Conclusion

Nation, a psycho-spiritual concept, is based on the “collective self-consciousness” (Grosby 10) of a people. It is formed around shared traditions about a “spatially situated past” (10). Although the collective unity or ‘the feeling of togetherness’ is generated and sustained by subjective elements in each nation, yet “[t]erritorial self-determination” (Barrington 712) of a people remains at the centre of most of the definitions of nation. To be a nation, a people should be majorly homogeneous in those aspects which are ‘national’ according to them. Nationalism refers to a set of beliefs about nation (Grosby 5); it is the ideological and political project that reflects in ideology, movement, feeling, and discourse (Guichard 14). It may be ‘state-seeking’ or ‘nation-shaping’ (Brubaker).

In creative space, Indian fiction presents a number of strains of Indian national movement; it tries to establish a parallel, if not oppositional, nationalist history from the view point of the colonized. Anandamath, Gora, and Kanthapura, the works chosen for this project, politically represent different periods of time and construct the history of Indian national movement. The novelists have not purely relied upon what is mentioned in the academic discourses of history or factual accounts. Rather they have (de)constructed metanarratives to develop their versions of Indian nation and nationalism on the canvas of fiction; they have artistically created their own settings, characters, and sentiments to focus on specific aspects of nation and nationalism. When linked in a chronology of the time of action, the novels under study construct a linear history of Indian nationalism in three phases. In Anandamath, the English are viewed as friends; in Gora, the doubts against the English administration take shape in the educated Indian mind, and in Kanthapura, there is a clear protest against the English.

In the narratives under study, religion-cum-‘Dharma’ emerges as the chief characteristic that psychologically differentiates ‘us’ from ‘them’/ ‘outsiders’. Unlike Renan’s idea of nation, it significantly plays an important role in national (dis)integration. It is a potent identity marker in the Indian subcontinent, which is
deeply rooted in myths and traditions. The novels under study entwine religion-cum-
‘Dharma’ and nationalism in one discourse.

In *Anandamath*, Vaishnavism is the strongest element which lays the foundation
of Bengali Hindu nation. The Children feel that the Hindu identity is threatened because
of the Muslim king’s attitude, and it is important to ‘destroy’ all the Muslims (147). The
Bengali Hindus get united to assert their identity collectively and to secure ‘national’
space. The novelist obscures the lines between religion and regime to portray
Ethnic/Hindu nationalism. Inspired by the famine of 1770 in Bengal, the novel purely
constructs the sentiment of Hindu nationalism among the Sanyasis in the then Bengal; it
creates a ‘Dharmic’ Code, which justifies violence in the service of Mother, to shape up
militant nationalism.

The idea of nation in the novel is strictly confined to Bengali Vaishnavas. The
land is personified as Mother and the the Vaishnavas are projected as her Children. It is
a befitting example how a nation is ‘imagined’ (Anderson) on the basis of ethnicity
(Smith). The novelist has used “Vande Mataram” to arouse national sentiments in the
Children, who feel a sense of unity through the idea of ‘collective’ Mother. The
Children’s desire of making the then Bengal a state of Bengali Vaishnava nation
conforms to the view that a nation always struggles for a nation-state.

The presentation of the English rule as the divine dispensation in the ending of
*Anandamath* is inspired by the Indians’ affinity for the English rule in those days; it
may also be viewed as the verdict of ‘the artist in chains’ (Das, Sisir K.), who was the
first Indian magistrate of Bengal in the British rule.

In Tagore’s *Gora*, the idea of Indian nation and nationalism is woven around
Hinduism and the ideology of the Bramho Samaj. Throughout the novel, the eponymous
protagonist envisions Bharatvarsha as a primarily Hindu nation. This is an attempt on
Tagore’s part to give voice to the ideology of his contemporary society that asserted its
Hindu identity during the colonial period. However, the idea of Bharat Mata in a secular
avatar, who welcomes one and all with open hands, dramatically dominates and
outshines the narrowness of Hinduism in the ending of the novel. Being a true humanist,
Tagore wards off sectarianism and advocates a secular image of Bharatvarsha in *Gora*.
Noticeably, his idea of nationalism, which carries ‘universal’ appeal, completely discards the cultural divisions of caste and creed. In the novel, Gora’s Irish lineage helps him unfetter Hindu identification and see the assimilating nature of Bharatvarsha. Anagnorisis in the novel leads to self-realization, “a vast truth” (Tagore 475). “The good and bad, the joys and sorrows, the wisdom and follies, of all of Bharatvarsha” (475) come close to Gora who consequently learns “[w]hat a mother’s lap means” (476). This construction of liberal or ‘non-parochial inclusive’ (Choudhuri, Indra Nath) nationalism is the outcome of Tagore’s sense of social justice, racial unity, universalism, humanism, and Indianness.

Tagore said, Indra Nath Choudhury writes, that “form yourself into a nation (nation with a small n) to mean society which was relevant to humanity”; he criticized the encroachment of Nation with a capital N to mean a nation-state or the nations of the West. According to him, the Western idea of Nation is violent; it has self-destructive tendency and makes one selfish and exclusive at the stake of the other’s freedom. It blindly spreads a homogenized universalism (“The concept of the nation-state”). In Gora, Tagore’s idea of Indian nation is accommodating and assimilating.

Raja Rao’s Kanthapura, crafted in the style of Indian Puranas, abounds in religious and ‘Dharmic’ elements. It depicts the discourse of Gandhian nationalism which has donned the garb of sacredness to lure the Indian religious sensibility. Myths are revised to fulfil political motives; Gandhi is portrayed as an incarnation of Shiva, who is on the mission to set free Brahma’s “beloved daughter from the enforced slavery” (17). Gandhian nationalism appeals to the villagers of Kanthapura because their simple minds have been fed on the legendary tales and myths from the ‘repository’ (Preface) of grandmothers. Raja Rao has instilled the elements of religion and Dharma in the narrative to erase the line between the political and the spiritual, to create an ambience of godliness and divinity, and to attach a sense of righteousness and sacrosanctity to the Gandhian freedom struggle in the novel. The novelist does not try to glorify what Gandhi actually did and said regarding religion and politics. The novel is, in fact, about how Gandhi and Gandhian nationalism were (mis)represented as divine and pious in the rural interiors during the freedom struggle. Rao alludes to the susceptibility of the Indian religious sensibility, which can be (mis)used for political
reasons. Gandhian nationalism is shown as a journey, not as a destination in the novel. The novel is wreathed in *Dharma* as law at cosmic level, as duty at social plane, as virtue at moral plane, and religion at spiritual plane.

In this setting of a small village, Rao conveys the idea of Indian nation through nationalist motifs and expressions such as ‘Gandhi’, ‘Congress’, ‘Mother’, ‘Vande Mataram’, and ‘Thousand Pillared Temple’. Concurrently, the novelist highlights the diversity of India through the peculiarly unique Congress in Kanthapura, varying versions of Hinduism, and the two opposite constructions of Gandhi in the discourse of the freedom struggle. He obliquely conveys a sense of Indian nation with diversity in the novel. Kanthapura, the village, is presented as a miniscule part of India. It is not ‘India in microcosm’. India is a complex entity, and a piece of fiction set in narrow space and time and with limited range of characters cannot grasp the macrocosm of India.

Hence, at the backdrop of religion-cum-‘Dharma’, *Anandamath* rests upon ethnic nationalism in the then Bengal; *Gora* begins with Hindu nationalism and ends on a note of secular Indian nationalism; and *Kanthapura* portrays the influence of Gandhian nationalism on an imaginary south Indian village. Bankim explores the potential of militant nationalism, whereas Tagore’s approach to nationalism is universalistic and humanistic. Raja Rao has presented strong anti-colonial civic nationalism.

The novelists have used ‘archetypal’ patterns of the anti-colonial discourse to construct the idea of nation and nationalism. The personification of the land as Mother, focus on lawlessness in the ‘foreign’ rule, the ‘nationalist’ dissent and remonstration led by a committed hero, and the use of religious imagery recur in the novels under study.

The idea of land as Mother acts as an integrative force in the novels. In *Anandamath*, the Mother is not the embodiment of India, but the then Bengal, a province in the Indian subcontinent. *Gora* personifies Bharatvarsha as Mother. The Mother is also a primary concern in *Kanthapura*: “We have to protect our Mother” (Rao 23). Notably, the clear concept of Bharatvarsha as a whole becomes strikingly clear in *Gora* and *Kanthapura*. It alludes to the fact that nationalism in India was at first level
provincial and carried internal tensions. Later on, it spread its wings with the rise of the English power across India.

The novelists clearly show that justice is not easily accessible in the foreign rule. Bankim in Anandamath portrays the period of time when there was social and political chaos all around. “[A] prison that was truly dreadful, for those who went in rarely came out, as there was no one to judge their case... at that time there was no order” (Chatterjee 158). In Gora, Satkori projects the contemporary legislative system as a money minting machine, “a market place for buying and selling for justice” (Tagore 185). He says, “[T]hose who don’t have money are bound to lose out”. In Kanthapura, Ranganna says, “The Red-man’s judges ... are not for Truth, but for Law, and the English are not for the brown skin but for the white, and the Government is not with the people but with the police” (Rao 92).

The protagonists in the novels under study rise above the common man’s sense of comfort and leisure for a national cause; they do not appear keen to come out of jail as they adhere to a specific ideology. Satyananda refuses to come out of the prison, as “[t]he santans must face a test today” (Chatterjee 160). Gora refuses to take any legal recourse, as he believes “[w]hatever be the fate of the helpless in this kingdom, mine should be the same” (Tagore 185). Moorthy refuses any defense as “[b]etween Truth and me none shall come” (Rao 92). Each hero is expected to follow a code of principles to fulfil nationalist aims during the freedom struggle. In Anandamath, the aim is twofold: “to chastise the wicked” and ‘to protect the good’ (151). In Gora, it is ‘Mukti’ through self-exploration. Gora says that it is important to understand our country because our Shastras also advise: ‘Know thyself- otherwise we cannot attain mukti’ (Tagore 67). In Kanthapura, the aim is to “slay the serpent of the foreign rule” (18).

References to mythology are given to strengthen the nationalist discourse in the novels under study. The cruel Muslim king in Anandamath is seen in parallel with “Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha” (Chatterjee 156), whereas the Mother is viewed as Jagaddhatri, Kali, and Durga (150-151). In Gora, Bharatvarsha is referred to as Annapurna as Jagaddhatri (Tagore 327). In Kanthapura, the British are compared to ‘Asuras’: “when the demon came” (Rao 99), whereas Gandhi is presented as an
incarnation of Shiva, sent on earth by Brahma to set free his “beloved daughter from the enforced slavery” (17).

In the novels under study, the Muslim characters are given limited space in the nationalist discourse. Bankim has portrayed the Muslims as the foes of the Mother; In Gora, there is only one Muslim character. Raja Rao has portrayed the Muslim characters as the archetypes of good (e.g. Iron-shop Imam Khan) as well as bad (e.g. Bade Khan). Rao appears to be biased towards Brahmanism. The novelists have portrayed their major women characters as three dimensional characters. Through Shanti’s example, Bankim shows that woman is a partner in virtue or great deeds. Tagore voices his message of humanism through Anandamoyi in Gora. In Kanthapura, the women are encouraged to participate in the freedom struggle within the set boundaries prescribed by men in the gripping socio-political Indian society; they are “marginalised in the essential representations of nationalist discourse” (Sethi 131).