Chapter 1

Indian Nationalisms: Debates and the Case of Cultural Appropriation

Introduction
Among different types of advertisements available in the market, the ones for consumer products are the most attractive so far as the construction and presentation of messages is concerned. Such advertisements, irrespective of channels of communication, not only reflect a cultural character about them; but also seem to work in alignment with the hegemonic networks of the State promoting its ideological stance among the masses. Different contemporary concerns, such as the issues of nationalism and cultural pluralism as well as racial, communal, and gender identities, are portrayed through advertisements reflecting the contemporary socio-political and economic trends of the time. What Bipan Chandra (1990) observes for communal ideology as the ‘material force on its own’ owing to ‘its persistence among the people’ (Chandra, 1990: 38) seems applicable to advertisements as well. A close observation of Indian advertisements of more than a decade reveals that such texts do reflect and sometimes duplicate the ‘premier task’ persistent within the Indian cultural agenda reinforcing ‘the communal belief system or communal ideology.’ (Chandra 1990, p.38) The aspects of literariness and fictionality in advertisements as effective purveyors of ideological messages are what make this genre of texts worthy of academic exploration as contemporary cultural documents.
It may be noted that the media is highly dependent on advertisements for the much-needed financial support. Advertisements occupy roughly 20% - 30% of media space and/or time (@ 2 – 6 mins in 30 mins slot). A rapid growth of the Indian advertising industry by 25 times in terms of turnover between the period 1976 and 1994 (Jeffrey, 1997: 58) is not only a testimony of its colossal presence in contemporary Indian public life but also an indication of the emergence of a new cultural discourse type in this context. The fictional, the literary, and the ideological components in the advertisements have not been paid adequate attention to by researchers though studies have been undertaken to explore the semiotic and linguistic aspects in them (Das 1994, Sen 1995, Sen 1997). The present research is an attempt to explore some such contemporary issues in advertisements as the ideological state apparatus of the 'culture industry' of a nation. Using Indian advertisements, both audio-visual and print, of and between December 1992 and 2007 period, I attempt to explore the patterns of representation of Indian femininity, Indian masculinity and the cultural other. I do this through an examination of the relationship between the operative ideologies in relation to the definition and nature of the Indian nation.

I
As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ideas of nationalism(s) and communal ideology with their importunate existence in India for more than a hundred years seem to rejuvenate themselves in post 1992 India with renewed vigour. Rajeshwari (2004) points out that communal conflicts and resultant riots that took place in India between 1960s and 1980s are different in nature from those taking place after the 1990s. However, in both periods
such cases of violence are politically engineered rather than being a 
spontaneous ‘action’ or ‘reaction’ out of ‘religious animosity.’ (Rajeshwari,
2004: 1). She reports that communal tension and consequent riots during the 
first period occur as a result of clash of economic or occupational interests 
mostly in urban areas. Nonetheless, similar incidents in post-1990 India owe 
their origin largely to the change in political scenario of the country and the 
rise of the Hindu militancy. She notes

Communal violence since 1990s needs to be seen in the light of the changing 
political equations in the country. The decline of the Congress and the 
emergence of the BJP as a strong political force resulted in shifting patterns 
of communal riots. (Rajeshwari, 2004:2)

A change is also visible in the discourse, design, and representational matrix 
of media texts such as news, teleserials, films, and advertisements as a result. 
Advertisements as cultural texts comprise a potential site for placement vis a 
vis contest among varying opinions with reference to Indian nationalism(s) 
and communal belief system. Jeffry (1997) shows how the almost 
unprecedented flourish of ‘media capitalism’ in India in the last two decades 
not only augurs ‘the breakup of old empires’ as Anderson (1983) notes but 
also proves itself to be ‘centralizing forces of modern nationalism’ as McLuhan 
languages, which ‘ought to suggest perils for the unified Indian state’ though 
not apparently pointing to any balkanization yet (Jeffrey, 1997:58), seems to 
augment some communal ideology. For example, several of Bangla 
teleserials such as Agnipariksha and Saat Pake Bandha of Zee TV Bangla, 
Sindoorkhela, Taare Ami Chokhe Dekhini, Dhanni Meye, and Bou Kotha Kao of Star Jalsa, Sonar Horin, Jaya, Kokhono Megh Kokhono Bristi, and Sadhak
Bamakhyapa of E TV Bangla are all set in typically Hindu contexts. This trend of regional language television programmes of religious determinism, fits perfectly with the representational matrix of their counterparts at the national level so far as Hindutva is concerned.

**Nation and Nationalism: towards exploring the definition**

Benedict Anderson (1983) defines nation as 'an imagined political community' that has been 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.' (Anderson, 1983: 5) He subsequently draws the attention of his readers to the problem of looking at nationalism as an ideology. He suggests that the idea is to be treated as an 'analytical expression' rather than an ideology such as 'liberalism' or 'fascism.' Gellner (1964) considers nationalism as a 'mechanism' that attempts to 'invent nations where they do not exist' rather than 'awakening of nations to self-consciousness.' (cited in Anderson, 1991:6)

In contradiction to Gellner's deliberations on nationalism as a 'mechanism,' Anderson (1983) identifies a sense of national identity and nationalism prevalent in a nation as an 'imagined community.' He considers 'nationalism' as 'cultural artefacts of particular kinds' that make the 'imagining' and 'creation' of such communities possible (Ibid). Though Anderson refers to 'political nationalism,' he labels the categories related to nationalism as 'cultural artefacts;' thereby establishing the inseparability of the political and cultural domains. He critiques Gellner's underlying argument regarding pretence or falsity behind self-articulation of existing communities into nations. He argues that the distinction of communities does not depend on inherent 'falsity' or 'genuineness' of communities but 'by the style in which they are imagined' (Ibid). Anderson ascribes the emergence of national identity and
nationalism to structural aspects such as the rise of print capitalism, standardization of language, spread of education, bureaucracy and political agendas that consequently lead to formation of a somewhat coherent community called 'nation.'

Unlike Anderson's notion of 'nation' as 'cultural artefacts,' Haas (1986) describes nation and nationalism as 'cognitive artefacts.' According to him, such 'cognitive artefacts' are invented 'to mark off an intellectual universe' (Haas, 1986: 708) and are fraught with 'permeable intellectual boundaries.' (Haas, 1986: 711) He considers the idea of nationalism as a 'successful rationalizer' in a society riddled with 'mutual exclusivity and outright hostility' (Ibid). The idea of homogeneity is obvious in this idea of the nation as it is in Anderson's. However, such arguments, underpinning 'coherence' in one hand and subsuming 'homogeneity' on the other, as essential constituents for weaving groups of people who share a common geographical boundary under the title 'nation,' may pose certain issues and challenges to multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious contexts such as India. Chakraborty (2006) aptly points out that Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath,*xx which is the first fictional account pertaining to the formal imagining of the Indian 'nation,' skillfully appropriates the potential of "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger) and "imagined communities" (Anderson), not to assert the truth but to choose a particular history. His invention of a usable past to suit the anti-colonial agenda of the time shows how the creation of "national" identification must essentially proceed through the imaginary rather than through essentialized "natural" affiliations.xxx
The imagining of a community as the nation, indeed, emerged in India as a reaction against colonial contempt and rejection of India’s tradition as ‘degenerate and barbaric.’ Chatterjee (1989) notes that

‘a central element in the ideological justification of British colonial rule was the criticism of the “degenerate and barbaric” social customs of the Indian people, sanctioned, or so it was believed, by their religious tradition. (Chatterjee, 1989: 622)

Colonial rule seemed to present itself as a preferred alternative endowed with ‘orderly, lawful and rational procedures of governance’ to improve ‘the “degenerate and barbaric” social customs of the Indian people’ (Ibid).

Chatterjee (1989) points out that in an effort to justify the ‘civilizing mission’ of the colonial agenda, the colonialists took recourse to appropriation of Indian womanhood to exemplify India’s cultural and social backwardness. They assumed a position of sympathy ‘with the unfree and oppressed womanhood of India’ (Ibid). Hence it seemed imperative for the nationalist discourse to counter-argue such a generalisation so far as the country’s tradition and Indian womanhood was concerned. Bankim’s representation of India as the ‘Mother’ and women as ‘holy and venerable’ in Anandamath can be viewed as a nationalist reaction against the colonial construction of Indian womanhood as ‘unfree and oppressed.’ Jackson (1992) rightly notes that Bankim’s ‘vision sparked the imagination of his compatriots in Bengal and other parts of India’ (Jackson, 1992: 7) through the period of the Indian freedom movement.

Bankim’s idea of Bharatmata as a spiritual continuum was represented through three manifestations of Hindu goddesses in the novel – Jagaddhatri [what Mother was], Kali [what Mother has become], and Durga [what Mother will be]. Nevertheless, iconization of a nation as a feminine deity is not
exclusive to the Indian context alone. For example, the image of Marianne, as an allegory of the French spirit of Liberty and Reason, emblematically represents France since the time of the Revolution; and the Mexican feminine deity of Our Lady of Guadalupe also emblematically represents the country. However, the Mexican emblem of ‘Our Lady of Guadalupe’ appears more similar to Bankim’s idea of Bharatmata. The image of the Lady was a source of inspiration for the Mexican nationalists in their fight against the colonial rule of Spain during 1810 to 1821. The same emblem was also used in the Great Revolution of Mexico in 1910 which went on till 1920. The idea of Bharatmata performed a similar function in the Indian struggle for Independence.

Apart from the projection of the divine mother-figure as the soul of the nation both in the Indian and the Mexican context, there is yet another parallelism between the formal features of the struggle for Independence in these two countries. For example, Miguel Hidalgo (1753 – 1811), a Spaniard Jesuit priest turned the leader of the Mexican War of Independence, made use of the following battle cry as part of El Grito de la Independencia (a cry of Independence) which was also known as Grito de Dolores (cry of Dolores) - ‘Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!’ (Krauze, 1997, Mukherjee [forthcoming]).

The song Vande Mataram (Hail Mother!) of Anandamath also imbued a mercenary spirit among ‘santans’ (children) dedicated to the cause of freeing the motherland [considered as the Mother]. My idea, here, is to highlight the comparability of this kind of iconisation of a religious motherhood to build a discourse of counter-resistance to colonisation and a discourse of nationalism; both from within, as in the case of Hidalgo, and from without, as in the case of Bankim. Hidalgo as a Jesuit priest and a Spaniard represented the counter-
discourse or the voice of dissent from within the colony. However, Bankim’s was the voice of dissent of the ‘colonised.’ The role of the *Grito de Dolores* is so important in the cultural life of Mexico that the nation commemorates the day [16th September, the day that refers to the beginning of the Mexican war of Independence in 1810] every year as one of the most important days in the nation’s history. *Vande Mataram*, in spite of a lot of controversy, occupies an equally important position in the cultural history of the Independent India. It is made the national song of India and enjoys a similar reverential status as the national anthem of India. Mexico launched the bicentennial celebration commemorating *Grito de Dolores* in 2010. In 2006, Government of India declared a bunch of programmes commemorating the Indian nationalist movement against colonialism. Events included in the bunch of official programmes are the centenary celebration of the adoption of *Vande Mataram* as the national song of India, the 150th anniversary of India’s first struggle for Independence in 1857, the birth centenary of Shaheed Bhagat Singh and the 75th Anniversary of his martyrdom. Invoking collective memory in relation to nationalism through official celebration of events and icons in an age of reckless economic liberalisation seems extremely interesting.

*Vande Mataram* was first sung by Rabindranath Tagore in the session of the Indian National Congress in 1896. However, the song gained the status of almost an anthem for the nationalists, struggling against the colonial rule, ever since its extensive use in the anti-partition *Swadesi* movement in Bengal in 1905. The first two stanzas of the song, declared as the national song of India after the independence, ‘express his vision of Mother India as a Goddess and of woman as holy and venerable.’ (Jackson 1992:7)
However, this particular vision of India as the venerable ‘goddess’ comes to be appropriated by the Hindu rightwing ideologues in favour of constructing the nature of the Indian nation essentially as a ‘Hindu’ homogeneous identity.

Bankim’s idea of women as ‘holy and venerable’ is emphasised in the following statement made by him in *Krishnokanter Will*

> Woman is full of forgiveness, of compassion, of love; woman is the crowning excellence of God’s creation... Woman is light, man is shadow. (Jackson 1992: 7)

The idea of women as the manifestation of the ‘crowning excellence of God’s creation,’ the source ‘of forgiveness, of compassion, of love,’ and the source of ‘light’ of which the man is a ‘shadow’ in the above statement can be taken as the seed of the ‘inner-outer’ or the ‘core-periphery’ dichotomy in the discourse of the Indian nationalism. This leads to creation of further dichotomy of the oriental ‘spiritualism’ and the western ‘materialism.’ Indian women as ‘holy and venerable’ are made to iconically represent the sacrosanct ‘inner spiritual core’ while men are made to represent the ‘materialistic outside.’ Such binaries occupy a considerable part of the elitist discourse of Indian nationalism. The idea of women as the chief component as well as protector of the ‘inner spiritual core’ of the projected ‘Indianness’ seems problematic for it conforms to the traditional gender roles of women imposed on them by the patriarchy. Tagore’s (1916) celebrated novel *Ghare Baire* (*The Home and the World*) illustrates, in vivid details, the contradictions lying inherent in exclusive binaries such as orient and the west, oriental spiritualism and western materialism, the tradition and the modern, the past and the present, and critiques aggressive nationalist fervour projected through...
the character of Sandip. Tagore, in fact, poses the character of self-less Nikhil as an antidote to Sandip’s self-interest driven involvement with the Swadeshi movement and aggressive nationalist zeal that finally takes a disastrous communal turn in the novel.

In the context of Bankim’s much-debated novel, *Anandamath*, the individuals devoted to the service of *Mother India* are christened as *Santans* which means children. It is to be noted that characters of the novel, made to project the new Indian identity of ‘the ascetic nationalist subject,’ exemplify the martial prowess comprising principles of celibacy, commitment to the cause of the ‘nation’ and determination. Through this projection the novelist succeeds in creating the ‘normative Indian masculinity’ leaving ample scope for its later interpretation and subsequent appropriation by the Sangh Combine as essentially ‘Hindu’ in nature. Chakraborty (2006) shows how such a conceptualisation of the normative Hindu Masculinity within a highly gendered discourse of nation successfully excluded ‘women and non-combatants’ from the purview of the ‘imagined nation’ as a homogeneous category. In the venture to free the ‘nation’ (the Mother) even married Indian men vowed to maintain a celibate ascetic life secluded from their respective families. For example Mahendra, one of the main characters of the novel, leaves his wife Kalyani to dedicate his own self to the services of the nation.

In the Indian context, the nationalist agenda repositioned women into deeper orthodoxy among the middle classes. Thus Tanika Sarkar (2001) states that women became the symbol of the chaste and the unviolated inner space of the nation that needed to be protected from the colonizer (Sarkar, 2001: 265).
Such a tendency to exclude women from the ‘imagined community’ gets endorsed by the traditional brahminical dictates of the Indian patriarchy. For example, Manu in his *Smriti* advocates the following for the Indian women

*Pathe nari bibarjita*

[one must not bring woman out in the public – translation mine]

He also proclaims that women are not fit for independence. The man should rule her in different phases of her life in different roles:

*Pitah Rakshathi Koumarye*
*Bharta Rakshathi Yowvane*
*Putrah Rakshathi Vardaykye*
*Na sthree swatantram arhati*

*[Manusmriti, Chapter IX. verse 3 – Trans: “Father protects her before marriage, husband protects her in youth, son protects her in oldage – no woman is fit for independence” – translation mine]*

Such a situation of social exclusion of Indian women has been in practice across communal and racial boundaries. For example the system of *pardah* was prescribed for both Hindu and Muslim women of the upper and the middle classes.

The ‘santans’ in *Anandamath* were involved in a struggle to free their ‘motherland’ from the aggression of the ‘jabans’ [a term to denote Muslims in Bengali] and not of the ‘British’. The ascetic leaders of *Anandamath* vowed to liberate their motherland from the clutches of the *Jaban*, a term popularly refers to Muslims in Bengal. Written using the context of the Sannyasi Rebellion in the late 18th century and early 19th century in Bengal and Bihar, *Anandamath* portrayed the Muslim rule of the medieval India as the period of religious and social aggression. However, towards the end of the novel Bankim does refer to the British rule through the speeches of Satyanadnda as an equally oppressive force of foreign aggression. The British rule is
mentioned here as a necessary force for social reforms in the then India and for future revival of the Hinduism in the country (Anandamath 1892:p.131). This part is omitted in the 1941 translation of the novel by Basanta Koomer Roy (Jackson 1992:6). Bankim seems to equate the normative Indian masculinity with ‘courage’ considering ‘militarization of spirit necessary for being a good Hindu and a patriot.’ (Alam, 1999: 107)

The configuration of the ‘nation’ as occurs in this novel appears to be somewhat homogeneous. The idea of homogeneity related to nationalism is, according to Nandy (1994), an import from the west and therefore lacks cultural roots in India. (Nandy 1994:39) Homogeneity as a criterion to define nationhood in India, leading to cultural exclusivism and promoting a purist ideology of the state, can threaten the very basis of Indianness which is deeply rooted in the Indian culture of multiculturalism and principles of tolerance for centuries. The idea of ‘Indianness’ or Bharatiyatwa though, on the contrary, attempts to define the Indian identity as different from Anderson’s idea of ‘nation’ in its scope and approach. It is inclusive in nature and accepting in temperament.

हे० दयार्थ, हे० अनार्थ, हे० दाबिड़ चीन -
शक-चन-दल पाठान मोगल एक देख हुल चीन।
पश्चिमें आजी खुलियाछेघ घार, सेठा हुते सबे आजे उपहार,
दिबे आर निबे, मिलाबे मिलिबे, याबे ना फिरे -
एइ भारतेते महामानबेर सागरतीरे।

Tagore, ‘Bharattirtha,’ p. 507
[‘Here Aryans, non-Ayrans, Dravidians, Chinese/ Groups of Scythians and Huns, Pathans and Moguls merges into one/ Now the door opens at the West, wherefrom everyone receive some gift/ share and receive, mingle and get mingled, nothing gets
refused/ in this seashore of India’s great humanity’ – translation mine]

It is not homogeneity that characterises the essential Indianness for Tagore – it is the unprejudiced cultural exchange and acceptance of difference that let Indian spirit elicit the ‘magnanimous spirit’ as Tagore calls it.

তপস্যাবলে একের অনলে বড়ে আতাতি দিয়া
বিভেদ ভূলিল, জগায়ে ভূলিল একটি বিরাট হিয়া।

Tagore, ‘Bharattirtha,’ p. 507

[‘Through austere efforts, sacrificing many in the pyre fire of the one/ (the people of India) forgot differences, evoked a ‘magnanimous spirit’ - (insertion, translation and emphasis mine)]}

Cultural mingling leads to assimilation of different groups in acts of unison in which each member’s cultural identity is regarded, revered, and maintained.

The Indianness, that Tagore considers as central to his idea of the nation, can be viewed as a multicultural mosaic rather than ‘culture-as-the-melting-pot’ notion of the west. The same view is seen reflected in Gora in which the protagonist, an Irishman by birth and a Hindu Brahmin through his rearing, comes to realise the spirit of true India that is benevolent to differences and inclusive:

You have no caste, you make no distinctions, and have no hatred – you are only the image of our welfare! It is you who are India! [Gora: 867]

Interestingly this has been said to Anondomoyee, Gora’s surrogate mother in the novel, in whom he finds the real accepting spirit of India. With loving benevolence and full knowledge of identity of the orphan child of an unknown Irish couple, who died as a result of violence during the Mutiny, she brought him up as her own son. The irony lies in this person’s turning out to be a staunch propagator of the Sanatan Dharma [i.e. traditional orthodox Hinduism]
as the essence of *Indian* culture and identity. Through most part of the novel he remains irrational and unforgiving towards people who seem to violate the austere authority of this religious order, only to find the attempt futile at the end. Tagore’s portrayal of the mother stands opposed to Bankim’s portrayal of the nation as *Bharatmata in Anandamath*. Some critics note the tone of even disavowal of nationalism in Tagore’s argument pertaining to the *Indian* identity.

Chakraborty (2006) notes

> Although sharing a similar regional bias and writing during the same era as Bankim, Tagore disavows nationalism. He suggests that nation building itself can be understood as a colonial activity. In *Nationalism*, a collection of essays, and in the novels *Gora* and *Ghare Baire*, Tagore expresses his dissatisfaction with the ideology of nationalism because it erases local cultures and promotes a homogeneous national culture. He demonstrates the violent consequences of Bankim's gendered, upper-caste, Hindu nationalist formulations.

(Ibid)

It is in the light of the idea of homogeneous *Hindutva* that the Hindu communalists and *Sangh Combine* construct the Indian nation through the territorial imagining of a ‘Hindu’ nation. The term *Hindutva* was first used by Damodar Vinayak Savarkar (1923) in a pamphlet entitled *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*. Savarkar defined a ‘true’ Hindu patriot as someone who considered India as the ‘Holy Land’ and the fatherland. The *Hindutva* argument of the Sangh combine is based on two fundamentalist premises: vehement rejection of cultural pluralism and the secular modernity. Raychoudhury (2000) noted that such an idea was inaccessible to cultural others such as Muslims and Christians and as a result made members of these groups susceptible to majoritarian suspicion regarding their patriotic loyalty to the country.

(Raychaudhuri, 2000: 263) This territorial imagining of a Hindu nation is based
on the principles of exclusion and the potential threat of the cultural other, particularly the Muslim other. The Sangh combine magnifies such a threat by explicit reference to pre-colonial Muslim invasion in India, post-colonial association of Indian Muslims with Pakistan and global connection of Indian Muslims with transnational Islamic terrorism following the ideology of Hindutva. (Appadurai, 2006: 66-70) As a consequence of implementation of Hinduva, the combine not only ‘exclude the non-Hindus from their idea of Indian nation but [also] cast them in the image of anti-nationalists and therefore objects of hatred.’ (Mukherjee et al, 2008: 11) While the Right wing Sangh Combine cite texts and contexts from the ‘glorious’ past of the ‘nation,’ to link it with the present as well as the future of the ‘nation,’ the Indian Left invokes the bequests of the anti-colonial movement that put an active resistance to the Hindutva agenda of the Right wing at that historical juncture. The Left refers to the inclusive anti-imperialist struggle on the basis of past ‘values’ such as rationalism, democracy and secularism. (Alam, 1999: 84-85) The unicultural self, which is the subject of the Eurocentric political nationalism that Anderson discusses, seems to be a cultural impossibility for a context that is mostly celebrated for its tradition of acceptance, multiculturalism, and plurality.

While the idea of cultural homogeneity is conceptualized by critics on external grounds such as language, culture etc., M.K. Gandhi invents traditionally internal and inherent cultural as well as spiritual characteristics as the binding force for the Indian national identity emerging in the early 1900. The argument and position of Gandhi is reiterated and flourished in Nehru subsequently. Mention must be made here that both Gandhi and Nehru were not only products of Western Education, but also carried forward some
insights of the western thought in their anticolonialist arguments. For example, both conformed to the colonial concept of the ‘timeless Indian Culture’ and ‘valorised’ the ‘spiritual East’ in their attempt to establish essential qualities of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and non-violence, as part of the Indian cultural identity on the basis of the ancient Indian cultural tradition. They attempted to pose the idea of the ‘spiritual East’ against western prototypes emanating from the culture of materialism [Hind Swaraj by Gandhi (1909) and The Discovery of India by Nehru (1946)]. The search for the Self, both for Gandhi and Nehru, seems to be couched in the idiom of search for the national identity invoking India’s glorious past, that supposed to have cradled principals such as tolerance, non-violence, and peaceful coexistence. Such an invocation becomes imperative also to construct the national identity on an apparently ‘secular’ ground to accommodate the multilingual, multicultural and multireligious heterogeniety within the vast cultural space of India. The Gandhian Swaraj could only be viable and hence have valency as a legacy for the Nehruvian project of arduous discovery of India’s lost past. India appears to be routed to its present nationalist venture of establishing a unique cultural identity through its past.

Interestingly, the contesting voices of the rightwing Sangh combine too resorted to this ancient origin of Indian culture while conceptualising the nation along essentialist Hindu lines though discarding the principles of non-violence (Ahimsa), tolerance and peaceful coexistence propounded by Gandhi or Nehru as attributes of the archetypal Indian [Hindu] culture. Hence the references to Shivaji and his heroic resistance against the ‘foreign’ Muslim forces in the throne of Delhi, representing the Hindu militant force, are invoked
as a reminder of the ancient Hindu greatness and martial competence in Indian context. This glorification of the Hindu martial expertise reminds one of the santans in Bankim’s Anandamath. Shivaji’s resistance to Aurangzeb is valorised by the Sangh Combine as an instance of Hindu resistance against the Muslim atrocities rather than the conflict between the powers located at the centre and its margin. However, the religious nature of Indian nationalism is reiterated in both kinds mentioned above. What seems to have found an organised expression in Gandhi’s and Nehru’s political practice regarding nationalism has been initiated in the late nineteenth century Bengal. Chandra (1990) notes that

‘communal ideology was preached in a minor fashion, primarily through history writing from the 1830s, and it started emerging as a more structured ideology in the 1870s and 1880s, except for very short spurts of violence in one place or another, say in 1893 in Poona and Calcutta, communal violence became a force in India only in the 1920s.’ (Chandra, 1990: 38).

Chandra’s (1990) scrutiny finds reiteration in Heehs’ (1997) observation: ‘[o]rganised nationalism and Hindu religious revivalism both arose in Bengal in the 1870s and 1880s.’ (Heehs, 1997:117) Heehs (1997) points out that this has been done through two separate yet ‘intimately associated’ movements such as movement of cultural nationalism led by Rajnarain Bose, a leader of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, and the formation of the National Society in 1885 as ‘precursors to Indian National Congress’ to promote ‘indigenous social institutions rather than imitative social reforms.’ (Heehs, 1997:117 – 118) It is through organising the Jatiya Mela (National Fair) in 1861 that this movement
of cultural nationalism finds its first expression. The *Jatiya Mela* was significantly renamed as *Hindu Mela in 1872.* (Heehs, 1997: 118)

The Jatiya Mela of 1861 was organised by Nabagopal Mitra with active help from Dvijendranath and Ganendranath Tagore, eminent leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. The idea was to link 'self help to the issues of *jati* and *samajik* uplift.' (Gupta, 2009: 21) Gupta (2009) demonstrates 'how notions of unity, *jatitva* and the Bengali *samaj* interlocked in the cultural nationalist agenda of the Mela' (Ibid) by citing the views of Shibnath Sashtri as expressed in his *Ramtanu Lahiri and Tatkalim Bangasamaj* (1904) who perceives the mela in the above light. Both Heehs (1997) and Gupta (2009) consider the relevance of the Mela in its being the 'first organised expression of cultural nationhood' (Ibid). Far from being *pan Indian* the nationalistic sensibilities seem to have been couched in regional spaces and identities based on exclusivist principles. Contemporary discourse shows that the idea of *jati* in time of formation of cultural nationhood lies chiefly on the unity among different groups of people living in the same region. The idea of 'desh' [country] in such discourse refers rather to an idea of region than the idea of the vast geographical space that Nehru and Gandhi assumes in their idea of *India.* Such notions of 'nationhood,' during the formative years of Indian 'nationalist' contexts, seem to depend on some kind of cultural and religious homogeniety. Diverse Indian communities, however, remained outside this category. The undercurrents of Hindu revivalism as well as the emerging cultural nationalism are well exemplified, as discussed above, in Bankim’s works, particularly *Anandamath.* Chandra (1990) argues that the communal ideology ‘becomes a material force’ once it ‘prevails for a long enough period.’
(Chandra, 1990: 39) It indeed prevailed in India for ‘long enough period,’ hence turning itself into a ‘material force’ in contemporary Indian cultural topology, thus providing a context for the Indian nationalist public discourse via different modes.

The idea of Indian Nationalism provides a distinctive cultural space where meanings are explored, read, reinvented and hence appropriated following western epistemology in an attempt to meet respective ideological agenda of contesting groups. The idea of progress seems to play an important role in the discourse on Indian nationalism even in the contemporary period. This idea of progress appears to be equated with the western imports including different social categories, epistemology and governmentality. It transpires from a close observation of research works on nationalism done by Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Bipan Chandra that an attempt is made to unquestionably resolve the inherent social, moral, spiritual and communal/racial/ethnic discomforts by clinching to or appropriating the western modernities, promoting the idea of progress in Indian contexts. Colonial imports such as nation states, imperialist historiography, and progress are allowed to permeate into the Indian system ‘as a means of re-organizing the culture’s self-definition.’ (Nandy, 1994: 48) He further notes that

This success of colonialism is matched by the ambition of a nationalism which, after faithfully swallowing the colonial worldview hook, line and sinker, is willing to sacrifice Indians at the altar of a brand new, imported, progressivist history of the Indian nation-state in the making. (Ibid)
Such natural extensions to the colonial construction regarding nation, nationalism and the Self can be viewed as a mark of cultural discontinuation of the indigenous worldview within the Indian history. The colonial period in India is responsible for severing the continuum of the self-imaging of ‘Indian’ culture in the sense that it reset the norms of worldview as well as construction of the sense of community according to the western colonial framing of ‘nation’ as a homogeneous category. However, such a binding idea of ‘nation’ as a homogeneous whole was never present in India. The very introduction to the western frame of nation resulted in a cultural discontinuity in the Indian context. This newly introduced notion of the ‘nation’ seemed to promote exclusivism vis a vis homogeneity as opposed to inclusiveness vis a vis heterogeneity. Such an ideology operating under the mask of nationalist arguments and discourse is far less liberating as it foregrounds, ‘a different, more potent, cosmopolitan image of male authority.’ (Nandy, 1994:50)

Concepts and values rooted in Indian culture such as *Ahimsa* and *tolerance* that were the main essence of Gandhian and Nehruvian thoughts characterise the ‘inner’ domain of Indian nationalism to counter the *outer* emanating from the western materialism. This cultural inclination of non-violence and tolerance (*sahanshilata*) is also projected as the enabling factor for India to remain united in spite of diversity. In the thoughts of both Gandhi and Nehru the idea of nationalism appears more like an ideology than what Anderson (1983) calls ‘cultural artefacts of some kind. The contests over the definition of nation and its nature are a tale-tell evidence of this.
The inner outer binary in Indian nationalist discourse is crystallized under the premise of gendered considerations. The women are made to represent the inner (spiritual) space while the men are represented as belonging to the outer (materialistic and social) space of the dichotomy, engulfing the inner space. However, the Indian female subject representing this inner spiritual space is confined to the limits of home by the Indian Brahminical patriarchy, in spite of being represented as ‘holy and venerable.’

Such an attempt to construct Indian femininity as the essence of the inner spiritual core is problematic in the sense that it is limited only to the Indian elite upper and middle classes. Thapar-Björkert (1999) notes that

The political activities that were eventually recorded were, however, relevant to only a small, elite section of women. This history was neither representative nor constitutive of the 'masses', the 'nameless' ordinary middle class women who also played a significant role in the nationalist movement (Thapar- Björkert, 1999: 35).

It is during this time of nationalist movements that some Indian women began to take part ‘in the highly public, audacious act of writing about her own life.’ (Sarkar, 2001: 110) Rashsundari Devi’s (1876) *Amar Jiban* (My Life) is a case in point. A large section of Indian women also came outside their predetermined social domains of the ‘inner spiritual core’ during the period of the nationalist movement in India and played a significant role in mass movements such as Tebhaga movement, the Telengana Movement as well as Quit India movement led by Gandhi. However, the women’s participation in the first two movements mentioned above was through Renu Chakravartty (1980) shows the growth and development of mass organisation of Indian women under the aegis of the Communist Party of India in the 1940s. Malini
Bhattacharya (1982) points out how the ‘organisation cut across class barriers and reached women belonging to the most oppressed sections of society’ and ‘became a force to reckon with within the anti-imperialist and anti-fascist struggle in the 1940s.’ (Bhattacharya, 1982: 20) For example, the poor peasant women of Bengal by forming semi-militia through local *Nari Bahini* successfully guarded villages against the state oppressive mechanisms during the *Tebhaga* movement. Rani Dasgupta (1973) informed that ‘nari bahinis were formed everywhere to guard the village.’ (cited in Custers, 1986:99) In fact, much true to the claim of the woman being ‘venerable’ so far as her essence and capacity is concerned, a big section of Indian women did project this venerability through actions. The poor rustic peasant women led people’s movement in India and their collective leadership was accepted by the masses. Custer (1986) notes that ‘[t]he key to understanding the nari bahini is that they were created in the phase in which people’s resistance was most spontaneous.’ (Custers, 1986:99)

Unfortunately the position of social leadership of Indian women in the ‘outer’ material sphere of the society is not usually represented in contemporary advertisements as well as other popular media forms. Instead they appropriate that partial representation of the Indian woman confined to the limits of home as the cultural archetype of the Indian women. This social subjectivity of confinement allows the patriarchy to ‘rule’ over the woman as the colonial subject and as someone who is ‘not fit for independence’ [*Na stri swatantram arhati*] according to the patriarchal code of Brahmanism. Moreover such watertight categorisation and role assignment impairs the dynamics of the process of formation of the nation as a living mechanism. Not
only does this conceptualisation of women confine them into limits of the home but also takes away from them the autonomous citizenship.

**Anderson’s Utopia**

Partha Chatterjee (1986) notes that in assigning more emphasis on structures of colonialism while considering the idea of nation Anderson pays inadequate attention to innovative engagement of nationalists in formulation, ideological negotiation, propagation and defence of ‘new possibilities.’ He observes that ‘with its explicitly laid-down procedures and criteria of membership, the imagining of nationhood has been reduced to the institutional grid of governmentality.’ (Chatterjee, 1999:129) Hence it can be said that the criteria for structuring of nation as ‘imagined’ community as formulated by Anderson rest chiefly on external conditions vis a vis constructs. However, the ‘feeling’ and motivated ‘mental’ actions though seem to play an important role in coagulating communities into a nation, remain outside the fold of his argument. The uniqueness of the Indian discourse on nationalism lies in the fact that it involves the ‘mentality’ of the masses in its expression of the nationhood which is more than mere ‘cultural artefact’ as Anderson seems to claim. Ray (2003) considers’ nationalism’ as an ‘idea’ that is dependent on ‘self-perception,’ owing its origin in the ‘history of mentality’ comprising both ‘ideas and emotions.’ (Ray, 2003: ix) He comments that even though one ‘may invent’ a tradition, ‘construct’ an identity, ‘imagine’ a nation,’ the success of the ‘project’ to understand and define a nation rests on understanding of ‘some real emotional bond’ (Ibid). Ray views nationalism as an ‘idea’ and ‘nation’ as a ‘felt community’ that emerges as a result of a ‘mental process’ of ‘self-perception’ in which ‘emotions’ act as ‘building blocks.’ He notes that
‘ideas and emotions are equally important in the political processes of forging a nation.’ (Ray, 2003: x) However, in his discussion on nationalism, Ray (2003) introduces the distinction between ‘patriotism’ and ‘nationalism’ arguing that the former existed, even before the latter came to existence, as an emotion binding an individual to a community. Whereas the idea of ‘nationalism’ appears more organized and therefore institutionalized, the idea of patriotism ‘lacked the uniformity of a creed and the power of an organisation;’ and therefore devoid of ‘the potential for oppression’ of the ‘other, submerged nationalities.’ (Ray, 2003: x) The idea of nationalism does not seem to account for the ‘other, submerged nationalities’:

[a]s free nations emerged out of sprawling civilizations, other submerged nationalities and communities of sentiment were submerged in the process. (Ibid)

India’s position as a ‘united space’ shared by diverse races and its multiculturalism may have some connection with the absence of the idea of a ‘nation’ in a strictly western sense with ‘potential for oppression’ of other submerged communities.

However, unlike Anderson, Chatterjee (1986) views nationalism essentially as an ideology. Hence he ventures to explore the actual process of ‘imagining’ of national communities in articulations of ideologies of nationalism in specific contexts at particular moments in history that legitimises different versions of nationalist projects in different places. Chatterjee (1989) points out that in the formative years of configuration of nationalist project in India ‘nationalism was not simply about a political struggle for power: it related itself to the question of the political independence of the nation to virtually every aspect of the
material and spiritual life of the people.' (Chatterjee, 1989: 624). His chief consideration remains the way in which the nationalist ideology operates through presuppositions of particular kind, the location of the same in relation to other discourses, the points of contests, subversion, tension and even suppression.

While discussing nation and nationalism Anderson (1991) brings in a distinction between nationalism and the politics of ethnicity elucidated through two types of seriality that are outcomes of the modern imaginings of community, viz. bound seriality and unbound seriality. Abstract or conceptual groups such as nations, citizens, revolutionaries, bureaucrats, workers, intellectuals are included in Anderson’s unbound seriality while ‘the finite totals of enumerable classes of population produced by the modern census and the modern electoral systems’ make up the bound seriality. (Chatterjee 1999:128) According to Anderson the unbound seriality seems to be more liberating due to less rigidity in terms of finiteness of number. Chatterjee (1999), however, considers such categorisation of seriality and the demarcation between them as ‘utopian.’ He thinks so as Anderson locates such serialities within empty homogeneous time that subsumes the entire world as one, while the concept of time itself is considered by Chatterjee (1999) to be heterogeneous with varying density. What is contested in Anderson’s thought by Chatterjee, is the idea of classical nationalism that imagines ‘nationalism without modern governmentality.’ (Chatterjee, 1999:132) Modern governmentality is considered to be an important feature that enables one to construct or even ‘imagine’ the ‘nation.’ One’s access to governmentality ensures one’s participation into the nationhood, at least as a theoretical reality. Constitution
acts as the primary foundation that ensures access to modern
governmentality by all citizens. However, there are traditional, cultural, and
social factors that subvert the constitutional prerogatives given to its citizens.
As a result there remain groups within the nation with constitutional
entitlement of participation into the nationhood, yet culturally, socially, and
traditionally excluded from the mainstream of the nation. Hence the relevance
of the notion of cultural nationalism comes into the foreground.

The ongoing debates on nationalism, cultural pluralism, gender issues, and
multiculturalism result both in a growing awareness of cultural, religious,
ethnic and gender differences within societies, and a concomitant challenge to
the concept of nation as a united ‘symbolic force.’ In a country like India
where the concept of individual’s existence, still, is supposedly instituted upon
the experience of multiculturalism and polyvocality – contradictory opinions
about the nature of Indian national identity and the permeability of its culture(s)
perturb traditional, classical, and ideologically inflected views of its history.

A sustained systematic study of the history of emotion undertaken by Ray,
while trying to understand the idea of nationalism from an Indian perspective,
seems to unfold a deeper connection between the two notions, namely,
‘nationalism’ and patriotism:

On the night of 6 December 1992, millions of people in India, Pakistan and
Bangladesh experienced trauma as the BBC displayed the domes of the
Babri Masjid collapsing under the blows of hate-inspired, demented crowd. In
the riots that followed, shouts of ‘Musalmanon ka do sthan, Pakistan aur
Kabristan’xxiv were accompanied by the horrifying act of small children being
thrown out of a moving train because they belonged to the community named
in the chilling slogan.
The strong presence of negative emotions about the said community in particular and to the Other Backward Communities [OBCs and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes] in general lead to a tendency to demonise the ‘other’ in the Indian context, keeping up with a similar tendency of constructing the position of the ‘cultural other’ elsewhere in the world. Such a negative ‘public’ emotion leads to either ethnic violence or self immolation as the token of protest against the Government’s policy of reservation of such communities, as happened in response to the Government’s move to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission; or events of genocide as a planned move in post-Demolition phase in India.

Ray’s concern has support not only from the Indian context but also from the global context, so far as viewing Muslims as the demonic ‘other’ is concerned. The post-9/11 concern for terrorism and its transnational coverage has affected most epistemological, ideological, governmental pursuits in contemporary times across geographical boundaries. These growing trends, in a significant manner, not only unsettle how terrorism is being perceived traditionally as a somewhat ‘local’ phenomenon but also is being greatly influenced by the way in which nation and group identities are defined, re-defined, described and re-described, particularly in relation to communities from the ‘third’ world. For example, the 1993 attack on the World Trade centre geared the American media to bring into projection an image of terrorism (transnational in nature) that appears to be invariably connected with the Islamic identity. Such a projection is operative in constructing particular image of the identity of Muslims living in America at that time. The image is of
irrational terrorists, airplane hijackers, and suicide bombers who wage war against “civilization” and “democracy” in the name of jihad (holy war) to establish the Islamic way of life against the kafirun, who are unbelievers to be either converted or killed.xxxvi.

Such changes are subtly incorporated in the representation matrix of images and issues portrayed in the popular media worldwide. The snowball effect of the construction of identity in the world’s most influential medium has drawn the media of different nations into the core of a tornado of sweeping generalization; thereby strengthening the stereotype of the Muslim other across culture as well as geographical boundaries in our time. Far from remaining uninfluenced by this global project, Indian popular media seems to recontextualise the trend by adapting its long-standing (colonial) project of representing the (local) Muslim ‘other’ against the global perspective. While films made on cross-border terrorism and racial violence seem to be sprawling in India, exhibiting significant effect on our postcolonial position in the post 9/11 era in the last three decades, advertisements seem to retain their stand in either obliterating or merely normative representation of the ‘other’ in their texts. Films such as mentioned above appear to recycle the colonial stereotypes regarding patriotism and national allegiance; militancy and terror; the architecture of Indian nationhood; social, political and religious differences as impediments to unity (therefore security) of India as an emerging nation within the world power structure. Advertisements address the same issues through a more prescriptive way: the default identity of advertisements is that of a member of the Hindu nation where the cultural other’s appearance is normative and nominal.
This process of representation of the nation, membership of the nation as well as the construction of identity and demonization of the Muslim other can be seen reflected in some recent films made in India such as Sarfarosh (1999), Black Friday (made in 2004, released in India in 2007), A Wednesday (2008) and Aamir (2008). The first film was made two years before the 9/11 happened. A close look at this particular film demonstrates the shifting focus in terms of representation of the Muslim other as the ‘local’ category to a global category with the post-9/11 socio-political discourse and the American (therefore global) ‘war against terrorism’ at its backdrop.

Though predictable the narratives in these films are nevertheless interesting since they combine two racial stereotypes: the typical colonial stereotype of the pro-(Hindu) nationalists and the anti-Hindu (therefore anti-nationalist and non-patriotic) conspiratorial Muslims. Such an interesting combination (or binaries) becomes necessary to establish the (so called anti-national) moves initiated by the minority groups as portrayed in a number of mainstream Bollywood films as motivated actions rather than mere coincidences. Muslims seem almost always to occupy an ambivalent position within the continuum of Indian otherness. It would not be out of place to mention here that the colonial subject has constantly been an easy prey of western homogenisation vis-à-vis the agenda of exoticisation that succeeds in creating the position of the ‘exotic’ other as opposed to the ‘normal’ mainstream ‘us.’ However, the paradox lies in the venture of creating further categories within this already created ‘otherness.’ For example, the Indian colonial exotic otherness appears to have several other sub-categories such as ‘Muslims,’ ‘Hindu backward communities,’ ‘adivasis’ etc. Within such a discourse each category
is bound to the other in the similar relationship of ambivalence that exists between the archetypal western ‘us’ and the oriental ‘other.’ Interestingly, one cannot avoid noticing that in the cacophony of categories within the (post)colonial discourse on identities the ones that strikingly stand out almost always is the position of the patriotic (non-violent as well patronizing) Hindu and parochial as well as communal (therefore violent as well as reticent) Muslim. In the colonial discourse, the Muslim stereotype is represented as unhappy or doleful, irrational, erratic, narrow-minded, violent, reticent, revengeful, or unforgiving and even fanatic. As a group, they are shown as people though devoid of a strong sense of patriotism for the land they inhabit, yet with a sense of affiliation, religious as well as racial and linguistic, to a space located elsewhere. Such a popular representation seems to alienate the Muslim other from the ongoing nationalist discourse in Indian contexts during its years of formation on one hand. On the other hand, it creates a scope for continuation of the alienation in subsequent nationalist pogrom on the ground of cultural detachment of Muslims from the Nation. For example, this stereotype of the alienated Muslim identity is wonderfully portrayed through the characterisation of Dr. Aziz in E. M. Forester’s (1924) A Passage to India. In the novel the elevated nirvanic eternity of Godbole’s Hinduism is placed as the binary of Dr. Aziz’s views on decaying Islam riddled with a sense of personal perception and dissatisfaction rather than driven by a universal sense of religiosity. The Passage is a classic example of the colonial representation of the Muslim ‘other.’ Dr. Aziz is aware of a contemptuous indifference of the mainstream (the English colonial authority as well his Indian Hindu neighbours) to his identity. This very fact seems to arouse his fanaticism and excesses in the novel. The continuation of a similar
contemptuous indifference of the mainstream towards the Muslim other can be noticed, extending itself from colonial India to the contemporary time. In the contemporary time, also, a similar mistrust is seen operative against the Muslim other: however, this time around the question of terrorism as an internal weapon used to disintegrate and jeopardise the sovereignty of the [Hindu homogeneous] nation. For example, in Sarfarosh (1999), in one of the emotionally charged scenes, ACP Ajay Singh Rathore (the Hindu Indian protagonist of the film played by Amir Khan) tells Inspector Salim (a good Muslim in the film played by Mukesh Rishi) that in order to safeguard his/our home (hamare ghar) he/we (hamein) do not need the help of any Salims. The content of the speech is self-explanatory. The presence of the good [normative] Muslim other is seen in the same light in advertisements as well such as the advertisement of Tata Salt mentioned above. The positions of the Muslim other as well as other marginalised communities in India are further exoticised to create the ‘essentialist stereotype’ (Bhabha 1994)xxviii. The fact that there is almost always a good Muslim in the group of (Hindu) nationalist mercenaries reduplicating the agenda of safeguarding the country against the group of conspiratorial Islamic other to whom s/he belongs culturally and racially. The position is to promote the creation of such essentialist stereotype. The ‘good' Muslim is otherised culturally by an imposed moral code other than that of his/her own context. This is what can be called the ‘paradox of otherness’ following Bhaba.

Whereas exponents of homogeneous societies argue for the exclusion of differing cultures or their assimilation into the dominant culture by ruling out a space for diversity, representatives of cultural pluralism acknowledge and
encourage the existence of diversity as an integral part of the Indian nation.
Such diverse and contradictory interpretations in relation to the nature of
Indian nationalism have always been there in the available discourse. Uma
Chakravarti (1989) has given a comprehensive observation regarding this in
obsvses that there has always been

three major elements that coalesced and triggered off the beginnings
of cultural nationalism in the 1830s: one was the attack of the
utilitarian and Anglicists on Hindu civilization; the second was
perceived threat of the Christian missionaries as exemplified in the
person of Duff whose ambition was to convert the whole of Calcutta,
and the third was the abolition of sati, which was perceived as an
intrusion into the Hindu family, the most sacred sphere of Hindu
society.
(Chakravarti, 1989: 36)

These three elements depict what she points out as ‘ideological conflicts.’ the
traces of the ‘ideological conflicts’ can still be palpably felt in the contemporary
interpretations of what goes in the name of Indian nationalism. It is to be
noted here that the ideological conflicts in terms of Indian nationalism that are
referred to in the above excerpt pertains to an essentially ‘Hindu’ identity.
The necessity for India to emerge as a nation seems to have its origin in the
urge to safeguard the ‘Hindu’ identity with a subliminal agenda of cultural
homogenization as was expressed in desires of the organisers of the *Jatiya
Mela* of 1861 (renamed as *Hindu Mela* in 1872). This agenda seems to be
subtly present in different cultural texts as well as practices and a textually
*guided* process of meaning-making even after nearly a century and half
thereby making its persistent presence prevail for ‘long enough period’ as
Chandra (1990) notes. The sprawling growth of ‘media capitalism’ in India in the past couple of decades seems to reinforce ‘an Indian ‘national’ identity through advertisements (Jeffrey,1997: 58) thereby making itself a ‘material force’ as Chandra (1990) calls it.

Far from working as an insular module conveying merely commercial messages advertisements seem to carry forward ideological arguments lying latent in the media discourse of which it is a part. A careful coordination of ideological stance may be found in media texts such as teleserials, films, news and advertisements. For example, the Coca Cola advertisement mentioned in the previous chapter can be analysed in terms of meanings embedded at the level of design and production, which are modified by the creation of new meanings as the product is represented through the advertisement in the Indian media. In turn, the meanings produced through representation connect with, and help constitute the meaningful identities of the consumers/viewers as participants. Although intended specifically to describe how present-day, technology driven contemporary culture works, social semiotic approach can also offer a useful model for exploring the ways in which a classical text, such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* acquire social and cultural meaning through ideological appropriation in contemporary times.

The notion of interaction can be extended beyond considerations of writing and reading processes to acknowledge the roles that practices of representation, identity formation, and cultural regulation play. Furthermore, it offers a systematic way of exploring why some meanings have become
associated with *Ramayana, Mahabharata* or *Gita* as representative Hindu texts, rather than others. The framework also provides us a clue as to why some interpretations have acquired dominant, normative or naturalized shape and are accepted virtually unchallenged, while some others are being fiercely contested.

**Cultural Nationalism, Nation and Culture**

We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation;

Preamble to Indian Constitution

The above promise gives a somewhat perfect picture of a target society in which citizens irrespective of cast, creed, religion and culture coexist peacefully as a nation. This pronouncement enabling any citizen to participate in 'modern governmentality,' as Chatterjee (1999) observes, is not only crucial to construct the 'nation' but also to even 'imagine' it. Does this announced and official version of 'Indian Nationalism' actually portray the 'real' nature of Indian nationalism? – is a question worth asking. So far as the practice is concerned it would be more apt to say that there is no one brand of Indian 'nationalism' but rather there are Indian 'nationalisms.'

The proclamation of the official statement of 'nationalism' in India is seen modified and appropriated by the changing political regime in charge of the country from time to time. The formal stand as expressed in the constitution of India, however, remains the same in official records and the reality seems
to keep on falling prey to interpretation, political manipulation and change throughout its post-independent time frame driven by the ideology of the group ‘ruling’ the country. With this change/adaptation of the official definition of the nature of ‘Indian nationalism,’ the status of communities in power and out of power become susceptible to paradigm shift as to how and to what extent the constitutional definition of Indian nationalism is viable and practiced within the country’s culture-scape. Indian literature and other forms of cultural discourse are potential sites for contests of different brands of Indian nationalism, depending on the colour that they assume and sustained political campaign in favour and against one another. After a lapse of almost six decades since the drafting of this preamble, the definition of Indian nationalism in the country’s most authentic document appears to be lost in ‘myths of time’ and the swirl of opposing interpretations and arguments seem to cloud its most sacred prerogative – rise of a nation as a united secular entity (Bhaba, 1990). Though the practitioners and exponents of the Indian nationalism on secular grounds have been harping on a secular nation ever since the Indian nationalist movement has coagulated, the ‘secular Indian nation’ appears to remain a myth all through.

Bhaba (1990) notes that ‘(n)ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye.’ (Bhaba, 1990: 1) He goes on to say that though such an image of the nation or narration appears to be ‘impossibly romantic’ and ‘excessively metaphorical,’ it stems from those traditions of political thought and literary language. As a result, the nation emerges as a powerful historical entity. He defines this as an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a
symbolic force. Nevertheless, does nation mean a community of people bound by an arbitrarily drawn geographical boundary? A thorough investigation to the nature of this imagined community(ies) is to be executed if one attempts to find any satisfactory answer to this cardinal question. (Anderson 1991)

Anderson (1991) asserts that ‘[n]ationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which — as well as against which — it came into being.’ This alignment can only be done on the basis of the ‘authentic’ and ‘contextualised’ history of the nation. The most relevant questions in identifying apparatus of a historical study into the genealogy of a nation are to be raised thus as follows:

1. What forms of discourse are to be treated as authentic evidence for written history of a nation?
2. Can ephemeral commercial texts like advertisements be considered as an authentic document of contemporary history?
3. If yes, how would we account for the representation, resistance, visibility and silence among the communities at the advertisements?
4. What are the arguments put forward in various versions of explanation about the nature of Indian nationalism in such texts?

To begin our attempt to understand the process of documentation and writing history the following observation might help us finding clues as to what goes into forming a situation of suspicion and mutual disbelief while trying to ‘read’ history of a nation.
Motivated manipulation of history and consciousness of the people of
a country is something one needs to be aware of. It is through this
motivated manipulation that history as an entity can turn out to be
fictional and therefore with a distinct slant towards what creates it, i.e.
the vested interest of a few as opposed to many. In doing so,
especially in India one runs the risk of over throwing a wonderfully
multicultural, sacrilegious and profane history or way of looking at
life.xxix

The written history of evolution of Indian nationalism appears to be a tale of
‘motivated manipulation’ and therefore is full of contradiction and confusion.
Each group with particular belief kept on adding new shades to the definition
of Indian nationalism. As other cultural documents do, advertisements also
bear testimony to varying definitions about the construct. What is most
interesting is the fact that advertisements often modify its point of view
depending on the interpretation in vogue at the time of their own campaign.
An in-depth and systematic study of advertisements can unfold the history of
evolution of Indian nationalisms in contemporary time through the popular
discourse of change in them.

This research intends to find out some answers to the questions raised above.
I will focus my quarry on the case of advertisements in various national and
regional magazines (a list of which has been given in the earlier chapter) and
advertisements telecast through various television channels in India. I
propose to concentrate my analysis on the following points:

• how advertisements are used as a site for contest of different
  brands of Indian nationalism, - extreme right, moderately right and
  left wing interpretations of Indian nationalisms
• the image, and the construction of social reality – illustrated by a picture or sequence of shots along with a combination of cultural convention and myths;
• citizenship, and the reconstruction of political reality – illustrated by interviews as well as by transnational exchanges of young people involved in the media.
• the representation of ethnic and religious minorities, which has challenged the previously unproblematic understanding of a unified, culturally homogeneous nation

Anderson (1991) identified the way in which certain forms of mass mediation, notably those involving newspapers, novels, and other print media, played a key role in imagining the nation and in facilitating the spread of this form to the colonial world in Asia and elsewhere. Arjun Appadurai’s general argument is also that ‘there is a similar link to be found between the work of imagination and the emergence of a postnational political world.’ (Appadurai, 1997: 21 – 22) Indeed, press, cinema, radio and advertisement have permitted to standardise the popular ideologies, to make them appear homogenous and also to exploit them deliberately to ends of propaganda (Hobsbawm 1990). Likewise, in Niklas Luhmann’s words, ‘the social function of the mass media is to be found […] in the memory generated by it.’ (Luhmann, 2000: 65)

The structure of representation in photography, the point of view and the frame, reflect and reproduce an ideological position that remains easily hidden – especially in advertisements. However, one must always remember the significance of the social, cultural and political practices, which surround
photography, and selection of shots and angles in a movie, even the
apparently innocent ones. It should serve as well as the basis for our reading
of photographic images for print advertisements and filming scheme for audio-
visual advertisements, and as one of the basis for our understanding of
construction of reality with strong ideological underpinnings.