**STUDY MATERIAL SEMESTER 2**

**JAYANTA MAHAPATRA: DAWN AT PURI**

In the colonial era the rhetoric of cultural nationalism in India was founded on three presuppositions:

(a) the colonial rulers were utilitarian in philosophical orientation and morally bankrupt and so they are *essentially* different from the colonized population

(b) the colonized male was subservient to the white colonial ruler for financial reasons

( c) the married women in the Indian household, because of their loyalty to the male members and the institution of the family and their sexual morality/desexualized state as mothers, represented an authentic inner space as a marker of distinctive Indian tradition and thus the notion of a pure interiority could ideologically pose a threat to the morally degenerated and utilitarian white rulers

In such a scheme the unmarried women and more specifically, the widows were outcasts. In fact, the widows were considered to be a threat to this sanitized national space of pure interiority as they were sexually vulnerable to the adult male members within the Indian households. Their very presence was a threat to the newly emerging national culture. That was the root of their crisis. That was the main reason why they got secluded from the imagined nation space. This apart, there were serious problems like lack of nutrition, depression and social marginalization.

In the post-partition phase the widows had to desperately move out of the refugee camps and new shelters for adopting new modes of survival. The crisis remained in a different guise. However, they could not appropriately stick to the sacred interior domain of Indian household.

The role of institutionalized religion is also to be noted in this regard.

For this purpose I am attaching a book pdf on Gandhi’s appropriation of khadi for the Indian women, and the widows in particular. That will help you understand the colonial politics and its legacy in the postcolonial India, as far as the social acceptance of the widows is concerned.