). This book provides theoretical frames to locate the concepts of nation and nationalism. Chatterjee detects a deep contradiction in nationalist discourse: While India borrowed the tools provided by modernity to fight colonialism, it rigidly guarded its tradition and cultural specificity.

In *The Nation and its Fragments*, Chatterjee contests Anderson's formulation of first world nationalisms as "modular" forms and third world nationalisms as imitative. Such a formulation elides the existence of indigenous modes of resistance to colonial rule, especially in the domain of the private/spiritual. For our purposes, Anderson's view that print languages created "unified fields of exchange and communication" (1983:44) that helped foster a nationally imagined community may be applied quite effectively as we shall see later, to the role played by Hindi cinema. The fellow viewership allowed for the interplay between overt entertainment and a covert pan-Indian bonding.

In the West, political nationalism is characterized by the rise of the anti-feudal bourgeoisie. Even in most postcolonial societies, the primarily elite nature of the nationalist classes gave it a sectarian character. However, when the modern Indian nation was taking shape, it was also being interrogated simultaneously for its exclusionary nature. Foremost among such anti-bourgeois thinkers was Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, who saw the nation as a social brotherhood and democracy not merely as a form of government. Ambedkar's vision combined the political aspects of a nation-state with the sociological aspects of the nation. The subsequent chapters will examine whether the nation constructed in the texts under scrutiny embodies an inclusive vision or remains entrenched in the elitist, bourgeois model.

Aurobindo Ghosh claimed the right to freedom for India on religio-spiritual grounds. He based his demand for independence on the inherent

right of people to self rule and the inherent evil of foreign domination. His works are considered primary texts of early twentieth century Bengali religious nationalism (Heehs, 1998). Religious nationalists based their ideology on the belief that Indians had an intrinsic spiritual nature and hence the western secular model was not suitable for the nation. The historical perspective given to religious nationalism by Heehs helps us to understand the interface between religious movements and secessionist movements in contemporary India. Ghosh's militancy even if motivated by the goal of freedom from colonial rule converges with movements such as the Khalistani or the Kashmir militant movement on the point of secularism. Both reject the western version of secularism and believe in the primacy of religion in politics.

Secessionist movements in India have run parallel to the nationalist movement for independence from British rule disrupting the notion of nation as a single unit with a homogenous social and cultural life. These movements have also led to prolonged encounters with the national army in the country, resulting in low intensity conflict and a blurring of the identity of the enemy. Therefore the need is felt to expand the definition of war (more on this later) to include the dynamics of insurgency and consequently the shifting significance of the concept of nation.

For the purposes of this study the term nation will be understood both as a cultural and a territorial space that both reflects as well as constructs an entity called "India." A nation is constituted in the people's imaginary through a series of cultural and representational strategies. The cultural practices of a nation actively engage in creating its particular image. Interestingly, there has been no major work on the link between nation and war in India. War is not a "normal" situation; its peculiarities call for perceptual mechanisms different from those employed during peace. The present study hopes to make up for this deficiency.

III

War studies or polemology as a discipline is mainly restricted to military history and political science. The former is engaged in rigorous analyses of wars from the point of view of strategy. The latter studies war as a political phenomenon caused by differences in political ideologies and praxis. Military historians study war from the soldier's perspective. Unlike the soldier who studies specific wars, battles and campaigns, the political scientists study war at the macro level. Political realists believe in the

inevitability of war and the consequent need for nations to be prepared for it. Political idealists by contrast believe that peace is the natural state of the human being. Therefore the pursuit of peace and harmony among nations is a natural condition of nation states. The Marxists were of the opinion that the nation state was the cause of war. The bourgeois nation used war to subjugate not only its enemies but also the proletariat within its own territory. They believed that the end of war could be brought about by the triumph of socialism as it would facilitate the demise of the state. The political scientists study various factors that lead to war. For the soldier-writer, the inevitability of war is the starting point of his study. He does not question the political causes of war; rather he studies war in order to learn how to win wars. This marked difference in perception is crucial to our analysis of military literature. The present study attempts to integrate the two disciplines, i.e. political science and military studies, by employing the category of culture. Beginning with the premise that war to most of us is a narrated event the study proceeds to explore the "national question" in war discourse.

Military literature in India may be loosely divided into autobiographies/memoirs (J N Chaudhuri, B M Kaul, S S P Thorat, S K Sinha for instance), monographs of battles/wars (P Bhullar, K P Candeth, J P Dalvi, Lachhman Singh, etc), and the evolution of the army as an institution (W J Wilson, S Cohen, P Mason for example). To the best of my knowledge no attempts have been made so far to study the representation of the soldier or the nation in Indian military literature. Also military literature has not received critical scrutiny except for journalistic attempts in the form of book reviews. Lastly, military literature has not been used as a tool to examine the ways in which India is constructed as a nation. My study is an effort to fill these gaps.

Lt Gen S L Menezes' *Fidelity and Honour* is an authoritative history of the Indian Army from its origins in the seventeenth century till the present. The book details the formation of the Presidency armies (Bengal, Madras and Bombay) under the East India Company up to 1857. Indian troops were recruited into independent companies, commanded by a British officer. Differences of caste and religion remained strong amongst the Indian troops and the British officers were ordered by their superiors not to interfere in such matters. The book analyzes the 1857 revolt, the Indian army's role in the two world wars, the Indian national army, the partitioning of the Indian army that occurred with the creation of Pakistan, the Nehru and post-Nehru eras.

The studies conducted on war so far focus on strategy, history, analysis of causes and effects. Studies of war literature (John Onions for instance) treat it as "literary" texts and deploy the tools of literary criticism to interpret these texts. Jean Bethke Elshtain's book *Women and War* is a major intervention in war studies in which war is treated as a cultural phenomenon. It offers a feminist perspective on war discourse. However, the "national question" is not satisfactorily addressed by Elshtain. In the third world context, women are drawn into war-like situations in anti-colonial struggles as well as ethnic conflicts. This makes it imperative for us to address women's militarism/militancy differently from first world contexts. Women's agency in the third world context needs to be treated within more sophisticated theoretical matrices. My analysis of nation and war as gendered categories seeks to develop an understanding of the problematic relationship between women, militarism and the state. I invoke the ideas provided by Nira Yuval-Davis in her chapter, "Gendered Militaries, Gendered Wars" from her important book *Gender and Nation*.

Military literature belongs to the category of niche writing. Unlike popular films made to cater to a large audience, military literature has a limited readership. It is therefore unmediated by the imperatives of commerce. Does this automatically make it a freewheeling narrative unconcerned with the market forces? If so would the writers be more free and honest? The search for straightforward answers to these questions is hampered by the nature of autobiographical writing. The temporal dislocation between the events described and the time of writing undermines the truth claims of this discourse. The representation of the self in autobiography or diary involves the processes of selection and erasure just as in fictional narratives. The sanctity of military literature is however diluted in this postmodern era by the intrusion of the media (print and electronic) into the hitherto insulated organization.

War produces inexplicable situations. Even bitterly fighting enemies could suddenly develop empathy for each other as comrades-in-arms. Does the military experience narrated in literature produce the experience of individuals or nations? Classical European literature on war has an inexorable tragic sense as its dominant quality (Greek tragedies, for example). The literature of the American civil war dramatizes the conflict a soldier faces in the contradiction between private emotions and public duty. (For example, Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*.) This aspect which finds a prominent place in war films will be illustrated in the third chapter. Valorization of army discipline and behaviour went hand in hand with the professionalization of the army in the seventeenth and

eighteenth century Europe. Both war films and military literature devote ample space to the description of training institutes. The professional soldier then was more and more isolated from the rest of society. War is only a small, even if the most momentous part of the military experience. The rest of the time is spent in making the organization work. For this reason, it may be noted that Lt Gen Sinha's memoir analyzed in the second chapter has barely a few pages related to the author's war experience. Any soldier more often than is imagined, is a corporate executive rather than a warrior.

Comradeship is a dominant theme in the literature of war. The works of some English poets such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves exemplify this theme. In their works, the death of a comrade is more tragic than the horrors of war. The endurance of the brutalities of war is made possible in the light of collective suffering. The universality of the soldier's situation increases endurance levels. The death of a comrade is like a rehearsal of one's own death. The despair and senselessness of war increase with each comrade's death.

As can be seen, war is mostly explained in western literature as a universal phenomenon with philosophical implications for life, death, friendship, betrayal and so on. War does not occupy as much space in the collective imagination of the Indian people as it does in the western mind. While not ignoring entirely the existential dilemmas of war, the analysis provided foregrounds the immediacy of war, its representation in the cultural arenas of the national space and the gendered nature of wars.

IV

The postmodernist age heralded the blurring of boundaries between binary oppositions, one of the most important being the distinction between "high" and "low" culture. An ideology that sees the surface as the real, appearance as reality has facilitated the examination of genres dismissed for long as unworthy of serious study. How may the popular be defined? What constitutes the popular? Can the popular be defined only in terms of its contrasting other, "The elite"? Stuart Hall has argued that the popular must necessarily be seen in a relationship of tension with its other, i.e. the elite (Hall, 1997). The historical shift from modernism to postmodernism in the eighties in the West may be seen as a shift from the classical to the popular. Such a shift is imbricated in the socio-political/economic forces of a particular time and place. The populist

impulse in postmodernism has enabled the institutionalization of film studies as an academic discipline. This trend has established itself in metropolitan academic centers in India. The discipline of popular film studies is in its own way subversive in nature. That which is condemned as commercial or popular (appealing to masses) has attained status in academia. The trajectory of the Indian nation-state is best charted by examining popular cinema. Cinema, especially in Third World countries, is implicated in the economic, political, social and cultural processes of nation building. My argument focuses on how a text (whether a film or a memoir) produces a particular subject, in this case, the nation and how the process of production of the subject is inflected by ideology, commerce and historical imperatives.

Cinema is a multi-dimensional art form. It combines literature, the pictorial, the plastic arts, dance, drama, music and even architecture. Architecture's use of space to add to the drama is well exemplified in the films of Eisenstein or Antonioni (Corrigan, 1998). Film technology, production and distribution are commercial and economic enterprises. Films are not as much about subjects/themes as they are about presentation of subjects/themes. Any analysis of film must necessarily take into account this fundamental premise, what John Berger calls "way of seeing." The ideological orientations of the film are manifested through inducing the audience to particular ways of seeing. The power of art, technology and commerce combine with ideology in the process of image production.

In the past few years, several scholars have explored themes in cinema using the topos of nation and nationalism as a framework. One of the most influential studies is Sumita S Chakravarty's *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema*. It is an in-depth account of popular Hindi cinema over a period of forty years from Independence. The study is deeply entrenched in the poststructuralist framework that positions cinema at the intersection of the axes of culture and nation.

Chakravarty employs the metaphor of impersonation to establish a relationship between Indian cinema and national identity. In a way, impersonation is reminiscent of the appearance versus reality theme, central to the readings of classical literature. Chakravarty analyzes very briefly the 1961 Dev Anand starrer *Hum Dono*, a film with a World War II background. *Haqeeqat* is mentioned in passing and its non-committal nature is too easily interpreted as the "apolitical stance of the Bombay film" (1996: 219). *Hum Dono* receives more attention as the double role played by Dev Anand gives Chakravarty an opportunity to locate the

reading of this film within her framework of the impersonation theory. Such a tendentious reading of a war film obfuscates the possibilities of several other interpretations.

My study has a strong feminist bias in which I explore the modes through which war narratives construct masculinity and feminity. The narratives use the metaphor of the earth mother to glorify the fecundity of the woman. The idealization of the nation as a mother, on the one hand, and the valorization of women's subservience to national goals on the other, account for the paradoxical construction of womanhood in war discourse.

V

A set of frameworks that informs my analysis of military literature and popular war film may be explained here. For military literature, I propound a framework that divides it into what I call "insider" and "outsider" literature. The former term designates the output of writers who belong to the armed forces and the latter indicates writers who write on military matters but are not from the armed forces. The two categories together resonate with the notion of secondary discourse as formulated by Ranajit Guha in his essay, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency (1983). Secondary discourse according to Guha consists of a body of retrospective writing like memoirs. It is written by the participant after a considerable lapse of time from the event. Unlike primary discourse (letters, dispatches, telegrams, and reports written by officials strictly for the information of the government), secondary discourse is meant for public consumption. This is not to assume that the compartmentalization of the two discourses is rigid. The two categories do overlap to the extent that both are written by a participant in the event.

I use Antonio Gramsci's and Louis Althusser's formulations of ideology to understand how a war film upholds and propagates the statist agenda. According to French theorist Althusser, the function of ideology is to provide social unity and to sustain class domination as well. In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" (1971), Althusser explains the basis of his critical production. The key question he poses is: what is ideology and how does it permeate society and conscience? Using Marx, he sets out to explain his idea of a state. He enhances our understanding of the state by distinguishing the ways in which state power operates. He identifies two significant modes called "Repressive State Apparatus" viz.

army, police etc. and "Ideological State Apparatus" viz. religion, family, school, media etc. The hierarchies that operate in society are replicated in the values taught to individuals through ideological state apparatuses. Thus ideological state apparatuses ensure the continuation of existing relations of state power. Following this understanding of ideology I wish to see Hindi cinema as a cohesive force in that its ideology, as I shall show reflects as well as shapes national culture. Popular cinema is the arena of shared space (the cinema hall), shared aspirations/dreams/fantasies and shared national recreation. Such a sharing creates a community of national consumers that mediate in the formulation of discursive strategies of popular/public culture into which the hegemonic ideology seeps in at times in subtle ways, at others even overtly.

According to Antonio Gramsci, a particular ideology flourishes in situations created by economic conditions. In order to understand the ways in which ideology penetrated and circulated in any given society, Gramscicoined the term "hegemony". Hegemony involves the crystallization and entrenchment of the ideas of the elite classes. Hence we may say if ideology is the medium to transmit ideas, according to Gramsci, then popular film can also be read as a terrain on which ideological battles are fought. This makes cinematic characters bearers of dominant ideologies. Despite the onslaught of reception studies, Dwyer and Pinney's for instance, that foreground the consumption of cinema, it is my contention that the scope for the study of cinema as an ideological site is not yet exhausted. To continue with Guha's formulation, I suggest that the discourse of film, especially terrorist film be equated with what Guha calls "tertiary discourse" (1983: 71). This discourse belongs to the realm of the third person, non-official narratives. It is characterized by its radical content made clear through its sympathy for the insurgent. Some of the films in the third chapter will be analyzed in the light of this formulation.

VI

In this section, I provide the layout of the book. The several strands in the title of the study (nation, war, military literature, Hindi cinema) need to be opened up and each strand necessitates detailed explication.

In Chapter II, which follows this Introduction, I offer an elaborate overview of the concepts of nation and nationalism as they form the objects of study. Its main concern is to map out the history of the terms nation and nationalism as they have evolved in various contexts. The

proliferation of studies of these terms from different disciplinary locations underlies their contestatory nature.

In colonized countries, nationalism is predominantly understood as anti-colonialism. It conjures up images of an enslaved past out of which the nation extricated itself by the concerted and dedicated efforts of the people. These efforts written into the narrative of the nation as sacrifice, patriotism etc. bring to it a strong affective element forging "a community of sentiment", to use Appadurai's phrase. The creation of the *Bharatmata* as an emblematic figure of the nation encapsulates an entire regime of sentiment engendered and controlled by the state to a great extent through deployment of various strategies. The *Bharatmata* emblem also indicates that the nation is a gendered construct, an idea that is explored in the book.The mobilization of sentiment is crucial to the sustenance of the idea of a unified and unitary India. Sentiment is thus nurtured by authoring a progressivist narrative of the nation. It is in this sense then that nationalism may be studied as a narrative. Here the role of popular culture comes into play. Popular culture is a contested site that exists in a relationship of tension with high culture.

Although nationalism is largely understood as an anti-colonial movement, for the purposes of this study, an understanding of nationalism as a discourse would be more productive. Nationalism is harnessed to the service of defining the nation. It involves the attempts to structure a coherent narrative of the nation. In this sense, India may be conceived as a discursive terrain over which different discourses of various ideological hues engage in a battle to gain hegemonic status in the task of lending meaning to an amorphous entity called an Indian nation. As the historical narrative of a nation is imbricated within its cultural articulations, the discourse of history is significant for the ways in which it shapes cultural discourses.

The historical narrative enshrined in the institutionalized discipline of history is one of the chief sites that engages in defining the nation. Rajeev Bhargava distinguishes between four types of history writing on nationalism, viz. manipulated, strongly relativist, critical and objectivist. A glaring example of manipulated history is official history because such a history needs the power to be manipulated which rests with officials. Nationalist history writing takes on the responsibility of correcting colonial history. It attempts to restore the self-respect of the colonized people by creating the image of an idyllic past. Relativist histories are those that could not possibly be entirely objective. For instance, Indian historiography is divided between the communal and the secular, the

former emphasizing communal difference and the latter the modern state with religion restricted to private realms (2000, 195-196). The discourse of history is significant for the ways in which it shapes cultural discourses. Nationalism in its various manifestations then may be seen as a dynamic and constant on-going process to gain power over the means to define, to give meaning to a well-bounded geographical space which we call nation.

The study of nationalism in postcolonial societies must necessarily begin with the idea of nationalism as anti-colonial struggle. The territorial concept of nation shifts the locus of identity-formation from people to place. All nationalist movements claim the authority to speak for the whole nation. This gives a mass character to the movement. Such democratization is central to nationalism as anti-colonialism as it leads to mobilization of masses. In the Indian context, Gandhi is credited with bringing this mass character to the freedom movement. The sociology of nationalism concentrates on the being and becoming of nation. According to Aloysius, nationalism is best studied as "a specific form of social change." (1997: 13) Anti-imperialist mobilizations of people are based on a common political purpose. This collectivization of people at the same time results in the formation of new social communities with the consequent focus on hitherto marginalized sections. Such a perspective of the nation shifts the focus from its conceptualization from above as a unified whole.

The new formations foreground the conceptualization of the nation from below as a collectivity of heterogeneous fragments upon which unity is imposed. As we shall see later in this study, such a perspective becomes fundamental to the study of insurgent movements.

As stated above, the nation is to be understood here as a cultural space in which culture is the locus of its self-definition. In the process of defining the nation, culture transforms into an ideology and becomes a contested/disjunctive site and forms part of the larger framework of the politics of nationalism. When a nation claims for itself a unique cultural distinctiveness, then the form of cultural nationalism arises. The idea of a unitary, absolute culture is utopian, especially in a plural society like India. Culture invariably is entwined with religion in multi-religious contexts. Therefore, cultural nationalism and religious nationalism become overlapping modes of constituting a nation. Writing about India's attempts at forging a national identity, Richard Lannoy writes, "The difficulties in forming a contemporary national self-image may be more clearly appreciated when it is realized that while India is now building a modern,

secular state, its traditions are permeated by a sophisticated religious sensibility" (1998: 101-102). The cultural nationalists claim that religious differences can be ironed out by fostering the idea of a common cultural heritage. In a country like India, this is highly problematic as invariably culture is made synonymous with a Brahminical Hindu culture. Propagating this as Indian culture would be tantamount to homogenization and majoritarianism. In attempting to forge a national identity for a nation coping with new forces like free market and globalization, it is tempting to fall prey to the idea of a homogenized nation-state as the perfect solution for a conflict-ridden plural society. Critiques of Nehruvian socialism and secularism paved the ground for Hindu fundamentalism. The categories of caste and religion suppressed in Nehruvian discourse began to tumble out of the closet into the public arenas. In the articulations of intellectuals, caste and religion became "respectable" categories of analysis. These in turn emboldened the religious fundamentalist groups to mobilize at the political level. The analysis of the growth of Hindu fundamentalism is necessary for this study as it is inextricably linked to militarism.

Of the many locations from which 'the national' may be defined the diasporic community is an increasingly significant one. The locus of a postnational global order lies within this community. The diaspora with its feet firmly planted on foreign soil and heart in the homeland emblematizes the simultaneity of lived experiences. The threat to the relevance of the conceptual nation in the wake of globalization has only increased efforts to perpetuate its significance. While first world discourses castigate the nation as a totalizing grand narrative, many third world scholars too, concede this point of view. However, their very attempt to move away from the meta-narrative by valorizing the fragment only helps to keep the former in the limelight. Diasporic writers (Rushdie, Seth, etc), scholars (Spivak, Bhabha for instance) and filmmakers (Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair and others) have added an entirely new dimension to the study of nation and nationalism, a dimension at times more valorized than that provided by the "real" Indians. This brings into question the instability of national identities which war narratives as we shall see contest in very definitive ways.

Tagore was instrumental in prophesying the possible violent offshoots of nationalism in postcolonial nations. He notes, "Nationalism is a great menace. It is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles" (1985: 111). Nationalism implanted itself chiefly as anti-imperialism resulting in freedom movements and finally independence. However, if nationalism was purely anti-imperialism, it should have

extinguished itself with political independence. That it survives to this day in many forms (ethnic/cultural/linguistic, to name a few types) reveals its many-sidedness. Most of these movements have resulted in violent uprisings, leading to bloodshed and fragmentation of national and human communities. It is for this reason that this study considers nation not as a unified grand narrative but one that is contested by the fragments. This view propagated by the writers of the Subaltern Studies Series has gained canonical status in academia. Here I use it as a starting point in order to examine the extent to and rigour with which war narratives seek to dismantle such a view and resurrect the notion of a unitary India. Interestingly, this idea carefully constructed by the secular nationalists is revisited by the present day cultural nationalists. Only the former's notion was inclusionary, the latter's exclusionary.

Chapter III analyzes some military memoirs (Capt Lakshmi Sahgal, Lt Gen S K Sinha) diaries (Amar Singh, Harinder Baweja), war accounts (Brig J P Dalvi, Maj Gen Lachhman Singh) and newspaper reportage to examine the truth claims of these narratives generally considered as the "authentic" or "official" sources for information on military matters. To reiterate, the selection of texts may be divided on the basis of the "insider" and "outsider" author. The literature produced by the men/women in uniform may be characterized as "insider" writing and literature produced on military matters by those not belonging to the armed forces may be characterized as "outsider" writing. The latter (A Soldier's Diary and newspaper reportage) forms part of this chapter for the purpose of comparison and contrast. Interestingly, whatever criticism there is of the state emanates from "insider" literature. "Outsider" literature as we will see, indulges in romanticizing the soldier. Both however, uphold the sanctity of the notion of the nation. In this globalized world in which nations are conceptualized as abstracted "imagined communities" and nationalism condemned as archaic and disruptive of global unification, the Army persists with a notion of nation concretized in the form of borders, boundaries, maps and fences.

The chapter will deal with the construct of nation in military literature. The focus here is quite clearly on the phenomenon of war and how it produces a particular idea of the nation. Carl Von Clausewitz, the theorist on war defined war as an extension of politics and the military as an instrument of political policy (1976). To the Nazi theorists of war there was no such thing as peace. Instead, peace was only the period of war preparation. For the socialists only the war of the oppressed classes could be considered the legitimate war. Kant believed that peace could be

attained if all states became republics and then formed a confederation of independent states (Efraim Karsh in Freedman, 1994). Legitimacy of war is granted in the epics as well as by socialists, however, for the latter only the war of the oppressed classes is the legitimate war. To Marxists-Leninists, the nation-state was the root cause of war. Liberal thinkers conceptualize the state as a war-like entity. Liberal and Marxist theories are inadequate to explain war, both being based on the idea of history as progress. War in the twentieth century, far from being the epic battle of good over evil has been self-serving, fought out of greed, territorial aggrandizement and ethnic/national/religious rivalries. Liberal theorists believe that chances of war decline in an industrialized society. But experience has proved that ethnic/religious differences perpetrate war even in industrialized societies. Consequently, war is not always necessarily fought for resources or territory. Even advanced societies can be drawn into the ethnic conflicts of third world countries, as is so well exemplified by the US attacks on Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. The neo-Machiavellian view is that war and the armed forces are a part of the human condition. War makes possible the unleashing of aggressive impulses. Glenn Gray in his *The Warriors' War* (1967) makes visible a delight in destruction (in Elshtain, 1987). The romantic notion of war which may be seen in the work of Martin Van Creveld for instance, holds that war provides the opportunity for man to display heroism and all that is best in human nature, testing his worth against an equal or stronger opponent.

To us, however, it is war as a narrated event that is central to an understanding of texts in this book. To the vast majority, war is narrated through stories, legends, history and films. The fascination for a war story is endemic to the human race. War stories are captivating as they deal with certain fundamental existential dilemmas of the human race. The transformative power of war with its classic stories of triumph and honour and as a rite of passage that shapes its veterans in profound ways makes for self-aggrandizement that translates into the aggrandizement of the nation itself. The children in the villages according to Fanon dream of identifying with 'some rebel or another, the story of whose bravery still moves them to tears." (1967: 91). There was a spate of books on war and terror after the attacks of September 11 on New York's World Trade Centre. Justifying the spurt in sales a representative of a bookstore in New Delhi said, "Our job is to give the readers what they want. Tragedy and controversy sell like nothing else" (2 November 2001, Times of India, Ahmedabad).

The tradition of war narratives does not exist in India unlike in Greek