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# Representing Dalit Bodies in Colonial North India

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This essay examines how and why representations of Dalit bodies became potent symbols and critical grounds for identity formation and social positioning, for the colonisers, upper-caste Hindus, social reformers and the Dalit themselves in colonial north India, with a particular emphasis on the United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh, and henceforth UP). By studying the multiple discourses of different sections of society in colonial UP, this essay tries to provide a perspective on the disjunctive forms of representation that signified Dalit bodies, both female and male.

Representing Dalit bodies in certain modes can indicate ways in which pasts are remembered and retailed, and the relationships of such pasts to people's sense of belonging. As has been remarked, representation can pose afresh the relationship between memory and myth, fiction and history, oral and written, transmitted and inscribed, stereotypicality and lived history.[1] Reading the histories of Dalit bodies in colonial north India through the lens of representation adds important dimensions to our understandings of it, while also revealing tensions between the pedagogical and the performative, the rhetoric and the reality. Looking deep into the interior of constructions and projections, one can learn of ways in which other realities are conjugated. Representation makes private feelings and images public. Further, identities are formed through practices of representation.

While functioning as storytelling mechanisms, representations of Dalit bodies in colonial India through multiple narratives helped in circulating ideas about them. They were also symbols, struggling to impose definitions upon what is and what should be. They often symbolised the hidden fears and desires of the collective unconscious. They spoke for the Dalit women and men, and defined their identity, giving them a shape, image and texture. While writing this essay, I have grown keenly aware that representations of Dalits were often stereotypical, and not uplifting to their self-image.

Indeed, more often than not, the opposite was generally the case. As Foucault writes, all representations are by their very nature insidious instruments of surveillance, oppression and control — both tools and effects of power. However, if we argue that representations of Dalits were constructed only to support dominant modes of ideology, and that their aim was ultimately coercive, then how can we use this space also for confrontation? Does representation have the scope of carving out more contingent, varied and flexible modes of resistances?[2]

It needs to be also remembered, as remarked by Stuart Hall, that different groups of people from different social circumstances perceive the same representations differently.[3] Further, this essay also attempts to show how within the field of representation, counter-images emerged, challenging hegemonic visions. Different, often contradictory ways and practices of representing the Dalit bodies signified that their identities were historically amenable to transformation, and that there could be a co-existence of multiple identities and images along with different practices of representation. It needs to be also remembered, as Carlo Ginzburg has effectively argued, that any analysis of representation cannot overlook the principle of reality.[4] The structures of gender and caste oppression in colonial India impinged on the processes of identity formation and on its representation.

Representations of Dalit women and men posit a problem for the historians of colonial India. For example, in colonial India, there have been a significant number of studies concerned with the representations of high caste, middle-class women, particularly for example the *bhadramahila* in Bengal.[5] My own earlier work too has been chiefly concerned with such representations in colonial north India.[6] While significant in their own right, there is an implicit implication in these works that since Dalit women fall within the category of 'women', their representation need not be singled out for a separate study. Thus, Dalit women's portrayal as a major area of feminist scholarly examination has remained negligible and on the fringes,[7] particularly in colonial UP, illustrating a crisis within Indian historiography. Representations of Dalit women have usually been shrouded in invisibility, and remained few and far between. They have remained unvoiced, misseen, and not doing. The subsuming of Dalit women's representation under the rubric of 'women' obscures the

double jeopardy of caste and gender faced by them.[8]

In the case of representations of Dalit men, we encounter a different problem, linked to issues of masculinity. Studies on masculinity in India have come on their own in the past decade particularly.[9] Insightful works have also revealed how masculinity was constructed and represented particularly in the colonial discourse, juxtaposing it to femininity, with dichotomies of manly British and effeminate colonial subject.[10] And in present day India, links have been drawn between the growth of the Hindu Right, assertions of masculinity and violence.[11] However, most scholarly studies and theoretical exegeses on masculinity and its representations in colonial India have either focussed on British authorities or on Hindu men, and have not examined the way it gets played out in Dalit politics and identity formations by Dalits themselves.[12] While religious identities have remained an important arena for masculinity studies, the same cannot be said with equal authority about caste. Dalits have remained vexingly invisible, and excluded as participants in the discourse around masculinity. In other words, the conjunctiveness and intermeshing of caste, Dalit identities, sexual ideology and masculinity has not been easily recognised. Examining representations of Dalit male bodies messes up the dominant images of hegemonic masculinity,[13] challenging strait-jacketed links between masculinity, domination and power. Various images of Dalit men and their masculinity by colonisers, reformers and by Dalits themselves contested, resisted and absorbed hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

This essay situates representations of Dalit bodies at the centre of its analysis, as keys to understanding the complexities of caste, class, gender and sexuality in colonial and post colonial India. It scrutinises these dimensions by highlighting various sites of representing Dalit bodies in different contexts. It focuses on three different sets of representations of Dalit bodies. First, it studies the didactic literature in Hindi, written largely in late colonial north India, addressed mainly to middle-class, upper-caste women. Through them, it shows how Dalit women were imaged by an influential section of the upper castes. Simultaneously it explores attempts made by Dalits to counter such images. Second, it looks at conversions, and shows, particularly through cartoons, how Dalit bodies of both women and men were represented. And lastly, it peeps into Dalit male bodies and their representations through militarised and army discourses, both by the colonisers and by Dalits themselves. By focussing on three disparate sites,

it tries to see how Dalit bodies were attempted to be decoded and recoded into a 'comfortable' system of representation. An examination of the way Dalit bodies were described and imagined tells us much more about the describers and the imaginers. We know as much about the object as the subject.[14] While the essays studies three different arenas and styles of representation, it hopes to provide some clues to the conflicting, contradictory and often contested nature of representations of Dalit women and men.

## I. Dirty Vamps ('Kutnis') as 'Other': (Mis)Representations of Dalit Women in Hindi Didactic Literature

Gender has only recently emerged as an integral part of historical studies on Dalits in colonial India.[15] These works effectively show how attempts to project Dalit women in certain ways led not only to the strengthening of upper-caste women's status but also to the consolidation of caste-specific patriarchies. Reform of Dalit women also became a way of strengthening claims to upward mobility. I extend these arguments by exploring a literary genre of colonial north India, namely Hindi didactic literature, written mostly for Hindu upper caste, middle class women, and ways in which the Dalit woman[16] got represented in it. From the late nineteenth century, there was a rapid development of public institutions, libraries, and print culture, with growing publishing houses, presses, newspapers and books in UP. This print explosion and the emerging vernacular press helped in producing a large amount of didactic Hindi literature, which had an inherent caste and class character. These etiquette guides and management manuals were overwhelmingly written by a vocal and influential section of the Hindu middle class literati, belonging to upper and intermediate castes. They became one of the cultural resources, which helped in fashioning an upper caste, middle class Hindu identity and a respectable domesticity.[17] This literature, precise and detailed, principally addressed itself to middle class, high caste Hindu women. This literature produced and strengthened the construction of a woman which was increasingly detached from productive resources and activities. Through these books, middle class, upper caste women were asked to be *pativratas*, obedient, religious, and competent in household work.[18] High caste perspectives abounded in these writings, reinforcing their supremacy. Even those tracts that were written with gender sensitivity, had their readers

clearly marked out.

Poor, lower caste and Dalit women never appeared as actors in these didactic manuals, as they were largely ignored or left out. However it is interesting to examine this space where Dalit women were almost invisible and silent. After all feminist history also means exposure of the often hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present as defining forces in the organisation of societies. Ways in which Dalit women appeared in this literature revealed deep seated biases. Dalit women here were not just a footnote but a constitutive footnote. They were perceived in a binary opposition to the upper caste women. To study this literature through a Dalit feminist lens also puts a question mark on simple binary oppositions, represented by male versus female. Rather, it reflects a simultaneous active management of gender, caste, class and religious power. These manuals in many ways helped in consolidating caste barriers, in policing and maintaining borders, in contributing to a rhetoric that 'naturalised' caste differences, and in justifying and perpetuating the status quo. The religious, caste and class identity of the audience of this literature helped in determining, marking, and sharpening, their difference with women of lower castes, particularly Dalit women, in terms of social status, lifestyle, dressing, attitude and behaviour. These markers became significant to prove the higher social status and civilisation of the high castes, more so in a colonial situation. Since this literature was meant for a particular audience, the image of the Dalit woman could be stereotyped and projected as 'different'. Through such representations, there was an attempt to permeate a collective mind-set, an 'us-them' mentality, and a hierarchical social construction of womanhood.

These images of Dalit women were usually constructed by upper caste male writers, but upper caste women too often helped in mapping the historical terrain of such representations.[19] In a gendered politics of power, women were always subservient to men, but in a caste politics of power, upper caste, middle class women often cooperated and participated with men to achieve control, and to contrast themselves with outcaste women. A consolidation of their own status and power also helps elucidate why this literature constructed Dalit women as deviants from prescribed social norms. Repetitive transmission of negative and false images of Dalit women had their roots firmly fixed in ancient, cultural traditions.[20] With the coming of colonialism and the development of print culture, such imagery received

an impetus.

These manuals directed the high caste women to cover themselves up, not to speak loudly, not to fight, not to gossip and not to converse too much with other women. It was precisely these traits and activities that were identified with Dalit women and which were seen as markers of difference. Thus the image of the morally chaste, virtuous, ideal upper caste Hindu woman was sharply juxtaposed to negative portrayals of the Dalit woman, seen as loud, raucous, unfeminine, uncouth, uncultured and shameless. One such tract, *Kanyaon ki Pothi ya Kanya Subodhini*, meant for girls and women, retailing appropriate behaviour for them, distinguished between higher and lower caste women by emphasising that upper caste women did not fight with one another, did not give *galis* (abuses), and never uttered bad words. They all were specified as traits of lower caste women, who were seen as constantly fighting, abusing, shouting and bad mouthing.[21] Such imagery pervaded the description of movements and actions of Dalit women - with their eyes rolling, lips protruding, feet stamping, pawing, gesticulating and revealing a frenzied madness. Portrayal of such binary and polar opposites helped to show upper caste view of themselves and their women versus how they saw the 'other'. The presence of Dalit women thus helped to improve the social image of high caste women in this literature, whose behaviour marked her as different from civilised upper caste womanhood. The construction of 'woman' in this literature thus had two sides: upper caste was what woman is and ought to be; Dalit was what she had better not be. Caste difference was thus marked in profound ways through the construction of gendered differences between upper caste and Dalit womanhood.

Or to take another example, a tract had detailed instructions through rhymes, anecdotes and letters for women of varied backgrounds, including lower caste women, who were variously branded as *thagini* (cheat), *chatori* (greedy) and *kutni* (evil).[22] She was identified as not only uncultured and uncivilised but also someone full of *kapat* (deceit) and a home-breaker. There was a perception that Dalit women were closely related in both nature and character to bad behaviour. Thus a tract had as its last, and stated to be the most significant, chapter entitled 'Jokhimon se Chetavni' (Warning from Dangers).[23] Addressing itself explicitly to middle class, high caste girls and women, it stated:

In households various kutnis keep coming and going. We have

> to daily engage with women like *malin* (woman gardener/ flower seller), *nain* (woman of the barber's caste), *kaharin* (woman of a water-drawer caste), *chamarin* (woman of the Chamar caste), *dhobin* (washerwoman), *barain* (woman who sells betel leaf), *pisanharin* (woman who grinds corn), *maniharin* (woman bangle-seller) and *dai* (midwife). All these women also indulge in pimping. They start fights in peaceful homes. They roam about criticising others. They tell tales about depraved conducts of husbands and corrupt the minds of brides. They cause fighting between husband and wife. When they feel that a particular bride is not of a very sound character, they make her fight the others in the house and sometimes even make her run away… These *kutnis* work hand in glove with other wicked characters. They take money from them to trick women of decent homes. And they do it in such a cunning manner that it is impossible to know it. Dear daughter, be very careful of these women. They are notorious for telling bad and false tales. You clearly tell them that you have no time for these dirty stories. It is *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that are only worth listening to.[24]

This asymmetry among women strengthened the ideology of 'otherness', with an either-or orientation. Another tract stated that Dalit women particularly the *dai* and the *bhangan* (female sweeper) were the ones who were mainly responsible for spoiling upper caste women, and it was because of them that *irsha* (jealousy), *dvesh* (fighting) and *kalah* (tension) prevailed in the family.[25] Upper caste women were thus constantly warned to be on constant vigilance against these perceived *vyabhicharini* (adulterous) and *patit* (degraded) women.[26] It was stressed that our neighbourhoods should be cleansed of such dangerous women, as they caused grave harm to character.[27] Warned another tract to upper caste women:

> Be most cautious of the dangers lurking in interactions with *nain, maniharin, chamarin* and *kaharin*. They are the ones who are mainly responsible for a large number of misdeeds and harms done in the past and being done at present…. If you interact with and listen to them, demon will enter your

pure hearts.[28]

These 'shameless' women were an antithesis of the virtuous, upper caste women. The devaluation of Dalit women increased because they departed from middle class/upper caste conceptions of 'true' womanhood and respectable domesticity. In these tracts these Dalit women were 'non-women', something other than women, and denied the status of 'woman', which was defined by the cult of the high caste woman. Rather, these women were identified primarily from their low caste, with their specific 'degrading' occupations. Further, such portrayals of lower caste women, linked to their occupational status, were tied to the ideology of domesticity, which stripped the notion of femininity of its labour content and denuded its economic value for the household. These manuals thus promoted the claims of middle-class women to the prized domain of exclusive housewifery and childcare as a mark of status, while denigrating the Dalit women who worked outside their homes, and were seen as unable to devote their lives to wifehood and motherhood exclusively. It was remarked that these outcaste women, who worked outside their homes, had 'polluted' characters, did not look after their children properly, could not make their husbands happy, and all their 'soft' traits disappeared, destroying their 'womanliness'.[29] Hence two stereotypes of women were being constructed in this literature. In the first case, women who could afford not to work were being defined through the primers as 'ideal' women while Dalit women who were remunerated for their services were denigrated, owning to the pervasive devaluation of all manual labour. The private/public dichotomy was also defined, redefined and strengthened by highlighting that it was this that differentiated high caste women from Dalit women.

Alongside, the upper caste Hindu male world also often drew the Dalit woman's body as excessive and flagrantly sexual, quite different from the emerging ideology of chastity, purity and modesty which defined the middle-class, urban, high caste woman's body. Crass representations of abundant and questionable sexuality of the Dalit female body were juxtaposed to the secluded demeanour of upper caste female body. There was an absence of *lajja* (modesty) in Dalit women. They were identified as *nirlajj* (shameless) and *randis* (prostitutes) in these manuals.[30] In orientalist reportage, the dependent status of unclean menial groups was defined by superior landed people in terms of the sexual availability of their womenfolk.[31] The Dalit women were supposed to live in temporary

marriages, have questionable sexual morals and experience frequent divorces and desertions. They were seen as sex objects by the high caste men particularly — good to have sex with, but never to fall in love with. Thus the Dalit female body, while represented as 'unfeminine', was also perceived as lustful. She was unattractive but alluring. Her body was both at the same time — repulsive and desirable, untouchable and available, reproductive and productive, ugly and beautiful. Sexual exploitation of Dalit women was an everyday fact, which was often expressed in terms of the alleged 'loose' character of Dalit women themselves. Thus casually remarked Crooke:

> It is needless to say that the records of our courts swarm with examples of the association of men of the Rajput class with women of the lower races, and in this stratum of village society there is not even a pretence of moral continence. The effect of this state of things is obvious and requires no further illustration.[32]

The fact that most Dalit women were active in the non-segregated work force, and worked as agricultural labourers along with men, exacerbated their sexualised identity in the eyes of upper caste publicists. Thus a tract stated:

> If you look at the personal life of many of these lowly and labourer women who work around our household, then you too will say along with us that 80 out of 100 of these women have extremely degenerate characters. Even the census reports state that many of these women labourers are prostitutes in reality. Many of the women peddlers who sell things or sit in shops proclaim their lewd behaviour loudly. Only 2 out of every 1000 such women can be said to have a chaste character.[33]

A fear was expressed of sexual liaisons between upper caste men and outcaste women. Upper caste women were warned to beware of these women who could woo their husbands, and to ensure that their men kept away from them. While critiquing men of their frivolous nature, biases against outcaste women were also revealed. Stated one:

> The licentious tendencies of men are very much visible in the public spaces - on streets, roads, narrow lanes, markets, fairs and festivals… They will not talk with their wife at home, but will laugh and talk with the outside *jamadarin* (female sweeper), who comes to clean the bathrooms or streets. They will flirt with the *maniharin* and the *chamarin* on the street, completely neglecting their wife. Women need to be cautious of the dirty nature of their husbands and beware of these women.[34]

The fears of upper caste men and their illicit liaisons with outcaste women and vice-versa, of upper caste women colluding with outcaste men, both were played upon. Thus for example, when arguments were made to keep upper caste women couched in domesticity, it was also stated that public places were particularly dangerous because of the possibilities of interaction between outcaste and Muslim men with upper caste Hindu women, who could lure them away.[35] On the other hand, as we have seen, Dalit women were seen as immoral, as wanton, as the deviant sexual 'other'. They were declared to be 'openly licentious', 'morally obtuse', 'sexual outside the context of marriage', 'more sexually free', and coded to be synonymous with 'prostitution', 'accessibility' and 'availability'.

Dalit women were thus represented as *kutnis*, as aggressive and intimidating, to be feared and to be kept away from the upper caste women. They became a troupe for disrupted harmony. These negative portrayals engendered their alienation from the dominant upper caste culture. These negative depictions served as a kind of metaphoric rape of Dalit women, achieved through the persistent debasement of this subgroup. This literature was thus fed on a diet rich in stereotypes. In different ways this literature and the material culture around it was involved with a gendered casteist discourse committed to constructing, and in fact institutionalising, stable categories of *pativratas* and *kutnis*. While such representations were not very visible in official records or in archival data (though sometimes they seeped in), they were ubiquitous in the didactic literature of colonial north India.

How did Dalit men and women perceive such representations of Dalit women and what did they do to counter such images? We observe that

a recasting of Dalit women and control over their movements and sexualities was also attempted at this time by Dalit men. Such attempts were also made by other intermediate castes, but they acquired a specific colour in the case of Dalits. Thus, Chamars of Moradabad announced that they would allow their women less liberty of movement.[36] Chamars of Dehradun and Saharanpur started to advocate the wearing of *dhotis* by their women when cooking food and forbade them to visit bazaars to sell grass.[37] A Jatia Chamar Sabha at Meerut, attended by over 4000 Chamars, passed a resolution to have their females go into *purdah*.[38] Wealthy urban Chamars particularly began putting their wives under seclusion, proclaiming a new role for the women of their community.[39] At a meeting of Bhangis at Mathura, it was decided that their women should not be sent daily to bazaars.[40] A Pasi panchayat in Meerut resolved that their women should not go out for daily labour. Bhangis of Bulandshahr passed resolutions in their panchayats, forbidding the attendance of their womenfolk at *melas* (fairs).[42] Khatiks of Lucknow resolved not to allow their women to peddle fruits on the street, and made them sell only in shops.[43] Scholars have seen such moves as ways of strengthening claims to upward mobility.[44] Dalits here were also drawing on norms of bourgeois respectablility[45] and dominant manhood which emanated from the upper castes, claiming their space not through heterogeneity but through mimicry. These measures appear to me to be a complex mixture of upward mobility, assertion of patriarchal control, attempts to restore dignity to Dalit women, and to appropriate a language of 'moderniy' and 'civilisation'. Regulation of sexuality was an important axis for the politicisation of caste identity. Dalit reformers' masculinity was predicated on the reform of gender within their community and the defence of community honour against the disdain of outsiders.[46] However, given that many Dalit women played a critical role in the work force outside the home, it was not always easy to 'seclude' them within domestic bounds or to practice reformist bourgeois notions of sexual purity and 'true' womanhood, which often remained at the level of rhetoric, and even if possible, effected a very small upwardly mobile section of Dalits. There were thus contradictory voices as well, where Dalit women and men asserted themselves in different ways, countering crass representations of Dalit women, while also attempting to give Dalit women's work a certain amount of dignity. Often many Dalit men were forced to accord more social room, though not necessarily equality, to their women. Many of the Chamar midwives, recognising that childbirth

was still largely dependent on their labour, started asserting themselves by demanding payments in cash and a fee for services performed.[47] These were also attempts to give self-respect to their work. A panchayat of Chamars at Basti resolved that their women should accept not less than Rs. 1.40 a day when functioning as midwives.[48] In Benaras the Chamars of several *parganas* passed a resolution that less than Rs. 5 should not be charged for cutting a 'nar' of a child at the time of delivery.[49] Thus, while didactic manuals represented Dalit women overwhelmingly in singular moulds, these representations were countered by Dalits.

## II. Conversions to Christianity and Constructions of Dalit Bodies

However this was not the only representation of Dalit bodies. There were other sites where these acquired different contours. In this section I look at conversions, and how Dalit women and men were represented in this context. Here I particularly refer to certain cartoons published in Hindu reformist literature, and how Dalit bodies were represented in them.

Religious conversions have been a highly polemical issue. There are a large number of scholarly works on religious conversions, be it of high caste individuals or of low caste 'masses'.[50] The figure and image of the Dalit convert, who in any case cannot be homogenised as a Hindu in the first place,[51] particularly introduces a serious rupture in the ideas of caste, religion and nation. Religious conversions have traditionally been and continue to be one of the common expedients of those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy,[52] both to improve their position, as acts of protest and anger, and of assertion.

In colonial north India too, missionaries spread their network among the outcastes for the propagation of Christianity and to facilitate conversions.[53] Proselytisation by Christian missionaries led to dissemination of vernacular tracts in large quantities in UP as propaganda material for conversions.[54] The North Indian Christian Tract and Book Society, with its headquarters at Allahabad,[55] published painted story scrolls, pamphlets, books and hymns, addressing itself largely to the depressed classes. Many Chamars and Bhangis of Badaun, Mathura, Meerut, Roorkee, Cawnpore, Moradabad, Pillibhit, Bijnor and Bareilly converted to Christianity.

How were the converted Dalit bodies represented in literature in support of and against religious conversions, by missionaries and reformers? Conversion to Christianity came to be stated by the missionaries as the biggest boon for the outcastes, ridding them of all the evils of Hinduism. At the same time, Dalits were represented even here in stereotypical ways revealing the dichotomy of missionary minds. Their records repeatedly talked of the simple heart of the depressed classes. Stressed one:

> They make splendid Christians. They have great faith, and many of them a *child-like trust* and a simplicity in worship that puts an occidental to shame.[56] (emphasis mine)

Or stated a missionary pamphlet, published from Allahabad:

> The depressed classes are governed by their heart rather than their mind. They are not cunning like many of the upper caste Hindus, who have exploited these simple men in a clever fashion. It is much easier to win them over and mould them according to the true teachings of Christian faith.[57]

The language of missionaries for reform and conversion among the outcastes was thus often problematic and seen largely as a civilising mission, bringing culture and civilised religion to the outcastes. With a sense of racial and religious superiority, the behaviour of many missionaries was patronising, reflecting clear biases in terms of Dalit representations. A mission tract, published in Hindi, remarked:

> The untouchables are like lost rupees, on which dust, soil, dirt and mire has gathered. But just as dirty and tattered rupees do not loose their actual value, similarly in the eyes of God the value of these sinful people does not decrease. And we missionaries are here precisely to reform these dirty sinners.[58]

In the context of this essay, it is also important to know that discourses around demeanour, clothing and masculine elevation were also tied to conversions. Missionary literature claimed that conversions provided manhood to Dalits by making them into respectable men.[59] Said Godfrey

Phillips:

> These movements are making the outcaste into a man, and giving him a man's place in the world - a place he has never enjoyed before.[60]

On the other hand, Hindu reformers depicted Dalits as incapable of taking decisions of conversion on their own, and saw them as being manipulated by the *maulvi* (Muslim religious teacher) and the missionary. Cartoons on the subject, in leading magazines of UP portrayed Dalit male body as feeble, small in stature and without a mind. One caricatured him as a 'football', being kicked by the *pandit* (Brahman, with knowledge of Hindu scriptures), but being grabbed by the maulvi and the *padri* (Christian religious preacher). Another showed him as 'unclaimed property'. In both, the Dalit was stripped of any voice in the matter. These images constructed the cultural meanings of inhabiting a Dalit body, and symbolised the aesthetic values of reformers. They indicated what was sanctioned, often repeatedly, to go in print.

Ironically, while lamenting conversions as 'wrong', reformers too could not deny that conversion to Christianity provided Dalits with an elevated stature and status. This revealed the paradoxes and moral dilemmas faced by the reformers. This was most starkly revealed in some cartoons published at this time, which represented the relationship between Dalits and conversions. A series of cartoons on the subject were published in *Chand*, the most famous Hindi magazine of the time, in various publications of the Arya Samaj, and constantly reprinted in a number of other newspapers and journals of the time. Many of them were compiled in *Vyanga Chitravali*.[61] Usually they depicted two outcaste women or men together: one who was not converted (and thus assumed to be a Hindu), and the other who had converted to Christianity. The change that conversion brought about in Dalits - in their mode of dressing, walking style, gait, status and prestige was present for all to see. One cartoon depicted the converted outcaste man dressed in a suit, wearing shoes and walking ahead royally as a sahib. The unconverted Dalit walked behind, bare-footed, carrying a load on his head. The caption read:

*chalta hai age ban sahib, isayi jo hua achchut,*
*jo Hindu, wah murgi dhota, peeche yeh kaisi kartoot?*

[The untouchable who has become a Christian walks ahead as a sahib. The untouchable Hindu carries the load of chicken on his head. What an irony!][62]

Another cartoon had the converted Dalit man flaunting his wealth, and giving wages to the unconverted untouchable man:

*ek that se gali dekar daan kar raha mazdoori!*
*ek jati, achchut isayi, mein rehti kitni doori?*
[One curses with arrogance and donates wages. Why such distance between same caste - one Christian and one untouchable?][63]

There were others which depicted converted Dalits playing sports, getting their shoes polished etc. by the unconverted. The elevation of status due to conversions was stark. It was claimed by some Bhangis and Chamars around Meerut that conversions to Christianity gave them a new life through literacy, dignity and stature. They too enframed conversions as a way of restoring dignity and manhood, though from a different positioning than Hindu reformers or missionaries.[64] Dalits were also writing themselves into colonial modernity using Christianity, whose meanings encompassed for them freedom from social oppression.[65]

To come back to the cartoons, Dalit women too feature in them. Thus one depicted the converted outcaste woman walking ahead royally, carrying an umbrella, a purse, wearing a hat and high healed shoes. The unconverted woman walked behind, head bent, bare-footed, carrying the child of the converted Dalit woman. The caption read as follows:

*ek jati ki mem, aur dasi-achchut ka yeh antar!*
*veh chalti chaata le aage, yeh uska bachcha lekar!!*
[See the difference between two women of the same species: one is an English madam and the other a servant-untouchable.
The former walks ahead with an umbrella, while the latter walks behind with her child.][66]

Another cartoon had the converted Dalit woman sitting on a chair and the unconverted untouchable woman sitting on her feet with a dog. It stated the following:

*isayin kutte ki malik, hai achchut uski naukar!*
*par donon the ek jati ke, dekho Hindu ankhen bhar!!*
[The Christian woman is the master of the dog, while the outcaste woman her servant.
But they both were of the same caste, Hindus please see carefully.][67]

Yet another depicted the converted Dalit woman, again with hat, boots, umbrella, and a skirt, buying fish from an outcaste woman. The caption said:

*mem sahiba ek bani hai, aur ek machli wali!*
*dhanya dharm isa-masih ka, kitna maha shaktishali!!*
[One has become a madam-lady, the other a fish seller.
Blessed be the religion of Christ, which is all powerful.][68]

These cartoons simultaneously lamented the loss of Dalit women to the Hindu community, admonished the upper caste Hindus for treating Dalit women badly, and also could not help but show the elevated status achieved by these women due to conversions, and the threat therefore of conversions for the Hindu community.

There were other anxieties as well about conversions of outcaste women. The special issue of *Chand* on *achhuts* stated that there were millions of outcaste mothers who were full of love and affection, but because of the cruelty of Hindu society, they were converting, nurturing the wombs and prodigies of Muslim and Christian children, and producing cow killers.[69] *Abhydaya* stated in an article:

> Many of our Hindu women, whom we consider outcastes, are going into the hands of Muslims and Christians. How can these women, whom we treat so badly, become protectors of cow and worshippers of Ram and Krishna?.... We should make all efforts to prevent our outcaste women from converting. It is imperative so that the number of cow-protectors does not reduce.[70]

Conversions by outcaste women represented a loss of numbers

and potential child bearing wombs for the Hindu community, which had to be stopped by all means.[71] It was a moral imperative for Hindus to safeguard even Dalit women and make certain they produced only 'Hindu' offspring.

There were other anxieties amongst reformers about conversions by Dalit women. While western missionary women had been effectively brought under surveillance, it was feared that since outcaste women were converting to Christianity or Islam, they would persuade upper caste women too in doing so. Their interactions with upper caste women could not be regulated so easily, since they entered homes to do various kinds of work and had access to informal conversations with upper caste women. Particularly fearsome was that they would encourage widows to elope, convert and remarry.[72] They were seen as one of the vehicles that could be used covertly for conversions, besides of course missionaries and Muslims.

How did Dalits react to these representations and conversion discourses? The cartoons mentioned above can also be seen as an index of the fact that Dalits were converting in substantial numbers. More important, they could not help but illustrate how conversions gave them a certain status and dignity. They brought a certain degree of self-esteem, health, education and a prospect of social and economic advancement. They impacted their dress, walking styles and outlook. Equally important, Dalits often used to their advantage the alarm felt by the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha regarding their conversions, to demand more rights for themselves, and as a way of achieving liberation from the stigma of 'untouchability'. They played on the fears of Hindu organisations, who responded with alacrity to some of their demands. For example, in Bulandshahr the threat to convert gave Chamars access to a public well in a Hindu neighbourhood of the city, which had previously been restricted.[73] In Benaras the 'untouchables' demanded that unless the Hindus gave them equal rights, they would convert to Islam or Christianity.[74]

The example of conversions and depictions of Dalit bodies in it reveals dilemmas and anxieties of upper castes and some opportunities for Dalits, however limited, who were using it in their own ways. Representation of Dalit bodies in the army is my last example, and here I show most effectively how Dalits twisted the tool to their advantage.

## III We too Are Men: Dalit Men in Army and Police

Dalit bodies were not just screens on which high castes and colonial authorities projected their own caste, racial and gender anxieties and desires. Dalits too were historical agents in their own identity formation, and in their own way, they attempted to challenge the stereotypes by representing themselves in different ways, and conceiving a gendered sense of self in political, cultural and social spheres, often with contradictory and ambiguous implications. I take the example of army and police to show how Dalit men, through their self-representation, attempted to recuperate their manhood. Military modernity in the colonial period provided many castes of UP a possibility of 'manhood enhancement'. The idiom of martial valour found supporters amongst many, including, for example, the urban Sudra poor and the Yadavs, as it was an effective expedient of upward class mobility.[75] Dalits too used this opportunity to articulate their distinctive military traditions and visions of manhood, in the process drawing from others, while simultaneously giving it their own colour.

Dalits fostered their distinctive military traditions and visions of manhood. Particularly, military modernity in the colonial period provided them such an opportunity. The role and participation of Dalits in the British army and police has been a subject of debate. Dalit scholars and some historians have dug up colonial army histories to show that Dalits played a critical part as soldiers in the British armies.[76] Dirk Kolff points to the social heterogeneity of the East India Company soldiers, which could potentially include many lower-caste soldiers. He suggests that Pasis were especially recruited in the earlier period.[77] Stephen Cohen argues that Dalit sepoys benefited from colonial army services, especially in the earlier period, and this became a means for social and economic upward mobility. Simultaneously, they attempted to emulate the martial traditions of the Kshatriya castes, and claim an upper caste status.[78] The Bengal army led by Clive in the battle of Plassey consisted mainly of the low caste people like the Dusadhs, Dhusias, Doms and Dhanuks.[79] Thus it appears that when the English began to militarise their economic power, the lower castes provided their first soldiers.[80]

However, recruitment of Dalits in the army by the British proved fickle

and slowly, particularly after 1857, there was a Brahmanisation of the army, due to a decision by the British government to stop recruiting untouchables.[81] They were victims of the 'martial races theory' adopted by the British Army after the Mutiny to justify reorganisation of the military along caste lines, by excluding Dalits and Brahmins, who were represented as weak, effeminate, and incapable of martial courage. Actually there was much debate among the army officials on the subject. As early as 1800, British officers commanding the regiments of cavalry had been submitting repeated applications for the dismissal of men whom they suspected to belong to the 'objectionable' lower castes, and thus in cavalry it was stated that there would be recruitment from higher castes only. Representations were made to even get rid of the lower castes in the recruitment of native infantry.[82]

At the same time, there were some others who argued for their recruitment. Remarked an officer:

> The advantage of introducing low caste men to a certain extent is that they are more ready to undertake work of a miscellaneous character, frequently such as would be an offence to the caste principles or prejudices of the higher, and further, that there is less danger of religious fanaticism, or of union between such men and the higher castes, on the basis of social and religious sympathy.[83]

The most vociferous defence regarding the recruitment of Dalits in the army as well as the police came from a report submitted in 1860 by Lieutenant Colonel Bruce, Chief of the Oudh Police. In his police force in 1860 there were 462 Bhungis, 252 Chamars and 764 Pasis. Remarked he:

> Enormous difficulties were experienced in getting the lower order to enlist - several cases came to my knowledge of endeavours being made to drive these men out of the place…. There can be no doubt of the policy of maintaining a portion at least of our soldiers from the lowest orders…. The Brahmins or Mahomedans may hope that they may be restored as rulers, and be always ready to attempt usurpation, but this can hardly

be the case with the lower orders, whose ambition would not extend beyond a rise in the social scale which could only be achieved under our government. It is strange that without either order or rule of government at first the Bengal Army should have become a quasi masonic body of Brahmins and Chuttrees; and that the lower caste men who fought in our earlier battles in India with at any rate equal courage should have been entirely replaced by men of more handsome appearance it is true, but who would certainly seem to be less fitted for war from the fact alone of their taking a quarter of a day in preparing their dinners, and another quarter of a day in eating them.[84]

He represented Bhungis as follows:

There are numerous divisions of the sweeper tribe but all make good soldiers. The men are of good height and fair muscular development, and they eat and drink anything with anybody; they are brave, aspire greatly to military service, and are fond of the practice of sword exercises in which many of them are expert, and are possessed of great shrewdness…. There are nearly 500 of these men in the Police, and they have done good service both as Soldiers and Policemen.[85]

He was particularly fully of praise for the Pasis. He stated:

The Passees…are extremely hardy and courageous race, and furnish most of the village watchmen of Oude and the adjacent NWP, they use the bow and arrow expertly, and are said to be able to kill with the latter at wonderful distances; there used to be bodies of these men in the service of every Talookdar and Zemindar of Oude, the NWP too - I have no doubt before they came under our rule…. Although there is hardly a species of theft, robbery and plunder in which they are not experienced and skillful, they have a remarkable name for fidelity when employed, so much so that Bankers employ them to carry their special remittances, householders leave the guard of their property and family to them during their absence, and the highest caste Native in the land would not scruple to place

them in positions of trust.[86]

Such voices however appear to have been slowly marginalised and the number of Dalits in the army steadily declined after 1857. Most British army officers were opposed to their recruitment. Wrote John Lawrence in a letter dated 5 January 1861 that the employment of lowest castes like Chamars and Bhungis as soldiers, along with Brahmins and Kshatriyas was 'like bringing Lepers in contact with men of sound health in Europe'. Brigadier F. Wheeler of Simla expressed deep resentment against the recruitment of the lowest castes:

> The Bhungees or sweeper castes are very filthy in their habits, as shown by a large proportion of them being ever in Hospital with itch…. I therefore condemn their caste of men…. The Chamars and Khutteecks are a shade better…. But the village cobbler, and the tanner of leather, I as strongly object to, as I have done to the Bhungee…. The Kunjur, as a despised race, who feed on rats, mice and other vermin, I utterly reject.[87]

Captain E. Hall, Commanding the Aligarh Levy wrote about sweepers: 'In their habits I consider them as unclean and more than ordinarily liable to sickness, whilst also being generally careless and unthrifty in money matters.' Regarding Chamars he wrote: 'As workers of leather they are looked down…and in common with other low castes are addicted to the use of drugs and liquors.'[88] Brigadier P. Gordon from Benares wrote about Chamars and Mehtars that they get drunk, are smallish in appearance with ill developed chests and small limbs. Pasis, Chamars and Bhangis were repeatedly condemned by many British officers as drunkards, extremely dirty, and prone to creating disturbances in bazaars.[89] Dalits were implicitly either contrasted with being almost feminine, with small limbs, or their manliness was seen as crude, uncultivated and inferior, which created unnecessary disturbances.

Thus the number of Dalit men in the army sharply dwindled, though they could not be totally dismissed.[90] The theory of able-bodied martial castes and races was used repeatedly in Indian recruitment handbooks and army histories, to justify recruitment of high castes in the army rather than those from low or degraded castes. These martial races were seen as physically and morally resilient, orderly, hard working, courageous and

loyal. Sikhs, Pathans, Gurkhas and above all the Kshatriya Rajputs were considered the best for the job.[91] Untouchable soldiers were retrenched, forced into retirement, and excluded from new recruitment.[92] One possible avenue for upward mobility was closed to the low castes.

However, increased demands for manpower during the two wars forced a re-evaluation of the recruitment system.[93] The world wars forced the Indian Army to discover martial qualities in new communities. Katherine Mayo has narrated some incidents of the deeds of valour and extraordinary courage of men belonging to the untouchable castes during World War I. Recently Radhika Sinha has shown how sweepers, mainly from UP, were recruited by the Government of India to serve in the Army overseas, though to do the 'lowly' work only.[94] In Gorakhpur and nearby areas, Doms were urged to enlist as sweepers[95] and to go overseas to serve in the Army.[96] Some Ramdasies were recruited and a Chamar regiment was raised during the World War II, but was soon disbanded after the cassation of hostilities.[97] More important, Dalits were needed for non-combatant services.

During the II World War, the Dalits renewed their demand for recruitment in the army, and provided their own ideological and martial perspectives. They repeatedly emphasised their strong military culture and celebrated a succession of military achievements for Dalit soldiers during the British rule. Akhil Bhartiya Harijan Sabha's president S.C.Raja stressed the need for Harijans to enrol in the army and compared them to Krishna's valour and martial skill.[98] A conference of the Adi Hindu Sabha was held in Lucknow on 10 and 11 February 1940, in which it was stated that the depressed classes would give their full support to Great Britain in the present war, urging that they be urgently recruited in the police and military for the same.[99] Even if they were not recruited in combatant services, the prestige of enrolling in the military in any position was considered great by the low castes, as it was seen as an important means both to seek concessions from the government and to claim a higher social status. Dalit genealogies and histories considered enrolment in the army and police as a defining moment in the establishment of their prestige and manhood. It is to be noted that Swami Achhutanand, the founder of Adi Hindu movement, and one of the leading Dalit publicist of UP, was raised and educated in a military cantonment where his father

was employed.

RS Hari Prasad Tamta, an MLA from the Kumaon hills, President of the Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha and a very active member of the UP Adi Hindu Depressed Class Association of Almora, actively asserted the role that Dalits could play in the British army and posed divergent norms and models of masculinity, not confined just to the upper castes. Tamta emphasised the martial role that Shilpkars of Kumaon and other Dalits had played in the past, pointing to the fluidity of earlier recruitment in the army and kshatriya *naukari* traditions. On 7 September 1939, he offered to raise a brigade of the depressed classes of Kumaon in service of the British army during the War.[100] Many Shilpkars, who were mostly Doms, actually enrolled from the Kumaon region in the army during this time. Usually they went into a labour unit, and not a combatant unit, due to the stigma of untouchability. But any military designation was embraced as a source of social affirmation by them. These Doms later recalled their military service, even as porters, to plead for official patronage.[101] Maurice Hallett, governor of UP, in his address to the Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha in Almora on 24 October 1941 acknowledged the valuable contribution made by the community to the war effort of India by the readiness with which members of it had come forward to join Pioneer Battalions. He remarked:

> I am particularly glad that the Shilpkars of Kumaon are now recruited to the Army not in hundreds but in thousands. Recently in Lucknow I had the privilege of being taken around the lines of one of the new Pioneer Battalions…. The Commanding Officer, Major Crawford, was fully of praise for their bearing and discipline and from what I myself saw I have no doubt that these men are a worthy addition to the Indian Army.[102]

Tamta linked it to the restoration of manhood and civilisation among the Shilpkars. He further wrote on 27 March 1942:

> I am one of those who stand for unconditional support of the British Government in this struggle which she has taken up for us all…. You would be glad to hear that from the District of Almora alone I have been able to get about ten thousand Shilpkars (Depressed Class) recruited in the Army. These Depressed Class men (Shilpkars) are serving in various Pioneer

> Battallions, Labour Units and as Technicians…. It is a truth poignantly realised by the Depressed Classes of these Provinces that for centuries preceding the British Rule they were steeped in the abysmal ignorance and unspeakable poverty and the social system as well as the political power then conspired to rob them even of their manhood. Had it not been for the British Government which came to their rescue like a merciful act of God, the Depressed Classes could not hope within any measurable time to emerge from degradation and to share benefits of a civilised world.[103]

Tamta, along with Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu, interviewed the Shilpkar soldiers and gave a spirited speech:

> We are immortal souls and these bodies are our garments…. Just as we feel joy in putting on new clothes in place of old ones, similarly, those who are brave feel joy in entering new bodies after sacrificing old bodies at the altar of duty…. A coward is afraid of death but a brave person invites it. He fearlessly enters the battlefield…. The earth is for the brave to enjoy.[104]

Constant appeals were made by the UP Adi Hindu Mahasabha and by Tamta particularly, urging the depressed classes to join the defence services and offer themselves as recruits in as large numbers as possible.[105] In a speech made at the Adi Hindu Conference, held at Allahabad on 15-16 January 1942, Nand Lal Jaiswar 'Viyogi' argued that Dalits had given their whole-hearted support to the British government against the rebellion of 1857, which also proved the manliness and the martial character of the Dalits.[106] This was a widely held perception among the Dalits that they had militarily helped the British in 1857, and had thus proved their martial culture. They mobilised a paternalistic discourse through which they tried to invoke the special bond that they shared with the British, the *sarkar,* by having faithfully served in their army. By repeatedly invoking how they had entered the service of the ruling power, they also tried to turn that entity into a patron who could be supplicated for concessions. It is significant that some Dalits were even awarded for the same. For example, land was granted to some Choovail and Chaidah Chamars, paying a *jumma* of Rs.

250, as a reward for mutiny service.[107]

The great aspiration among Dalit men for a military status was continuously reflected in their various meetings. The annual conference of the UP Adi Hindu Dalit Mahasabha held at Allahabad on 14-15 February 1942 adopted various resolutions, urging the *achchuts* to enrol themselves in the army and police as civic guards, ARP, police and military services. It requested the government to adopt special measures to create scheduled caste regiments and military police forces as in the Kumaon division.[108] Enrolment in the British army under any capacity was seen by Dalit groups as a major peg around which to construct their fitness for higher levels of political power, equal citizenship and manhood. Police or army uniforms, medals and military papers became critical markers to project the masculinised body of Dalit men, and to reinvent themselves as able bodied men.

Various Dalit castes often evolved a pre-colonial martial heritage, focusing on deeds of their bravery and martial valour. Chamars claimed a past history of extreme valour and bravery and stated that they served in the army of Mughals, just as Mahars and Mangs did among the Maratha army.[109] At another place a Dalit writer attempted to prove the self-worth of the downtrodden by emphasising the importance and honour of serving in the military. He stated that by serving in the army, Dalits could fashion a different kind of body by acquiring a soldierly bearing, and styling their headgear and clothes in a way suitable for military service. He went on to state that any Dalit who returned from the Army, having served in any capacity, took great pride in displaying his military gear and clothes. These Dalits recuperated a militant history for the Dalit communities, but hitched their martial identity to a new goal — a claim to continued employment in the British Army. Army service deeply affected the first generation of Dalit publicists who experienced social mobility and relatively little discrimination in the military.

These attempts to represent Dalit men as strong, brave, masculine and valiant soldiers historically served multiple purposes. They seriously questioned dominant writings about upper caste martial races, revealing another facet of soldiers and armies. Dalit soldiers were depicted as simple peasant brotherhoods in arms. They were plain, simple and informal, ready to do a variety of tasks, which many of the upper caste soldiers would

not touch. The world of upper castes was juxtaposed as a luxurious world, where men were more interested in luxuries than in fighting. The Dalit soldiers posited a model of simplicity and soldierly masculinity. Here Dalits seemed to have imbibed a shared strategy of mobility with other castes, imbued of the manhood rhetoric, but added their own distinct arguments to it. Such representations also served as a disguise to overcome their sense of powerlessness of themselves, and claim respectability. The language of social status, of better jobs, of employment here also became a language of claims to manhood, which in turn was used to argue for more dignity and rights. It was a language determined as much by gender as by caste.

## Conclusion

This essay has taken up three disparate and unlikely sites to weave them together through the common thread of representation of Dalit bodies in colonial north India by the British, the nationalists and by Dalits themselves. These sites reveal that Dalit identities and bodies were imaged in multiple ways, and their invocation depended on the context. On the one hand, the didactic manuals of the time provided a number of lubricious, venal Dalit female muses. They strengthened the glorification of upper caste norms, mores and values, especially pertaining to women. The assault of this literature revealed that the representation of women, even when spoken to or spoken about, as both objects and subjects, was sharply divided along caste and class lines, leading to a stereotypical coding of the imagery of Dalit women. Such representations reinforced not just a caste hierarchy but a female hierarchy among upper caste and Dalit women, fortifying female polarisation socially and culturally. On the other hand, the sites of conversions and army show that representations of Dalit bodies reflected the fears and anxieties of British and reformers, contributing to collective imaginations of Dalits. But these very sites also show that Dalits desperately searched for respect from marginal social locations, and conversions and army participation, among other things, were a way to restore their dignity. These were forms of compensation for feelings of powerlessness that they felt and tools to articulate social mobility in the face of social exclusion. Alternative representations in these sites by Dalits were a performative act, a tool deployed by the underprivileged. Through conversions and claims for place in the army, Dalits were searching for an

entry, tenuous though it may be, into a modern public sphere where they could claim to have an identity and dignity. It was part of a survival strategy, a coping mechanism and a form of resistance to a limited structure of opportunity. Such representations produced creaks, cracks and dislocations in dominant representations of Dalit bodies.

**Endnotes**

[1] Shahid Amin, 'Representing the Musalman: Then and Now, Now and Then', in Shail Mayaram, M.S.S. Pandian and Ajay Skaria, eds, *Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims, Dalits and the Fabrications of History,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2005, p. 2.

[2] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism,* Routledge, London and New York, 1993, pp. 11, 129.

[3] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis, eds, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies,* 1972-79, Methuen, London, 1980, pp. 128-38.

[4] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian: Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth-Century Miscarriage of Justice,* trans. Antony Shugaar, Verso, London and New York, 1999, p. 17.

[5] To mention a few, Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism,* Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2001; Himani Bannerji, *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy, and Colonialism,* Tulika, New Delhi, 2001; Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998; Dagmar Engles, *Beyond Purdah? Women in Bengal 1890-1939,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996; Sonia Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876-1939,* E.J.Brill, Leiden, 1996.

[6] Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001.

[7] Significant exceptions are Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India: The Bengal Jute Industry,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999. For further critiques, see Anupama Rao, ed., *Gender and Caste,* Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2003; Sharmila

Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios*, Zubaan, New Delhi, 2006.

[8] Similar points have been made regarding the portrayal of black women. See for example, R. Simson, 'The Afro-American Female: The Historical Context of the Construction of Sexual Identity', in A. Sintow, C. Stansell & S. Thompson, eds, *Powers of Desire*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1983, pp. 229-235; bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, South End Press, Boston, 1992; D. Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemina: Representations of Race and Region*, Routledge, New York, 1994; M. E. Young, *Mules and Dragons: Popular Culture Images in the Selected Writings of African-American and Chinese-American Women Writers*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1993.

[9] S. Derne, *Movies, Masculinity and Modernity: An Ethnography of Men's Film Going in India*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1999; Radhika Chopra, Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, eds, *South Asian Masculinities: Context of Change, Sites of Continuity*, Women Unlimited, New Delhi, 2004; Radhika Chopra, ed., *Reframing Masculinities: Narrating the Supportive Practices of Men*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2006.

[10] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, pp. 1-63; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly' Englishman and the 'Effeminate' Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995; A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, Routledge, New York, 1995.

[11] Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2006; Anand Patwardhan, producer and director, *Father, Son and Holy War*, 1994; P. K. Vijayan, 'Outline for an Exploration of Hindutva Masculinities', in Brinda Bose (ed.), *Translating Desire: The Politics of Gender and Culture in India*, Katha, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 82-105; Thomas Blom Hansen, 'Recuperating Masculinity: Hindu Nationalism, Violence and the Exorcism of the Muslim "Other" ', *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 137-72; Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994.

[12] There is some work which addresses the Sikh and the Muslim man and other masculinities in India, but it too is rare. See Chopra et. al. eds,

*South Asian Masculinities.* They too however acknowledged the following: 'We not with dismay, but a sense of inevitability, the absence in this polarised picture of the Dalit (ex-untouchable) man, certainly another of the modern South Asian nation's problematic 'Others', and hope to find future work addressing this lacuna'. See p. 4. There have been significant works on black masculinity, which have pointed to similar tensions. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism,* Routledge, New York, 2004, pp. 181-212; Maurice O. Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775-1995,* Duke University Press, Durham, 2002; Martin Summers, *Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930,* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2004.

[13] The term was initially used in Tim Carriagan, R. W. Connell and John Lee, 'Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity', *Theory and Society,* 14, pp. 551-604. Also see Tim Carriagan, R. W. Connell and John Lee, eds, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies,* Routledge, London, 1994.

[14] This has been pointed out sharply in the context of racism. See Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

[15] Particularly see Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste Through a Feminist Lens,* Stree, Calcutta, 2003; Rao, ed., *Gender and Caste;* Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2009.

[16] Dalit was not a word used in this literature. Here these women were referred to as outcastes or very low caste women, often identified with their caste and occupation. However, I prefer to use the term 'Dalit', keeping in mind contemporary sensibilities.

[17] Gupta, *Sexuality,* pp. 123-76.

[18] There were scores of book of this kind. See for example, Hanuman Prasad Poddar, *Samaj Sudhar,* Geeta Press, Gorakhpur, 1929, pp. 24-5; Balkrishnapati Bajpei, *Stri Sarvasava,* Ratnashram, Agra, 1934; Gupt 'Pagal', *Grihani Bhushan,* Kashi, 1921, 2nd edn; Jaidayal Goyandka, *Nari Dharma,* Geeta Press, Gorakhpur, 1937; Mahendulal Garg, *Kalavati Shiksha,* Prayag, 1930; Babu Sannulal Gupt Girdavar, *Stri Subodhini,* Lucknow, 1922; Janardan Joshi, *Grh Prabandh Shastra,* Prayag, 1918, 2nd edn; Kannomal, *Mahila*

*Sudhar,* Mahavir Granth Karyalaya, Agra, 1923; Chintamani 'Mani', *Manu aur Striyan,* India Book Agency, Allahabad, 1935.

[19] Some of the domestic manuals penned by upper caste women reflected similar biases. See for example, Rukmani Devi, *Mem aur Saheb*, Durga Prasad, Banaras, 1919; Yashoda Devi, *Nari Niti Shiksha*, Allahabad, 1910; idem, *Kanya Kartavya,* Allahabad, 1925; Hukmadevi, *Mahila Manoranjak Prashnavali, II,* Lucknow, 1932; Manvrata Devi, *Nari Dharma Shiksha,* Kashi Pustak Bhandar, Banaras, 1948, 12th edn.

[20] Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi?: Orientalism, Nationalism, and a Script for the Past', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds, *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History,* Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 27-87; Uma Chakravarti, 'Women, Men and Beasts: The Jatakas as Popular Tradition', in Aloka Parasher-Sen, ed., *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India,* OUP, Delhi, 2004, pp. 210-42.

[21] Ramdas Gaur, *Kanyaon ki Pothi Ya Kanya Subodhini,* Gandhi Hindi Pustak Bhandar, Prayag, 1927, p. 19.

[22] Lala Bankelal, *Kanyamanoranjan,* Laxminarayan Press, Moradabad, 1909.

[23] Gaur, *Kanyaon,* pp. 220-8.

[24] Gaur, *Kanyaon,* p. 222.

[25] Jagpati Chaturvedi, *Humari Parivarik Vyavastha,* Matri Bhasha Mandir, Prayag, 2nd edn, 1946, pp. 68-9.

[26] Chandrikanarayan Sharma, *Manavotpatti Vigyan,* Kashi, 1938, p. 235; Ganga Prasad Upadhyaya, *Mahila Vyavahar Chandrika*, Prayag, 1928.

[27] Keshavkumar Thakur, *Grihasth Jeevan,* Prayag, 1932, p. 70.

[28] Ramtej Pandey, *Nari Dharma Shastra,* Bhargav Pustakalaya, Kashi, 1931, p. 38.

[29] Vidyavati Seth, 'Prachin aur Navin Bharat ki Mahilaen', *Madhuri*, October 1922, pp. 339-42. Poddar, *Samaj Sudhar.*

[30] Laxmidhar Vajpei, *Dharmshiksha,* Tarun Bharat Granthavali, Prayag, 1941, 8th edn, p. 76; Devi, *Mem,* p. 28.

[31] Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 196.

[32] W.Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North Western India, I,*

Cosmo Publications: Delhi, 1974 [originally published in 1896 under the name The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Province & Oudh], p. xxiv.

[33] Ramrakh Singh Sehgal, *Samaj Darshan athart Samajik Kuritiyon ki Digdarshan (stri jati ke liye ek anupam granth)*, Chand, Allahabad, 1922, p. 77. Sehgal was a reformist, and wrote for the welfare of women but when it came to lower caste women, his biases too were visible.

[34] Keshavkumar Thakur, *Vivah aur Prem*, Chand, Allahabad, 1930, pp. 105-6.

[35] Shiv Sharma Mahopdeshak, *Stri-Shiksha*, King Press, Bareilly, 1927.

[36] *Secret Police Abstracts of Intelligence of UP* (henceforth *PAI*), 1 April 1922, No. 13, Para 416, p. 642; *PAI*, 13 May 1922, No. 18, Para 573, p. 845.

[37] *PAI*, 30 September 1922, No. 38, Para 1193, p. 1466.

[38] *PAI*, 4 November 1922, No. 42, Para 1269, p. 1577.

[39] U. B. S. Raghuvanshi, *Chanvar Puran* [A Caste Tract on the Chamars], Aligarh, 1916; G. W. Briggs, *The Chamars*, Calcutta, 1920, p. 47; Owen M. Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India*, New York, 1969, pp. 174-81; Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 272.

[40] *PAI*, 24 March 1923, No. 12, Para 247, p. 186.

[41] *Abhyudaya*, 25 December 1926, p. 8.

[42] *PAI*, 29 September 1923, No. 38, Para 660, p. 503.

[43] E. A. H. Blunt, *The Caste System of Northern India: With Special Reference to UP*, London, 1931, p. 241.

[44] Gender has only recently emerged as an integral part of studies on intermediate and lower castes. Various scholars have emphasised how women were used to counter their social marginalisation. See Lynch, *Politics;* Cohn, *Anthropologist*, pp. 255-98; Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'From Alienation to Integration: Changes in the Politics of Caste in Bengal, 1937-47', *IESHR*, 31 (3), 1994, pp. 349-91; Saurabh Dube, *Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity and Power among a Central Indian Community, 1780-1950*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998. For views on how women in turn asserted themselves, see Mary Searle-Chatterjee, *Reversible Sex Roles: The Special Case of Banaras Sweepers*, Oxford, 1981; P. G. Jogdand, ed., *Dalit Women in India: Issues*

*and Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1995; Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste*; Prem Chowdhry, *Contentious Marriages, Eloping Couples: Gender, Caste and Patriarchy in Northern India*, Delhi, 2007; Rao, ed., *Gender and Caste;* Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender.*

[45] For a detailed argument on this in a contemporary context, see Manuela Ciotti, ' "The Bourgeois Woman and the Half-Naked One": Or the Indian Nation's Contradictions Personified', *Modern Asian Studies*, 2009, pp. 1-31.

[46] Rao, *The Caste Question.*

[47] Briggs, *Chamars*, pp. 54, 65.

[48] *PAI*, 20 May 1922, No. 19, Para 604, p. 880.

[49] *PAI*, 7 August 1926, No. 30, Para 701, p. 417.

[50] Particularly see Gauri Vishwanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998; Biswamoy Pati, *Identity, Hegemony and Resistance: Towards the Social History of Conversions in Orissa, 1800-2000*, Three Essays Collective, New Delhi, 2003.

[51] Pati, *Identity, Hegemony and Resistance*.

[52] Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities : Backward Classes in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984, p. 324.

[53] M.A. Sherring, *The History of Protestant Missions in India from 1706-1871*, Turner & Co., London, 1875, p. 193.

[54] A. C. Clayton, *Preachers in Print: An Outline of the Work of the Christian Literary Society for India*, London, 1911.

[55] J. J. Lucas, *History of the North Indian Christian Tract and Book Society (1848-1934)*, Mission Press, Allahabad, n.d., p. 3.

[56] *Annual Report of the Presiding Elder*, North West India Conference, 1895.

[57] Rev. W. F. Johnson, *Jati Pariksha*, North Indian Christian Tract and Book Society, Allahabad, 1910, p. 8.

[58] *Jati Panti ka Varnan*, North Indian Christian Tract and Book Society, Allahabad, p. 15.

[59] *Hindu Dharma ke Phal*, North Indian Christian Tract and Book Society, Allahabad, 1905, p. 6.

[60] Godfrey E. Phillips, *The Outcastes Hope or Work Among the Depressed Classes in India*, Young People's Missionary Movement, London, 1912, p. 83.

[61] These cartoons were repeatedly published in many other newspapers

and magazines of the time, highlighting a broad consensus and opposition to conversions of outcastes. See for example, various issues of *Chand*, *Vyanga Chitravali*, *Abhyudaya*, 13 March 1926, p. 9.

[62] *Vyanga Chitravali*, 'Chand' Karyalaya, Allahabad, 1930.

[63] *Vyanga Chitravali*, 'Chand' Karyalaya, Allahabad, 1930.

[64] Duncan Forrester, pp. 74-5, 77, 81. [quoted in Webster, *Dalit Christians*, pp. 54-5.]

[65] Dilip M. Menon, *The Blindness of Insight: Essays on Caste in Modern India*, Navayana Publishing, Pondicherry, 2006.

[66] *Vyanga Chitravali*, 'Chand' Karyalaya, Allahabad, 1930.

[67] *Vyanga Chitravali*, 'Chand' Karyalaya, Allahabad, 1930.

[68] *Vyanga Chitravali*, 'Chand' Karyalaya, Allahabad, 1930.

[69] Editorial, 'Paap ki Granthiyan', *Chand*, May 1927, p. 4.

[70] Shyambihari Lal, 'Samay ki Maang', *Abhyudaya*, 31 October 1925, No. 40, p. 3.

[71] Kaushalya Devi, 'Hindu Jati ke Adhopatan ke Karan', *Stri Darpan*, pp. 369-74.

[72] Mahopdeshak, *Stri;* Narayan Dutt Sharma, Kashyap, *Bhartiya Vidhwaon ki Karunapurna Kathayen Arthat Hindu Vidhwaon par Atyachar*, Part I, II, III, published by Vidhwa Sahayak Granthmala Kayalaya, Sultanpura, Agra, 1927, 1929, and 1931 respectively.

[73] *PAI*, 9 June 1923, No. 22, Para 423, p. 333.

[74] *PAI*, 31 March 1928, No. 13, Para 278, p. 135; *PAI*, 21 April 1928.

[75] William R. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996; Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

[76] Most of these works have laid particular emphasis on the role of Mahars in the military history of India. See for example, Victor Longer, *Forefront Forever: The History of the Mahar Regiment*, Mahar Regiment Centre, Saugar, 1981; Ardythe Basham, *Untouchable Soldiers: The Mahars and the Mazhbis* [ed by Bhagwan Das], Ambedkar Sahitya Prakashan, Bangalore, 1980.

[77] Dirk Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan 1450-1950*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

[78] Stephen P. Cohen, 'The Untouchable Soldier: Caste, Politics and the Indian Army', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1969, pp. 453-68; Philip Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Martial Race

in Late Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Western India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 60, no. 2, May 2001, p. 442 [pp. 439-78].

[79] Bhagwan Das, 'Introduction', in Basham, *Untouchable Soldiers*, p. 3.

[80] Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from 1745*, London, 1758.

[81] Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Martial Race'.

[82] F/4/260/5780: Board's Collections: 1808-09, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library (henceforth OIOC).

[83] L/MIL/7/7236, OIOC.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] L/MIL/14/216, OIOC.

[91] George F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1911; Eden Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1906; Alfred Horsfield Bingley, *Rajputs*, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1898.

[92] Alexander Robertson, *The Mahar Folk*, YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta, 1938, p. 59.

[93] Basham, *Untouchable Soldiers*, pp. 28-9; Cohen, 'Untouchable Soldier', p. 458.

[94] Radhika Singha, 'Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq: The Jail Porter and Labor Corps, 1916-1920', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2007, pp. 424-27 [412-45].

[95] Home, Police, A, June 1913, Nos. 6-7, National Archives of India (henceforth NAI)

[96] Home, Jails, A, November 1916, Nos. 42-48, NAI.

[97] Anirudh Deshpande, 'Hopes and Disillusionment: Recruitment, Demobilisation and the Emergence of Discontent in the Indian Armed Forces after the Second World War', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 177, 180-3 [175-207].

[98] 'Harijan aur Sainik Seva', *Chand*, July 1939, p. 200.

[99] *PAI*, 24 Febrary 1940, No. 8, Para 71, p. 42.

[100] L/PJ/10/14, OIOC.

[101] Singha, 'Finding Labor from India'.
[102] L/PJ/10/14, OIOC.
[103] L/PJ/10/14, OIOC.
[104] 'Shilpkar Soldiers', *Pioneer,* 1 August 1941.
[105] 'Depressed Classes Urged to Enlist', *Pioneer,* 18 January 1942; *Pioneer,* 25 February 1942; L/PJ/10/14, OIOC.
[106] *Report of the Adi Hindu DC Kumbh Mela Conference,* Kumbh Mela Ground, Allahabad, 15-16 January 1942, pp. 3-4.
[107] 105-105/6 January 1860, Foreign Consultation, Foreign Deptt, NAI.
[108] *Samta,* 25 February 1942.
[109] 'Asprishyon mein Jagriti', *Chand,* February 1930, p. 775.