UNIT 1 MASCULINITY

Structure

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Objectives
1.3 Studying Masculinity
1.4 Examining Masculinities
1.5 Masculinity and Nationalism
1.6 Masculinity, Violence, Nationalism
1.7 Gender Bond
1.8 The Texts and Their Implications
1.9 Further Elements of Masculinity and Nationalism
1.10 Let Us Sum Up
1.11 Unit End Questions
1.12 References
1.13 Suggested Readings

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding Block, you have gained some familiarity with the ways in which nations and nationalisms are conceptualized, theorized, imagined and perhaps most significantly, interrogated, in terms of the diversity and heterogeneity of their constituencies. You have explored the factors that shape conceptions of the nation, as well as those that mould its representational forms. A key element in both these processes of shaping the nation as well as of shaping its entry into representation was discovered to be the question of identity. This was also seen to be constituted along several social axes or frameworks: amongst these, for instance, are the axes of caste, class, region, ethnicity, language in the Block 1 and Block 2 of this course. In this Unit, we will study how various conceptions and practices of masculinity intersect and interact with these discourses of nation, nationalism and national identity. We will explore how these discourses both produce, and are in turn shaped by, the construction and deployment of a variety of masculinities, each in a dynamic relation with the others, and how they are in turn related to the formations of patriarchy. We will then study how these constructions are serving specific roles within the discourse of nationalism as well as beyond it. It will also be helpful for you to revisit MWG-002, Block I, Unit 3 and MWG-004 Block 2, Unit 3 as you read this Unit.
1.2 OBJECTIVES

After completing this Unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss some of the main debates on masculinity;
- Analyse the constructions of masculinities that intersect with the discourses of nationalism;
- Engage with larger formations of patriarchy and nationalism; and
- Critically examine the relations between masculinity, patriarchy and nationalism in terms of representation.

1.3 STUDYING MASCULINITY

Until recently, that is till about the nineteen eighties, there was not much interest in studying men or masculinities. During the nineteen seventies, in response to the ‘second wave’ of feminism, there was a brief promotion of a ‘men’s movement’ in the United States of America (USA), led by figures like the poet Robert Bly, but a consistent and consolidated field of ‘men’s studies’ - which later became ‘masculinity studies’ evolved only in the late nineteen eighties and into the nineteen nineties, in response to what was seen as the ‘third wave’ of feminism. This new field of gender study sought to focus on the ways in which the study of men and masculinity were significant to understanding the dynamics of gender and sexuality. It sought to explore the role played by masculinity in its various forms in a multiplicity of issues and discourses, not least of these being the terrain of nationalism.

Much of the early work on and about masculinities came from the fields of anthropology and ethnography. According to Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), masculinity was studied through its enactment in the lives of men in different communities, and elaborating on as well as problematizing their conceptions of masculinity. We have already noted that the early years of masculinity studies in the 1980s in the United States, resulting from the Men’s Liberation movement of the 1970s did see an attempt to register it as a field called ‘the new men’s studies’ - presumably as a male answer to the field of ‘women’s studies’, under the aegis of Harry Brod (Brod,1987). It was immediately controversial, under attack as being essentially bourgeois, self-pitying and digressive from the more serious, even arguably more legitimate concerns of women’s studies. Subsequent attempts to carve out a sphere of men’s studies carefully avoided the tag and the preoccupations of this somewhat narcissistic approach, opting instead for a gender-based one, with wider scope and with the intent to address the processes of gendering - of the making of men’s masculinity, rather than of male subjects themselves.
However, this approach essentially treated masculinity as a property or set of properties that is or are worthy of analyses in itself/themselves. Property here must be understood not just in a ‘neutral scientific’ sense as attribute, but in a more subjective and compromised sense, as that which is acquired or owned. In this approach, a fundamental feminist insight is ignored that gendering is not about attributes or properties but is a process, and is about the inextricable entanglement of femininity with masculinity in that process. Further, feminist concerns with the structural and organisational processes by which women in general are systemically oppressed, exploited, subjugated, co-opted and/or violated in patriarchal systems then gave way in much of masculinity studies to the examination of the culturally defined attributes of men and practices of maleness, and of the categories and kinds of masculinity. In other words, rarely do such explorations examine the discursive and practical alignment of masculinity with power. This alignment is so pervasive that it extends to and informs even the attempts to disavow that power, which ‘masculinity studies’ as opposed to the ‘new men’s studies’ represented itself as doing.

Raewyn Connell sought to address this by defining masculinity as “a configuration of practice around the position of men in the structure of gender relations” (Connell, 1996, p.2), thereby seeking to retain structural factors in the analysis. But typically, the focus returns to men as definitive of masculinity. The intent is avowedly to retain “the way in which reproductive capacities and sexual differences of human bodies are drawn into social practice” (Connell, 1996, p.3), that is, to remember that masculinity has to do with embodied agents, and not abstract disembodied qualities and this is important. But such a sex-based biological criterion for the definition of masculinity can lead to a very limited understanding of it as primarily a male concern. The tendency to narcissism then inevitably remains strong. Consequently, the understanding of gender itself is distorted, producing a rather lopsided emphasis in this field. Connell is aware of this when she narrates the transformation of the men’s movement of the seventies into the bourgeois, right-wing ‘masculinity therapy’ politics of the eighties and later. Connell also attempts to negotiate this particular problem by introducing the notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as invoking structural and historical factors. But the problem does not go away as long as this continues to refer to men or their practices as forms of masculinities, however classified.

Masculinity studies consequently is frequently dominated by very subjective orientations - how are men constructed, how does one understand men understanding masculinity, how does one understand the male psyche, its productivity and reproductivity, its sexuality, its relations to violence and so on. John Beynon (2002) for instance identifies an analytical frame entailing a threefold approach: formal or representational, experiential, and
Gender, Sexuality Nation

performative (Beynon, 2002, pp.10-16), and in each instance focuses on men as the primary agents determining and being determined by the significations and practices of masculinity. Masculinity studies remains willy-nilly rooted in the subjective preoccupations of the earlier ‘Men’s Movement’. The point is reinforced by observing that most scholarship in masculinity studies at least in the Anglo-American context was and remains male generated. It remains largely a dialogue of men with men, about men.

Obviously, the point here is not that ‘masculinity’ or ‘masculinities’ are completely unproductive analytical terms but that to become fully so, they should be understood in relation, firstly to notions of femininity; and secondly to a larger set of structural and institutional factors and forces that allocate masculinities and femininities along scales of distribution of power and agency. As Marj Kibby notes:

“[t]he study of masculinity inevitably leads us back to issues of femininity and sexual orientations and the links between gender, and race, class and national identity, to the construction of individual subjectivities”.

(Kibby, n.d.).

But when control of much public and private space is largely in the hands of men, as in all patriarchal societies, how that control is operationalised, shared, wrested, lost, may come to define the qualities of the men in control and their masculinity. This tends to suggest a possible dissociation from femininity and a definitively sufficient association of masculinity with power - i.e., that we may understand masculinity sufficiently through understanding its relations to power. Which is why the goal of a lot of masculinity studies seems very often to be less the exposure and explication of patriarchal gender systems in their comprehensiveness and more the ways in which specifically men relate to power as men. Consequently, ‘masculinity’ has almost come to replace patriarchy as an analytical category in masculinity studies, obscuring the ways in which women and femininity are fundamental to the sustenance of any patriarchy, in their relations to men and masculinity. Much of masculinity studies emerged out of anthropology, feminism and gay and lesbian scholarship. Its origins lie in the confluence of anthropological ‘discoveries’ of ‘other’ constructions of gender, feminist insights into the operations of gender relations, and the political emergence of gay and lesbian work on the formation of sexual identities. Anthropology exposed variances in social practices deriving from variance in gender systems, while feminism and women’s studies argued for the focus on sex and gender systems in the first place, and identified the gendered power-relations at work in the constructions of knowledge’s, cultures, societies and subjectivities. Equally significant was the search for alternative theoretical modes for understanding gay sexualities and
masculinities in gay and lesbian studies. By redrawing the (heterosexual) norms of appearance, conduct, and terms of (especially sexual) relations, and critically re-examining and interrogating the bases of their normativity, gay and lesbian cultural criticism generated new analytical frames often derived again from anthropology and feminism but importantly also from psychoanalysis to locate and understand gender relations in general, and masculinities in particular.

But the focus on masculinities is also substantially a consequence of another set of historical forces, viz. colonial and imperial gender discourses and post- and neo-colonial responses to them. It is the gendered political gaze of nationalism and the nationalist that has engendered for instance both anti-colonial Indian nationalism and the more recent Hindu nationalism as well as their constructions of ‘national’ masculinities and femininities. Cynthia Enloe notes that “nationalism has typically sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope” (Enloe, 1989, p.44). However Indian scholars like Ashish Nandy (1983) and Partha Chatterjee (1986) argues that the attention to masculinity and masculinities has originated in postcolonial and developing-world contexts outside of the disciplinary fields of anthropology and feminism, within the political discourse of the nation and the state.

The discourses around masculinity and the nation have taken essentially two forms: colonial and anti-colonial perceptions of the relations between coloniser and colonised as gendered (colonial power = masculine, colonised disempowered= feminised). As Mrinalini Sinha (1995) points out, the discourses of the colonised are replete with allusions to a humiliated masculinity, while parallel discourses of the coloniser disparagingly allude to colonised men as feminised.

1.4 EXAMINING MASCULINITIES

The question that arises at this point for us is, in what ways do the understandings of masculinity that emerge in these discourses relate to the notions of masculinity that we outlined first, which are increasingly proliferating in academic men’s studies? Are they analysable in terms of these other masculinities, that is, masculinity studies sufficiently equipped to handle these postcolonial (to put it broadly) notions of masculinity and femininity? Specifically for us, can we explore phenomena like nationalism through the framework of masculinities that are conventionally analyzed in mainstream masculinity studies? It is clear that the analysis of masculinity, especially in contexts outside the metropolitan locations of the origins of the field, demands that the term itself should be subjected to a complex analytical process that locates it in its historical and social contexts of generation and usage.
Specifically for us, masculinity as an attribute of identity opens a line of analysis into forms of identity politics; masculinity as a set of practices opens another into the politics of social practices. But already here it is no longer about masculinity alone but about its links to and relations with other social formations, structures and systems. *In other words, it is important to see masculinity as not just an attribute (or a set of attributes) possessed by individuals (or a nation or community), but as part of a set of terms that define social and economic relations, along with femininity, class, caste, race, etc, and that constitute a terrain of ceaseless political negotiation and contestation.* Once we acknowledge that gender is an embedded network of values and practices and not just a taxonomical catalogue of kinds of masculinity and femininity, we can identify the ways in which it enters the fields of macro-politics. Unlike class, race and to a lesser extent caste, these gender terms do not necessarily imply or invoke a specific objective grouping beyond the vague group categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’. That they are nevertheless, in identity politics, frequently forged into such an implication is an indication of the urgent need to unravel the ways in which the languages and practices of gendered intimacy can become vehicles for, if not actively mobilised by, sectarian, exclusive and insular politics. These politics in turn then come to monitor and shape these languages and practices.

Because masculinity and femininity as terms with extensive social connotations are nevertheless bound intimately to the sexed body and to the related terms of pleasure and reproduction, they have a subjective dimension that may be understood essentially as the personal articulation of the social and therefore of the political too.

*MacInnes* (1998) suggests contrarily that the terms ‘sexed body’ are not rooted in the body, but are assigned to the male and female body respectively on the basis of the sexual division of labour, i.e. that there is no logical reason why ‘masculinity’ for instance, and all its significations need not be ascribed to women. Again, the point is not the logical connection (or lack of it) between the body and its gender, but the historically specifiable connections that in fact demand that they be examined in their totality.

They not only cut across lines of caste, class, race, etc. but constitute the terms on which these are internalised by the subject, and often reorganised and replayed in the world - establishing a circulation between private and public, personal and political, domestic and worldly. The investment in this circulation is important since it brings the values and terms of interaction of the private back into the public, and vice versa, each thus mutually reinforcing the gendered meanings and interpretations of the other. In contexts of high-intensity identity politics and conflicts, it is then obvious that the process of gendering - the creation and definitions of masculinity
Masculinity

and femininity - will necessarily be moulded by other factors determining those politics and political conflicts, as much as they supply their terms of functioning.

Check Your Progress:

Identify some differences between the terms ‘men’ and ‘masculinity’, with regard to social movements.

1.5 MASCULINITY AND NATIONALISM

In the above discussion we have outlined some of the limitations of conventional masculinity studies. We have also seen the need to open out the terrain towards a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of masculinity, by tracing the theoretical bases for the relations between masculinity and its contexts of generation and operation. As Vijayan (2012) has argued, these relations may be best understood through a theoretical and historical understanding of patriarchy as masculine hegemony. Such an understanding of patriarchy allows us to identify the connections between gender relations and other hegemonic formations. With specific regard to nationalism, “Masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another, and the modern form of Western masculinity emerged at about the same time and place as modern nationalism” (Nagel, 1998, p.249). It is possible to argue that the relations between masculinity and nationalism are similar in structure and not just in the sense that they are both always represented as being aspired for, sought after, rarely if ever achieved. Nationalism and masculinity are structured together in another very crucial way. Through what Connell famously called the formations of ‘hegemonic masculinity’,
dominant conceptions of the nation are automatically reflected in the dominant or hegemonic structuring of masculinity’ (Connell, 1995).

Thus, for instance, dominant forms of nationalism in the Indian case, usually perceived to be upper-class, upper-caste constructions, through their deployment of masculinity as their main mode of self-representation, strive to re-construct, in their own image, the identities marginalized by the dominant nationalist discourse (e.g., lower-caste and -class identities, regional identities). That is, they strive to use the hegemonic articulations of masculinity to co-opt and incorporate the marginalized, subaltern and subjugated identities into the dominant national identity. Constructions of masculinity then function as conduits for ideas of nationalism, and - keeping in mind the understanding of patriarchy as masculine hegemony, noted above - both masculinity and nationalism then draw on, as well as shape, local patriarchal formations. In other words, neither masculinity nor nationalism can be understood without taking into consideration the patriarchal formations within which they emerge (Vijayan, 2012).

Inherent in such a definition of masculinity is the sense of having to prove itself: this too, in the specific case of India, is analogous to the need to constantly identify what or who is the ‘authentic’ Indian. As Joane Nagel writes,

Hegemonic masculinity is more than an ‘ideal’, it is assumptive, widely held, and has the quality of appearing to be ‘natural’.... This is not to say there is consensus among all men and women in any national setting about the ideal man. Indeed, hegemonic masculinity often stands in contrast to other class-, race- and sexuality-based masculinities. None the less, hegemonic masculinity remains a standard - whether reviled or revered - against which other masculinities compete or define themselves.


We had noted earlier that every dominant - or hegemonic - idea of a nation necessarily works through one or several dominant - or hegemonic - ideas of masculinity. This is essentially so in patriarchal societies, in which the hegemonic masculinities are always already in a relation to power. Let us elaborate on this point a little, in what follows.

1.6 MASCULINITY, VIOLENCE, NATIONALISM

It is easy to see that any given society is organised along multiple and intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination that determine the access to and exercise of power, as well as the terms within which that power is (to be) exercised. Further, the organisation of these hierarchies
Masculinity may be discerned as hegemonic formations that favour specific social groups or alignments. For instance: power accruing from being upper-caste/white/property-owning; belonging to specific regions/tribes/clans/religions/sects/institutions/professions; superiority in age/educational level/institutional position/physique/appearance; or diverse combinations of these - etc. The organisation of these hierarchies is always, in Raymond Williams’ terms, represented as ‘common sense’ (1977, p.110), and therefore possessing and projecting an air of unchangeability. But such hegemonic conditions are never stable because they are essentially constituted through and by a continuous process of contestation between themselves and emergent (and residual) formations striving to become hegemonic. In fact, the reason for the instability of hegemonies is precisely the potential for violence that is structurally inbuilt in this continuous process of contestation.

But this perpetual instability is also a necessary component of the logic of hegemony: it is vital to the maintenance of a sense of threat to the existing hegemonic order, that in turn serves, on the one hand, to maintain communal unity within the specific social group/alignment benefiting from that order, and on the other, to maintain its exclusivity through the very process of ‘othering’ instituted by violence. In other words, what becomes clear to us is that violence and coercion, because they are integral to the emergence and sustenance of any given hegemony, therefore become integral to the formation and understanding of the community itself. In fact, it is crucial to establishing the community’s notions of internality and externality, of identity and otherness (Vijayan, 2012). It is for this reason that the relation between masculinity and nationalism is often a militarized one, and that the discourses of nationalism are themselves often maintained in and by discourses of violent hyper-masculinity. In fact, Joane Nagel extends these relations and locates them historically in the context of the unfolding of imperialism and colonialism:

Given the close association between nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideologies of masculinity, colonialism, imperialism, militarism and nationalism, given the fact that it was mainly men who adhered to and enacted them, and given the power of those movements and institutions in the making of the modern world, it is not surprising that masculinity and nationalism seem stamped from the same mould - a mould which has shaped important aspects of the structure and culture of the nations and states in the modern state system.


In other words, as it appears, the widespread tendency to associate masculinity with violence, or to treat violence as an essentially masculine phenomenon, is not because of any natural or innate tendency to violence
in men, but because of the historical reliance of patriarchal formations, understood as masculine hegemonies, to rely - like all hegemonic formations - on a combination of force, or violence, and consent - and in this case, because the hegemony is gendered, so is the violence. Therefore, so also the discourse of nationalism that it is related to.

A crucial dimension of this gendering of the discourse of nationalism is in the attribution of shame and honour: in general, as Nagel points out, in almost all forms of nationalism, there is a tendency to “liken the nation to a family” and this in turn gets represented as “Feminine shame and masculine honour in the national family” (Nagel, 1998, p.251). Karen Gabriel’s *Melodrama and the Nation* (2010), also provides an analysis of the politics underlying the ways in which nationalisms use the metaphor of the family with regard to the nation.

We have already noted above that colonialism and imperialism played major roles in the gendering of the relations between communities, as masculinized by power, or feminized by the lack of it. We now see that these were integrally related to the understanding of the nation as family, as well as in the application of senses of shame and honour to the constituents of this family. The gendering of these discourses has been remarked on by a host of scholars [Ballhatchet (1980), McClintock (1996), R Hyam (1990), Sinha (1995), Stoler (1997)]. What is of significance is that the particular patterns of gendering that were established under colonialism continued into the post-colonial nation’s perceptions of itself and its constituencies, in the nationalist discourses that continued after independence. These apparent continuities, however, are actually re-definitions the ideas of community and gender, to suit the post-colonial situation and its requirements. Post-colonially, new notions of community and nationhood emerge that were not available or possible or desirable under the colonial regime: hence for instance, the emergence of religious nationalisms, linguistic nationalisms, or ethnic nationalisms, in places like India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Indian state has, for the most part, successfully prevented such nationalist movements from developing into full-fledged secessionism. The point to note here is that dominant nationalisms tend to generate counter-nationalisms, simply by virtue of the principle of exclusion by which they operate.

But in order to understand the persistence of such gendered discourses, as well as the changes they undergo from the colonial to the post-colonial period; we will now briefly examine a well-known literary and cinematic figure, whose very existence draws on these discourses: the figure of James Bond.
Check Your Progress:

Why are colonialism and imperialism important for understanding the relation between masculinity and nationalism?

1.7 GENDER BOND

British aristocrat and professional spy Ian Fleming created the figure of James Bond partly in his own image, as it were (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990). The first of the Bond novels, Casino Royale, came out in 1952, in the early years of the Cold War between the Warsaw Pact countries, led by the erstwhile Soviet Union, and the NATO countries, led by the USA. This was immediately after the Second World War, which the Allied forces had won, but in which Britain had lost its status as the most powerful nation, industrially, economically and militarily, to the USA. The Second World War had taken a severe toll, but as importantly, during this time Britain also lost control over several important colonies, like India, and others like Nigeria and Kenya were also clamouring for independence. Perhaps the two most important factors in these changes were:

i) The British economy was in tatters after the war; the UK, for the first time, faced the ignominy of having to borrow hugely from the USA, its own former colony, in order to rebuild its industrial and commercial infrastructure. The immense economic hardship that resulted meant that the national sentiment in the UK, in the middle of the twentieth century, was one of deprivation and failure, along with the weariness of the long war.

ii) Alongside this, and paradoxically, in spite of its economic depression, Britain was also becoming the destination for large numbers of colonial
peoples, who were permitted entry simply by virtue of being part of the British commonwealth. This was actually a consequence of pathetic economic conditions in the colonies, along with the demand for cheap labour that arose in the post-war context in Britain. But this in turn began to lead to strained race relations, as well as a heightened sense of ‘us-versus-them’, especially amongst the working class. The high unemployment caused by the economic crisis, could easily be interpreted as the result, rather, of the influx of immigrants ‘stealing’ jobs that ‘belonged’ to the ‘British’ (which usually meant white English males).

1.8 THE TEXTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The xenophobia generated by these developments was not confined to colonial subjects; it was to a substantial extent directed also at the new enemy - the communist, eastern-European and Russian constituents of the Warsaw Pact nations in general and the erstwhile USSR in particular. Umberto Eco (2000 [1966]) has pointed out that, in the Bond novels, xenophobia is layered in racial terms; to this we may add that it is layered in gendered terms as well as. It is usually embodied in caricatures or stereotypical characters who embody racial and gendered characteristics that are usually associated with specific nationalities; these in turn are exaggerated to the point where they appear monstrous - and this method of representing the ‘other’ is almost exclusively used for the villain-figures. For instance, in Live and Let Die, the figure of Mr. Big, a black Haitian, is deliberately rendered hideous: apart from a very large head, the skin was grey-black, taut and shining like the face of a week-old corpse in the river. It was hairless, except for some grey-brown fluff above the ears. There were no eyebrows and no eyelashes and the eyes were extraordinarily far apart so that one could not focus on them both, but only on one at a time.... They were animal eyes, not human, and they seemed to blaze. (Fleming, 2012 [1954], pp. 78-9)

The antipathy toward the colonial/immigrant figure is captured well in this representation - but the true meaningfullness of this emerges only when we compare this to a description of Bond himself: in the same novel, we see Bond arriving in the USA, and reflecting on his situation in the following words:

Every thread of his real identity that went on record in any file diminished his value and, ultimately, was a threat to his life. Here in America, where they knew all about him, he felt like a negro whose shadow has been stolen by the witch-doctor. A vital part of himself was in pawn, in the hands of others. Friends, of course, in this instance, but still... (Fleming, 2012 [1954],pp. 2-3)
The ‘friends’ referred to in the last sentence are the Americans; the fact that Bond, and the British in general, now have to rely on the Americans, who were once their colonial subjects, is compared very tellingly in the colonial-racial terms of the ‘negro’s’ disempowerment. As significantly, it serves to deliver the implicit message that, unless a Bond-like national ideal is subscribed to, along with the violently gendered nationalism that Bond represents, there is the danger of becoming like the ‘negro’, conquered and disempowered.

The fact that Bond is actually neither ‘negro’ nor disempowered serves to heighten the contrast, subtly focusing on the fact that Bond is a white man, and therefore powerful, in comparison to Mr. Big, who, however powerful and dangerous he aspires to be, because he is ‘negro’, will not be able to overcome the white man. However, Bond’s overcoming of the various villains he encounters is not just a testimony to his racial superiority, but to his superiority as a man, specifically as an English man. In From Russia with Love (Fleming, 2001 [1957]), for instance, there are two main villains, and a third who masterminds them – Red Grant, the half-Irish, half-German, lycanthropic professional killer; Rosa Klebb, the Russian agent who almost overcomes and kills Bond; and Colonel Grubozaboyschikov, who masterminds the plot to take down James Bond, but fails to do so. Here, as in several other Bond narratives, the villains are all white, but are inferior to Bond in every respect. In this novel in particular, the very mythology of Bond as an invincible, indestructible force is chosen as the theme of the narrative: Colonel Grubozaboyschikov’s plot is to seduce Bond with the possibility of stealing advanced technology (in the form of an encoding machine) as well as with an attractive Soviet agent (Tatiana Romanova), and capture him in the act to reveal him as a sexually depraved thief, before killing him. This unlikely plot is aimed at destroying Bond’s reputation as the best British agent; in its very failure then, Bond’s invincibility is reaffirmed.

1.9 FURTHER ELEMENTS OF MASCULINITY AND NATIONALISM

Central to this myth of invincibility is the promotion of a particular kind of masculinity, as well as a particular kind of nationalism. Bond is represented as having a ‘handsome, ruthless face’ (Fleming, 2001 [1957], p. 54), in Tatiana’s words; this, along with his defeat of Red Grant and Rosa Klebb, by sheer dint of his presence of mind and fighting skills, are the key markers of the kind of masculinity that is valorized. In addition to this, in the corpus of Bond works, there are two more characteristic markers of a superior nationalist masculinity: one is in his somewhat paradoxical relationship to wealth and excess; the other is in the celebration of technology. In the first case, we see in the very first novel that Bond has
access to enormous sums of money, which is provided to him by the British state, for him to gamble against the villain, Le Chifre. As such, he is represented as entrusted with enormous financial power. But Bond’s masculinity is defined by the fact that he is himself unmoved by wealth, and, while he can be repeatedly seen to enjoy a luxurious lifestyle as part of his cover, we are also repeatedly told that he rejects this: in *From Russia with Love*, for instance, Bond’s entry into the text is with the following words:

> The blubbery arms of the soft life had Bond round the neck and they were slowly strangling him. He was a man of war and when, for a long period, there was no war, his spirit went into decline.

*(Fleming, 2001 [1957], p. 62)*

In other words, even as the Bond narratives present us with a masculinity that has access to enormous financial power, and to the trappings that go with it, its ‘real’ strength is revealed to be the stereotypical English austerity with which those trappings of luxury are rejected. This in turn is in consonance with the austerity measures of a depressed economy in post-war Britain, allowing the Bond-figure to be easily identifiable with. So, Bond’s enjoyment of luxuries allows the reader to enjoy them, as well as the sense of financial power that they endow, vicariously; at the same time, his rejection of these renders him one of the people, a truly national man.

The second characteristic of superior nationalist masculinity, which we noted above as the celebration of technology, is again engaged with in a somewhat paradoxical, if not contradictory manner. Bond has access to cutting edge technology in his ‘war’ against the enemies of Britain - and this is especially and spectacularly true of the cinematic versions of the James Bond stories but although he uses it, thereby demonstrating his mastery over technology, ultimately it is his own skill, ability, intelligence, presence of mind, speed that work to overcome the enemy. The veneration of technology is part of the condition of modernity, and sets the western world in general, but especially the former imperial powers, apart from the rest of the world. One of the most crucial elements in the triumph of western imperialism had been its industrial and technological superiority, till the middle of the twentieth century. It was no longer possible to sustain this, in the face of American industrial superiority on the one hand, and the dramatic growth in the military-industrial might of the erstwhile USSR. There was thus wistfulness for that technological superiority, even as there was a need to show that Britain’s glory was not dependent on it. Bond’s masculinity - through which Britain’s glory comes to be defined in these narratives, could thus be defined as master of that technology, even as simultaneously dismissive of it.
1.10 LET US SUM UP

In the above Unit, we explored the concept of masculinity, and tried to understand it in the context of the discourses that gave rise to it, such as gender studies and anthropology. We saw that attention to this concept emerged partly in response to feminist movements, and partly out of the history of imperial and colonial conquest, and then subsequently of opposition to this conquest. We observed, through Joane Nagel’s work, that nationalism and masculinity are close related, if not conceptually then structurally - i.e., in the ways in which they work. We also noted that this is due to fact that both nationalism and masculinity work through hegemonic formations. We observed the centrality of patriarchy to the relations between masculinity and nationalism, insofar as patriarchy is understood as a masculine hegemony. We then noted the significance of violence and coercion to such hegemonic formations, and the consequent tendency to associate violence with certain forms of hegemonic masculinity.

Much of the debate around masculinity and nationalism has focused on this connection through violence, on the association between nationalism and militarization. While this is an important aspect of the relations between masculinity and nationalism, there are other dimensions to these relations, as we noted above, in the analysis of the figure of James Bond. We noted for instance, the role played by xenophobia and exclusivism of various kinds, to the definition of a nationalist masculinity. We also observed that, in the relation between masculinity and nationalism, there can be elements of moralism, of a celebration of austerity, on the one hand; and an obsession with technological superiority as well as its dismissal, on the other. In sum, we can note here that the relations between masculinity and nationalism are complex, layered, integrally related to larger hegemonic formations, and fundamentally associated with certain forms and practices of violence, especially of the organized, militaristic kind. As such, much work in this area still remains to be done.

1.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Do you agree with the view that masculinity and nationalism are structurally related? Give a reasoned answer.

2) Account for the understanding of patriarchy as a form of masculine hegemony.

3) What, in your opinion, is the reason for the phenomenal success of the James Bond novels and films? Does the analysis in this unit help you to understand this better? Watch a James Bond film and prove a reasoned response with the help of examples.
1.12 REFERENCES


### 1.13 SUGGESTED READINGS


