

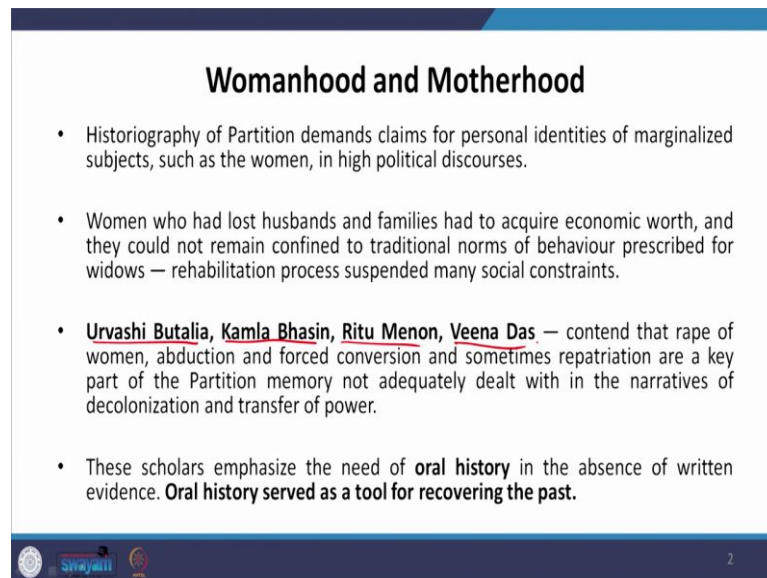
**Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema**  
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**Lecture - 17**  
**Womanhood and Motherhood - I**

Good morning and welcome back to my course Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. At the outset, we need to understand what to expect for this module. We are going to talk about the imagination of woman and the importance that was given to the figure of the mother in colonial India. It was a pan-Indian discourse of motherhood, and it actually laid the foundation... it extended a lot of motivation, it played a substantive role in the shaping of the Swadeshi movement [and] the anticolonial struggles. So, the nation was viewed as the mother; the Mother India had taken after the image of the quintessential Indian mother, and womanhood realized its importance in motherhood.


[Womanhood] fructified and realized its importance, its role in the society as the mother. So, today we are going to talk about womanhood and motherhood.

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**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- Historiography of Partition demands claims for personal identities of marginalized subjects, such as the women, in high political discourses.
- Women who had lost husbands and families had to acquire economic worth, and they could not remain confined to traditional norms of behaviour prescribed for widows — rehabilitation process suspended many social constraints.
- **Urvashi Butalia, Kamla Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Veena Das** — contend that rape of women, abduction and forced conversion and sometimes repatriation are a key part of the Partition memory not adequately dealt with in the narratives of decolonization and transfer of power.
- These scholars emphasize the need of **oral history** in the absence of written evidence. **Oral history served as a tool for recovering the past.**

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[While discussing the] historiography of Partition, we have already talked about how the formal historiography and memory are not really convergent. They have different ways of looking at the past.

When we look at the lacunae [and] loop holes in the formal historiography, we understand that there is a need for a claim of personal identities of marginalized subjects, to be included within the high political discourses.

So, historiography of Partition demands claims for personal identities as a way of filling up the loopholes within the formal discourse, and so, the marginalized subjects such as the women need to be incorporated urgently, her voice needs to be incorporated within the high political discourses. For example, women that lost their families, the male kin had to acquire economic worth, and they could not remain confined to the traditional norms of behaviour that were prescribed for the widows.

So, we see that single mothers, unmarried women, and widows actually come out of the precincts of their homes. Partition becomes a life changing affair for them; they have to earn, they have to become the breadwinner, sometimes the sole breadwinners for their families. Partition has different kinds of meanings for these women.

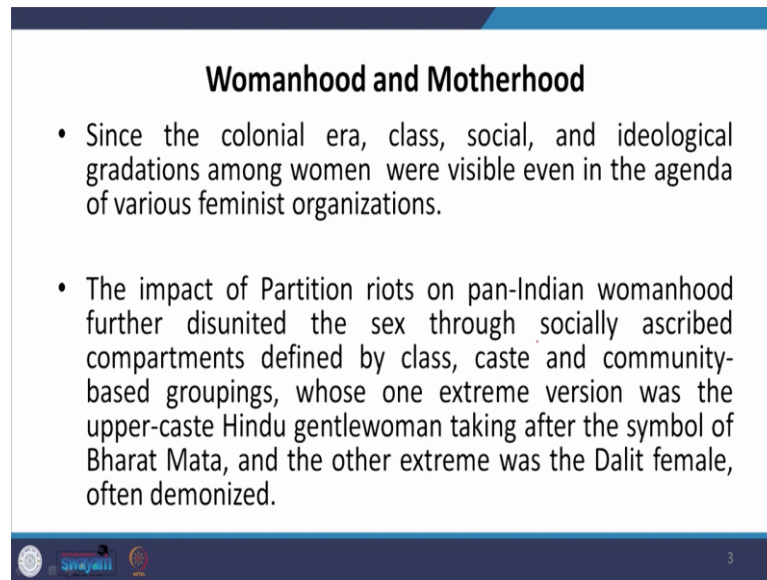
For some, it is an excruciating experience, it is a painful experience of losing one's family, status and honour and yet, for others it is also a new opportunity. Some women actually testified to the fact that the Partition had opened new grounds for them to become educated, visible in the job arena, and hence, become agents of their own lives.

Partition had opened new grounds in terms of new opportunities for them, and they were suddenly in charge of their own lives. We have scholars like Urvashi Butalia, Kamla Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Veena Das - that contend that rape, abduction, forced conversion and sometimes repatriation or rehabilitation were key parts of or in fact, they are key parts of the Partition memory that have not been adequately engaged with, that have not been given the importance that they deserve.

And these narratives need to be folded into the metanarratives of decolonization and transfer of power. So, overall history plays a quintessential role in serving as a device, a tool for recovering the past, right. So, talking to the survivors, asking them about their experiences; these complement the formal process of historiography.

Talking about womanhood and motherhood, we understand that since the colonial era we never had a unified idea or notion of womanhood in India. There never was a unified agenda. Different class-caste positions, different social and ideological roles actually led to gradations among women.

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**Womanhood and Motherhood**

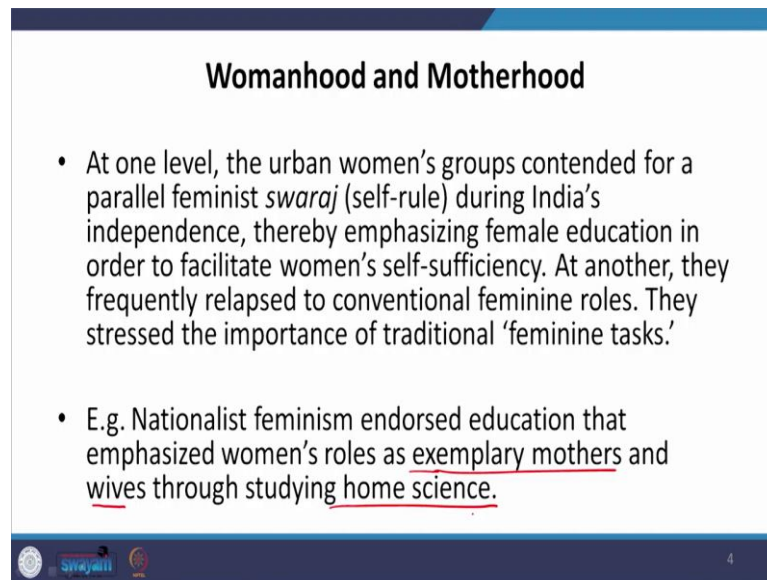
- Since the colonial era, class, social, and ideological gradations among women were visible even in the agenda of various feminist organizations.
- The impact of Partition riots on pan-Indian womanhood further disunited the sex through socially ascribed compartments defined by class, caste and community-based groupings, whose one extreme version was the upper-caste Hindu gentlewoman taking after the symbol of Bharat Mata, and the other extreme was the Dalit female, often demonized.

So, the impact of Partition riots on pan-Indian womanhood actually ascribed compartments to the category of woman and defined women in terms of their caste, class, community-based groupings.

So, we see that womanhood is not at all a converged meaning, but rather a range of meanings, a kind of spectrum, on one extreme side of which is the symbol of the Bharat Mata. The Bharat Mata that is inspired after the image of the upper-caste elite Hindu woman, and on the other extreme is the Dalit [female], who is often demonized. The women's position vis-a-vis the Partition discourse has a double-edged meaning of victimization and finding a position in the society, finding their own voice, their own foothold, and forwarding their own rights.

So, both were happening hand in hand.

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**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- At one level, the urban women's groups contended for a parallel feminist *swaraj* (self-rule) during India's independence, thereby emphasizing female education in order to facilitate women's self-sufficiency. At another, they frequently relapsed to conventional feminine roles. They stressed the importance of traditional 'feminine tasks.'
- E.g. Nationalist feminism endorsed education that emphasized women's roles as exemplary mothers and wives through studying home science.

swaraj 4

Urban women's groups actually were participating in a parallel feminist *swaraj* or self-rule during India's independence, and through this they were emphasizing the foremost need of women's education in order to facilitate their own sense of self-sufficiency so that women could sustain themselves. It was thought as very important at that point.

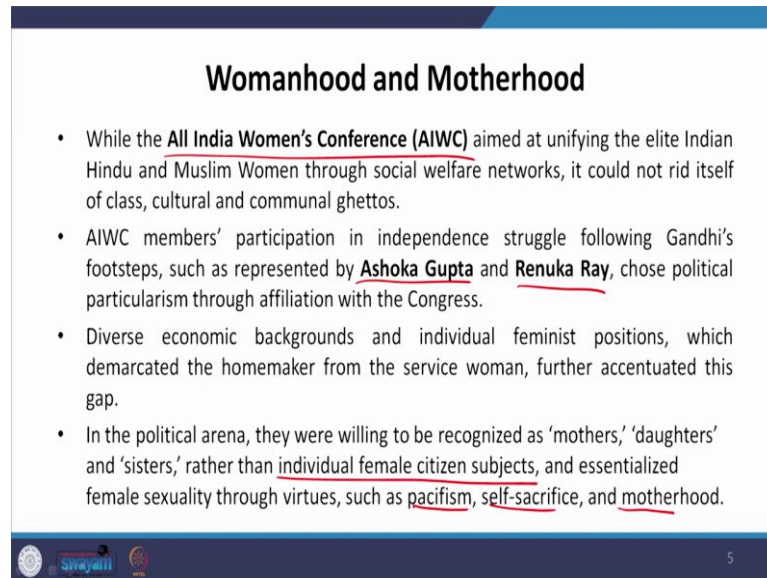
Conversely, we also see that at that time women would very frequently relapse to conventional feminine roles, they stressed the importance of traditional tasks as the mother, the sister, the dutiful daughter, and the wife and so forth. So, even the feminist factions were understanding the figure of the woman in terms of her inspirational role in the society rather than her substantive position, as an individual subject and a citizen.

For example, we see the nationalist feminist factions endorsing education for women. Although education was being promoted, how was it being promoted? There was emphasis on women's exemplary motherhood, and their role as wives. And so, even as women were continuing education beyond high school, they were pursuing their graduation degrees, [education] would commonly lead them to disciplines such as home science, basically training the woman to become an accomplished homemaker or housewife.

Education did not necessarily feed the woman's purpose of self-development; rather, it was actually playing an important role, enhancing the demands of the time, supporting the demands of the gentry class [and] serving the needs or the demands of the refined

Indian man. So, we see that education is hardly something we can call as self-referential. The woman's education is meant to fit into the larger schema of things.

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**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- While the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) aimed at unifying the elite Indian Hindu and Muslim Women through social welfare networks, it could not rid itself of class, cultural and communal ghettos.
- AIWC members' participation in independence struggle following Gandhi's footsteps, such as represented by Ashoka Gupta and Renuka Ray, chose political particularism through affiliation with the Congress.
- Diverse economic backgrounds and individual feminist positions, which demarcated the homemaker from the service woman, further accentuated this gap.
- In the political arena, they were willing to be recognized as 'mothers,' 'daughters' and 'sisters,' rather than individual female citizen subjects, and essentialized female sexuality through virtues, such as pacifism, self-sacrifice, and motherhood.

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So, for example, we have the faction called All India Women's Conference (AIWC) that aimed at unifying the elite Indian Hindu and Muslim women through social welfarist networks, (yet) it could not rid itself of class, cultural (and) communal ghettos. So, AIWC members' participation in independence struggle followed MK Gandhi's footsteps, and some of the forerunners of AIWC, such as Ashoka Gupta, Renuka Ray, chose political particularism through their avowed affiliation with the Congress.

In India, we have to remember they have always identified with different economic backgrounds, different individual feminist positions. There never was a unified notion of a feminist struggle. And so, the demarcation between the homemaker and the service woman had never gone. These feminist factions had never functioned towards eradicating this gap. In fact, this gap further accentuated through the functioning of several feminist factions.

In the political arena, the feminist factions were willing to be recognized in terms of their roles as 'mothers', 'daughters' and 'sisters', rather than as individual female citizen subjects. So, the question of being an individual in isolation from or decoupled from fellow male was never present. And so, what was being promoted through important feminist factions, through important social welfare networks spearheaded by women, is

an essentialized female sexuality and virtues, such as pacifism, self-sacrifice, and motherhood. (Refer Slide Time: 12:23)

**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- Women's interest and participation in the anti-colonial campaign with Mahatma Gandhi dates back to the Swadeshi movement when middle-class women were first involved. Boycotting British goods with the goal of fostering local industries and cotton crafts were involved.
- The Gandhian interpretation of Indian housewife perpetuated stereotypes of essentialist non-violent femininity. The Gandhian female activists hardly challenged the prevalent picture of Hindu sisterhood or women's co-authorship in the making of a patriarchal Hinduized nation. They echoed the Gandhian viewpoint of gender as destiny, advocating socio-spatial demarcation of an individual's role according to gender (Gandhi, 273-275).
- **Ketu Katrak** - Gandhi endorsed 'traditional' ideology that control a woman through marriage, wifehood, motherhood and domesticity, asking men to be 'just' towards women while also legitimizing the male authority. His understanding of women's nature being deeply rooted in Hindu patriarchy, Gandhi was preoccupied with the de-sexualized image of the woman, which interlaced religion, female body's purity and economics with nationalist sentiments through a virtue discourse (Debali Mookerjee-Leonard 45, 50).

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Women's interest and participation in the anti-colonial campaign with Mahatma Gandhi would date back to Swadeshi movement, where we see the middle-class women emerging in the public forum for the first time. So, they were actually supporting Gandhi in boycotting British goods with the goal of fostering local industries and cotton crafts, and so, the Manchester textiles were boycotted, they were burnt [and] instead khadi was promoted.

But, we later understand that women were supporting MK Gandhi in a very abstract [movement]. What the Dalit discourse says is that this is a very abstract, a very high-end and elite proposal that not all peasants, not all members from the fringes of different Indian societies could afford to participate in.

So, the question of burning one's clothes, clothes that were cheaper than the indigenous counterparts would entail being a wealthy person. It would entail some degree of socioeconomic support or a (sound) base. In the fitness of things, it was understood that burning clothes was not the best expression against the British Raj. That was what the peasants would think.

So, for example, the otiyars were peasants and Ramchandra Guha would study that they preferred the saffron clothing to the khadi. They said that they had generationally fought

against landlordism, against any kind of hegemony, British hegemony. They had their own symbols and it did not converge with the khadi.

Coming back to the central argument, when women were participating in Gandhi's movement, they were essentially identifying themselves with a mode of protest that had its networking, its connections with the upper echelons of the Indian society.

The Gandhian interpretation of the Indian housewife, moreover, perpetuated stereotypes of essentialist non-violent femininity. So, Gandhian female activists that followed the footsteps of Gandhi hardly challenged the prevalent picture of Hindu sisterhood or women's co-authorship in the making of a patriarchal Hinduized nation.

When we talk of co-authorship, many feminists such as Ketu Katrak would contend that co-authorship refers to women subscribing to the position of secondary citizenship; women consenting to their roles as secondary citizens. So, these factions echoed the Gandhian viewpoint of gender as one's destiny.

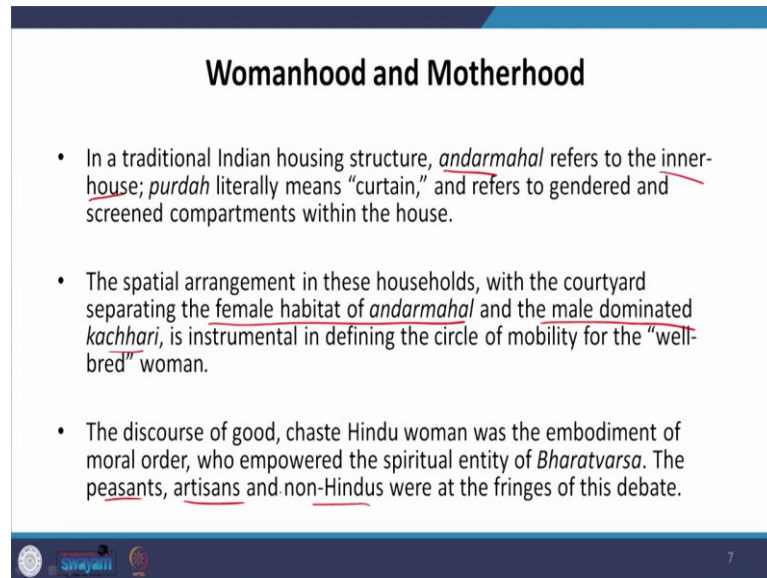
(In other words), socio-spatial demarcation of an individual's role made according to one's gender. And so, we see critics such as Ketu Katrak talking about the traditional Gandhian ideology that control the woman through ideals of marriage, wifehood, motherhood, and their service to the domesticity. And Gandhi would ask men to be just towards women, to be fair towards women while also legitimizing the male authority.

Gandhi's understanding of the superlative qualities of women was deeply rooted in the Hindu patriarchy, and this actually went on to speak to and inform the image of the Bharat Mata. The Bharat Mata that is the blown up and celebrated, glorious image in Bankim's poem Vande Mataram.

So, Gandhi was deeply influenced with and deeply inspired by the de-sexualized image of the woman, which interlaced religion, the concept of female body's purity and economy with nationalist sentiments, and it actually imposed a virtue discourse on the



image of the woman. So, next we are going to talk about the Indian housing structure, and this is a pan-Indian thing we talk about - the kachhari and the andarmahal.

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### Womanhood and Motherhood

- In a traditional Indian housing structure, *andarmahal* refers to the inner-house; *purdah* literally means "curtain," and refers to gendered and screened compartments within the house.
- The spatial arrangement in these households, with the courtyard separating the female habitat of *andarmahal* and the male dominated *kachhari*, is instrumental in defining the circle of mobility for the "well-bred" woman.
- The discourse of good, chaste Hindu woman was the embodiment of moral order, who empowered the spiritual entity of *Bharatvarsa*. The peasants, artisans and non-Hindus were at the fringes of this debate.

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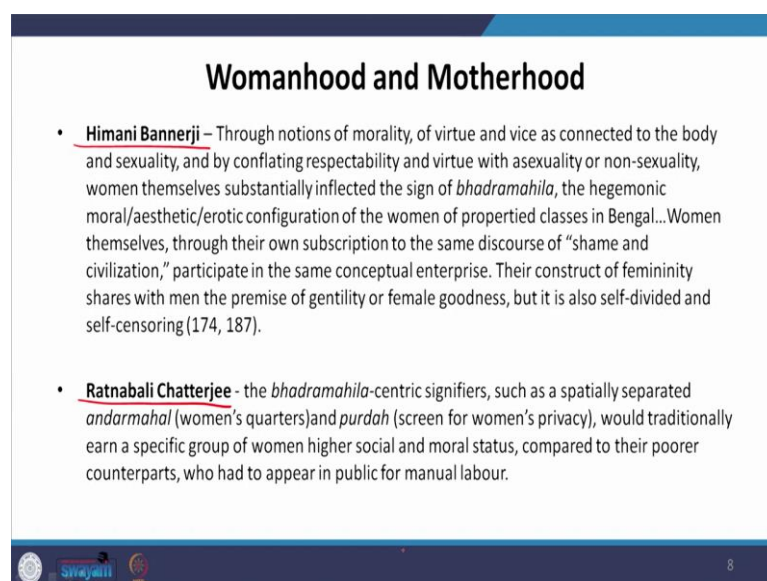


Once again, this coinage has its class-caste dimension - peasant that lives in a shanty, in a hut cannot probably afford an andarmahal and kachhari. It refers to a sprawling mansion. Andarmahal refers to one's inner house, where women would generally live, the female kin would live and they would stay within the precincts of this space covered by a purdah or a curtain. We see screened compartments within the house of the elite Indians.

The spatial arrangement of these households, where a courtyard would separate the female habitat of andarmahal and the male dominated kachhari, tells us about the limited mobility of the "well-bred" woman, [and] how her mobility was curbed and defined within a pre-given circle and she could not move beyond that.

So, the question of the good pure Hindu woman, who was the embodiment of the moral order of her community, and who empowered the spiritual entity of Bharatvarsa had always already been there. The peasants, the working class women, the artisans and the non-Hindus would never feature within this discourse of the Hindu household that maintained modesty through purdah and andarmahal. They were at the fringes of such a debate.

So, regarding sartorial choices and regarding women's food habit, women's special belonging, there have been several important interventions, several important studies - one being by Himani Bannerji, who says that (Refer Slide Time: 20:19)



**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- **Himani Bannerji** – Through notions of morality, of virtue and vice as connected to the body and sexuality, and by conflating respectability and virtue with asexuality or non-sexuality, women themselves substantially inflected the sign of *bhadramahila*, the hegemonic moral/aesthetic/erotic configuration of the women of propertied classes in Bengal... Women themselves, through their own subscription to the same discourse of “shame and civilization,” participate in the same conceptual enterprise. Their construct of femininity shares with men the premise of gentility or female goodness, but it is also self-divided and self-censoring (174, 187).
- **Ratnabali Chatterjee** - the *bhadramahila*-centric signifiers, such as a spatially separated *andarmahal* (women's quarters) and *purdah* (screen for women's privacy), would traditionally earn a specific group of women higher social and moral status, compared to their poorer counterparts, who had to appear in public for manual labour.

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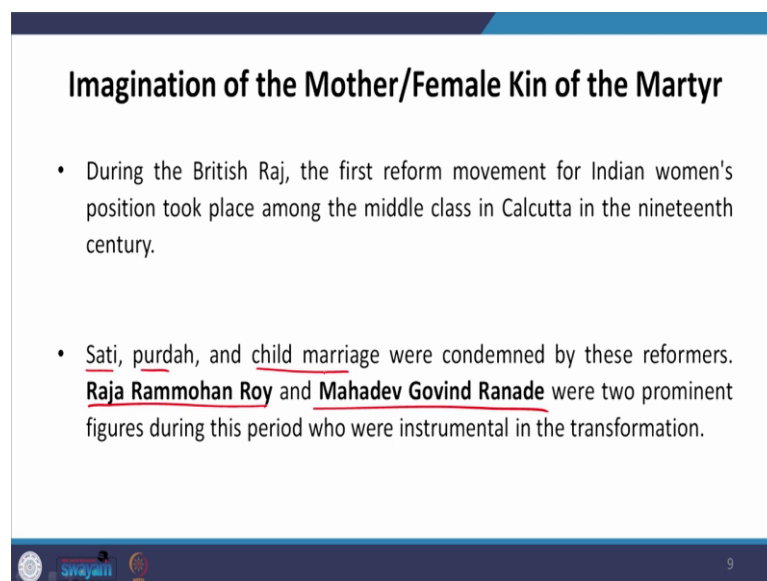
"Through notions of morality, virtue and vice as connected to the body and sexuality, and by conflating respectability and virtue with asexuality or non-sexuality, women themselves substantially inflicted the sign of bhadramahila, the hegemonic moral aesthetic erotic configuration of the women of propertied classes in Bengal.

Women themselves through their own subscription to the same discourse of "shame and civilization," participate in the same conceptual enterprise. Their construct of femininity shares with men the premise of gentility or female goodness, but it is also self-divided and self-censoring. Women actually support or endorse certain patriarchal values in their self-imaging."

Further, Ratnabali Chatterjee says that the bhadramahila-centric signifiers, such as a spatially-separated andarmahal and purdah, would traditionally earn a specific group of women higher social and moral status by virtue of maintaining these, compared to their poorer counterparts, who had to appear in public for manual labour. We also ask the question of who could afford the purdah and the andarmahal.

So, the first reform movement for Indian women's position took place among the middle-class in Calcutta in the 19th century; some of the leaders, some of the forerunners that spearheaded these movements

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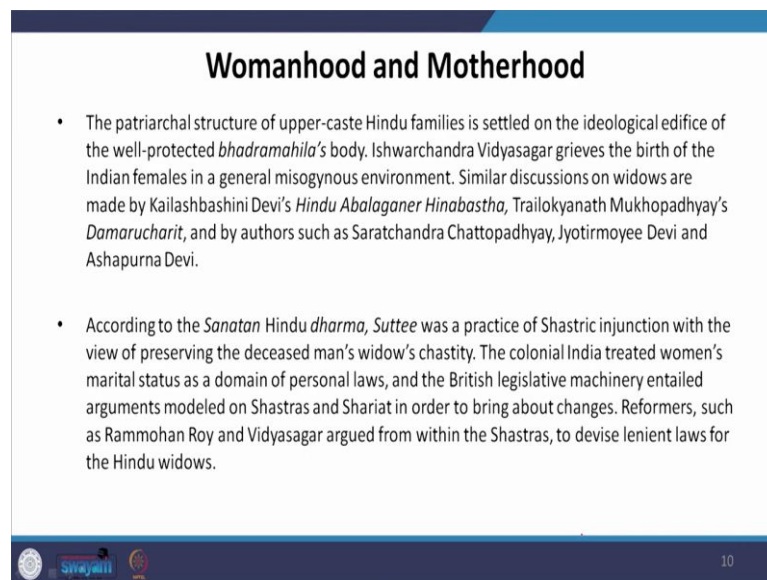
**Imagination of the Mother/Female Kin of the Martyr**

- During the British Raj, the first reform movement for Indian women's position took place among the middle class in Calcutta in the nineteenth century.
- Sati, purdah, and child marriage were condemned by these reformers. Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahadev Govind Ranade were two prominent figures during this period who were instrumental in the transformation.

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were Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahadev Govind Ranade. They were prominent figures during this period, who were instrumental in bringing about positive social, changes vis-a-vis women's position in the society. Social reformers like Rammohan Roy and Govind Ranade condemned practices, such as sati, purdah and child marriage.

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**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- The patriarchal structure of upper-caste Hindu families is settled on the ideological edifice of the well-protected *bhadramahila's* body. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar grieves the birth of the Indian females in a general misogynous environment. Similar discussions on widows are made by Kailashbashini Devi's *Hindu Abalaganer Hinabastha*, Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay's *Damarucharit*, and by authors such as Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Jyotirmoyee Devi and Ashapura Devi.
- According to the *Sanatan Hindu dharma*, *Suttee* was a practice of Shastric injunction with the view of preserving the deceased man's widow's chastity. The colonial India treated women's marital status as a domain of personal laws, and the British legislative machinery entailed arguments modeled on Shastras and Shariat in order to bring about changes. Reformers, such as Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar argued from within the Shastras, to devise lenient laws for the Hindu widows.

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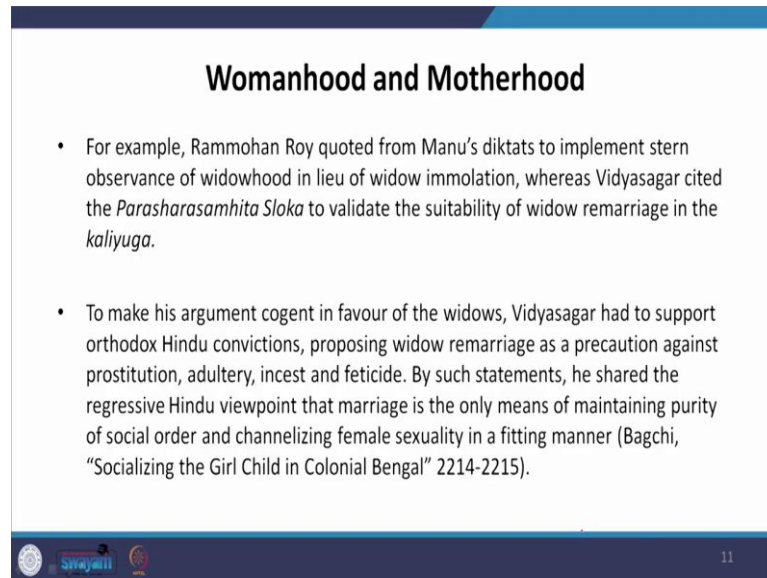
The patriarchal structure of upper-caste Hindu families is settled on the ideological edifice of the *bhadramahila's* body, and the irony is that even as social reformers such as Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Raja Rammohan Roy are proposing (women's emancipation), they are fighting for changes [and] want to bring about these changes through following orthodox Hindu dictates. They cannot bring changes from without; they have to devise transformations in the Hindu society from within.

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar grieves the birth of Indian females in a general misogynous environment. There are discussions of widows, the state of widows in different books, such as *Hindu Abalaganer Hinabastha* by Kailashbashini Devi and then, Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyaya's *Damarucharit*, and then we have other authors such as Jyotirmoyee Devi, we have Saratchandra Chattopadhyay and Ashapura Devi discussing about the plight of the Hindu widow.

*Suttee* was a practice of Shastric injunction that was meant to preserve the deceased man, the dead Hindu man's widow's purity; so, in other words if she did not die, she would resort to promiscuity and promiscuous behaviour and her chastity would be threatened.


The colonial India treated women's marital status within the purview of personal laws, such that the British legislative machinery required arguments that were modeled on Shastras and Shariah, in order to bring about any positive transformations.

We see that Rammohan Roy is quoting from Manu Samhita. He is quoting Manu to implement stern observance of widowhood rather than immolating [the widows]. Similarly, Vidyasagar is citing Parasharasamhita Sloka (Refer Slide Time: 25:13)



**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- For example, Rammohan Roy quoted from Manu's diktats to implement stern observance of widowhood in lieu of widow immolation, whereas Vidyasagar cited the *Parasharasamhita Sloka* to validate the suitability of widow remarriage in the *kaliyuga*.
- To make his argument cogent in favour of the widows, Vidyasagar had to support orthodox Hindu convictions, proposing widow remarriage as a precaution against prostitution, adultery, incest and feticide. By such statements, he shared the regressive Hindu viewpoint that marriage is the only means of maintaining purity of social order and channelizing female sexuality in a fitting manner (Bagchi, "Socializing the Girl Child in Colonial Bengal" 2214-2215).

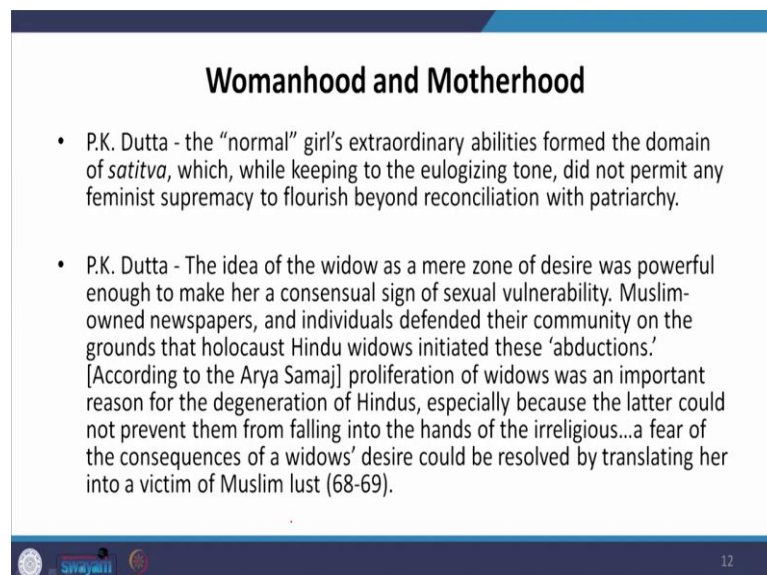
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to argue that the widow could remarry in the kaliyug. So, they have to recourse to very orthodox arguments in order to eradicate these evil social practices; that is the only way.

To make his argument agreeable in favour of the widows, Vidyasagar was supporting certain orthodox Hindu convictions. So, he would say for example, (something that modern feminists would take offence in)... He would say for example that widow's remarriage actually is a kind of cushioning against other degraded practices, such as prostitution, adultery, incest and feticide.


So, in other words, the only means of maintaining purity of social order was through remarrying the widows, and so remarrying the widows would ensure that their female sexuality has been channelized in a fitting manner. We see P K Dutta making a similar argument. He is studying how the Hindu widow becomes a symbol that the Hindu community is obsessed with, [which leads to the] question of safeguarding the Hindu widow.

According to the Arya Samaj, widows were the cause of the Hindu community's degeneration and degradation. The Arya Samaj was actually referring to the uncontrolled sexuality and the chances of widows falling in the hands of the non-Hindus. (Refer Slide Time: 27:15)



**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- P.K. Dutta - the "normal" girl's extraordinary abilities formed the domain of *satitva*, which, while keeping to the eulogizing tone, did not permit any feminist supremacy to flourish beyond reconciliation with patriarchy.
- P.K. Dutta - The idea of the widow as a mere zone of desire was powerful enough to make her a consensual sign of sexual vulnerability. Muslim-owned newspapers, and individuals defended their community on the grounds that holocaust Hindu widows initiated these 'abductions.' [According to the Arya Samaj] proliferation of widows was an important reason for the degeneration of Hindus, especially because the latter could not prevent them from falling into the hands of the irreligious...a fear of the consequences of a widows' desire could be resolved by translating her into a victim of Muslim lust (68-69).

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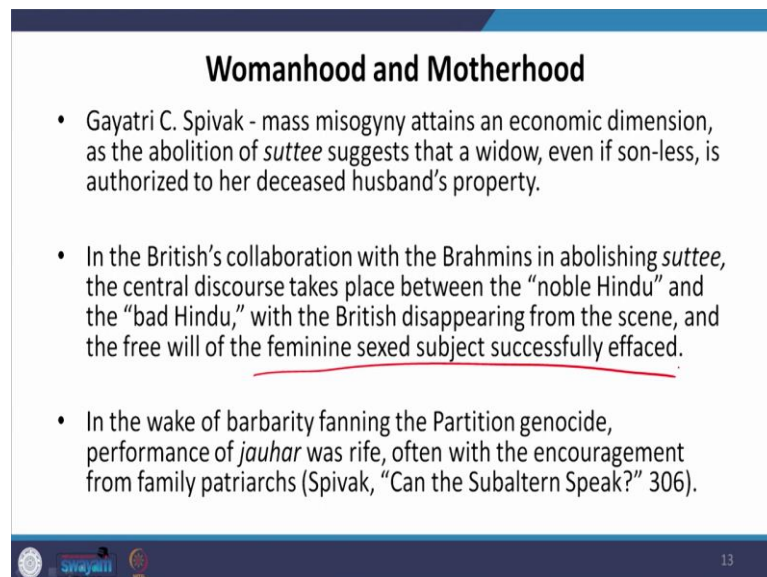
So, there was a fear of the widow's desire being translated (exploited) by her becoming a victim of Muslim lust.

Widows were often times seen as victims of Muslim lust, and the Muslims would conversely say that whenever there was a case of the widows running away/ eloping from the family with a Muslim male, (the Muslims would argue that) the Hindu widows actually initiated these abductions.

Spivak in this regard notes the socio-economic dimension that informs the practice of suttee. Abolition of suttee, according to Spivak, suggests that the widow in the absence of her husband is liable to become the owner of her husband's property, and that would become a kind of obstacle for the husband's male kin. That is how she looks at the practice of suttee as a way of getting rid of the deceased man's wife, and taking a control of his property.



Spivak also says that in this debate between the 'noble' Hindu and the 'bad' Hindu, the discourse centering the question of suttee and abolishing of suttee takes place at the expense of disappearance of the woman and the British from the scene.

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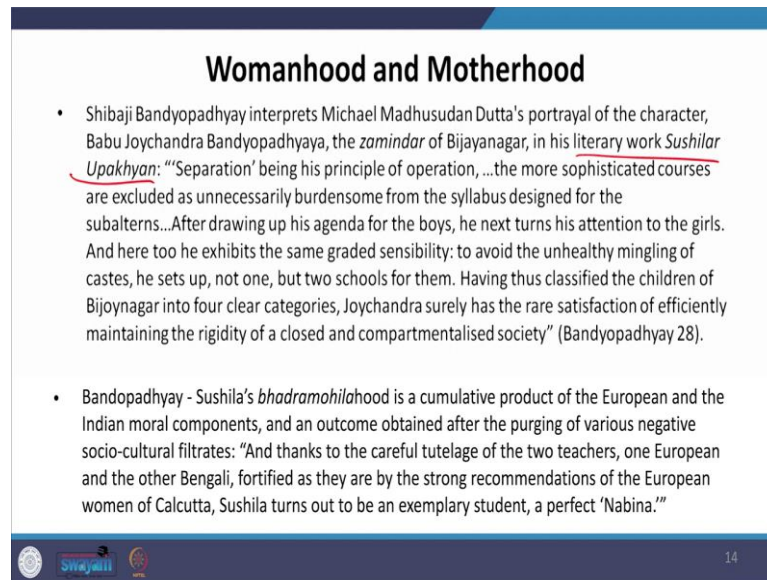
**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- Gayatri C. Spivak - mass misogyny attains an economic dimension, as the abolition of *suttee* suggests that a widow, even if son-less, is authorized to her deceased husband's property.
- In the British's collaboration with the Brahmins in abolishing *suttee*, the central discourse takes place between the "noble Hindu" and the "bad Hindu," with the British disappearing from the scene, and the free will of the feminine sexed subject successfully effaced.
- In the wake of barbarity fanning the Partition genocide, performance of *jauhar* was rife, often with the encouragement from family patriarchs (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 306).

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So, the feminine sexed subject is successfully effaced. Necessarily, it is a homosocial discourse.

Next, we are going to talk about how Shibaji Bandyopadhyay reads Michael Madhusudan Dutta's literary work, *Sushilar Upakhyan*, (Refer Slide Time: 29:15)



**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- Shibaji Bandyopadhyay interprets Michael Madhusudan Dutta's portrayal of the character, Babu Joychandra Bandyopadhyaya, the *zamindar* of Bijayanagar, in his literary work *Sushilar Upakhyan*: "Separation' being his principle of operation, ...the more sophisticated courses are excluded as unnecessarily burdensome from the syllabus designed for the subalterns...After drawing up his agenda for the boys, he next turns his attention to the girls. And here too he exhibits the same graded sensibility: to avoid the unhealthy mingling of castes, he sets up, not one, but two schools for them. Having thus classified the children of Bijoyanagar into four clear categories, Joychandra surely has the rare satisfaction of efficiently maintaining the rigidity of a closed and compartmentalised society" (Bandyopadhyay 28).
- Bandyopadhyay - Sushila's *bhadramahilhood* is a cumulative product of the European and the Indian moral components, and an outcome obtained after the purging of various negative socio-cultural filtrates: "And thanks to the careful tutelage of the two teachers, one European and the other Bengali, fortified as they are by the strong recommendations of the European women of Calcutta, Sushila turns out to be an exemplary student, a perfect 'Nabina.'"

where (there is) this character of the zamindar - zamindar of Bijayanagar, his name is Babu Joychandra Bandyopadhyaya and he is designing a syllabus. He has four separate schools - for upper-classes and upper-castes, for the subalterns, and then another for the women.

Separation being his principle of operation, the more sophisticated courses are excluded (from the syllabi of the subalterns) because they are seen as burdensome. And then to avoid the unhealthy mingling of castes, the zamindar sets up two schools.

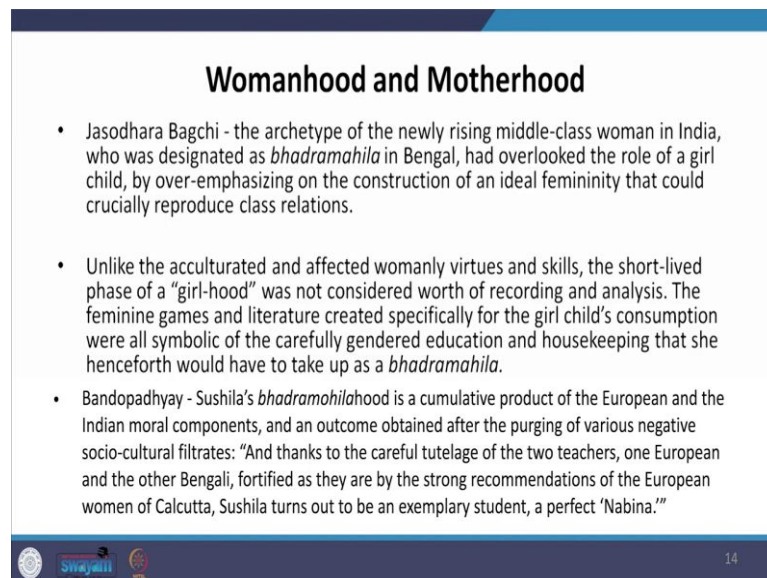
So, education system being segregated in terms of class, caste, gender; having thus classified the children of Bijayanagar into four clear categories, Joychandra surely has the rare satisfaction of efficiently maintaining the rigidity of a closed and compartmentalized society.

Similarly, Shibaji Bandyopadhyay says how Sushila goes on to become the Nabina, the perfect new woman that fits into the larger scheme of the modern imagining of a nation. Sushila's *bhadramahilhood* is a cumulative product of the European and the Indian

moral components, and an outcome obtained after the purging of various negative socio-cultural filtrates.

Thanks to the careful tutelage of the two teachers, one European and the other Bengali, fortified as they are by the strong recommendations of the European women of Calcutta, Sushila turns out to be an exemplary student, a perfect 'Nabina'.

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**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- Jasodhara Bagchi - the archetype of the newly rising middle-class woman in India, who was designated as *bhadramahila* in Bengal, had overlooked the role of a girl child, by over-emphasizing on the construction of an ideal femininity that could crucially reproduce class relations.
- Unlike the acculturated and affected womanly virtues and skills, the short-lived phase of a "girl-hood" was not considered worth of recording and analysis. The feminine games and literature created specifically for the girl child's consumption were all symbolic of the carefully gendered education and housekeeping that she henceforth would have to take up as a *bhadramahila*.
- Bandopadhyay - Sushila's *bhadramohilhood* is a cumulative product of the European and the Indian moral components, and an outcome obtained after the purging of various negative socio-cultural filtrates: "And thanks to the careful tutelage of the two teachers, one European and the other Bengali, fortified as they are by the strong recommendations of the European women of Calcutta, Sushila turns out to be an exemplary student, a perfect 'Nabina.'"

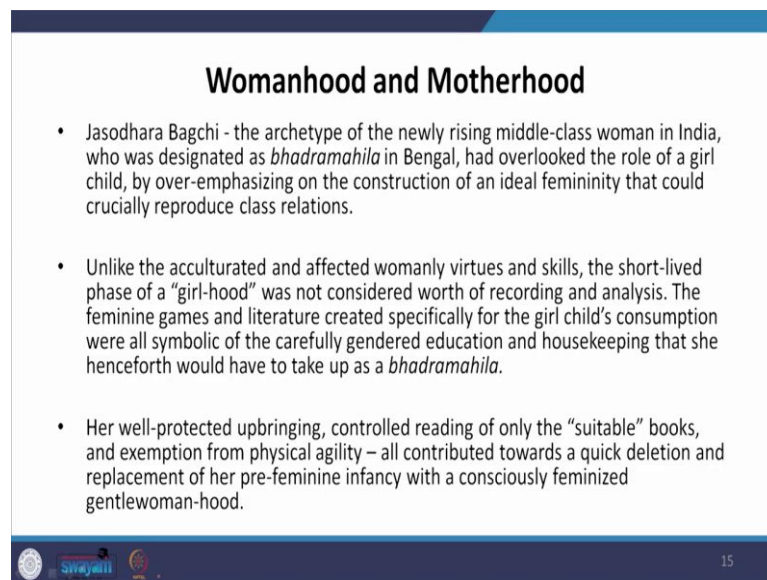
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Similarly, Jasodhara Bagchi is studying how the society's obsession with the figure of the refined-class woman has gone on to overlook the role of the girl.



So, while the discourses mainly focus on the acculturated and the affected womanly virtues and skills, there is still a short-lived phase of girlhood, which has possibilities of different raptures. [The phase of girlhood] is something that is not really controlled and coherent. Bagchi would study that the feminine games and literature created for the girl child's consumption are very carefully, systematically shaped, such that the suitable books that she gets to read, and the exemption of physical agility -- these things are trained.

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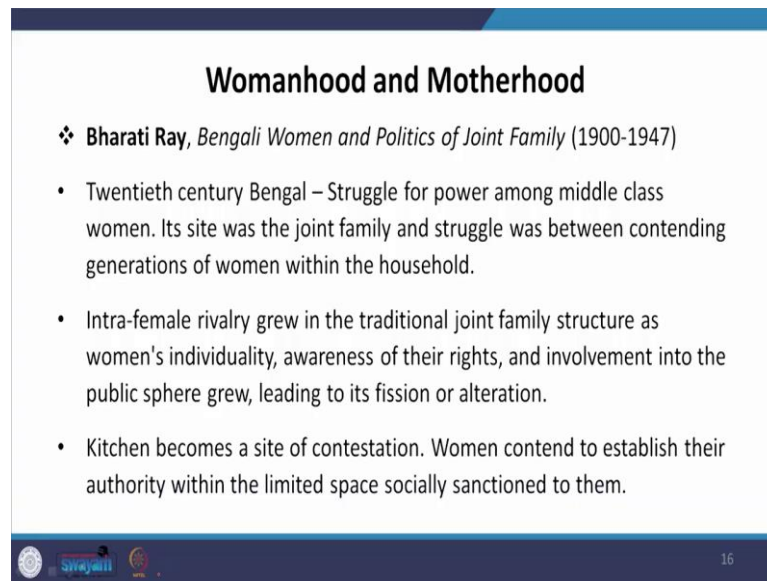


**Womanhood and Motherhood**

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- Unlike the acculturated and affected womanly virtues and skills, the short-lived phase of a "girl-hood" was not considered worth of recording and analysis. The feminine games and literature created specifically for the girl child's consumption were all symbolic of the carefully gendered education and housekeeping that she henceforth would have to take up as a *bhadramahila*.
- Her well-protected upbringing, controlled reading of only the "suitable" books, and exemption from physical agility – all contributed towards a quick deletion and replacement of her pre-feminine infancy with a consciously feminized gentlewoman-hood.

 Sriyaji  15

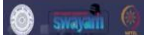
When a girl child grows up, all of these contribute towards replacement of her pre-feminine infancy with a consciously feminized gentlewoman-hood. Next, we are going to very quickly look at Bharati Ray's arguments about the politics within the joint family. So, 20th century Bengal saw the struggle for power among middle-class women, and this site of struggle for power was the joint family. This struggle actually happened between contending generations of women within the household. (Refer Slide Time: 33:16)



**Womanhood and Motherhood**

❖ **Bharati Ray**, *Bengali Women and Politics of Joint Family (1900-1947)*

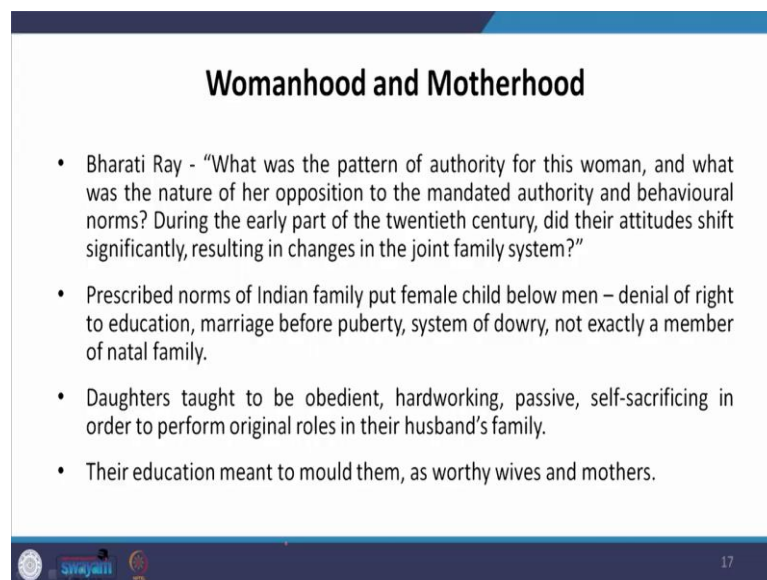
- Twentieth century Bengal – Struggle for power among middle class women. Its site was the joint family and struggle was between contending generations of women within the household.
- Intra-female rivalry grew in the traditional joint family structure as women's individuality, awareness of their rights, and involvement into the public sphere grew, leading to its fission or alteration.
- Kitchen becomes a site of contestation. Women contend to establish their authority within the limited space socially sanctioned to them.

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So, intra-female rivalry would actually inform the joint family structure. Awareness of their rights, involvement into the public sphere -- with all these factors coming in, the rivalry would be accentuated leading in many cases to fission and alteration. And she studies very interestingly the space of the kitchen, which becomes the site of contestation. The women actually struggle to establish their authority within the limited space that has been socially allotted to them.


Bharati Ray notes that prescribed norms of Indian family generally put the female children below the men. So, they would generally be denied of right to become educated. They would be married off before they reached puberty, and they would be victimized by the system of dowry. And so, women could not really establish themselves

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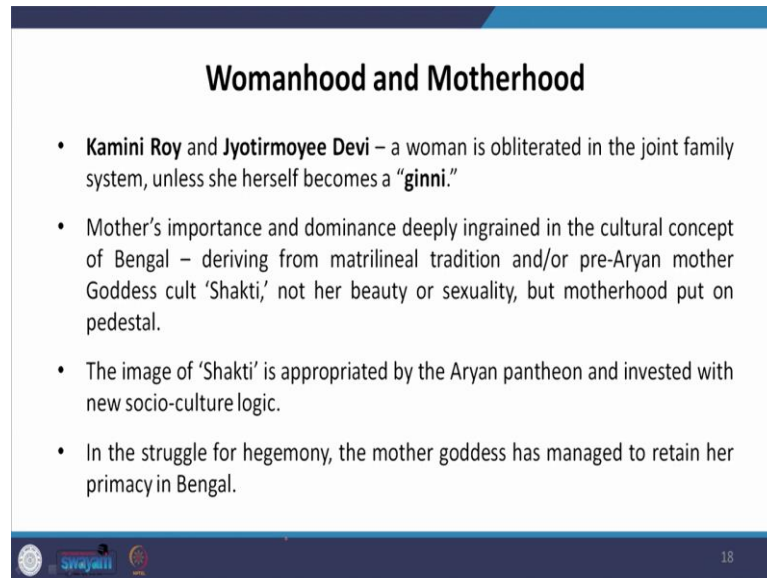
**Womanhood and Motherhood**

- Bharati Ray - "What was the pattern of authority for this woman, and what was the nature of her opposition to the mandated authority and behavioural norms? During the early part of the twentieth century, did their attitudes shift significantly, resulting in changes in the joint family system?"
- Prescribed norms of Indian family put female child below men – denial of right to education, marriage before puberty, system of dowry, not exactly a member of natal family.
- Daughters taught to be obedient, hardworking, passive, self-sacrificing in order to perform original roles in their husband's family.
- Their education meant to mould them, as worthy wives and mothers.

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or be claimant of prominent membership within the natal family. Daughters were taught to be obedient, hard-working and passive. So, these were all parts of becoming the refined woman. This is what women's education mainly entailed, becoming worthy wives and mothers that supported the project of the nation. Project of the nation, whose enactors were the males.

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### Womanhood and Motherhood

- **Kamini Roy and Jyotirmoyee Devi** – a woman is obliterated in the joint family system, unless she herself becomes a “ginni.”
- Mother’s importance and dominance deeply ingrained in the cultural concept of Bengal – deriving from matrilineal tradition and/or pre-Aryan mother Goddess cult ‘Shakti,’ not her beauty or sexuality, but motherhood put on pedestal.
- The image of ‘Shakti’ is appropriated by the Aryan pantheon and invested with new socio-culture logic.
- In the struggle for hegemony, the mother goddess has managed to retain her primacy in Bengal.

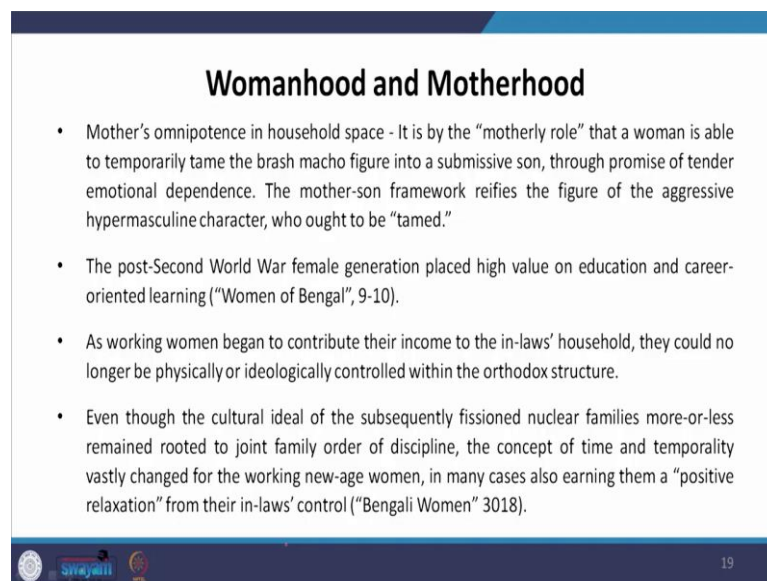
 Swayam  18

So, we see the mother's importance and dominance. Ray is making a case. She is studying the case of Bengal, but we could extend this situation to the rest of the India and say that the mother has a paramount importance, and her dominance in the joint family is deeply ingrained in the cultural concept of Bengal, but we could say of India at large.

It derives from the matrilineal tradition and the image of the pre-Aryan mother, the Goddess cult Shakti, which has been appropriated by the Aryan pantheon and invested with new socio-cultural logic. So, in the struggle for hegemony, the mother goddess manages to retain her primacy and that is mirrored within the joint family values.

So, the motherly role is a peculiar case, where the man as the son gets temporarily tamed/ domesticated, his brash macho figure becomes converted into a submissive son in exchange for tender emotional dependence.

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### Womanhood and Motherhood

- Mother's omnipotence in household space - It is by the "motherly role" that a woman is able to temporarily tame the brash macho figure into a submissive son, through promise of tender emotional dependence. The mother-son framework reifies the figure of the aggressive hypermasculine character, who ought to be "tamed."
- The post-Second World War female generation placed high value on education and career-oriented learning ("Women of Bengal", 9-10).
- As working women began to contribute their income to the in-laws' household, they could no longer be physically or ideologically controlled within the orthodox structure.
- Even though the cultural ideal of the subsequently fissioned nuclear families more-or-less remained rooted to joint family order of discipline, the concept of time and temporality vastly changed for the working new-age women, in many cases also earning them a "positive relaxation" from their in-laws' control ("Bengali Women" 3018).

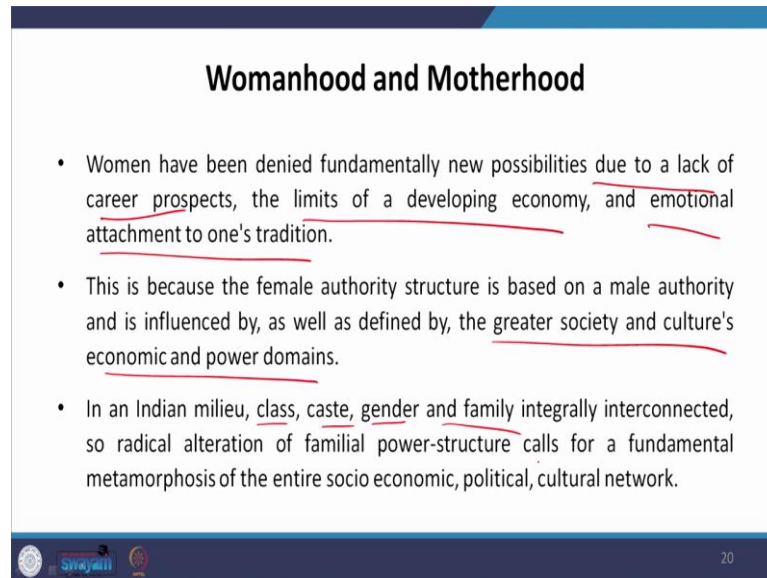
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However, we see high education and career-oriented learning coming into the picture in post-Second World War female generation. For the post-Second World War female generation, high value was placed for education and career-oriented learning. Women had begun to contribute financially, to the in-law's household.

And so, they would no longer be ideologically or physically controlled within the orthodox structure. And so, there were cases of certain positive relaxations from the

senior woman -- most of the times, the mother-in-law's control. The concept of time and temporality had vastly changed for the new generation of working women.

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### Womanhood and Motherhood

- Women have been denied fundamentally new possibilities due to a lack of career prospects, the limits of a developing economy, and emotional attachment to one's tradition.
- This is because the female authority structure is based on a male authority and is influenced by, as well as defined by, the greater society and culture's economic and power domains.
- In an Indian milieu, class, caste, gender and family integrally interconnected, so radical alteration of familial power-structure calls for a fundamental metamorphosis of the entire socio economic, political, cultural network.

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We see that women have been denied new possibilities due to several factors -- one could be due to a lack of career prospects and the limits of a developing economy, and finally, many women still sought emotional attachment to their tradition. They identified with religious and traditional values.

So, the female authority structure is based on the male authority. In feminist scholarship we use the term female patriarch. So, women dominate women, a female's victimization by another female aggressor can be defined in terms of the values that patriarchy has imbibed in the older generations of women.

(Younger) women are dominated by the males and the female patriarchs and then, by the greater society and culture's economic and power domains. So, in an Indian milieu, we see that class, caste, gender, family, they are all integrally interconnected, and any radical change of familial power-structure calls for a fundamental metamorphosis of the entire socio-economic, political and cultural network. So, with this I would like to conclude today's lecture.

Thank you.