

**Nath, Debarshi Prasad**, Tezpur University, India

### **Women and Cultural Nationalism in India**

Even the most secular of Indian nationalists have thought of India as a primordial nation civilizationaly defined, rather than a modern nation that was the product of the anti-colonial movement itself and an entity that arose out of the crucible of 15 august 1947. In such conceptions, the nation was already an embodiment of a supposed shared culture and not a product of common citizenship or juridical equality. In India narratives of the nation-in-the-making were premised on the affirmation of cultural difference from the West, with women often represented as the embodiment of that difference. Nationalist discourse in India thus aligns women with the cultural and the authentic. In the Indian context, it is the narrative of the nation that stitches together women and tradition, women and national culture, making women emblematic of that which is uniquely Indian. The nineteenth-century reconstitution of Indian tradition created distinctions between home and world, private and public, inner and outer. As new patriarchies came into being, women increasingly took up the burden of maintaining the distinctiveness of Indian culture, while men negotiated the worlds of commerce, higher education, and governance on terms established by colonialists.