"For All the Women You Are": National Identity, Gender, and Tradition/Modernity in Indian Women's Magazines

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Abstract

As a remarkably diverse nation of various ethnic, religious, and language groups, "Indian" identity is tenuous and ever-shifting, informed by both India's colonial past and rapidly changing, 'globalizing' present. Economic liberalization within India has created vast economic changes in a relatively short period of time, sparking rapid cultural and social transformations. These changes are especially noticeable within the media, as the idea and figure of the "New Indian Women" was born from the transformations liberalization and globalization brought. This gendered construction serves to manage the conflict between modernity and tradition within post-colonial nationalisms, as the figure of the modern women is able to embody both the traditional cultural identity of 'Indian' and the reality of changing social structures. This paper uses Indian women's magazines as sites to explore the tensions of national identity within a globalizing context, aiming to understand how women's magazines construct Indian national identity within the tradition/modernity paradigm, and how this construction is embedded within the larger discourses surrounding post-colonialism, neoliberalism, and gender.

Historical Context of Indian National Identity, the Tradition/Modernity Discourse, and the "New Indian Woman"

Since India's independence, 'modernity' has been implicated within the national project in public media discourse and politics. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, explicitly envisioned a nation rooted in "modernity, technology, and progress".[1] Inherent to this modern nation he envisioned was gender equality; according to Rao, "Nehru wished to establish a nationalism based on 'equal opportunity' for people of every 'backward groups [sic], race, and creed'. For him, technological advance inherently implied a notion of equality in which 'adult men and women' would have equal access to the 'fruits of progress' and 'a sense of dignity and self reliance'."[2] Thus, the discourse of modernity has been historically gendered within India with gender equality positioned as a part of India's trajectory to being a 'modern' and powerful nation. In the post-liberalization era, this historical connection became even more salient as the 1990s sparked the idea of the 'new Indian woman', with the image of the 'modern',

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[1] Shakuntala Rao, "Woman-as-Symbol: The Intersections of Identity Politics, Gender, and Indian Nationalism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 22, no. 3 (1999): 320.

[2] Shakuntala Rao, "Woman-as-Symbol: The Intersections of Identity Politics, Gender, and Indian Nationalism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 22, no. 3 (1999): 320.

emancipated, and liberated women central to the national project and India's aspirations to be a global economic power.

However, existing alongside this discourse of modernity is the consistent tension of preserving Indian 'tradition', identity, and culture. As Radhakrishnan argues, "the nationalist subject marks the space of a constitutive representational debacle when it is torn by modernity's vision to change and tradition's vision to remain static".[3] This 'representational debacle' is resolved and managed through gendered ideologies. As Bhatt writes, citing Chatterjee,

> Anti-colonial nationalisms had to mark themselves as both capable of modernity, like the colonial powers, and distinct, and they did so through complex processes of gendering. The 'new Indian woman' became an icon and an identity that straddled this sociotemporal paradox between modernity and tradition by asserting national, cultural difference in the home, a place distinct from the world.[4]

 Symbolically, representations of women thus resolve the national identity conflict between the constructed binary of tradition/modernity.

The birth of the 'new Indian woman' also came at a time when the Indian gender social structure was in flux, as increasing amounts of women were entering the public sphere and Indian society was experiencing an influx of Western goods and images. The image of the obedient, self-sacrificing mother gave way to the newly 'liberated' women who was integrated within the public sphere. The simultaneous changes in the gender social structure and the influx of Western consumer goods and images created cultural anxiety, sparking increasing fears of 'Westernization'. It is therefore not surprising that the 1990s experienced a concurrent rise of

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[3] Raj Radhakrishnan, "Nationalism, gender, and narrative." In *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, edited by Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, & Patricia Yeager, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 85.

[4] Amy Bhatt, Madhavi Murty, and Priti Ramamurthy, "Hegemonic Developments: The New Indian Middle Class, Gendered Subalterns, and Diasporic Returnees in the Event of Neoliberalism," *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 36, no. 1 (2010): 131.

'globalization' and Hindu religious fundamentalism. As national identity was in flux, torn

between rising religious fundamentalism and Western consumerism, gendered national

representations served to negotiate these two strong forces. Fears of the loss of Indian culture and

tradition were projected onto women and women's bodies, which symbolically serve as

representatives of the nation. Notably, women's bodies in public media and discourse

increasingly served as the point at which 'tradition' and 'modernity' could fuse. As Fernandes

writes,

> Images of the 'new Indian woman' attempt to negotiate the contradiction inherent in the
> politics of globalization. Gender, in this context, serves as the socio-symbolic site which
> attempts to manage the destabilizing contradictions which globalization produces in the
> Indian nation...The potential disruption is managed through a remapping of the nation's
> boundaries through a politics of gender which centers around conflicts over the
> preservation of the purity of women.[5]

Women thus become the symbols of a nation still intact, soothing fears and smoothing cultural

contradictions.

Other scholars have argued that the image of the 'new Indian woman' served to subvert

the potentially revolutionary effects of the increase of women in the public sphere, limiting the

threat these changes posed to patriarchy. In particular, Munshi argues that the image was

channelled through marketplace ideologies, thereby taming its revolutionary potential as it

became closely linked to consumerism. "Therefore...it remains it remains posited *within*

traditional structures of patriarchal hegemony and does not become a disruptive force from

without'.[6] Rather than challenge patriarchal power structures, then, the image of the 'new Indian

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[5] Leela Fernandes, "Nationalizing 'the global': Media Images, Cultural Politics, and the Middle Class in India,"
Media, Culture, & Society 22 (2000): 623.

[6] Shoma Munshi, "Wife/Mother/Daughter-in-Law: Multiple Avatars of Homemaker in 1990s Indian Advertising"
Media, Culture, & Society 20 (1998): 573.

woman' was not actually so new at all, but rather a media construction that helped facilitate the explosion of consumer capitalism.

Thus, the modern, 'new' Indian woman was a representation created from the specific political, economic, and cultural context of the 1990s, and the destabilizing contradictions of the simultaneous forces of globalization and religious fundamentalism; she served to symbolize the fusion of tradition and modernity within a distinctly 'Indian' national identity. Within this context, this paper focuses on three core questions: How do Indian women's magazines construct this idea of the 'ideal' Indian women? How do they negotiate the tension of tradition/modernity within post-colonial national identities? How do they negotiate the "threat" of westernization, glamorizing consumer culture without threatening Indian culture/tradition?

Women's magazines were chosen to analyze national identity and tradition/modernity for several reasons. Women's magazines have mass-appeal and a large readership, suggesting they are a major site where women (at least middle-class women) "learn" about gender and what it means to be a woman. They construct ideal, aspirational identities for their readers, offering tips for improvements, suggesting what clothes to wear, what meals to cook, and how to deal with relationships. In doing so, they create a vision of an idealized, normal subject and how that subject should look, act, and behave. The prescriptions they provide thus offer significant insight into the aspirations and goals of a particular society. In India in particular, magazines have a significant cultural history; *Femina*, the leading women's magazine, was founded shortly after independence, serving as a "tool to help create a homogenous Indian woman who would transcend the boundaries of caste and ethnicity to unite the nation".[7] Thus, as women's

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[7] Susan Dewey, *Making Miss India Miss World: Constructing Gender, Power, and the Nation in Postliberalization India* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 19.

magazines have historically functioned as a site for the creation of national, gendered identities, examining them in the current era will help to illuminate the effects of economic liberalization.

Methods

Magazines sampled were *Femina, Woman's Era, New Woman, Cosmopolitan,* and *Marie Clair.* Magazines were read and coded around the themes of national identity, tradition/ modernity, beauty ideals, and gender and sexual norms. Although the focus was on editorial content, advertisements were included in the final analysis and coding, as there is traditionally significant overlap in content, and advertisers have historically had a strong sway over editorial content. In addition to a survey of magazines, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with Indian women about how they view media representations; respondents were all middle to upper-class Hindu women in the cities of Jaipur, New Delhi, and Gurgaon. Since the goal of the interviews was to better understand how real, everyday women interpret and think about media images, no 'experts' were surveyed. Fieldwork was also conducted in beauty salons, nail salons, and cafes (locations where magazines are often read) through informal conversations with groups of women as they read magazines or chatted. A small selection of Indian women's blogs were also sampled to gain better context of how women felt about and responded to media representations.

There are some crucial differences between the magazines surveyed that are important to note in understanding the different representations they offered. Below is a brief synopsis of magazines surveyed and their differences.

New Woman is an Indian magazine, founded in 1996 and published by Pioneer Book Company, an Indian company established in 1948.[8] According to its publishers, it is the second

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[8] "Company Profile," New Woman India, accessed May 8, 2013, http://www.newwomanindia.com/new-woman-women-magzine.html.

largest selling women's monthly English magazine in India.[9] It's tagline is "She's Just Like You" and it features content on beauty, fashion, health, parenting, recipes, home decor, life advice, and Bollywood celebrities. Although it explicitly names itself as *New Woman*, suggesting it is aiming for a youthful and 'modern' readership, it does not feature the international products or have the prestige of *Femina* or other magazines, and features significantly less advertisements than the other magazines sampled.

Women's Era is also an Indian magazine, founded in 1973 and owned by Delhi Press Magazine.[10] It's tagline is "Makes Life Beautiful" and it boasts that "one in three women a year" read it. Considered a more 'traditional' magazine (as one respondent put it, "the type of magazine you would want your daughter-in-law to read"[11]), it features recipes, parenting and relationship advice, and short stories. It's advertisements feature less international brands and more local items more specific to Indian culture (i.e. henna, hair oil.) Unlike all of the other magazines sampled, beauty and fashion did not feature prominently in its content.

Femina is also an Indian magazine, originally published in 1959 but today owned by Worldwide Media, jointly published through BBC Worldwide and The Times Group.[12] It has historically been associated with beauty in India, sponsoring the Miss India beauty pageant since 1964. Published fortnightly, its tagline is "For all the women you are", and it features articles on fashion, beauty, sex, relationships, current events (particularly related to women), celebrities, recipes, and profiles of accomplished women. *Femina* is also an aspirational magazine for many

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[9] "Company Profile," New Woman India, accessed May 8, 2013, http://www.newwomanindia.com/new-woman-women-magzine.html.

[10] "About Us" Women's Era, accessed May 8, 2013, http://womansera.com/wemag/we.aspx?show=ABOUTUS.

[11]Dutta, A, personal interview, New Delhi, India, May 1, 2013.

[12] "Femina" The Times Group, accessed May 8, 2013, http://www.timm.indiatimes.com/timm/femina.jsp.

women, since, despite its wide-readership (the #1 English-language women's magazine within India), the products and experiences it highlights are often far beyond the price point of the average Indian women (such as 40,000 rupee coats).[13]

Cosmopolitan is a magazine from the United States, first published in 1886 as a family and literary magazine. In the 1960s, under the helm of Helen Gurley Brown, it was transformed into a women's magazine focusing on sex, beauty, and relationships, garnering iconic status as one of the first popular magazines to posit that women could be single, happy, and enjoy premarital sex.[14] Today, owned by Heart Magazines, it is somewhat of a global empire, as it has 64 international editions and is distributed in more than 100 countries.[15] It has been in India since 1996, and features articles on sex, beauty, health, fashion, celebrities, and men. It is also (in)famous for its daring sexual headlines and articles; for example, the February 2013 Indian copy featured the headline "Exactly Where to Touch a NAKED MAN." (It should be noted that the Indian copy is often significantly tamed down from the US copy---for example, of the above issue, the US copy was entitled "The Sexy issue" and also included the headline "Late-Night SEX" while the Indian copy was "The Love Issue" and featured "Your 2013 Astrology Report.")

Finally, *Marie Claire* is a French magazine first published in France in 1937 and today is published in 35 countries worldwide.[16] It was launched in India in 2006 with the tagline "Think Smart, Look Amazing." Alongside its focus on beauty and fashion, it offers coverage of global

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[13] "The Story of Femina" The Times Group, accessed May 8, 2013, http://mags.timesgroup.com/femina.html.

[14] James Landers, *The Improbable First Century of Cosmopolitan Magazine* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 268.

[15] "Cosmopolitan: Fun, Fearless, Female" Hearst Corporation, accessed May 8, 2013, http://www.hearst.com/magazines/cosmopolitan.php.

[16] "Marie Claire India" Groupe Marie Claire, accessed May 8, 2013, http://www.marieclairegroup.com/pageEN_International_Countries_India_Marie+Claire.html.

women's issues and travel advice. Both the advertisements and fashion content featured are all explicitly upscale, featuring ads for luxury brands such as Gucci, Dior, and Louis Vuitton.

Understanding the differences between these magazines is important to contextualize the differing representations of gender, identity, and Indian identity they offer. Magazines owned by transnational companies and featuring international beauty and fashion ads offer very different representations than magazines strictly consumed and produced for Indian women with little advertisements. As Chirita states, "Glossy magazines rely on the kind of successful, sensual powerful refined woman, while mass-market titles promote the medium class, traditional, woman."[17] Thus, all five magazines attempt to appeal to different subsets of readers, are read for differing reasons, and are stratified along class lines in terms of the content they offer and readership they garner.

The Ideal "Indian" Women

All of the magazines constructed some form of 'ideal women' that readers should aspire to be. All of the magazines, with the exception of *Women's Era*, place a premium on women's ability to meet a very specific beauty ideal: slim, toned bodies (yet with curvy breasts), fair, shiny and smooth hair, and keeping up with the latest fashions. This was reinforced both in the beauty/fashions sections, which displayed pictures of products that would enable readers to achieve this look through consumption, and in the advice columns, where columnists often recommended plastic surgery or beauty techniques as a means to achieve a 'better' appearance.

The magazines often posited women's bodies or appearance as 'problems' that could be solved through the right products or rituals. For example, when a reader wrote in to *Femina's* 'makeup guru' with a question about eyeshadow, he responded "Do not use any dark eyeshadow,

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[17] Denisa Elena Chirita, "The Mediated Construction of Women Identity: (Non) Value in Women's Magazines," *Romanian Journal of Journalism & Communication* 7 (2012): 10.

as this will only deepen your problem."[18] . To another reader, writing about dark patches on her

lips, he advised "mask your entire lip area with foundation...'[19]; the 'problem' of her lips thus

must be covered or 'masked' with foundation to 'hide', as opposed to challenging the idea there

is something inherently wrong with darker lips. In a more extreme example, a reader wrote in

about his wife's chubby cheeks and was advised on plastic surgery options.[20] Again, the idea of

challenging a normative standard of appearance (what is wrong with chubby cheeks?) does not

arise. *Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan,* and *New Woman* all featured similar language and articles,

with tips on how to "Get Dewy Skin"[21], or "Sculpt Your Face" with "smart makeup tools" such

as "foundations, concealers, and bronzers"[22].

All of the magazines, again with the exception of *Women's Era,* also offered extensive

workout, diet, and slimming tips. For example, a monthly section of *New Woman* was entitled

'nutrition', and featured a nutritionist doling advice on slenderness. In an article entitled "Diet

Tricks to Look Slim" she criticizes crash dieting and instead proposed readers to eat smaller but

more frequent meals, avoid alcohol, and eat yoghurt.[23] Immediately after this nutrition section is

an article on exercises to "lighten up, literally!", which suggests "workouts for troublesome hips/

glutes."[24] The articles highlighting of 'trouble spots' (such as "neck wrinkles, double chins,

jiggly arms, and a flabby belly") reveals that, far more than being innocent health or fitness

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[18] "Makeup Guru**"** *Femina,* March 25, 2013, 151.

[19] "Makeup Guru," *Femina,* March 25, 2013, 151.

[20] "Life Advice," *Femina* March 5, 2013, 137.

[21] "Get Dewey Skin," *Cosmopolitan,* November 2012, 332.

[22] Pallavi Shankar, "Clever Contouring**,"** *Marie Claire,* April 2013, 164.

[23] Samreedhi Goel, "Diet Tricks to Look Slim," *New Woman* February 2013, 124-126.

[24] "Lighten up, literally!" *New Woman* February 2013, 128.

advice, these diet and workout tips are about grooming and creating a body that fits into

normative prescriptions.[25] The magazine thus presents a women *without* these 'problems' as the

ideal, and urges all other women to engage in actions to closer fit that ideal.

To this extent, the women's magazines sampled exemplify what Bartky has termed the

the 'modernization of patriarchal domination'. Bartky identifies three categories of gendered

disciplinary practice: "those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and general

configuration, those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures and

movements, and those directed toward the display of this body as an ornamented surface".[26] She

points to dieting and exercise as disciplinary practices imposed on women; these impositions are

self-movements (that is, practiced and done by women themselves), yet are also a form of

gender-based domination seeking to curtail and control women's bodies in a way men's bodies

are not. They also try to mold women's bodies into a very specific form and sanction women

who do not meet those standards. Bartky argues that disciplinary powers help produce what she

terms "the ideal body of femininity", mirroring Foucault's conceptualization of a 'practiced and

subjected' body, i.e. a body on which an inferior status as been inscribed".[27] This theoretical

conceptualization is highly relevant to the content of Indian women's magazines, where women

are given prescriptions on how to dress, beautify themselves, and workout to achieve an

idealized body type.

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[25] "Lighten up, literally!" *New Woman* February 2013, 128-133.

[26] Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,"
In *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, edited by Diana T. Meyers (New York: Routledge, 1997), 95.

[27] Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,"
In *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, edited by Diana T. Meyers (New York: Routledge, 1997), 95.

Bartky's analysis demonstrates how discipline becomes internalized and self-serving (that is, how domination reproduces itself even without the figure of a clear hegemonic institution or person); this is particularly relevant to women's magazines which are produced by and for women, yet often uphold regressive gender structures.[28] In this sense, the women who create and participate with the beauty and fashion content of women's magazines are participating in the practices of their own subjugation, as the creation of the normalized (or 'docile', in Foucault's term) woman is all pervasive within magazines. It is also important in demonstrating the limits of 'modern'---as shown later, women's magazines closely tied 'modern' with 'women's equality', but this association is clearly complicated by the different ways women's subjugation is expressed in a 'modern' society. It also begs the question, how much increased freedom do 'modern' women supposedly have, if they must spend significant portions of their time dieting, exercising, and worrying about their appearance.

Some respondents critiqued the magazines for their representations. One women argued, "Fashion magazines just turn women into commodities. They also keep women more dependent on men--who do you think is buying and paying for those things? Men."[29] Her comment, however, was an anomaly, as most women emphasized that they read women's magazines for pleasure. For example, in contrast, another respondent who was the part-time owner of a beauty salon, stated, "I read *Femina* for the beauty and fashion tips...they have many interesting articles.

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[28] Although "produced" by women may be a bit of a misnomer, as magazines are often relatively at the mercy of the large corporations owning the magazines or the corporations which pay for the ads within magazines, which are predominately male controlled. That is, at the very top of the chain is men controlling the gendered representations and creating an idealized version of womanhood. That being said, despite the power inequities, almost all of those who consume and create the actual content are women.

[29] Singh, P, personal interview, New Delhi, India, April 27, 2013.

I read women's magazines because they make me happy."[30] To an extent, this reflects the ambiguities and difficulties in feminist analysis of pop culture; that is, even as it is possible to critique something, such as women's magazines, it is important to keep in mind that even in their flawed representations, they are also a source of pleasure and enjoyment for women.

In addition to the normalization of a specific ideal of womanhood, however, Indian women's magazines participated in several management strategies to ensure this disciplined subject is both "Indian" and "modern" enough. These strategies, and their inherent contradictory logic, became clear in *Femina's* discourse surrounding beauty and the Miss India pageant.

Beauty in *Femina* and the Miss India Pageant

The contradictions of this idealized 'modern' and beautiful woman *Femina* created is clear in the language it uses to describe the Miss India pageant, as it struggles to find a balance between an essentialized, nationalistic inherently "Indian" beauty and the Western beauty and fashion norms it subscribes to. This often resulted in conflicting advice, contradictions in terms, and an awkward amalgamation of standards that the pageant contestants must live up to. *Femina* consistently constructed beauty as an inherently "Indian" feature, glorifying the natural femininity of Indian women, yet also inscribed that beauty as worthy because it met global standards and was internationally competitive.

For example, in the 'Pageant Diaries', *Femina* describes pageant fashion designer Jaya Misra designs: "Jaya Misra's creative premise, a wonderful fusion of nature and modernity, complemented Pond's Femina Miss India's theme and vision. Chandigarh say some of Jaya Misra's best designs--natural hues and styles that define the Indian women's femininity."[31] . This

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[30] Lahiri, S, personal interview, New Delhi, India, May 8, 2013.

[31] "Pageant Diaries: Road to Fame," *Femina* March 5, 2013, 162.

description firmly roots the Indian women's femininity as 'natural' and 'real', obscuring how beauty is socially and culturally produced and consumed. It also fuses 'nature' and 'modernity' to the Indian women, suggesting she can be both appropriately real, natural, and 'Indian' without compromising her modern status. *Femina* also frequently boasted that India is home to the most beautiful women in the world, and that part of their beauty is their "Indianness", the huge diversity of India and the reality that the vast majority of 'Indian' women look nothing like the pageant winner not withstanding.[32] The homogenization of the 'Indian' women is relatively pervasive within the magazine; a typical style column asks "What is the most flattering silhouette or outfit on the Indian woman?"[33] This posits that the hundreds of thousands of women in India have the same body shape and therefore would be flattered by the same outfit; the use of the phrase "*the* Indian woman" further homogenizes all women who live in India and binds them into one ideal.

At the same time that it essentializes a distinctly "Indian" beauty or woman, however, *Femina* routinely contradicts itself and highlights the way "Indian" beauty is appreciated and approved of on a global scale. For example, it highlights Miss India pageant winners who made an 'international' impact with special focus. The contradictions of this 'natural' beauty are also made clear as the magazine continually reiterates the amount of work, time, and financial capital goes into being beautiful enough to be 'Miss India.' For example, a description of the pageant sponsor, Ponds, reads:

> Ponds has been synonymous with beauty in India for a long time and has had a successful stint in the Indian market. Pond's has led the way in understanding women's skin and beauty needs for years. Pond's and Femina Miss India together present a platform that

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[32] "India's Most Beautiful Women," *Femina* February 8, 2013, 47-86.

[33] "Your It List: What is the most flattering silhouette or outfit on the Indian woman?" *Femina* April 17, 2013, 67.

helps realize the dreams of ambitious Indian women and make beauty a way of life. The national pageant, which has changed the lives of many young women, has been associated with a panel of experts from across the industries of fitness, diet, fashion, lifestyle, beauty, grooming, and healthcare.[34]

This quote encapsulates the contradictions within the beauty logic of *Femina.* It both positions Pond's and *Miss Femina* as the harbingers of 'beauty' and presents beauty as a 'way of life.' At the same time, it reveals that the beauty of the Miss India contestants is not *natural* but created through a 'panel of experts.' It also suggests that it is *Ponds* that has created beauty in India, being 'synonymous with beauty in India', and not some sort of natural essence of Indian women themselves. Revealing the 'work' of beauty can also be seen as an extension of disciplinary power---demonstrating that if beauty can be created anyone can achieve it, therefore all women should continually be working and striving.

Femina also highlights how Indian women's beauty is a distinctly modern beauty. That is, the ideal Miss India can blend tradition and modernity, pulling off a classic, modest sari or *salwar-kameez* as well as a Western mini dress. However, although she must be able to adapt to both worlds, appealing to all of India and symbolizing the nation, her identity is distinctly 'modern' and representing a new face of India on the global stage. She is not the old India of the past---traditional and ridden with the complications of caste, religion, class, and extreme poverty, but rather a new one, where any girl from a 'backward' village can grow up to be Miss India, as the aspirational language surrounding the pageant suggests.

Thus beauty in India is complicated by a discourse surrounding what is both "Indian" yet internationally prestigious. This construction of the ideal 'Indian' woman is relevant to the ways the magazines utilize a discourse of tradition and modernity to both idealize and historicize an

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[34] "Pageant Diaries: Road to Fame," *Femina* March 5, 2013, 162.

Indian cultural past while cementing a power dynamic which affirms that Western and modern is better.

What is "Modern"?

This construction of beauty within the Miss India pageant reveals a much larger question--what does modern even mean? Why does Miss India have to be a 'modern' women and why does it matter? All of the magazines (with the exception of *Women's Era)* explicitly constructed the idea of their reader as a 'modern' women in several ways. Both a content analysis of the magazines and interviews conducted suggest that 'modern' has no real stable meaning--- rather, it functions as a signifier that connects to a wide variety of ideas. Most explicitly, modernity is connected with ideas of women's equality, independence, freedom, India as a globally powerful nation that is 'progressing', and easy availability of consumer goods.

Within interviews conducted, modernity was most often connected with changing gender roles. For example, one respondent stated that "Modernity is like women going out and working, which was a taboo earlier. In India people see the west as wrong---that it had a bad impact on India, bringing divorce and women's equality---but I think globalization is good, improving the quality of our education system and bringing ideas of women's equality".[35] Modernity is thus immediately linked to the entrance of women to the public sphere (not any changes in men's behavior), as well as to ideas of women's equality; it is also described as part of a globalizing process tied to economic and political structures. Another respondent also tied modernity to women entering the public sphere and being increasingly self-reliant: "A modern women is one who both works and has a family; she is independent."[36] 'Women's empowerment' was also

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[35] Mehta, S, personal interview, Jaipur, March 23, 2013.

[36] Gupta, H, personal interview, New Delhi, India, April 18, 2013.

explicitly connected by many of my respondents to modernity. One respondent, when asked how or if representations of women in the media have changed: "Now I think a few things have changed, as the media shows women's empowerment and the possibilities of modern womanhood; there are many good articles written by women featured and women's content has become popular."[37] To be 'modern' was also to be 'urban' and connected to urban, professional, working women.

The idea of the 'changing' Indian women was also present within the magazines. In one article, women were asked "how has the Indian women changed?" One respondent said "Women today are smart, educated, and professional--whether they work inside the home or outside. They are not afraid to voice their opinion on issues that are relevant, which is admirable."[38] This answer both connects the 'new' woman with feelings of self-confidence and being able to express opinions, however this 'newness' is stratified along class lines; it is the 'educated' and 'professional' woman who is new to today's world and inhabits modernity, a reality far disconnected from the vast majority of Indian women who live in rural areas or do not have the social, cultural, and financial capital to work within 'professional' environments.

However, the tension of preserving 'tradition' within 'modernity' was also reflected throughout interviews conducted and content analysis. As discussed earlier, this mirrors Radhakrishnan and Chatterjee's conceptualization of post-colonial national identity as caught between the discourse of tradition and modernity.[39]

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[37] Dhawan, P, personal interview, New Delhi, India, April 29, 2013.

[38] Ruchira Hoon, "Art of Beauty," *Femina* April 17, 2013, 210.

[39] See Radhakrishnan 1992 and Chatterjee 1993.

Hybridization?

      All of the magazines struggled to manage the glorification of 'modern' without repudiating 'tradition' or being seen as disavowing Indian culture. Although the magazines, with perhaps the exception of *Women's Era*, related modernity to freedom, independence, and fun, they also consistently made clear they retained Indian 'values' and 'traditions'.   Thus 'modernity' was not a replacement of tradition, but rather a way to fuse Indian traditions and culture with the reality of a changing world, the creation of a 'hybridized' sensibility.

      For example, a fashion advice column for *New Woman* reads:

> Saris, churidaars, salwar kameez at work are passe! The basic plain or striped shirts and dark trousers are also not in fashion anymore. The dress code for the modern-day working woman has undergone a sea change. Especially for those working with corporate giants and who need to dress well and look smart all the time! The New Woman's attire reflects her independent thoughts, confidence and her 'urban' approach towards life.[40]

This quote reveals much of the 'hybridizing' logic underlying Indian women's magazines. First, it positions Indian clothing such as saris as passé or not appropriate for work---the 'modern' women now wears western clothing at work. Further, the text positions the 'modern' women as one who works outside the home, preferably with a 'corporate giant', and lives in an urban setting. The magazine clearly connects the 'modern women' with a host of positive attributes-- confidence, independence, looking smart, and dressing well. The article goes on to quote a fashion expert, who takes "frequent trips to New York, London, and Dublin" to stay up on the latest fashions.[41] In doing so, the magazine explicitly positions Indian working women as a part of a larger global, cosmopolitan landscape.[42]

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[40] "Your Dress Code for Success," *New Woman* April 2013, 49.

[41] "Your Dress Code for Success," *New Woman* April 2013, 49.

[42] "Your Dress Code for Success," *New Woman* April 2013, 49.

However, at the same time, the magazine makes clear that it is not rejecting tradition fully, but rather embracing a new hybridized sensibility. Later, the article suggests that "A lot of women love fusion-a touch of ethnic and western" and recommends ways to combine the two aesthetics, such as combining *kurtas* with jeans.[43] Thus, while the magazine upholds and glorifies 'modernity', it attempts to do so in a way that 'fuses' with Indian tradition and culture.

Women also commented that the ability for hybridization is one of the positive things about living in a globalizing India**.** For example, one woman stated "I stay in India because here in India its accessible to bridge between modernity and tradition".[44] Another women stated, when asked if there were any other final thoughts she had to be included, "I hope you give a good picture of India, as we are a warm and good hearted people. We are trying to improve while retaining our traditions and cultural heritage."[45] She was thus suggesting that India could become a modern, or, in this context, more equitable nation, without losing the heritage that made it a unique nation. Modernity is not opposed to tradition, then, but rather something to be achieved while retaining tradition. Respondents often noted magazines' ability to 'hybridize': "I think Femina presents both traditional and modern at different points and yes their thrust is towards being modern and yet traditional."[46]

This management of tradition/modernity and attempts to achieve a hybridization and balance of the two was pervasive within four of the five magazines sampled (*Femina, New Woman, Marie Claire,* and *Cosmopolitan*). A letter to Femina's editor by Blossom Gonsalves

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[43] "Your Dress Code for Success," *New Woman* April 2013, 49.

[44] Mehta, S, personal interview, Jaipur, March 23, 2013.

[45] Gupta, H, personal interview, New Delhi, India, April 18, 2013.

[46] Menon, P, personal interview, Gurgoan, India, May 7, 2013.

complemented "The magazine's views are contemporary, with a right mix of traditional values and modern outlook."[47] Another letter to the editor at *Marie Claire,* by Ananya Sah and entitled "Tradition Meets the Modern", stated "Over the years, *Marie Claire* has become one of my favorite reads. Your continuous efforts at showcasing the traditional alongside the contemporary throughout your pages is commendable. Case in point--Nandita Das' interview. She is modern in her thinking and yet strives toward keeping the traditional alive through her creative pursuits."[48] Both of these letters highlight the continuation of 'tradition' in some way, yet also approve of the magazines 'modern' or 'contemporary' outlook. Notably, that these magazines, which get volumes of letters to the editor and must select only a few to publish, chose *these* letters is emblematic of the ways the magazines are proud of and sought to highlight their ability to hybridize tradition and modernity. The goal of 'hybridizing' tradition and modernity is thus (somewhat) achieved within the magazines, and approved of by its readership.

What is Tradition?

However, if magazines posited a 'hybridized' modern/traditional identity, what does 'tradition' mean? Partha Chatterjee has argued that 19th-century nationalist narratives in India "redefined 'tradition' not as an obsolete and oppressive set of practices to be remedied by colonization, but as a timeless and spiritual set of practices in which India was superior to 'the West,' 'undominated, sovereign, master of its own fate".[49] Thus, 'tradition' works as a vague signifier, standing in for both an Indian nationalistic sentiment and the repudiation of the Western materialism or immorality. This enables feelings of nationalistic pride which gloss over

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[47] "Your Say," *Femina* October 12, 2012, 24.

[48] "Letters: Tradition Meets the Modern," *Marie Claire* April 2013, 18.

[49] Vanita Reddy, "The Nationalization of the Global Indian Woman," *South Asian Popular Culture* 4, no. 1 (2006), 71.

the uglier aspects of 'tradition' and instead glorify it as a part of a mythologized 'pure' Indian past.

This glorification of a purely 'Indian' and traditional past was evident in both the content and advertising within several of the magazines, even as they bragged about their hybridized sensibilities. For example, an ad for Parampara ready-to-cook gravy mixes explicitly links todays 'modern' women within a historical 'traditional' lineage.[50] In the background of the ad five women are shown in various stages of 'traditional' forms of cooking---grinding *atta* with a *ghatti*, crushing ingredients by hand---within an explicitly 'Indian' context, using a architectural features commonly associated with an Indian/Mughal style (arches, sitting on the ground on a floor mat). The tagline reads "Prepare delightful Butter Chicken, the way Punjab makes it. Expertly crafted recipes, sourced from their place of origin." Superimposed over the 'traditional' cooking, is a the picture of a contemporary women in a *kurta*, smiling and holding up a plate of the prepared food. Across the bottom of the ad is the phrase "delightfully easy", showing the two-step cooking process, and a list of the other flavors the company offers.

The ad thus positions the women as a part of a longer gendered tradition of food preparation, explicitly linking the 'new' way of pre-prepared food production as part of the same cultural heritage of making food from scratch. It suggests that women can leave behind the time-consuming cooking traditions of the past without compromising the flavor or quality of the food they serve. Simultaneously, it glamorizes traditional cooking methods, as the serene and happy faces on the women working, the beauty of the courtyard and their clothing, and joyful atmosphere of the image seem hard to reconcile with the reality of the back-breaking physical labor women had to do for centuries to prepare food. It also normalizes using pre-packaged, pre-

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[50] *Parampara* Advertisement, *Femina* January 25, 2013, 260.

mixed (and often microwavable) food mixtures, and does so in a manner that suggests this 'modern' food is really no different from traditional cooking methods or preparation. Ironically, despite the 'modernity' of pre-packaged foods, the ad does not seem to question that traditional value that women should do all of the cooking, again suggesting the limits of 'modernity' as means to create women's equality.

Another ad, for luxury Indian fashion house Kalpana, depicts a women in a sari and covered in traditional Indian jewelry, with the tagline "We recreate the past. You rejoice in it."[51] This explicitly posits Indian clothing as a historical experience in the 'past', not a thriving cultural reality, yet also points to women's ability to enjoy and 'rejoice' in the pleasure of this tradition. Ironically, even as it historicizes saris and Indian jewlery as the 'past', it is an advertisement aiming to sell these items, suggesting that they are still a significant amount of modern day life that women are still buying them and wearing them in everyday life.

'Tradition' is thus glorified as a rich cultural heritage within hybridized women's magazines, as the magazines use the tradition/modernity discourse to suggest that women can have the 'best of both worlds' and enjoy Indian culture and heritage while participating in a cosmopolitan, urban, lifestyle. However, the discourse of tradition/modernity is also frequently evoked against women in the public sphere to constrain them, suggesting the limits of a reading of the tradition/modernity tension as a benevolent cultural hybridization. For example, rape cases are often blamed on the loss of 'traditional' values (as if rape never happened in the past) and victims questioned about their 'modern' ways (drinking, staying out late, clothing, etc.). This occurs at even the upper echelons of Indian government and society, supposedly so much more

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[51] *Kalpana* Advertisement, *Femina* October, 12 2012, 143.

'modern' than rural Indians, as evidenced by President Pranab Mukherjee's son, Abhijeet Mukherjee who deemed women protesters in Delhi as "highly dented and painted."[52] Feminist blogger Iona Sharma demonstrated how the idea of 'tradition' harms women, as she sarcastically described "If you are not good enough, women-if you are not traditional, if you do not wear salwar-kameez, if you do not listen to your elders, if you do not listen to your men-you will be raped and you will deserve it."**[53]** Thus, while tradition may be used to evoke a glorified or politically neutral rich cultural heritage within media, it is also a very real constraint that is often used to justify discrimination against women and victim blaming within rape cases.[54]

The Limits of the "Modern": The Construction of the 'Other'

However, if the magazines were able to construct a 'hybridized' form of tradition/modernity, they did so through a process of 'othering.' That is, the urban, 'modern' women was only able to be seen as creating the appropriate balance of tradition/modernity because it was contrasted to the image of the non-modern women: the rural woman. For example, Femina posits itself as an explicitly 'liberated' 'modern' magazine, one which aims to empower women, thus it includes articles on explicitly feminist issues and women's rights struggles while also giving beauty, fashion, and lifestyle advice. However, Femina is able to create a modern/liberated subjectivity using the construction of a "suppressed,' "backwards" rural women. Through both its editorial content, articles and imagery, Femina consistently reinforces a power dynamic

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[52] "President's son Abhijit Mukherjee apologizes after calling anti-rape protesters 'dented and painted" *Times of India,* December 27, 2012, Accessed May 8, 2013, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-12-27/india/36021507_1_abhijit-mukherjee-jangipur-women-activists

[53] Iona Sharma, "The Creation of a Narrative Frame: The Delhi Gangrape the Mainstream Media," *Ultraviolet: Indian Feminists Unplugged,* March 5, 2013, http://ultraviolet.in/2013/03/05/the-creation-of-a-narrative-frame-the-delhi-gangrape-and-the-mainstream-media/.

between rural and urban women, specifically upholding the idea that rural woman should to be 'liberated' and modernized; moreover, that urban women are the ones who could bring modernity to them. It suggests that female empowerment will come when rural women urbanize, move to cities, and participate in consumer culture.

For example, a *Femina* article from January 25, 2013 profiled Mittal Petal and the work she does with disadvantaged communities in Gujarat. Entitled "Mind Without Fear", the article features several photographs of Petal and the Dafer community. All of the photographs position Petal as the source of wisdom and guidance to the community--either she is standing in front of them speaking while they sit and listen to her, or she is teaching a group of kids, or she is standing next to a woman and baby, reaching out to pat the baby on the shoulder while the woman beams up at her. These photographs naturalize a power dynamic between Petal and the villagers, positioning her as the source of wisdom and harbinger of freedom and equality, reinforcing the image of villagers as helpless or disempowered. (It is important to note that this is not a reflection on Patel or the work she does at all, which may be extremely valuable and helpful, but rather the presentation of NGO work within *Femina* and how it holds up the denigration of villages and rural people as backwards, common to print media). The article also continually upholds an active/passive binary which places Petal as active and the villagers as passive. She is the one who "organizes" and "campaigns" while the villagers receive the benefits; in the tagline she is described as "working to change their future and she's helping thousands from the disadvantaged of Gujarat by giving them a fair shot at an equal life."[55] The article ends

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[55] Upneet Pansare, "Mind Without Fear," *Femina* January 25, 2013, 144.

with the line, "I feel guilty because I am not able to reach out to all of them. The people need me and I need to work harder."[56]

What is missing, is the voice of *anyone f*rom the Dafer community, of which not a single person was interviewed nor asked what their community needs were or how they felt about Petal's work. There is also no historical contextualization, besides a brief mention of the British Criminal Codes. W*hy* is this community is disadvantaged? What problems do they face? What are their needs? The good intentions of the article seem to fall short, as although it may outwardly be about a social justice initiative designed to help people, it also functions as a means of reaffirming the supremacy of urban Individuals and the glorification of privileged individuals that bring 'progress' to a community, without providing any understanding of that community, their voice, or granting them a space to speak. Ultimately, articles such as these, pervasive within *Femina* which has a monthly "women just like you" section which profiles NGO workers or women's issues, serve to uphold a power dynamic.

The positioning of the urban women to 'save' these oppressed and 'traditional' women was also relatively pervasive within interviews conducted. As one women stated, "In media they only show modern figures, but it's important to remember how big India is, and that the majority of the population still lives in village; things have not changed a lot for those women. The majority of women still need outreach at the grassroots. They still need a hand." Thus, the urban women is positioned as the one who can give a 'hand' to those women in villages, and the dichotomy between the modern urban center/traditional (backward) village is preserved.

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[56] Upneet Pansare, "Mind Without Fear," *Femina* January 25, 2013, 146.

Magazines often actively highlighted their role as the ones who give this 'hand'. For example, a letter to the editor of *Femina* suggests the urban magazine is a means to educate rural peoples.

> I am a subscriber of Femina. And I enjoy everything about it, from the packaging to the contents. My journey with your magazine started 12 years ago. I lived in a small village in Tamil Nadu. Belonging to an orthodox Hindu family, I didn't have much exposure to the outside world. When I moved to Chennai, I was a little worried about how to cope with the people around me. But *Femina* came to my rescue, guiding me through all areas, from shopping to dealing with different personal problems. Slowly, with the knowledge and information I gathered from the magazine, I regained my confidence. Thank you, *Femina,* for being my best friend.[57]

This quote explicitly labels *Femina* as coming to the readers 'rescue', guiding her through the challenges of modern life (such as 'shopping'), and as a tool to 'regain her confidence'. Instead of challenging or questioning why a women's move to an urban center would diminish her confidence (was she treated poorly? did people look down on her for a different lifestyle?), *Femina* instead highlights its ability to 'rescue' this women from a small village who 'didn't have much exposure to the outside world.'

Elsewhere, the 'rural' woman functions as a floating signifier for being unfashionable and out of touch. In a fashion article entitled "What were they thinking?, featuring pictures of so-called fashion mishaps, the tagline under a bad outfit is: "Can someone please tell Sonakashi Sinha to snap out of her village bell reverie? Like, right now?"[58] Thus, to be a 'village belle' is a negative attribute that deserves sanction, not appropriate for a fashionable, urban actress. Notably, the actress is wearing an *anarkali* dress and not Western wear; it begs the question if an actress in an 'unfashionable' Western outfit would be made fun of for being a 'village belle.'

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[57] Sowmya Ramesh, "Your Say," *Femina* March 5, 2013, 26.

[58] Bhavna Bhalla, "What Were They Thinking?" *Femina* April 17, 2013, 50.

Magazines also posited villages and rural areas as the *true* block to women's equality, especially in regards to women's safety, rape, and sexual assault. As *New Woman* stated, "It's important to create social awareness at every nook and corner of the country, especially villages and small towns."[59] This suggests that the people who really need to be educated and made aware are not those living in big cities, but rather villagers who block the way for women's equality. This also seems to suggest that urban, 'modern' people are completely progressive and have achieved complete gender equality, despite the reality that rapes, sexual assault, and sex-selective abortions are all still a part of urban Indian life.

The construction of the village woman as the 'other' reveals how narrowly women's magazines create the idea of an 'Indian' identity, as it implicitly and explicitly excludes a significant part of the population from its ideal form of "Indian'. That is the, the woman who can't afford the beauty and clothes pictured, the woman who does not belong in the corporate world, or women marginalized for religious, ethnic, and caste reasons are all excluded from the magazines idea of appropriately 'Indian' or appropriately 'feminine.'

The Case of *Women's Era*

The limits of the ideal of 'modern' women as a means to promote women's equality becomes more evident within the magazine *Women's Era. Women's Era* idealized a much different form of Indian womanhood than the other magazines, often upholding 'traditional' ideas of how a women should behave, and rarely using the words 'modern' or the phrases 'modern woman'. One respondent described "The ideal Indian woman is respect-bearing, patient, tolerant, and self-sacrificing" and "the ones who take the most pain and have the most

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[59] Mahesh Kapasi, "Over To You: Samadhi for Damini" *New Woman* February 2013, 14.

tears are the most accepted"[60]; this construction of the ideal women as religious and obedient was evident through *Women's Era*, reflecting its status as a more 'traditional' magazine.

For example, while *Femina, Marie Claire, New Woman,* and *Cosmopolitan* (especially), often featured frank discussions of sex and encouraged women to enjoy sex, *Women's Era* posited sexual desire as a male phenomena. As one article bluntly put it, "Man Wants Sex, Woman Needs Love".[61] It states "Lusting after women is man's chromosomal character. His genes are to be blamed for the constant erotic distractions."[62] By inscribing 'lust' as in a man's 'genes', this renders male sexual aggression and dominance as biology; statements such as these are firmly rooted within a gendered rape culture which suggest men rape because of their inherent maleness, not because of a patriarchal power structure. In contrast to the focus on men's sexual needs, women are described as emotionally needy. "Women's an emotional being. To her, love is the greatest source of emotional fulfillment."[63] The article thus reinforces a gender binary and stereotypes of 'men' and 'women'; further, although it is talking about sex, it romanticizes it for women and suggests women only have sex for love. Interestingly, it also emphasizes women's passivity and dependence on men: "A women craves for love because she always has a deep-seated belief that she's unloved....she feels that man can provide emotional anchorage and stability to her."[64] This positions women as vulnerable and men as their saviors, reinforcing an unequal power dynamic.

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[60] Rathore, S, personal interview, Jaipur, March 22, 2013.

[61] Paul, Sumit, "Men Wants Sex, Woman Needs Love" *Women's Era* April 2013, 61.

[62] Paul, Sumit, "Men Wants Sex, Woman Needs Love" *Women's Era* April 2013, 61.

[63] Paul, Sumit, "Men Wants Sex, Woman Needs Love" *Women's Era* April 2013, 61.

[64] Paul, Sumit, "Men Wants Sex, Woman Needs Love" *Women's Era* April 2013, 61.

Women's Era also featured extensive short stories, almost all of which had a 'moral' to them that reinforced specific ideals about womanhood. For example, the story "My Happiness" featured a woman named Sheela who takes for granted her marriage and extravagant lifestyle (she is traveling through Europe), until she gets to know her mother-in-law, who is grieving after her husbands death. Sheela then realizes that she should give more priority to family and relationships, as she is impressed by the scope of her mother-in-law's devotion to her dead husband. Sheela realizes that relationships 'these days' have been corrupted, filled with selfishness, and she sees this because of her mother-in-laws only wish to die so she can go to heaven to serve her duties for him ("wash his shirts"). This belief is reinforced when the self-sacrificing image of her mother-in-law is contrasted to a Dutch couple Sheela meets on her journey. The husband of the Dutch couple was paralyzed, a brain hemorrhage taking away his ability to see, speak, and eat; his wife reveals to Sheela that she sometimes wished he would die and leave life support, as she cannot handle his medical care or the emotional pain anymore.

As Sheela states, this woman "was a totally self-centered woman, who made use of the pleasure and enjoyments of the life only for her sake.....this kind of selfish feeling towards her husband was a transformation of human beings into mechanical robots, where there was no place for humanity, and posed a big threat to the whole society."[65] This selfishness was contrasted to Sheela's mother in law, "a lady, a mother, a wife, who whole-heartedly dedicated to serving her husband and family, only because she loved them so deeply. There was no short cut for her."[66] The story thus functions as a moral cautionary tale: do not turn into the selfish woman who does not care about her husband or servicing his needs enough. It is threatening society, and if you are

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[65] Bhargave, Rashimi, "My Happiness" *Women's Era* April 2013, 28.

[66] Bhargave, Rashimi, "My Happiness" *Women's Era* April 2013, 28.

not a good enough mother and wife, you are a bad person. The story glorifies the dedication of the mother-in-law and warns women of the consequences of straying from these "traditional" values.

Through these short stories and advice columns, *Women's Era* continually affirms an essentialized version of womanhood it expects Indian women to uphold and inhabit: that woman are sexually passive and more interested in romance, that they derive primary satisfaction from being mothers and wives, and that they should remain rooted to specific a form of Indian (and explicitly Hindu) 'tradition'. It also positions this womanhood as distinct from and morally superior to that of Western women, due to its roots in the Indian tradition.

However, it would be a misnomer to label *Women's Era* as 'traditional' and the other magazines as 'modern'; rather, the case of *Women's Era* reflects the fluidity of the modernity/tradition discourse and demonstrates that gender inequality operates within both discourses of womanhood. While *Woman's Era* may explicitly tell women to be in service to their husbands and fulfill wifely duty, *Cosmopolitan,* a very explicitly 'modern' magazine, fills its pages with sex tips for women to 'please their man.' While the language and content may be drastically different in the two magazines, is the message really any different? Do they not both tell women to learn how to craft yourself and your actions in a way that is pleasing for men? Thus, women, whether 'modern' or 'traditional' continue to be policed to fitting differing standards of how they should behave, act, dress, and live.

Thus *Women's Era* reflects how much of a false mirage the idea of the 'new' woman is; rather, the continuing fixation on being a'modern' is merely a new way to set women up for conflicting standards. Ultimately, it manifests in women being forced to straddle competing

demands, a tight rope of cultural expectations to be simultaneously 'traditional' and 'modern'

enough. As one respondent stated, "The main tradition vs modernity argument for me rests in the

fact that one wants their women to be docile, obedient, compliant, not ask to many questions

while at the same time being the super mom, the super achiever and the person who is the child's

best friend and the husband's best friend. Its when that cracks and women make demands which

do not incorporate those images, thats when all hell breaks loose."[67] Being 'modern' thus is not

necessarily a means for women to claim equality without backlash; further, it obscures how

gender inequality is implicated within modernity as well.

Conclusions

Thus, women's magazines used the tradition/modernity discourse to navigate the tricky

cultural and social context of modernizing India, in which national identity is predicated on

affirming the nations status as a 'modern' nation without repudiating cultural and social

traditions. Representations of women are key to this understanding, as the tension and conflict

between modernity/tradition plays across women's bodies, lives, and gendered media images.

While the discourse of modernity frames itself as a mechanism for gender equality, it instead just

becomes another means for subjugating women. It obscures the ways that 'modern' societies and

'modern' people still oppress women and re-inscribe their second-class status. It also further

generates a cultural backlash---when women's equality is framed as the transition to the

'modern' world, it positions gender equality as separate from Indian culture and therefore flames

the fires stoked by globalization, where the economic imperialism of globalization backed by

Western finance and corporations increasingly puts individuals traditional cultures, customs, and

livelihoods at risk.

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[67] Menon, P, personal interview, Gurgoan, India, May 7, 2013.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are significant questions for future research to continue to explore. How will globalization continue to impact Indian society in media as it becomes ever more entrenched? How will understandings of 'tradition' and 'modernity' change as India continues to urbanize? How will women's changing status change media representations? How will the recent Delhi gang rape and protests spark change in gendered ideology? How will the continued entrance of women to the public sphere and workforce change understandings of tradition/modernity? These questions continue to be relevent and deserve exploration as India continues to change and evolve. Additional, expanding analysis to other media forms such as television, movies, and newspapers is another fruitful area for research on gender and national identity. Additionally, increased exploration of how *men* respond to, react to, and interact with media representations is needed.

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Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.