Chapter 2

Modernity, Identity, and Nationalism

2.1 Mapping the History of Modernity

Modernity as a historical epoch emerged in post-medieval Europe and later expanded and spread around the world. While destroying the medieval order, it also heralded the start of a new period characterized by change, invention, and dynamism which brought with it new possibilities and fear. However, the European Enlightenment which emphasized reason, progress, science, secularism, empiricism, and universalism in the west, gave the new century a distinct connotation. Immanuel Kant authored a modest article on *Aufklarung* (also known as Enlightenment) in 1784. Kant defined enlightenment as a period that leads to a process of mental freedom in which progressive and liberal concepts are prioritized. "Immanuel Kant called it the 'light of reason'- a general process of society awakening from the dark slumbers of superstition and ignorance" (Pathak, 2015). According to Kant, Enlightenment is a release from self-imposed tutorship, in which a person must emancipate and liberate himself from guardianship in order to have the courage to employ his intellect and reasoning (Chatterjee,1997). He was interested in the present as a whole, in the characteristics that distinguished it from the past. For the first time, the importance of self-reliance was progressively recognized and many agreed that to be self-reliant and independent, one must be free of tutelage. It also stressed, to some measure, the liberation of human consciousness from an embryonic stage of uncertainty and inaccuracy. To some extent, the new age was optimistic in the sense that some key traits of enlightenment represented optimism for a positive, useful and conducive conclusion to a given undertaking.

The phenomenon of modernity and its institution has been explained by classical theorists. Karl Marx (1946) for example was primarily concerned with the production relations of modernity. Capitalism, according to Marx, was the major transformative change that shaped the contemporary world. Agriculture production focused on local

manor was replaced by production for national and worldwide markets, in which not only an endless variety of material items but also human labour-power became commodified, as the economy shifted from an agrarian model to capitalist one. Modernity, on the other hand, was an age of 'rationality' for theorists like Max Weber (1947). According to Weber, rather than political and technological developments, one of the key contrasts that divide the traditional world from the modern is the way individuals think and express their ideas. Weber's distinction between traditional and modern society is that the former continues to moderate within its process, connecting traditional ties, whereas the latter is explicit in the sense that it constitutes a standardized methodological procedure that is scrutinized for further improvement and modification. He was primarily concerned with concepts such as rationalism, bureaucracy, and social stratification. Emile Durkheim (1922) portrayed modernity in the context of 'social solidarity' where he underlined that "more the differentiation, more there is modernity" (Doshi, 2015, 27). Partha Chatterjee (1997) in his definition of modernity, specifically 'our' modernity, where he argues for the negotiation that occurs within multiple modernities, is justified by his theory. He uses the term 'our' to refer to one such variety of India's modernity, which has its own set of traits.

In his book *The Consequences of Modernity,* while talking of the discontinuities of modernity at the various juncture of historical development in the modern period, Anthony Giddens (1966) writes "the modes of life brought into being by modernity have swept us away from all traditional types of social order, in quite unprecedented fashion....On the extensional plane, they have served to establish forms of social interconnection which span the globe; in intensional terms, they have come to alter some of the most intimate and personal features of our day-to-day existence" (Giddens, 1996, 4). Giddens also discusses the clear continuities that exist between tradition and modernity, as well as how they are juxtaposed in an ambiguous and deceptive fashion.

Modernity gave rise to the continuous unpredictable circulation of people, ideas, technologies, and images which Appadurai has termed 'global cultural flows'

(Appadurai, 1996, 33). He argues that as a result of new media and global migration, people's sense of identity is deteriorating, which has led to the rise of diasporic nationalism and the alienation of economic, cultural, and political facets of daily life. He also believes that the flow of global technology and media has produced imagined social worlds in which individuals increasingly view their lives through the lenses of possible futures provided by the mainstream mass media. The celebration of scientific rationality, something that examines objective reality and overcomes all presumptions, and thus creates a balance in human society, is something that is continually contested with modernity. Modernity is frequently associated with a good connotation. The concepts of progress, development, and prosperity are frequently associated with modernity, which remains a useful weapon in the fight against our cultural tradition's "backwardness." Gidden (1996) claimed modernity as a dual phenomenon, with freeing core ideals such as freedom, democratization, and secular orientation on the one hand, and arrogance and cruelty on the other. The world is dived and hierarchized as a result of this double-edged dynamic. It is the same thing that happens when someone is overly proud of himself while looking down on others.

2.1.1 Modernity in India

The colonial encounter was the beginning of India's tryst with modernity. The administrative and legal network, development of English education, urbanisation, industrialization and better forms of transportation and communication had given a stable foundation of modernity as a conquered state experiencing new economic practices. However, colonial modernity's inherently violent, controlling, and exploitative behaviours toward Indians resulted in the traditional practises of Indian society being undermined. The West positioned itself as a "higher" civilisation, believing that its form of modernity would rescue India's disadvantaged condition.

Unlike in the west, India's introduction to modernity occurred during colonial authority, and at a time when Indian society was already entrenched in numerous forms of pre-modern oppression. Modernity, as it manifested itself in the western

world during the industrial revolution (18th century), entailed a process of transition from an agrarian and traditional economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing, and consequently gave rise to "the secular state and polity, the global capitalist system, the advanced form of the social and sexual division of labour and the transition from religious to a secular culture" (Pathak, 2015, 21-22). Despite the steady alteration of traditional Indian society which resulted in a dramatic shift in its social and economic structure, certain features of Indian culture were often retained and given new meaning during this period. Modernity has frequently been pitted against tradition in contemporary analyses of social and political change, but when we evaluate our modernity, which is deeply rooted in our cultural heritage, we are forced to consider the process of transformation of our traditional society in light of contemporary times. While modernity is defined by its rejection of traditional characteristics and qualities, there appears to be some connection and absorption when tradition and modernity interact. Thus, Yogendra Singh (2013) rightly stated, tracking the rise of modernity in India:

> Modernization in India started with western contact, especially through the establishment of British rule. This contact had special historicity which brought about many far-reaching changes in the culture and social structure of the Indian society. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process a variety of traditional institutions also got reinforcement. This demonstrates the weakness of assuming a neat contrariety between tradition and modernity (2013, 202).

Even as modernism was glorified in India, the sacredness of its cultural and traditional origins was preserved. India's engagement with modernity was contradictory with people on the one hand embracing it and on the other hand, separating themselves from it. As a result, we saw a critical inquiry into the nature of modernity during the decolonization process. Gandhi, for example, was one of the first to critique and condemn western/modern civilisation. In fact, his contribution towards the

independence movement may be seen in his conception of a New India that defies the idea of Enlightenment modernity.

2.1.2 Modernity in Assam

The advent of modernity in Assam is mostly associated with the arrival of the British and missionaries in the land of Assam. The East India Company first came into touch with the historic kingdoms of Manipur, Jaintia', Cachar, and Assam, as well as the tribal inhabitants of the surrounding hills, after acquiring Diwani of Bengal in 1765. These thinly populated areas remained unaffected until the Burmese invasion of Manipur, Assam, and the Cachar Plains (1817-24), which put an end to the policy of indifference (Guha, 2016). However, with the arrival of the British, Assamese society experienced a shift in its socio-economic and cultural framework, which had a significant impact on the society of the time. As a result of the colonial conquest, Assam was ruled by the British, which was an entirely new experience for the people of Assam. The population underwent a significant reorientation in the late nineteenth century. They not only implemented the British form of government, political institutions, education, and social etiquette, but they also established a new set of civilized requirements with the introduction of new sartorial experiences among the population. Assamese society was primarily feudal before British authority in India, with a significant presence of tribalism among the region's diverse ethnic communities. The truant of industrialism was absent in Assam before the British arrived. In comparison to other Indian states, Assam was only occupied by the British in the 1820s. The British entry into Assam can also be considered a turning point in Assamese history, as it fractured and enslaved the Assamese socially, culturally, and politically, shattering the fabric of Assamese society.

In a feudal society like Assam, modernization emerged during the British administration. For society and individuals, modernity has always brought with it an identity crisis. The invasion of Assam by the British in 1826 marked the beginning of modernism in the state. When we study Assam's identity dilemma, however, it is

evident that it was a half-baked project (Dutta, 2012, 50). In Assam, modernity was understood as "colonial modernity," in which people were exposed to new experiences that caused chaos and anxiety. In order to trace the significance of modernity in Assamese society, it is also crucial to evaluate the impact of the Industrial Revolution on Assamese society, particularly concerning clothing. The Industrial Revolution had already reached its height in Britain when the British seized Assam, resulting in a strong impact on the region's industrial infrastructure. In contrast to Assam, where manufactured goods overflowed, the region's indigenous industries were severely hampered. This has had a significant impact on the rise of indigenous industries (weaving, pottery, and so on), as well as a cultural impact by promoting highly mechanized goods and services in Assamese society, which were comparatively cheaper and easier to access, and which no doubt, eventually replaced indigenous goods with foreign goods.

The British government had an effect on Assam's urbanisation. With British rule and English education, urbanisation was the main source of social developments, which later influenced Assamese society in its style of living and habits. In the early half of the nineteenth century, when people encountered unprecedented socio-cultural and political growth in the society, industrialisation had little impact on Assam's agrarian society. Except for tea, there was no other significant enterprise that could support the local growers at first. Later, items such as food and textiles flourished in Assam due to the expansion of markets and availability of transportation connections (railway, roads, and waterways) within the country and abroad.

One notable development in Assam's weaving and textile history can be seen in the growth of urbanisation along with various socio-economic and cultural changes that occurred with the arrival of the British in the state. Assam was rich in weaving culture; the locals were encouraged to weave their clothing all around the state. It was inextricably linked to the lives of Assamese women and hence played a crucial role in Assamese culture. It was both a component of a girl's education and a part of her regular household chores. This was so important in Assamese women's lives in the

past that they were asked if they learned to weave during marriage proposals, and if they did, they were revered and commended. As a result of the industrial revolution, there was a progressive transition in weaving culture in Assam after the rate of imported clothing from Europe flowered in the marketplaces. People welcomed the European products since they were something new that had been imported from another country, were inexpensive, sturdy, and were progressively gaining popularity among Assamese.

Samman (1897) stated-

> Cotton fabrics imported from Europe and India can be purchased ready-made for a moderate sum, and these though less lasting, are much finer in texture than those usually made by the Assamese………. Accordingly, among rich classes, the women have given up weaving cloths for ordinary wear and confine themselves to the production of fine clothes deliberately and tastefully ornamented with borders and patterns of silk, or gold or silver thread…... The middle class, too, have now taken to wearing imported clothes, and it is among them, at the present day, that weaving is at the lowest ebb. (1897, 3)

With the influx of cheap imports that were easily accessible to the masses, Samman's statement hints at the decline of traditional weaving traditions. In Assamese society, however, there was always a clear division maintained to maintain absolute hierarchy. Contrast was maintained between people of different strata in terms of clothing. The British colonialism in Assam was successful at dominating a larger section of the indigenous Indian culture. In *Assam in the Days of Company*, Barpujari (1963) writes: "There had been a growing demand amongst them (the common people) for luxuries, particularly foreign salt and imported cloth of English manufacture. Even at a frontier hat, one could find merchants selling commodities, the use of which had hitherto been confined to the nobility and gentry of the realm" (Barpujari, 1963, cited in Barman, 2012, 127).

During this transitional time, European goods dominated the domestic market, albeit on a small scale. With this, the desire for European goods grew among a few Assamese of the upper class, who progressively changed their sartorial style. They were impacted by the European way of life to some extent, as evidenced by the way they dressed and behaved. Few progressive families, who saw Europeans as superior creatures and were profoundly impacted by their manner of education, scientific innovation, administration, and the like, appeared to have changed their minds. Anandaram Barua, for example, wore pants, a hat, and shoes whenever he visited Europeans or went for a walk since his return from Calcutta in 1845. (Hopkinson,1867, cited in Barpujari et al. 1977,126). With the rise of the Assamese middle class, who kept the British bureaucracy operating, Assam was able to modernize significantly.

Many people in Assam, such as Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, followed and accepted the new age. Talking about Haliram's brother Juggo Ram, Guha (2015) writes:

> He makes no objection to dine with Europeans and eats and drinks freely of what is put before him- beef and veal not excepted…. He procures a variety of wines and European delicacies from Calcutta which as a man of large property, independent of his official salary, he can all afford to do, and his house in Gowahatty is amply furnished with chairs, tables, carpets an organ, art glass lustres and other articles of English furniture (2015, 253)

As a result, it was seen that the British created the foundations of modernity in Assam, where the formation of Assamese intellectuals not only demonstrated their steadfast commitment to the imperial rulers but also aligned themselves with their vested interests. However, the role performed by the American Baptist missionaries in Assam's dress reform is important to consider. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter built a girls' school in Sadiya in 1844 in Sibsagar, followed by two more at Nazira and Gauhati where along with formal education in schools, the missionaries also taught the Assamese women at their homes and also taught sewing, spinning, and weaving in addition to formal instruction (Talukdar, 2012). For a change, people were

introduced to new sartorial styles other than the traditional wrapped and unstitched clothing. With the introduction of the sewing machine, people started making stitched clothes imitating the Europeans. Unlike the Assamese men, however, the Assamese women's dress did not undergo a full makeover. Initially, it was the women's blouse that was worn along with the traditional *mekhela[9] chador[10]*.

The alteration in women's clothing has been noted to be cautiously adopted and accepted in Assamese society. However, there was a disparity in sartorial trends evident at each junction between European and Assamese, elite Assamese and lower economic class Assamese, and so on, which alludes to the layer of social stratification maintained, clothes being an important feature of differentiation. A hierarchy was maintained through clothes to identify one group from another. In Assam, however, the imitation of western dress spread more quickly among a few progressive families who were linked to Europeans and influenced by their way of life (education, administration, scientific invention). The preservation of class/caste lines was historically linked to the covering of certain areas of the body, notably for women. The introduction of the concept of 'civilisation' correlating with clothing, which meant covering one's body, was intended to make people aware of their 'inferior' status. The sensation of 'guilt' and 'shame' linked with the dress was constantly emphasized. However, because Britain's Industrial Revolution peaked in the mid-nineteenth century, introducing such concepts could also have been a tactic to build a market for European goods in Assam.

2.1.3 Photography and Colonialism

Photography played a crucial part in portraying the colonized in European's

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[9] *Mekhela* is the women's lower garment. This *mekhela* is wrapped around the waist and reached the ankle joints. It is a large, cylindrical piece of fabric that is folded into one or two pleats and tucked into the waist. *Mekhela's* were often woven from cotton*, muga, eri*, (silk manufactured in Assam) and silk yarn.
[10] Woman in Assam usually wears the *mekhela chador*, an indigenous traditional clothing of the region. The *chador,* the upper component of the two-piece dress, is a long length of fabric with one end tucked into the upper portion of the *mekhela* and draped across the chest and back.

imagination during the colonization process and in the supporting the conceptual underpinning of European racial superiority. As a result of the region's numerous cultures, traditions, and customs, European settlers viewed India as a photographic gem, which they could fully explore and study through photographs. As a result, photography was transformed into a crucial tool and mechanism for the British to use to create a visual representation of the region based on colonial ideology. With the goal of consolidating imperial power over the conquered nation, colonial discourses have always aimed to establish an ideological superiority over the adversaries, thus labelling the colonised as "other" and "insignificant".

In his *Manual of Medical Jurisprudence for India,* Chevers (1856), then Secretary to the Medical Board in Calcutta, made astonishing predictions about the use of photography. In the second edition, published in 1870 he recollected these prognostications. Chevers (1870) writes:

> I remarked in the Edition of 1856 that there could scarcely be a doubt that PHOTOGRAPHY would, before many years elapsed, be employed throughout India as a means of identifying bodies,…. anticipating the disfigurement of rapid decay, and enabling the magistrate and the civil surgeon to examine, in their offices, every detail of a scene of bloodshed, as it appeared when first disclosed to the police, in a place perhaps sixty miles from the sudder station ... (Chevers,1870,74)

Chevers' argument stresses the ascent of photography as a crucial element and thought of its optimistic prospects, emphasizing the role of photography in the British administration in the mid-nineteenth century. This demonstrates how government agencies have utilized cameras as a surveillance tool, with photographs yielding critical information for identifying perpetrators and victims during investigations. As a result, photographs served as a shard of evidence in sorting verdicts. "While imperialist propaganda was not always their explicit intent, the camera nonetheless became one of the colonial system's most useful agents" (Gaskell and Gujral, 2019,

9). Surveillance through photography was not merely confined to investigating crime scenes to maintain law and order, but it was also utilized very methodically and strategically as a tool for the conquest of information and control over diverse populations to strengthen their control over the subjects while portraying their supreme authority of the colonial regime.

2.2 Dress and Identity

Dress is most often used interchangeably with other concepts by social scientists, such as appearance, clothes, decoration, and so on. It was only in the twentieth century that the use of the word was made in a more specific way. Dress reflects our ideological standpoint; in other words, the choice of dress is an ideological act. From a naïve and simple understanding of dress as something that is used to cover oneself, we are today conscious that it is representational and linked to the question of identity, nationalism, status, class, age, and the like. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1995) stated about developing "a definition of dress that is unambiguous, free of personal or valuing or bias, useable in description across national and cultural boundaries, and inclusive of all phenomena that can accurately be designated as a dress. According to this definition, the dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and supplements to the body" (1995, 7). If one examines the evolution of Assamese women's attire across time, one can see how some components of their sartorial culture have been welcomed while others have been disregarded. However, unlike in other parts of India, the shift in women's clothing in Assam was not as drastic as they have experienced. Change in Assamese women's clothing evolved gradually, with the most significant modifications occurring under British control in Assam. With the change in dress, it is important to note that women strove to keep their identity as women and members of an Assamese culture by sticking to their traditional *mekhela chador* same time along with western/Pan-Indian form of clothing. The various socio-political and cultural movements that led to the transformation of Assamese women's dress will be discussed broadly in the coming chapters.

Clothes are expressions of identity, one of the perennial means whereby we signal to the social world who and what we are; they are part of our repertoire of social technology, a means whereby ideas of identity are grounded in the vision (Tseelon, 1995). In a manner, this expressivity aids in comprehending the underlying meanings of clothes as material culture. Clothing thus serves as a means of communication that reflects and represents the range of cultural qualities in a culture, in addition to covering one's body. Clothing and identity are intricately interwoven. Clothes communicate, exhibit, and shape identity by giving it a physical form. As a result, they provide a lens to examine the evolving ways in which older identities are constructed in contemporary culture. Individuals' identities are deeply shaped by the experiences one has adapt in society and thus as a result has gained new perspective and meaning to it.

As Calhoun writes:

> We know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they, are not made . . . Self-knowledge – always a construction no matter how much it feels like a discovery – is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others (Calhoun,1994, 9-10)

As a result, identity construction in a culture can be defined as a process in which individuals strive to develop their identities through a variety of cultural characteristics and experiences. Individuals/groups, on the other hand, may have many identities depending on the situation, which can lead to confusion when they are attempting to represent themselves. As an example, a woman identifying herself as a mother, daughter, teacher, and so on, depending on the circumstance, illustrates the different identities that an individual owns at any particular time. Establishing knowledge of the roles that are defined by norms maintained by institutions of society and assigned to individuals in a society, on the other hand, involves the creation of a separate identity. Negotiations and agreements between individuals and these

institutions and organisations determine their respective weight in influencing people's conduct. Identities are sources of meaning for and by the actors, and they are formed through an individuation process (Gidden, 1991, cited in Castells, 2010).

The relationship between clothing and identity has existed and continued to be a long-standing issue in the history of dress studies. However, it gained momentum with the emergence of post-modern (mid-twentieth century) attributes in the way individuals and groups began valuing and reinforcing identity. It was also during this period that the emphasis on the relationship between clothes and identity was studied from several angles, including socioeconomic class, gender, and semiotics by various sociologists. Many sociologists have looked into the role of clothes in shaping class identity, where society sees social hierarchy among various groups (classes) express themselves through dress. For example, in Indian civilization, the distinction in clothing style between individuals/groups has remained relevant, and it represents the social hierarchy that has existed in the community over time. In, *The Guide to Religious Status and Duties of Women*, a Sanskrit text (written between 600 and 499 BCE) stated that –

> [M]arried women (and not widows) of higher status should wear a bodice. Women of the middle strata should wear no bodice but should cover their breasts with the loose end of the sari[11]. Women of lower status should leave the breast uncovered. As Hardgrove maintains, in Kerela the rules of breast cloth for women were considered as a mark of respect to the upper caste (Hardgrove, 1968, cited in Bahl, 2005, 86).

This is in line with Bourdieu's (1984) explanation of clothes as a marker of class division, in which clothing as a type of cultural capital establishes the high society's power, control, and dominance. Elites, on the other hand, use distinct clothing styles to establish and maintain their social rank, reinforcing their dominance and subordination.

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[11] A dress made of a length of silk or cotton that has been intricately draped around the body and is typically worn by women from South Asia.

Another important issue that has always been the most significant way of connecting with clothing is gender. It is clear that women have historically been bound to appear in ways that indicate their lower social standing as well as adhering to a specific dress code that appears proper as per societal norms. Clothes have long been used to hide the sexual difference in their biological sense, while also pointing to and assigning it through gender stereotypes in clothing norms (Twigg, 2009). Although clothing is used to communicate a person's social class and identity, it also conveys a message about how men and women perceive their gender roles or how society expects a specific gender to wear certain clothing styles. As a result, clothing styles help in reinforcing gender through body type, while creating a dynamic interplay between sexed bodies and gendered identities that is difficult to understand. How society perceives and accepts women and their attire has a direct bearing on how they are recognized. Through the employment of feminine clothes, men and women can distinguish between themselves. Ultimately, gendering based on clothing is a form of stratification that fosters prejudices. Gender becomes more visible and clearer as a result of this, and it is repeated as a body style. Gender appropriateness is influenced greatly by society's beliefs and conceptions of what is masculine and feminine. Men and women, too, continue to perpetuate these mistaken gender norms throughout their lives. Clothes thus play a key influence in how women's and men's bodies are regulated, which exacerbates the already-existing gender discrepancies in a patriarchal society, in which appearance regulations become especially important for women. As a patriarchal culture wants to preserve a distinctness between men and women, a type of hierarchy is necessary to keep the two genders distinct.

Adrienne Rich (1979) has rightly said:

> [A]ny kind of group organization in which males hold dominant power and determine what part females shall and shall not play, in which capabilities assigned to women are relegated generally to the mystical and aesthetic and excluded from the practical and political realms…. Such group organization has existed so long that almost all written history, theology, psychology and

cultural anthropology are founded on its premises and contribute to its survival

(1979, 79)

According to clothing historians, gender disparities in clothes were less apparent prior to the nineteenth century since men and women both donned what was considered effeminate emblems of look and apparel. Even the aristocracy had no notable difference in attire for men and women. However, it was not until the transitional phase of modernity in European and American countries that people began to consider gender-specific clothing modifications. During the rise of modern society in Europe, there was a great desire for economic progress, industrialization, and modernization, as well as the establishment of democratic systems. When all of these principles were applied to men, rather than women, the middle-class male eventually became the symbol of these social changes (Davis, 1988; Kaiser, 1998). Since then, a more efficient distinction between men's and women's roles was reflected in the clothing they wore. Males exhibit their masculinity through their clothing, which consists of firmness, sobriety, and power, whereas women possess more femininity by being womanly, kind, and sensitive. Women have been conditioned to pay attention to how their attire portrays their style and values. In other words, how people of different genders internalize the idea of "feminine" and "masculine" dress plays an important influence in society's conception of gender. As a nonverbal form of communication, clothing as a form of non-verbal language has evolved and gained new meaning over time and space, yet they may also be interpreted in different ways. A distinctive projection of 'otherness' between genders remains observable when one scrutinizes clothing from a gender perspective. Although in contemporary society, the distinction between feminine and masculine clothing had narrowed down, the underlying significance of clothing ideals like modesty and elegance is still strongly associated with women's clothing. The role of social agencies in this situation is critical since they exert considerable influence on individuals by imposing gender norms and cultural expectations on their clothing choices and the unique characteristics they must wear. When it comes to understanding agency, Emirbayer and Mische's (1998)

temporal continuum concept, in which individual or collective acts are affected by the past, the future, and the present, one temporal orientation tends to dominate in any given context.

In the early colonial period, men and women in Assam favoured loose-fitting, unstitched draping attire. The problem of how clothing might help one establish their gender identity was not even a concern back then. Although there were few discernible distinctions between men's and women's dress in the late nineteenth century, it is evident how clothing has evolved as a tool to represent gender and how it has been linked to diverse roles and social positions for men and women throughout history. Dress reform became an important part of colonial authority during the British era since traditional clothing for both genders was nearly identical, rendering it tough to determine males from women. As a result, the period demonstrates a major reorientation in the way clothing was altered, while establishing a position where gender identity could be clearly defined and where clothing was strongly associated with gender roles. Basavaraj Naikar (2005) talked about Chandraprabha Saikiani's[12] question about the norms of patriarchal society regarding women's wearing patterns in his book *Literary Vision*. Naikar writes "Chandra cursed her dress and said, isn't it is much better to wear a *dhoti*[13] like the boys, something you can hitch up as high as you like and something you don't trip over all the time?" (2005, 30). this simple thought indicates Chandraprabha's inquiry into the sartorial division between men and women as well as a sign of a changing social context where women's questions were focused.

The dress also exemplifies Butler's notions of gender performativity, in which clothing serve to define and naturalize gender, making what is manufactured and performed appear natural and self-evident. Butler (1990) maintained that gender is a performance that individuals engaged in, rather than a set of rigid and immutable expectations and responsibilities socially constructed. Performativity emphasizes the importance of

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[12] A pioneer of the Assamese feminist movement, Chandraprabha Saikiani was a prominent freedom fighter, activist, writer, and social reformer of Assam.
[13] A piece of cloth worn by male that is knotted around the waist and extending down the legs

self-realization and representation in terms of its significance in the process of performance. As a result, the dynamic relationship between self, body, and clothes is further developed, and the embodied role of clothing in expressing and reinforcing identity is better understood. According to Craik (1994), dressed bodies serve as a tool for self-regulation. Both uniformity and order are upheld while at the same time embodying post-modern ideas of freedom of choice and self-reliance. As a result, for the majority of people, wearing appropriately for the occasion and blending in rather than drawing attention has remained a significant difficulty.

It has also been suggested that there is a semiotic relationship between clothing and identity in which clothing conveys information about the wearer's identity. Barthes (1983) used a structuralist framework to explain the Fashion system. At times, there is no clear link between the purpose of the wearer and what is perceived by others, since meanings are not always consistent and strict. Davis (1992) suggests that clothing is a code, arguing that it should be evaluated more holistically than as a linguistic code that conveys uncertainty and complexity. As is the case with other forms of material culture, overlapping, ambiguous interpretation, and uncertainty can occasionally obscure its meaning.

2.3 Mapping the History of Nationalism

When we say "nationalism," we usually characterise a person's attitude and mentality that requires a high level of loyalty and reliance towards one's nation over other personal and communal concerns. The term "nationalism" refers to a set of views about a country. Any nation will have its own set of beliefs and characteristics, separating itself from others in terms of its ideology and sense of nationalism, so proving its political autonomy from the others. Such division and distinction between groups whose members adhere to diverse sets of views and attitudes appear to be prevalent in modern times. Nevertheless, a nation's set of nationalism-related beliefs may be viewed subjectively from the views of different individuals.

Ernest Gellner in his book *Nationalism*, talked about how culture and organization play a significant role in society concerning nationalism. Gellner (1997) states-

> Nationalism is a political principle which maintains that the similarity of culture is the basic social bond……. Whatever principles of authority may exist between people depend for their legitimacy on the fact that the members of the group concerned are of the same culture (or, in nationalist idiom, of the same 'nation'). In its extreme version, the similarity of culture becomes both the necessary and the sufficient condition of legitimate membership: *only* members of the appropriate culture may join the unit in question, and *all of them* must do so. …..The aspirations of extreme nationalists are thwarted if their nation-state fails to assemble all the members of the nation, and if it tolerates a significant number of non-members within its borders, particularly so if they occupy places of importance (1997, 3-4)

Gellner's nationalism is grounded in the belief that creating closer ties between members of a community can be achieved in part via the cultivation of cultural familiarity and understanding. People feel closer to their homeland when their cultural ethos are maintained appropriately. A lack of integration into a single cultural ideology, on the other hand, prevents the development of a sense of belonging and, as a result, the maintenance of nationalistic sentiments.

Nationalist ideology also stresses the need of recognising and establishing strong territorial authority for the people/groups that constitute the nation. In the current context, nationalism has become a recognized feeling that influences both private and public life. Habib (2017) argues that only recently "demands have been made for each nationality to form a state; till then loyalty was not expected for the nation-state, but to other types of social authorities, political organizations and ideological cohesion such as the tribe or clan, the city-state or feudal lord, the dynastic state, church or religious group" (2017, 2).

Furthermore, "Nationalism often asserts that other nations are implacable enemies to one's nation; it injects hatred of what is perceived to be foreign, whether another nation, an immigrant, or a person who may practice another religion or speak a different language" (Grosby, 2005, 5). Grosby's concept illustrates how, in addition to admiring and respecting one nation's intellectual views, nationalistic sentiments that emerge in people's thoughts also inflict opposing ideas and scepticism toward another nation. Conflict frequently becomes an aspect of the past that people attempt to relate to in the present. Consider the scenario between India and Pakistan, where, while not knowing one other, both countries appear to be adversaries, whether during a cricket match or any other event where people do not miss the chance to insult and humiliate one another.

British historian Elie Kedourie stated, "Nationalism is also sometimes described as a new tribalism" (Kedourie, 1960, 72). Nationalism as defined by Kedourie, focused on creating xenophobic attitudes within a nationalistic perspective that sees the self and the other as antagonistic forces among nations. Hegemonic discourse is established through the formation of self and others, in which the minority is discriminated against and dominated. A nation, as a group or community, will constantly attempt to reject and isolate other nations that are viewed as intolerant. Nevertheless, since its inception more than a century ago, nationalism has acquired new meanings and implications and has indulged in more complexities while establishing a rigid term for nationalism. The display of patriotic impulses has become increasingly radical and aggressive, which historians and sociologists have criticised numerous times. Similarly, to how nationalism influences individuals or organisations, the method in which an ethnic group/tribe maintains its culture and customs illustrates the care that must be displayed as a community member. For political purposes, nationalism is the most potent and easily affected concept that can be started and used to construct a position that strengthens individual cultural, linguistic, and religious identifications.

During the anti-colonial struggle, many leaders avoided addressing India's numerous cultural, religious, and linguistic identities, even though they recognised the

importance of culture and religion in people's lives. Because prioritising the interests of any single group could have been a hindrance to increasing people's unity in support of India's freedom struggle. As a result, during the liberation movements, the strategy of one nation, as well as the concepts of unity and integration, were heavily emphasised. Gandhi's *khadi*[14] movement, for example, recognised the significance of cloth in culture and could envision *khadi* being used as an ideology or a movement to unify the people of India against the British. Examining colonial economic practices, however let Indian national leaders realise one of the most serious shortcomings of their country's economy: poverty. Rather than blaming Indians' loyalty to tradition and culture solely on the country's deteriorating economic conditions and acute poverty, they suggested that foreign policies played a crucial role as well. Many nationalist leaders were bewildered by the numerous economic policy arguments on the causes of India's poverty and the resulting remedies, leading them to conclude that British rule in India and its policies were destructive to Indian society and degraded the lives of the people. Jawaharlal Nehru, emphasised economic nationalism and developmentalism, which drew people from all walks of life (Habib, 2017). His concept of economic nationalism was to build the Indian economy during the colonial period and to educate people about its relevance in order to improve people's living standards and income production. Since the economy was flooded with foreign commodities during colonial times, demand for local indigenous products declined. However, Nehru was not the only one who discussed economic nationalism, Gokhale, Ranade, and Dadabhai Naoroji had all provided insights into it.

Nationalism can be at once beneficial and problematic as well. On the one hand, it has the potential to be a unifying force within and beyond nations, fostering peace and stability; on the other hand, it has the potential to be a highly divisive tool, impeding peace and security due to competing nationalisms (Habib, 2017). India's nationalism was primarily secular until the late nineteenth century, devoid of the conflicts,

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[14] Gandhiji's *Khadi* campaign advocated a philosophy, the notion that Indians might be self-sufficient in cotton and independent of foreign cloth and clothes.

tensions, or jingoistic nationalism that characterise contemporary religious identity politics. Nationalism was more intrinsically linked to 'Indian' (as a citizen of the nation), although other affiliations in terms of religion, ethnicity, and area were well-balanced and upheld, exemplifying secularism. Historian Romila Thapar also had similar views while explaining the nationalism of her time. She writes: "Nationalism was not something problematic. It was an identity with the nation and its society. The identity and consciousness of being Indian did not initially need to be defined" (Thapar et al., 2016). She continues by expressing her opinion that earlier nationalism could not create differences between religious groups and their ideas because nationalism could only be one, i.e., Indian, thereby drawing a clear boundary between nationalism and other allegiances.

However, British influence over nearly every sphere (administrative, educational, industrialization, print capitalism, and so on) had a significant impact on Indian society's socio-cultural framework, causing people to recognize the need of being masters of their motherland. Indians were angered by prejudice against their territory for the first time. After more than a century of repression, an anti-colonial sentiment gradually formed. The political leaders, who strove to overthrow British power in India through various means had a considerable effect on the attitudes and beliefs of the population. As a result, the interests of the Indian and British administrations varied drastically. The conflicting interests and the realization that they were being exploited by the colonials drew the people together as a country and sparked resentment that eventually led to an uprising against the government. People realized for the first time that colonial rule and policies were a major cause of India's backwardness and that their primary interest is the advancement of all segments of society.

In his book, *Indian Nationalism*, Irfan Habib (2017) countered political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson's notion that nationalism in Afro-Asia emulated one or more sophisticated western models, denying the people of these continents intellectual agency in establishing their own ideas of nationalism. He also stated how Partha

Chatterjee disagrees with Anderson's ideas, arguing that while India was governed by conquerors, Indian society envisioned its nation as a private domain before the political struggle for power began (Habib, 2017, 3). They envisioned a sovereign, self-governing country in which they could construct their own brand of Indian modernity. A type of modernism that functions inside the social structure of Indian society and hence does not copy or resemble the modernity experienced in the West. This is what Partha Chatterjee (1997) explored in "Our Modernity," in which he discusses the presence of multiple modernities, with "our" being one of them in the context of India. This pertains to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt's concept of multiple modernities and how it describes how people see the world today. He states:

> The idea of multiple modernities presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world-indeed to explain the history of modernity is to see it as the story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs. These ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programs of modernity, holding very different views on what makes societies modern……Through the engagement of these actors with broader sectors of their respective societies, unique expressions of modernity are realized.…… Though distinct understanding of multiple modernity developed within different nation-states, and within different ethnic and cultural groupings, among communist, fascist, and fundamentalist movements, each, however different from the others, was in many respects international (Eisenstadt, 2017, 2)

Even if it is impossible to pinpoint the exact beginnings of nationalism, certain historical political and social developments can help shed light on the movement's trajectory. As a diverse land, India has always maintained a strong commitment to its

own cultural and social components despite its many different religions, civilizations, and languages. Agriculture, which employs two-thirds of Indians and provides food for the country's enormous population, has long been an important part of Indian life. Subsequently, the land is an essential component of Indian civilization that is revered and held in high regard by the people. Historian Chris Bayly (1998) linked the foundations of nationalism in India before the colonial period to the socially engaged sentiments that people developed relationships with the land, cult, and language which he termed as 'Traditional patriotism' (1998,79). However, during colonial rule, this enthusiasm and sentiment for the country shifted dramatically when people realised, they were being exploited and marginalised in their own country. This resulted in widespread outbreaks and campaigns across the country. The 1857 revolt, for example, was the first and a massive rebellion against the British East India Company, despite its failure. People's sense of devotion and the sort of nationalism that Chris Bayly described as "traditional patriotism" shifted during colonial rule to a modified and constructed version of nationalism. India's freedom movements demonstrated this when all citizens regardless of class, castes, with diverse cultural backgrounds came together displaying an inclusive nationalistic fervour to support India from British domination. Despite all attempts to trace the origins of Indian nationalism, iconic leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak believed that "Indian nationalism is a force of recent growth, and not until our own time has it generalised itself and become conscious of a universal mission, pretending to a conquering destiny" (Habib, 2017, 16-17).

While reinforcing Indian nationalism the invasion's misery and exploitation fuelled the rise of nationalist sentiments in India, resulting in the formation of an "imagined political community," in Benedict Anderson's words (Anderson, 1991). It is referred to as "imagined" since individuals or groups of a particular nation may not know one another, but the notion of their oneness will live on in each individual's imagination, producing a distinctness from the rest of the community. In India, nationalism grew at a distinct stride and in different places, with different communities and regions

experiencing it in different eras. Because new forces did not conquer and penetrate the country at the same time, the conditions that led to the birth of political and national awareness differed across different sectors and societies. As a result of the nationalist movement and its philosophy, individuals from minorities, deprived sections of society, and marginalized groups became politically aware of their identity and inferior status in society, which sparked the formation of autonomous political movements.

The emergence of colonial modernity reinforced the sense of nationalism, as the question of identity and prejudices against Indians led to a surge of social-cultural and economic nationalism. During colonial period, nationalism evolved with new ideas and circumstances that led to the emergence of radical versions of nationalism in response to colonial discrimination and oppression, nationalism became a crucial tool for opposing colonial administrations. In addition to politics, the socio-political forces that formed as a result of colonial instability had a significant impact on socio-cultural concerns such as culture, education, science, art, and society. Because tradition and culture are the only things that can bring people together, political leaders rethought and believed in bolstering traditional society and restoring the core of its culture within Indian society. Given the urgency of removing British rule at the moment, they do however realise the significance of the Indian masses.

Mahatma Gandhi, for example, felt the value of fabric during the liberation movement and saw it as a vehicle for bringing society together. Clothing, as worn by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) throughout his archetypal nonviolent struggle to free India from British control, is one such symbol of a key time in history. He sought to popularise *Khadi* not only to emphasise traditional industry but also to strengthen and unite people in the fight against centuries of foreign dominance. One of Gandhi's most important realisations was that Indians were responsible for their own enslavement: "We wore Manchester cloth, and this is why Manchester wove it" (Gandhi, 1938, 148). As a result, it was vital at the time to recognise the value of traditional weaving in society, which might be preserved and continued if the use of

foreign goods was discontinued. He devised the 'Swadeshi Movement' to achieve this. He believed that only a methodologically designed, creatively symbolic, morally disciplined, geographically expansive communication campaign would be successful. Gandhi was able to spread his message far beyond the effect of newspapers, telegraph, radio, and railroad transit due to his ethics and communication management skills.

One of the most distinctive features of pre-British society was its self-sufficiency and independence, exemplified by its people's strong connection to nature and participation in physical pursuits. Everything, from agriculture to transportation to weaving, was performed manually utilising whatever resources were available. However, upon their arrival in India, the British colonial authorities altered administration, transportation, and education, among other things. In colonial India, the swadeshi discourse centred on economic self-sufficiency, spirituality, and home pleasure, and it was reflected in women's dress. Reformers and nationalists revised the appropriate clothes, make-up, and accessories for women's wardrobes while also showing their moralising tones and worries. Women's bodies, it has been claimed, were a metaphor for an unviolated, chaste place and the last sanctuary of freedom in colonial India (Chatterjee, 1993). It's also plausible to argue that the emergence of public space was aided by domestic space. As a result, women's clothing took on new connotations, as it became a symbol of both traditional culture and national identity. Wearing Indian attire was a national responsibility, as it was a mark of pride to show independence even when in a dependent condition. Women were the ones that exemplified this the most. Swadeshi clothing was not only more cost-effective, but it also symbolised a return to old splendour and emancipation via women's bodies.

Today, nationalism is widely popular, especially in our region of the world. In contrast to the openness that prevailed during the liberation movement, people's opinions toward patriotic impulses evolved substantially after the 1980s. Labels like "nationalism" and "sub-nationalism," which do not allow for such nuances, are nonetheless tough to get rid of. As historian Miroslav Hroch reminds out, not all patriots are nationalists. Nationalists, according to Hroch, are individuals who place

"total precedence on the nation's values over all other values and interests" (Hroch, 1996, cited in Baruah, 2021, 6). As a result, nationalism is just one type of national consciousness. Crawford Young (1976) defines sub-nationalism as a style of politicisation and mobilisation that meets some nationalist conditions but is not entirely dedicated to independent statehood. Earlier periods of political mobilisation, such as demanding Assamese as the state's official language or instituting Assamese as a medium of instruction in educational institutions, are best defined as sub-national. The growth of nationalism in India during the liberation struggle coincided with the emergence of regional nationalism, or sub-nationalism. When tracing the origins of sub-nationalism in India, the significance of language in reinforcing one's status and identity (especially within a group) was evident. Such instance, Ranajit Guha's (1987) depiction of Bengali nationalism demonstrates how, in the mid-nineteenth century, language played a key role in order for its educated middle-class to recognise it as an indicator of their identity. In order to distinguish themselves from their British rulers, few Bengali intellectuals adopted the "Bengali" language as a means of ideological identification (Guha, 1987, cited in Baruah, 2021). There are many ways in which the power of language and its political underpinnings of it can be harnessed to enhance a community's foundations. Consequently, the significance of language and the conflict over regional language standards in society tend to escalate.

While sub-nationalism was set to take root in Assam at the beginning of the twentieth century, India's freedom struggle prevented it and instead paved the way for Pan-Indian nationalism. Historian. H. K. Barpujari (1993) discusses the political transformations that took place in Assam in the early twentieth century. He writes:

> [T]he entry of a new group of Assamese elite and outlook into the Assam Association, the mouthpiece of the Assamese, produce a radical change in Assam politics. The younger section of the members …felt that the time has arrived that Assam should actively join the nationalist movement; that the Association should identify itself with the aim and methods of the Indian National congress… Regionalism gave way to national patriotism…..then

comes the clarion call of Gandhi to embark nationalists patriotism (1993, 275-276)

Assamese literature and language have long been associated with Assamese sub-nationalism, influencing Assam's cultural politics. The struggle to enhance Assamese culture and establish Assamese as the official regional language (maintaining a distinctiveness) of the state dates back to the British occupation. In Assam, the adoption of Bengali as the official language in 1836 sparked a sense of deception among a small number of middle-class Assamese and marked the birth of Assamese nationalistic sentiment long before it could be termed nationalism. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan also filed a petition with Moffat Mills objecting to education in Bengali, a foreign language, at a vernacular school (Baruah, 2021). As a result, the first generation of contemporary Assamese public intellectuals had to demonstrate that they were distinct individuals who spoke their own language and had their own culture.

Dhekial Phukan, on the other hand, had Baptist missionaries on his side who began learning the language and producing Assamese grammar and dictionaries. This was a beneficial endeavour because learning the language could bring them closer to the state's inhabitants. As a result, in 1873, Assamese was reinstated as the language of teaching in schools and court proceedings (Talukdar, 2012). However, the establishment of *Axomiya Bhaxa Unnati Xadhini Xobha* by Assamese students in Calcutta was a significant step in the evolution of the Assamese language and literature (Barpujari and Sarma, 1993). They believed that by improving the Assamese language, the population would expand and those who speak the language will prosper. This formulation was influenced by new possibilities and ideas about progress and modernity. Lakshminath Bezbaroa, known as the father of contemporary Assamese literature, played an important role in the development of Assamese cultural nationalism. The people of his generation were the first to make an effort to link Assamese language advancement with material success in the state.

Nonetheless, the relevance of clothing's profound connection to people's identities and its role in political movements and national/subnational politics persists over time. Clothing played an active role in the construction of identities, families, castes, religions, and the nation in colonial India (Cohn, 1989 ; Tarlo, 1996). C. A. Bayly (1986) reveals the power of cloth in the period, where it was inscribed with new meanings by the nationalists and became a key visual symbol of the freedom struggle against British rule. M. K. Gandhi's adaptation of swadeshi, for instance, gave it new connotations in subnational politics and clothing traditions. As part of the anti-colonial movement, Gandhi's emphasis on clothing remained strong, and he encouraged Indians to wear traditional clothing made of locally available cotton or Khadi. During this time period, people were acutely aware of their appearances, and their clothing preferences were the topic of widespread criticism. Gandhi was aware of the significance of clothes in everyday life, as well as the inherent values and symbolic meaning it bears. Under his leadership, clothing as a significant political weapon was deployed and remained a critical moment in a nationalistic discourse where the significance of dress was deeply acknowledged. Since then, clothing has become a crucial weapon for identity building and sub-national identity politics, where its relevance remains significant in the political landscape of India.

In Assam the Assam Language Movement of the 1960s marked the growing tension between the Assamese and Bengali, where strong feelings of resentment began to grow amongst the people. The Assamese Language issue dates back to the nineteenth century when the British supplanted Persia as the language of the courts and the medium of education in Assam with Bengali (Basid, 2016). During the movement, Assamese students caused disruptions in the form of processions, gatherings, and *hartals*[15], and they soon came to dominate the situation. Widespread violence and damage to a large number of people of Assam plunged the state into sorrow. The significance of clothing and its relation to identity politics played an important role

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[15] A large-scale protest, typically resulting in a complete stoppage of business and workplaces.

in the Language Movement. There were reports that Bengali women were tortured for wearing *sari's* and were further forced ask to abandon them and put on Assamese *mekhela chador* (Chakraborty, 1960, cited in Sharma and Kalita, 2020).

Women's clothing was also a cultural message and a tool of representation of Indian culture. Following India's Independence movement, the *Axom Andolon* (Assam movement, 1979-1985) was arguably the most significant event in Assam's history, with both men and women coming forth in large numbers to support the cause. During the Assam Movement, the Gandhian approach of employing clothing as a political weapon was evident. After India's independence, Assam Movement, a popular movement that emphasized the Assamese women's garments as indicative of nation and tradition, women as representatives of the nation, and women's bodies as crucial to any imagined battle between tradition and modernity, was a prominent movement. During the agitation, the traditional *mekhela chador* was established as a regional garment for women, similar to how the *sari* was established as a "national dress" during the liberation war. During the Assam movement, the *mekhela chador* was made mandatory in order to instil a sense of Assamese nationalism among women. The constant shift in women's clothing and the overlapping layers of meaning connected to clothing in the name of nationalism, identity, and so on undoubtedly created a sense of multi-level identity as well as a sense of modernity that was redefined at each turn of the century. As Tarlo mentioned- In India, transnational contact and class dynamics constitute crucial components affecting clothing changes; indeed, the notion of 'looking good' was only conceived 'through the Indian's encounter with the non-Indian' (Tarlo, 1996, 331).

2.3.1 Women and the Power of Identity Politics

In Hindu doctrine, the concept of female displays a fundamental duality: on the one hand, she is fertile, beneficent, and the giver; on the other, she is aggressive, malicious, and the destroyer (Wadley, 1977). For Wadley, the female according to Hinduism is not just *shakti* (energy/power); she is also *prakrtiti* (nature) the undifferentiated matter

of the universe. *Shakti* and *prakriti,* the dual nature of the Hindu female, provide us with insight into the norms and role models for women in Hinduism. The implications of this dualism emphasise men's ability to control women's sexuality and power. When it comes to the formation of womanhood in the Hindu tradition, the concept of goddess serves as a philosophical and social archetype (Bose, 2010). It has resulted in women's position being dominated regardless of caste, class, and sometimes even religion, as a result of the code of conduct that has emerged as a result of this belief. A wide range of pre-modern literature, including manuals of conduct, religious regulations, and interpretations, mirrored the building of the image of 'ideal women' and the assumption that their proper position is within the domestic realm, specifically home. According to this line of reasoning, women's legal and social inferiority can be traced back to *Manusmriti.* The Laws Manu, composed about the year 200 AD, lays out the fundamental principles for women's behaviour, emphasising the necessity of gender control due to women's inherent evil.

> "Through their passion for men, their mutable temper, and their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they are guarded in this [world]….. Knowing their disposition, which the Lord of creatures laid in them at the creation [every] man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them" (Buhler, 1886, 300)

The cultural ideals of womanhood, such as chastity, purity, gentleness, delicacy, devotion, patience, and the ability to tolerate pain and sorrow, were sometimes aimed to limit her free and natural progress (Pathak, 1998). Without comprehending the idealized concept of womanhood, it is impossible to comprehend the depth of these values. As Kakar (1981) writes: "For an Indian woman, imminent motherhood is not only the personal fulfilment of an old wish and the biological consummation of a lifelong promise, but an event in which the culture confirms her status as a renewer of the race, and extends her respect and consideration which were not accorded to her a mere wife" (1981, 79)

Identity, control, and compliance are all intertwined when it comes to how women are viewed, utilized, and manipulated in society's ideals and practices. Some ideals of womanhood are promoted as essential to the realization of a utopian society, where women's personal lives, clothing choices, decisions, and reproductive issues are all influenced by these concepts of womanhood. All of these key parts of women's lives are viewable, making it simpler to manipulate and exert coercive control over women in society. Women have long been viewed as the cultural bearer and transmitter of a group's ideals and customs due to their reproductive capacity. Consequently, they are viewed as a conduit for transmitting some cultural components of tradition to future generations. Women and their roles are symbolically elevated to represent the nation or culture when group identities are reinforced, and they are driven to fulfil their responsibility in preserving the existence of the community.