Introduction
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“How many countries have allusions to common national origins in their national anthems? e.g. ‘Land of my fathers’, ‘Enfants de la patrie’, ‘Deutschland uber alles’. Yet what constitutes a nation?”

(Cameron 1)

What is a nation? Nation is one of the most talked about and prevalent phenomena today. However, in spite of that, it has remained ambiguous as far as its definition and scope are concerned. The term, most commonly spoken of in the present scenario, is yet one of the most misinterpreted and misrepresented one.

The Oxford Mini-dictionary defines a nation as “people of mainly common descent and history, usually inhabiting a particular country under one government” while nationalism as a “patriotic feeling, a policy of national independence”. A nation, then, is a combination of geography and people while nationalism is the love for that geographical area. But in this definition how does one account for the multifacetedness in a country and for the presence of the ‘patriotic’ feeling in the wake of this diversity?

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the two terms as, “nation is a large aggregate of people united by common descent, culture or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory” and “nationalism is a patriotic feeling, principles, or efforts, an extreme form of this is marked by a feeling of superiority over other countries. It is also an advocacy of political independence for a particular country”. The definition of ‘nation’ here involves ‘people of common descent or culture inhabiting a particular state or territory” but does not refer to any single country under one government as in the previous definition. However “nationalism” is still the same, ‘a patriotic feeling for a country’.

The Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary defines the nation as, “a country considered as a group of people with the same language, culture and history, who live in a particular area under one government” and nationalism as, “the desire by a group of people who share the same race, culture, language, etc. to form an independent country and a feeling of love for and pride in your country, a feeling that your country
is better than any other”. The definition here relates the nation to the idea of a country and single government however it also uses ‘area’, distinct from a country. Moreover, nationalism is the ‘desire by a group towards freedom and liberty.’

Moving over to sociology, another field associated with the ideas of nations and nationalism, it emerges that it equates nationalism to the ‘society’. It holds that it is the society that creates the ideas of nation and nationalism. As a result, sociology concerns with the intra-social relationships prevalent in the society as the roots of the nation and nationalism. These intra-social aspects involve features like class, caste, status, power, affluence, etc. On a colonial level these features go on to the level of tribes and clans as well. John Breuilly says in Introduction to *Nations and Nationalism*, “Sociology equated ‘society’ with the membership of the nation-state. ‘Nation’ was thus naturalized as ‘society’ and attention devoted to internal relationships (class, status, power)” (XVIII).

This social dimension of nation and nationalism is a step forward from the earlier definitions. While the earlier definitions saw a nation inherent in a society, the perspective of sociology constructed the nation through society. The shift from ‘nation inherent in a society’ to ‘society constructing a nation’ is a major pedagogical deviation from the traditional notions. The placement of the nations as a ‘construction by’ the society rather than nations ‘inherent in’ a society makes the historical and cultural perspectives of society crucial. Every society basks in the glory of the two above mentioned categories, one defining its origin and growth while the other giving the reasons for it. In other words, history reveals how a particular society came into being and grew to what it is at a point of time while culture defines why that society grew in a particular way and not otherwise.

Nations and nationalism, then, depend on history and culture. Miroslav Hroch ascertains five factors that explain the emergence and existence of a nation and nationalism:

1. Past: This incorporates the national history.
2. Culture: It includes the ethnic, linguistic and religious ties.
3. Modernization and communication.
4. Nationally relevant conflicts of interests: These could be social, professional and political.
5. Agitations: These are based on emotional factors, symbols and festivities.

All the five, evidently, are points that play a central role in the establishment of any unit that is governed by a particular leader. This unit could be a political country, a state or a group of people. Deutsch believes that a nation is "a community of complementary habits of communication". In the earlier times the homogenization was related to kingdoms, a ruler and a law. According to Krishan Kumar in "Nationalism and the Historians" older states with their well defined territorial boundaries, centralized rule and common systems of law come closer to national form. This history, or the past where one looks for such 'territorial boundaries', is one that has been handed over by the forefathers, orally and written. Not only this, these very forefathers are the ones who have created or invented this past leaving it to the present to have to deal with the situation.

History, seen thus, is one of the several factors along with politics and anthropology on which the idea of nation and nationalism is built. Anthony D. Smith asserts in The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism, "...theoretical debates among the historians...also consider the work of political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others who have contributed to the fundamental debates on the role of ethnicity and nationalism" (1). To discuss the issue of nation and nationalism, one has to enter into a debate regarding their origin and nature and their role in the social changes, contemporary as well as historical. Hence, history becomes important to understand and evaluate the ideas of nation and nationalism. "'Historians', says Eric Hobsbawn, 'are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market" (Qtd in Kumar 7).

In fact, prior to the 20th century the ideas of nation and nationalism were closely related to the historical profession. John Breuilly asserts, "Until 1918 the study of nationalism was closely linked to the formation of nation states and of a historical profession. Nationalism was regarded as a component of national history rather than as a distinct subject. Academic history was organized on national lines" (XVI).

Every idea of a nation and nationalism that has emerged or continues to emerge is based on some historical or traditional context as Krishan Kumar avers that "a nation
is something that is formed in and by time” (7). He further asserts that nationalism should appeal to history and that all concepts of the nation necessarily refer to the past in one way or the other. Ernest Renan also asserts that a nation “presupposes a past” (qtd in Kumar 7). The history of a nation carries and narrates the story of its origin and the principles and ideologies that have governed nationalism in that nation. In addition to this, history and historians, as Krishan Kumar believes, not only give record of the nation and its origins but also define it by specifying the factors that have contributed to its establishment.

However, history in itself is not a homogeneous entity. It is a heterogeneous concept as it is treated differently by different historians and sociologists. As a result there emerge historical landmarks. At times, however, the opposite happens and the same event is seen in different light by different historians. For example, the French Revolution is considered as the starting point of the French nation. It is held to define France as the republic of equal citizens. However, the event attained that status late in the 19th century when the historians defined it as the starting point of the French nation. However, in spite of its contribution to the modern democracy there are voices that claim the denigrade impact it had on France. This disparate point-of-view makes history a heterogeneous entity capable of being interpreted in disparate ways.

Different sections, linguistic, ethnic or political, define these points according to their own convenience and it becomes increasingly difficult to have a common set of such points which at times leads to militant nationalism. The English historian, Lord Acton, asserts that, “the theory of nationality is a retrograde step in history...Nationality does not aim either at liberty or prosperity, both of which it sacrifices to the imperative necessity of making the nation the mould and the measure of the state. Its course will be marked with material as well as moral ruin, in order that a new invention may prevail over the works of God and the interests of mankind” (qtd in Kumar 10).

Krishan Kumar remarks that if nations and nationalisms are creations of historians then they are the ones who are “best equipped to assess [them]” (7). History and historians then, are not only definers but also critics of nations and nationalism. They make national consciousness and also are its most severe critics. The historians have also been complicit in diffusing the view that all history is essentially national history.
One thing that assumes significance here is the number of such differences and the number of different perspectives that then create a nation. However, the number has to be limited according to the paradigm that creates the differences. This ‘paradigm’ is the ‘social and cultural establishment’ prevalent in the times under consideration. Anthony D. Smith asserts in *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, “…neither is there an infinite number of such histories. What we have instead is a finite number of competing histories determined in large part by the historiographical debates generated by rival paradigms…” (2). A third role adopted by the historians in the concept of the nation and nationalism is that of the narrator: they are the ones who reveal how and when in history did nationalism come into being.

What determines the perspectives of the historians regarding the origin and growth of a nation is “culture”. It is the second factor that determines nations and nationalism. It takes one back and forth into history owing to the deconstruction and reconstruction to which it subjects the idea of nation and nationalism, especially in the era preceding globalization. One country reflects different cultural set-ups at different points of time and at a given point as well. These cultural differences are a crucial part of any society and country and make homogeneity extremely difficult. However, one thing that stood out with cultures and their construct of a nation is that they always aimed at homogenization. But at the same time, for all practical purposes the ‘heterogeneity’ of political and cultural forms in a nation stood equally true. Both the elements are multi-faceted and vary over space and time, especially cultures. However, attempts are made to cover this heterogeneity of culture with the sense of solidarity and a ‘we-feeling’ amongst the members of a nation. A nation, in spite of its cultural heterogeneity, is largely based on the concept of a culture itself as it is culture that generates feelings of belongingness, genuine or imagined, thereby giving strength to the idea of a nation.

It is important to see here that a nation, at the very roots of history and culture, fails to emerge as a homogeneous and uniform entity but is seen as an equivalent of a country. The history of a ‘nation’ and its culture is dependent on the times and the contradictions prevalent in those times. The ‘known’ history of a time, as also the popular culture, is the one that belongs to the dominant section during the time while
the marginalized is negated, though it exists. This makes the definition of a nation problematic.

In the wake of the issues, a vital shift that takes place as one moves to the post-colonial studies is that nation is no longer seen as a homogeneous entity but rather a diverse heterogeneous group. It also emphasizes that the stress on homogenization is a hegemonic practice by those having the ‘power of representation’ to reduce multiculturality and ethnicity to a single ideology of ‘their own.’ Two things stand out: one, the concept of a nation has changed with time; and two, the basic tenet of traditional definitions has been challenged by the post-colonial definitions of the term.

Hence, looking at the heterogeneity evident in history and culture, the definition of a nation, in the post-colonial era, needs a modification to accommodate these differences. Moving on from the traditional definitions of the two terms, Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies defines the two terms and the very idea of ‘homogeneity’ is questioned: “…nations are not ‘natural’ entities, and the instability of the nation is the inevitable consequence of its nature as a social construction. This myth of nationhood, masked by ideology, perpetuates nationalism, in which specific identifiers are employed to create exclusive and homogeneous conceptions of national traditions. Such signifiers of homogeneity always fail to represent the diversity of the actual ‘national’ community for which they purport to speak, and, in practice, usually represent and consolidate the interests of the dominant power groups within any national formation” (Ashcroft 150). Herein, the concept of ‘nationalism’ too becomes a myth “of a ‘national tradition’ [that] is employed…to legitimate a general idea of a social group (‘a people’)...” (Ashcroft 150).

This heterogeneity becomes problematic as well because it threatens ethnic revivals within a country. With a country no more synonymous to the nation, the ethnic groups demand a nation within the country. In fact, homogenization is one fact that eludes nations leading to the presence of distinct factions within a ‘nation.’ Every country is a heteroglossia and this some have tried to exploit by demanding separate nations based on a homogenization of caste, class, religion, ethnicity or various other ideas. John A. Hall, in “Structural Approaches to Nations and Nationalism”, says, “Second-class citizenship within a large polity due to skin color, religion, ethnicity, or some other cultural marker-naturally suggested the sense of playing with nationalist card, of
becoming a first-class citizen within one’s own state” (35-36). What gave this idea air is the belief in homogeneity as being one vital prerequisite in the composition of a nation by some critics like Gellner. The rise of militant nationalism attempts at creating a nation within a country. This is usually done through the use of force and violence. The very features of a community that have stayed with a section for ages suddenly become a matter of excessive obsession. This obsession may be due to a sense of ‘smallness’ for one’s culture or due to a sense of its superiority. In either case culture and history are relegated into the outrageous. It is then that the entire idea becomes open to misinterpretation and manipulation. Critics like Pannikar opine that every national movement has three stages of maltreatment: first it is treated with indifference, then ridiculed and finally abused. Until it has outlived these experiences men will not deal with it on its merits.

Attempts to create such homogeneous groups as nations within a nation are persistently striven for. India is no exception to this and attempts to make Khalistan in Punjab and Gorkhland in the East are a case in point. Leaders of such groups are politically active and sometimes powerful as well so that they are enabled to govern the actions and movements of the group towards homogenization. Such men, known as nationalist revolutionaries, also have the means to hold a nation to ransom for their demand of a separate homogeneous nation. This corroborates the belief of Gellner that nationalists in power are generally social revolutionaries, creating a nation where none existed before. Such regional communities, claiming national status on the basis of homogeneity leading to the concept of peripheral nationalism, never existed as nations in history. Hechter, Kuyucu and Sacks assert, “Peripheral nationalism occurs when residents of a culturally distinctive territory resist incorporation into a centralizing state by attempting to secede” (Hechter 86). Reynolds believed that regional communities are never nations.

However, homogenization does not necessarily mean a nation and neither does lack of it mean the existence of several nations. Most countries in fact today, holds John A. Hall, are fully developed nation-states within which a single ethnicity or culture dominates, however, any forced attempt in them towards homogenization is considered repulsive to the extent that a multi-cultural arrangement is preferred as the order of the day.
The concept of the nation, then, eludes a final definition and scope and remains elusive. There were nations equivalent to the country but later the relationship was questioned. There is, however, another aspect to the idea of a nation: globalization. While ethnic revivals reduce the size of nations, globalization enlarges it. Paul Valery says, “Nothing will be done anymore, without the whole world meddling in it” (qtd in Robertson 15). The arrival of the modern industrial set-up brought in the concept of globalization and this questioned the idea of ‘area and time specific’ culture. The rise of the multi-national corporates after the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century created a new culture which transcended most of the man made boundaries. These multi-national cultures did not regard and honour nationalisms and the concept of nations. They don’t even recognize the so-called ‘power states’ of the modern era and supersede them in their functioning. If a nationalist concept in accordance with globalization is sought then it would be a sort of a ‘world state’, a near impossibility in the present times of ‘nations within a nation.’ Mike Featherstone says, “...it would be impossible to identify an integrated global culture without the formation of a world state—a highly unlikely prospect” (1). As G. Aloysius says in Nationalism without a Nation in India, “Multinational corporate empires, with scant regard for national sovereignty have become the order of the day, and world finance bodies more often than not operate as super-states;...” (3). Agencies like the World Bank and the U.N.O. are such as have successfully overrun the concept of individual nations in their pursuit of the concept of the ‘global’. Whether these agencies are really third world friendly or carry this title as a tag is unsure but they certainly attempt at sidelining the concept of nation and nationalism.

The wave of globalization has given rise to two concepts, both against the idea of a nation and nationality. First, it has created the idea of a larger group, consisting of several countries, the European Union being an example. Secondly, it has created regional groups within a country, attributing uniqueness to them which gives the illusion of a nation. Both these tendencies contradict the basic tenet of a nation and nationalism associated with a country. Kevin Robins says in “Tradition and Cultural Translation: National culture in its global context”, “...there has been a consolidation of supra-national blocs (such as the European Community) and a new salience for sub-national territories (regions and localities)” (17).
The idea of a nation has always revolved around the concept of a political country having its own flag as its most unique identity. As a result, the idea of nation and nationalism revolves around the concept of a country and globalization offers a serious threat to this concept and ideology. Regions are becoming more organized and gaining importance in the global world and the threat of their assuming a national status looms large as it has given rise to new geographical equations and with it the global-local nexus. Anthony D. Smith says in “History and Modernity: Reflections on the Theory of Nationalism”, “The idea that all nations should have their own political roofs may be an outgrowth of Enlightenment ideas, but it accords with the fundamental ordering of modern, industrial society” (45).

Different scholars have given their own interpretations for the terms and have also put forward different theories for their origin. Elie Keoudrie, in his book Nationalism says: “Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century” (qtd in Breuilly XIX). A line of thinkers, like Hans Kohn and Theodor Schieder, hold that the roots of nationalism lie in the French Revolution and that the concepts developed different perspectives in the West and in Central and Eastern Europe and Asia. England and France, in Western Europe, were the first ones to generate the feeling of nationalism through revolutions and established a nation as a “community of state citizens” (Merdjanova 243). It was followed by nationalism in Germany and Italy, Central Europe, where the separated parts were brought together. The Eastern Europe developed a nationalism through ‘disjunction’, dissociating themselves from the greater empires based on monarchy. In Asia and the Middle East the nationalist movements were in tandem with the revival of the religious currents in Islam and Hinduism.

Here was the beginning of the idea of nation and nationalism as one whose ‘reality’ was questionable. This gained further ground in the 20th century with the increasing voice of anti-colonialism and decolonization. The primary concern of those against its very existence is the idea that nations are imaginary creations invented by a Europe basking in its superiority and addressing the ‘inferior’ tribes of their colonies. The very idea of ‘creating’ nations and ‘homogenization’ as a part of it was a hegemonic justification for conquering the tribes and aborigines.
The Post-colonialists assert a different view stating that nations are ‘highly volatile and unstable entities, heterogeneous in nature’. This is also the reason for the rejection of ‘homogeneous nation’ by the post-colonial critics. The post-colonialists, with their hard earned independence, concentrate on heterogeneity. As a result there is no clarity whether ‘nations’ are an authentic or an imaginary creation carried forward by the post-colonialists.

The question that then arises is of its utility. Gellner and Anderson hold that nationalism need not necessarily be true in its beliefs and that the nation-state may actually be a myth. Arnason holds in “Nations and Nationalisms: Between General Theory and Comparative History” that nationalism is “largely based on history, mysteries of ancient times and tribal solidarity” (47). The ‘history’ and ‘mysteries of ancient times’ are informations that are difficult to be authenticated and hence remain in the corridors of uncertainty. But Gellner and Anderson also add that its reality and truth do not determine its utility and desirability and actually, even if it is based on fiction, it is necessary fiction. Bhabha, in Nation and Narration said: “Nations like narratives lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (qtd in Rao Sudhakar 60). This idea of traditions and sanctity of identity of nations and nationality being an invented concept seems a myth and fabrication. The degree of fabrication includes the ‘beatification of defeats’. Even the episodes of most anguish and humiliation are made to serve as rallying points for unity in the narrative of a nation. They become the commonality that has to be avenged and striven for. It serves as the reason for sacrifice and heroism in the name of patriotism and binds the nation together. An imaginary past asserts equal influence in the making of a nation as any authentic past. Edward Said says in Orientalism, “...there is no use pretending that all we know about time and space, or rather history and geography, is more than anything else imaginative” (55). The essential and critical part here is that any such belief should be trusted and believed in. Malraux said, “I have ever, ever felt, unless one can die for an idea it’s not worth living. That’s what I like about the Orient, about India” (qtd in Rao Raja 49).

This sense of nationalism and a single nation stays with the individual even in routine life but raises itself in times of a crisis. As Kevin Robins opines that “the idea of nationality continues to have a powerful, if regressive, afterlife, and ‘the sleeping
images which spring to life in times of crisis – the fear, for instance, of being “swamped” by foreign invasion – testify to is continuing force”’ (15). Hence the role of a nation and nationalism, whether real or imaginary, seems of utmost importance and is required for a free and fearless survival.

However, imagination being valid in defining a nation has its drawbacks as well. Primarily, it exposes a nation to ‘non-tribal’ scrutiny; people who never were a part of the nation start framing its national history and culture which is, needless to say, according to their own standards. The image of the Orient, initially restricted to Islam and later to the entire East is a classic example of this manipulation. As Edward Said maintains in *Orientalism*: “Orientalim [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient” (3). Hence, more often than not, it is the West which, owing to its ‘superior’ status as colonizer, creates a cultural history of the East. Said adds, “…Orientalism was ultimately a political version of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived” (43-44). Thus, the history of a nation, real or imaginary, has its positive and negative repercussions. However, it still remains an integral part in the concept of a nation.

In the light of the above discussion of the nation, where does India fit in? Is India a nation or is it a conglomerate of several nations? Can India be seen as a ‘homogeneous entity’ as traditional definitions assert or is India a post-colonial nation of heterogeneous groups living together? The issue of the *representation* (emphasis mine) of India emerges only once she is defined in terms of a nation. How it is defined and what are its dimensions. Is India a single uniform whole or a collection of unique fragments? Or is there a third perspective, India as an amalgamation of both? In other words, can India be seen as a composition of fragments, each with its uniqueness and also possessing certain features spanning the length and breadth of the country? The answer to this question will determine the status of her representation, like, should it be comprehensive or selective.

India is one of the very few nations that can be marked out on the globe due to its geographical features. The country is surrounded by sea from the bottom half while the northern and north-eastern part is clearly marked with the Himalayas stretching
from the northern most parts to the east. On a geographical map of the world India can easily be demarcated. However this distinction alone does not entitle India to the status of a single nation. Politically, India, in the past, was none of the ‘country’ as it is known today. It was just a landmass, an area, a sub-continent with certain visible boundaries and inhabited by a number of tribes. ‘India’, the term presently has come to imply a nation governed by the limitations of a geographical boundary. But is India really a nation having the element of nationalism? The concept of the Indian nation emerged in post-colonial India but the roots about the validity of the concept of Indian nation go back to ancient India.

Post-colonial India and the post-modern society seem to relegate the concept of a single nation. Another thing that needs mention is the roots of the present ‘nations’ that have emerged in the modern era. From where have these nations emerged and where are the beginnings of the different ‘nations’ that can be found today in India? As D. N. Majumdar says in the “Preface” to the first edition of *Races and Cultures of India*, “...various problems of acculturation and decay [are] arising from the clash of cultures and contact of races...How do periodical...movements affect the life, customs and modes of settled agricultural tribes” (v). India, the country, too has been subject to scrutiny as a nation and the ideas of nationalism. However, for India, nation and nationalism is an extremely complex and hazy concept. Kohn believes that to nail down a theory of the growth of Indian nation is virtually impossible. The problem lies in the diverse historical and cultural backgrounds prevalent in India.

To start with, the idea of India as a single country itself emerged after the advent of the British. They were the ones who controlled the administration of the entire landmass. Prior to them India was merely a part of the landmass of what today is Asia. This landmass was divided into kingdoms that were conquered by different conquerors at different times in history with each imposing his own culture and history distinct from that of his predecessors and his successors.

“...our history has been the history of continual social adjustment and not that of organized power for defence and aggression”

(Tagore 5)
History, then, carries the answer to what India is today— history of the pre-modern times, of times much before the arrival of the English and the Mughals. India, today, has been formed through a long process of amalgamation and division of various groups, big and small, and to know if these ‘nations’ can be categorized into one it is vital to go back in time to the point where groups were first formed.

Archaeological Survey does show the presence of Paleolithic man dating to times prior to the arrival of the Aryans proving the existence of certain natives in this land. The primitive man was too weak individually to bear the brunt of nature and natural forces. As D. N. Majumdar says in *Races and Cultures of India:*

> Primitive man is subject to the powers of nature, to its wealth, its flora and fauna, to the hills and valleys, rivers and forests. He develops a code of social life based on his interpretation of his environing conditions. His tools are those which he can shape well from the materials available, and his interest in his environment is that of ‘survival in health and vigor’ and not the gain or profit which his efforts and application may bring forth (121)

Conditions demanded that man started living in groups. These groups, then, by the principle of assimilation and dissimilation, based on inter-group wars and the need to stay together for greater safety, formed tribes. This necessity is perhaps what gave rise to the first tribes, not only in the Indian landmass but on the globe as a whole. Different tribes inhabited the landmass called the Indian sub-continent today prior to the arrival of the Aryans. Various tribes had their own ‘powers’ which they categorized into good and evil and their social values were determined accordingly. Each tribe had its own set of values and cultures. A tribe’s religion was not the orthodox Hinduism or Mohammedanism of today but rather the ‘pagan’ system of faith. Such assimilations of different tribal groups and the subsequent advancement may have resulted in the birth of civilizations. The globe has had several civilizations and the Indian civilization of Indus and Harappa is one of the oldest. It flourished way before the Aryans arrived. It is equally important that the landmass also had its own stratification at the time when the Aryans came.
With the arrival of the Aryans the entire social structure and its manifestations changed. The greatest impact of the arrival of the Aryans was on the social structure which was till now tribe specific. The pagan concept of living was replaced by a more elaborate and defined way of life. A. L. Bashm holds that the Aryans, when they arrived here, were classified into Ksatra, the nobility and the vis, the ordinary tribesmen. The Aryans settled down in Punjab on their arrival and the land was named as Aryavarta, the land of the Aryans. From here they began their conquests to the South where their situation was different from that in the North. There they were a minority in the midst of a majority of the Dark aboriginals. As a result they were unable to suppress and supplant the culture of the aboriginals and with the passage of time they reduced the aboriginals to servitude as untouchable laborers. Their arrival brought about a hierarchical stratification which developed into the caste system. “They (caste)...found more fertile soil in India because of the absence of a strong political power wielding supremacy over a large area, crushing tribal differences and enforcing uniform laws and customs” (Majumdar 292).

Their emphasis on the purity of blood made them exclude Dasas and keep them on the fringes of the Aryan society. By the end of the Rg Vedic period the society was divided into four great classes and this was given a religious sanction of Hinduism. This sanction was unlike the pagan system prevalent earlier but was written down in the Vedas and the Manusmriti. The Aryans established themselves as Hindus and a uniform religion came to the fore for the first time. Manu, the Law-giver asserts that, “…caste system was a part of our social fabric and that Hindu society has been much benefited by that. Caste system helps society in protecting social set-up, without which there will be disturbance and disharmony and also chaos” (Bagulia 2). This caste system sustained through time and strengthened, becoming more and more rigid. A.L. Basham says in The Wonder that was India that the four classes of priest (Brahmana), warrior (Ksatriya), peasant (Vaisya) and serf (Sudra) were crystallizing throughout the period of the Rg Veda and have survived to the present day.

Hinduism, rather than the other religions, dominated India since time immemorial. It remains one factor that has been a part of the landmass. However, there are other religions which came and stayed in India. In fact, the caste system spreads itself beyond Hinduism to the other religions in India like Islam. But Hinduism remains as
the defining factor of India owing to its dominance and power of representation. The sensibility which equates India and the Indian tradition with Hinduism is much deep-rooted in Indian ethos. Indians have a ‘heritage of the forefathers’ in the form of a strong Hindu tradition that subsumes or rather sidelines all the other possibilities. As Partha Chaterjee says, “The idea of the singularity of national history has inevitably led to a single source of Indian tradition, namely, ancient Hindu civilization...The classical heritage of Islam remains external to Indian History” (113).

However, the Mughal era and then the British reign changed the concept of ‘India and Hindu.’ Hindu became a member of the religious sect of Hinduism, unlike the Mughal or the British who had his own faith and was seen as an outsider in India, the landmass. Prior to it, ‘Hindu’ was an inhabitant of the area around the Indus. The people came to be known as the Hindus from the Persian pronunciation of the word Indus (the river). According to Nirad C. Chaudhuri, the terms Indian and Hindu have common roots etymologically. Both are Greek and Persian derivatives of an identical definition. While the Persian word was aspirated, the Greek version was softly breathed. This is where the words began to have separate identities. The Original definition meant ‘an inhabitant of the region of the River Indus’ (in Sanskrit Sindhu). Later on, with the passage of time the term extended to include the residents of the entire continent. This Continent stretches from the region demarcated by the high Himalayas on the north and the ocean in the South. This region was defined as India in the old times. It contained a river called Sindhu which the Persians found hard to pronounce with ‘s’ so they called it Hindu.

The making of Hinduism into a religion made India a separate entity and anyone else coming here, an outsider. The Mughal rule over India was marked by rulers like Babur and Akbar. History sees the era in different lights but one thing that stands out is that even they failed to create a single Mughal nation, India. Their rule dominated the North and Central India but the south remained, yet again, somewhat elusive. The Mughal kingdom could not extend its hold on to the South which saw several kingdoms rise there, such as the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire (1336-1565). The Mughal rule, starting with Babur and ending with Jahangir ruled over a large part of India stretching from the North to the East and the Deccan in Central India but it did not encapsulate the entire landmass of the Indian sub-continent.
The Europeans were the next to come to the Indian landmass. The Portuguese came with the arrival of Vasco-de Gama at Calicut in 1498 while the Dutch came from the East in 1595. They were followed by the English who came with the dawn of the 17th century to India as traders. The East India Company, to trade with the East came and the English set up a factory in Surat and requested the Mughal court for permission to trade. The English went on to defeat the Portuguese and the Dutch in different wars in 1614 and 1695. In 1644, the French too came to India and the British sent their army to fight in India in the 1740s. This made acquisition of India possible for the Britishers.

The British seem to have started colonization with the idea of ruling the entire landmass. If their movement is seen as an indicator then it is evident that they started from the East, then moved to the south and finally conquered the north. This made it possible for them to unite the entire landmass as a single political entity, a first in the political history of India. However, this political unification was unilateral as so far there was no attempt on the part of the Indians to look like one nation. Hence it was the British who brought the entire landmass into one whole probably for the first time.

Prior to the arrival of the British, then, the Indian landmass was divided into a number of ‘Rajyas’. As a result, the struggles for independence from the British rule were initially restricted to the respective kingdoms and were sporadic. The first War of Independence which was fought in 1857, was, far from being a national revolt as it is conceived in popular imagination, a greatly restricted affair in its scope as the participation was not national. Following the revolt, the reins of India were transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown and in 1876 Queen Victoria assumed the title of the Empress of India.

With the growing resentment against the foreign yoke the desire to be free gained strength and attempts began at different levels and different places for the same. The pan Indian banner under which the freedom struggle was carried out and within whose fold various struggles came together was the Indian National Congress, established in 1885. The basic issue was the conflict of interests between the Indians and the British. A. O. Hume was the one who conceived the idea of a single all India organization and with his efforts, the leading personalities of India came together for the 1st Conference of the Indian National Congress in Bombay in December 1885.
With time it became the leading organization guiding the independence struggle of India.

It was with the unification of the Indian landmass under the political leadership of the British Crown that probably for the first time marked the birth of India as a nation as we know her today. This was followed by the rise of the sentiment of Nationalism and Nationalist feelings for the freedom of INDIA (emphasis mine). The national struggle for independence was in the backdrop of the political unity given by the British to India. The sole aim of the National Movement was independence of India, the landmass including the ‘Hindustan of the Aryans’ and the ‘Deccan and South of the aboriginals’. Rajesh Kasturirangan maintains that a national identity was crucial to sustain a mass political movement with the goal of achieving true swaraj. Hence, as a result of the colonization of the sub-continent a movement, national in character, found genesis and this is one of the few features characterizing a comprehensive national nature.

The British attitude towards Indian history was hardly supportive. They ensured that Indian history was manipulated according to their needs and specifications. As a result, one aspect of Indian nationalism was a complete opposition to the British view of Indian history and culture. Critics opine that Indian nationalism, in its political aspect, meant that the governance of the country by British officials had to be negated, to be got rid of. The British, on their part, attempted to ensure that no ‘unity’ of thought and action was achieved by the Indians. An easy way was to ‘work on’ the old concept of Insider- Outsider that underlined the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy in India. Hinduism, as a result became a tool in the hands of the British who juxtaposed it with the Muslim identity and played the ‘divisive card’ to curb any attempts at national cohesiveness. However, still, the freedom movement looked to become a symbol of ‘unity of thought and action’ for independence. But this ‘group existence’ had its advantage too. In the wake of this group identity it became increasingly difficult for the Christian Missionaries to convert people to Christianity. The British chronicles assert the fact that the group existence of the Indians, largely in terms of caste, was a major impediment in their way of conversions.

The Independence of India and the speech of Nehru at midnight gave birth to the euphoria of India as a nation rising to meet the world. There was widespread idealism
and it seemed that India as a nation will succeed in becoming a leader of the ‘new world’. However, in the wake of all this, the ground reality was forgotten and when it came in its full ugliness, idealism vanished into thin air and what was left was groups of communities at war with each other.

The yoke of foreign rule was overthrown in 1947 after a period of nearly 150 years of slavery and it inevitably generated a rush and overflow of emotions leading to idealism and a feeling of living ‘happily ever after’. The speech of the first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru on the stroke of midnight was the personification of that ideal. In his speech he asserted that India now awakens to a new dawn where the “soul of the nation, long suppressed, finds utterance”. Nehru always dreamt of India as a nation and in The Discovery of India he refers to Bharat as a nation. It seemed that the independence resulted in a wave of nationalism which gave rise to the Indian nation. But there was another side to this idealism and Nehru knew this when he delivered his famous “Tryst with destiny” speech wherein he said, “Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?...The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye.” Identical views were expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his Independence Day speech to the All India Radio. He said, “India today is free but she has not achieved unity.”

What followed Independence was something that was prophesied by both Nehru and Sri Aurobindo. The first blow to idealism was the partition leading to the creation of India and Pakistan. The process of migration of the Hindus to India and of the Muslims to Pakistan was accompanied by mass killings on both sides. It was an event that rendered thousands dead and many more homeless. The genesis of the term ‘Refugees’ for the Hindus of Pakistan at that time was the beginning of the collapse of the edifice of Indian nation right in its infancy. To add further to the woe came, as G. Aloysius also holds in Nationalism without a Nation in India, economic instability, unemployment, poverty, corruption, illiteracy and many chronic problems that took the centre-stage rather than the euphoria of happy idealism. As a result what emerged out of the nationalism after independence was not a single nation but rather, as G.
Aloysius says, “...a whole litter of communities divided from one another in terms of language, religion, region or caste” (1). The India that emerged thereafter was a powerful state system and not a nation. It rather comprised of “multiple warring communities” (Aloysius 2).

As a result, the ground realities were largely different from what was perceived initially. Far from having an Indian Nation emerging from independence, what came were divisions and differences based on language, religion, region or caste leading to multiple nations, each having a regional, linguistic and religious identity. Different nations overlapped but something in each made it unique and its members faithful to their nation and not to the other. Such ethnic revivals hit at the very heart of ‘ideal nationalism’ and can be seen to have a hold in England, Canada, Spain, the U.S. and many others as well. The threat that such ethnic revivals pose is amply evident in the collapse of the Soviet Union. G. Aloysius says in Nationalism without a Nation in India, “The collapse of the Soviet Union, and along with it, the well nurtured communist paradigm of thought, has thrown out of gear several precariously balanced relations; both of theory and praxis” (2-3). India, then, faced the threat of becoming a victim, like the Soviet Union, and even though the probability of such a collapse at present seems impossible, some voices of the kind have since been heard time and again.

At the centre of any concept of a nation is ‘unity’ at various levels, which includes political, religious, cultural and geographical unity. India, as it emerged after independence, seemed to carry none of the above. Apart from Pakistan there were other ‘broken limbs’, limiting the idea of the Indian nation. On political and geographical fronts Hyderabad and Jammu were independent states while the massacre owing to partition had thrown religious harmony and unity to the winds. Culturally India was never and could never be a homogeneous nation owing to its vastness and different ecological conditions prevailing in different parts of the country.

So, it becomes a problem to define India in terms of traditional definitions of a nation. Attempts to locate it in the past, in the patriotism seen during the Independence struggle or in the Hindu-Muslim ideologies have proved inadequate. Armason, in “Nations and Nationalisms: Between General Theory and Comparative History”,
says: “The process of nation formation in India is very complex, inconclusive and not well understood” (45). What certain critics feel is that to have a nation it is essential to have the awareness of being a nation, a feeling of nationalism. Hroch believes that a nation is not possible without a national consciousness and that it is extremely essential to have an awareness of membership as a valuable quality in a nation.

But there is another way of looking at the concept of a nation. Anthony D. Smith says in “History and Modernity: Reflections on the Theory of Nationalism”: “It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round” (48). He admits that nationalism uses the past, culture and cultural wealth, transforms it to revive certain things like dead languages and ‘fictitious pristine purities’ and then label a nation as one with these qualities. It is, in brief, “the imposition of a high culture on society” (Smith, “History and Modernity...” 48). Are their “certain things” amidst the heterogeneity that generate the feeling of Indian nationalism leading to the concept of India?

Raja Rao, in The Meaning of India says, “...it is not the Indian who makes India but “India” makes the Indian...” (17-18). This perspective looks at India from an altogether different angle and a unifying principle emerges. According to Rao, India has in it something that unites it in spite of all its diversities and that something is the one that makes the Indians what they are in addition to their ethnic uniqueness.

This ‘something’, according to Raja Rao, is ‘sacrifice’. He asserts that India is unique for its quality of sacrifice, from the sacrifice of material possessions to the supreme sacrifice of the ‘self’ and agni serves as the mode for the supreme sacrifice, the agni that does not burn but is a “cave of snow” (Rao Raja 12) because this sacrifice is the “purification of the instruments of perception” which ultimately leads to a place where “consciousness alone exists” (Rao Raja 14). He adds here that ‘sacrifice’ in India manifests itself even in a routine activity, “This continuous and spontaneous sacrifice is right living” (Rao Raja 14). This has been a part of India since ages. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to India in 300 B.C. said, “They live happily because they are simple in their ways, and because they practise frugality” (qtd in Rao Raja 15). Nearly four centuries later the Muslim traveler Idrisi said in Al Rojari, “The Indians are naturally inclined to justice, and never depart from it in their functions” (qtd in Rao Raja 15). The perspective grew and Max Muller said, “If I were to look...
over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow – in some ways a very paradise on earth – I should point to India...If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life and found solutions to some of them, I should point to India” (qtd in Rao Raja 17).

This uniqueness that India has, according to thinkers like Rao, gives India the status of a nation, a single whole nation. Malraux said to Nehru, “Europe is destructive, suicidal. Europe, like Nietzsche, understood, and who understood Europe better than Nietzsche did – so he had to go mad. You remember what Dostoevsky said: Europe is a cemetery of ideas – Yes, we cannot go beyond good and evil. We can never go, as the Indians can, beyond duality. India had Shankara...Aristotle made a mess of Europe – he created good and evil. He created science and distanced us from Socratic wisdom. So it took almost two thousand years for Nietzsche to come and say: the Truth is beyond good and evil. But you know better than I do, advaita of Shankara is not Nietzsche’s non-duality...we look up always at – death. But you in India have grown a civilization” (qtd in Rao Raja 51). This belief is another factor that is unique to India and has its basis in sacrifice. The advaita negates the presence of duality and hence, as Malraux told Nehru, “You Indians will die because Krishna taught you there is no death – ” (qtd in Rao Raja 52). To this Nehru added that even the Vedas say the same thing.

India, hence, stands unique with respect to the spiritual awareness and also far ahead as compared to other countries. This spiritual aspect alongside the diversities, as even Tagore avers, gives India the feel of ‘oneness’. As he says, “...India has been trying to accomplish her task through social regulation of differences, on the one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity, on the other” (Tagore 5). This is one critical avenue where India could stand as a single whole. Seen from this perspective it emerges that there is something that defines India, something that makes India as a single unified entity. This difference is also seen in the fact that India is a colony that the British left without a big coup against their authority and they lost, not to human power, but to human resilience and patience which has its roots in spirituality.
However, the entire concept of *advaita* and sacrifice stands on a weak footing today. Modern age has put all this under the scanner. The theory of *advaita* and sacrifice, which according to Nehru finds a place in the *Vedas* too, is today seen as hegemony of Hinduism to keep the aborigines in their grip. It is asserted that Hinduism and with it the caste system used these ‘spiritual traits’ for ‘self’ gains. Gavin Flood says, “Central to any understanding of Hinduism is the role of mediation between the sacred and the everyday or ‘profane’” (14).

However, the search, the perpetual search, for the ‘self’ is something that separates India from the rest of the world and this quality seeps into every person who visits India and becomes an Indian. India imperceptibly induces certain qualities into those who come here, thereby making them Indians. This approach of Rao, distinctly different, portrays India in a new light, that of a ‘maker’, a creator rather than a passive thing being created by the people.

S. Radhakrishnan says in *East and West in Religion*: “The unity of the modern world demands a new cultural basis; and the real issue is whether it is to be guided by the economic and the pragmatistic mind, which is the more dominant at the moment, or by the spiritual”(44). India, similarly, can be looked at from either side but there is one thing that stays: the sense of Indianness. The goose bumps one gets at the reference of Mother India or listening to the National anthem, the pride in India’s victory and the tears at the loss certainly connect to something that is today demarcated as India. The nation may be there for some and may not exist for others, but Indianness is something that is common throughout the length and breadth of the country, the nation. India may be composed of many units which can be called nations, each having a nationalism but there are factors which are common to India and they have ancient origins in the Indian sub-continent. However, India remains a country with a lot of variations and heterogeneity.

How does one represent such an entity, so varied and vast? Is it possible to represent India in its entirety with all its variety and multiplicity? Or, in case of the impossibility of such a representation, which elements of India are ‘more’ pertinent to be included at the cost of the other multitudes that shall not be represented? In other words, what is the best way to represent India? Should it be complete or partial? Certain critics assert that anything less than the ‘whole’ would be untrue and
unauthentic. But then, opine others, that it is not possible to be so ‘wholesome’. Defending the ‘selective’ approach, Gyanendra Pandey, in “In Defence of the Fragment”, opines:

Part of the importance of the “fragmentary” point of view lies in this, that it resists the drive for a shallow homogenization, and struggles for other, potentially richer definitions of the “nation” and the future political community (qtd in Chaterjee)

Any representation can either reflect the represented in its entirety or be a marginal representation. Asserting that India can be represented as a ‘whole’ seems an exaggeration owing to the variety and heterogeneity prevalent here. On the other hand, to represent aspects, true to some part of India and not to other also seems inadequate. The third alternative can be to take up certain aspects common to the ‘whole’ and represent them. India too has several such aspects common through time and space. Among such factors that appear common to India, three stand out: politics and history; the relationship of the oppressor and the oppressed; and all pervading religion.

Politics has become a central part of the lives of people in the modern age. Not only in India but all over the world, politics has become pervasive in the context of nations and nationalism. “In our times it is the increasing scope of government and politics in human life that has posed the biggest challenge to man’s ingenuity: it is through his capacity to master the art and science of politics that he must find his salvation” (Kothari 1). Politics, hence, has become more and more important in present day life. Moreover, not only the present set-up but even the ones that prevailed in the past have assumed significance in the wake of the impact they have made on politics of today. As Kothari asserts, “Political development, even more than economic development, is essentially a long-term process” (2). Kothari adds, “The context of political development in a new nation such as India...is that of an ancient land slowly seeking to incorporate into its womb the best elements of the culture of the modern world, without at the same time destroying its age-old traditions and diversities” (3). The history of India, then, becomes problematic and several reasons can be attributed to this.
Primarily, the very question of visualizing India as a single nation strongly evokes the issue of politics in Indian History. It is significant that Indian political history has been highly fragmentary in that there have hardly been rulers that have governed the entire length and breadth of the landmass called India. On the contrary, there have been kingdoms ruling a section of the country and then being replaced by others. It was to some extent with the Mughals and later with the British that India came under a single dominion. Kothari says, “One of the principal failures, perhaps the greatest failure, of India throughout its long history was its inability to function politically, to construct a viable political authority. It failed to build a center” (11).

The Indian political history and its representation largely depended on the “power of representation” that lay with the ruling authority. The Mughals produced a Mughal dominated history while the Rajputs advocated a Hindu political history. Hence India never seemed to have a history, a pan-Indian political and social history, of its own. Probably that remains a primary reason for the scant historical records of India that have survived to date. As Prof. R. C. Majumdar asserts, “Prior to the Thirteenth century A.D. we possess no historical text of any kind, much less such a detailed narrative as we possess in the case of Greece, Rome or China” (qtd in Keay xvii).

The British arrived and taking advantage of the prevailing situation manipulated to create a colonial discourse in their favour by “[forging] in a framework...the historian David Arnold has called the Orientalist ‘triptych’ of Indian history. In this vision, ancient ‘Hindus’ had once created a great civilization. With the advent of Islamic rulers in the early thirteenth century, Indian culture rigidified, political life gave way to despotism, and the gap between foreign ‘Muslim’ rulers and a native ‘Hindu’ populace of necessity made for a fragile structure...Stage three brought modern British colonial rule with its enlightened leadership, scientific progress, and professed tutelage to independence. This tripartite schema was explicit in much British writing, and it often underlay even anti-colonial Indian nationalist historiography” (Metclaf 2-3). The British hegemony carried on till independence and even after that the discord created between the Hindus and the Muslims stays and even grows wider in certain areas.

Since the British, India assumed a definite political structure because the “…British impact of rational-legal authority wielded by a central power...managed to
consolidate the whole subcontinent under it" (Kothari 21). The political set-up of the British, the colonials, hence, was one instance where India emerged as a single entity. With time this became the focal point of any discussion of India, not only the India of the future but also of the past.

The entire political history of India, then, plays its part in defining India, be it the Aryans, the Mughals or the British. The different sections combine together to form an image of Indian past, a history. In this political history, an important perspective is the presence of the conqueror and the conquered, the ruler and the ruled. The vanquisher shared a specific relationship with the vanquished. Broadly, it is the victor that dictates terms to the defeated who becomes the ‘other’ to the victorious ‘self’. The relationship that the two shared with each other, hence, assumes significance with reference to India. Gender then, becomes another vital issue related to India.

Another kind of relationship prevalent through the ages is the male-female relationship. The feature is certainly not restricted to India but is a global phenomenon. The extent to which Woman’s, Indian and Western, identity and status has been dominated by men can be seen from the following quote of Martin Luther:

> Women are created for no other purpose than to serve men and be their helpers. If women grow weary or even die while bearing children, that doesn’t harm anything. Let them bear children to death; they are created for that” (qtd in Wiesner 13)

She has always been projected as the shadow of the male with her sexuality, and attributed the qualities of the feminine. Women have been largely seen as the objects of male recreation whose job is to be ‘homely’ and produce children. They have performed a role considered ‘secondary’ to the major ‘masculine roles. Modern times, however, have witnessed women projecting themselves and asserting their identity before the male. With the passage of time and the rise in female awareness, the ‘voice’ became strong to free themselves from this masculine defining. In fact, this women’s voice is not altogether a new concept but has already been there for ages but in a subverted manner. As John Stuart Mill asserts, “But, it will be said, the rule of men over women differs from all these others in not being a rule a rule of force: it is accepted voluntarily; women make no complaint, and are consenting parties to it. In
the first place, a great number of women do not accept it” (16). As a result, the modern Woman, Indian and well as Westernized, is attempting to come out of the male shadow and carve an identity of her own. She is trying to don the garb of the Masculine in the new social set-up.

India too has had her share of the man-woman relationship. The Indian tradition asserts the role of a woman as a perfect daughter, a perfect wife and a perfect mother, subordinate to men who have manipulated culture to dominate them. The social set-up has put forth the image of the Indian Woman emerging from the Indian mythologies and folk tales as the ‘Ideal’. She is a symbol of the sacrificial mother. She has her sexuality but what is highlighted is her stature as the loyal ‘caretaker’. “In fact, women have been colonized within the family” (Singh Charu 29). Women have been variously portrayed under this broad umbrella of ‘otherness’ with several exceptions. She is the Sita of The Ramayana and the Draupadi of The Mahabharata, devoted to husband, but she is also Maneka, the seductress, but here too she abides by the divine orders to don the role. She is the homely lady but she is also Kali, the destroyer, a state where even Shiva cannot assert any control over Her. However, in either case, the ‘voice’ and ‘power of representation’ has rarely been allotted to her.

An important thing is the survival of the ‘other’. Why does the ‘other’ have to survive if it is the unwanted in the binary relationship of the self-other? The answer lies in Hegel’s idea of ‘Self-consciousness’ which asserts itself through an outside object, the ‘other’. Hence the ‘self’ engages in a battle with the ‘other’ but does not eradicate it but keeps it as a slave because the ‘self’s’ own existence depends on the presence of the ‘other’. “Hegel argues that self-consciousness does not exist in isolation but needs an external object against which to define itself. This external object is the Other…the Other must not be entirely destroyed because the Self needs the Other to recognize him. Thus ‘the master’ spares ‘the slave’: what was a temporary state of equality is replaced by a situation of oppression” (Tidd 44).

The traditional order of India has been largely promoting the masculine, which includes the high castes over the low castes and the males over the females. However in the 20th century, this old social order began to be questioned. Gender order, then, too occupies a central place in India.
Religion is another pertinent topic of contemporary times, albeit for all the wrong reasons. But religion has been a part and parcel of Indian life for times immemorial. Swami Prakashanand Saraswati asserts in *The True History and the Religion of India: A Concise Encyclopedia of Authentic Hinduism* that religion is a boon given by God to Indians and this boon is manifest in the form of the divine scriptures that form the roots of religion. He also holds that the English regime tried to destroy the culture and the religion of India and hence deliberately produced such derogatory literatures that confused and misguided the whole world. He asserts that the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and the *Upanishads* are all God written and hence eternal.

The British had a different view and asserted that “...Indian religion became located within contemporary notion of ‘the mystical’” (King 6). ‘Mystical’ here refers to the “…cultural and linguistic constructions dependent upon a web of interlocking definitions, attitudes, and discursive processes, continuities and discontinuities, and shifts in both meaning and denotation” (King 9). It reminds one strongly of Forster who portrays India and its spirituality as a ‘muddle’. India was only a colony for the English and religion was just another tool to hold things together for smooth governance. In fact, caste as an institution was not considered seriously by the British for a long time even after stepping into the country. “Whereas in the early part of the century India’s feudal past and then its village communities seemed far more important than the caste system, the colonial ethnographic curiosity that flowered, especially from 1870 on, took caste as the primary object of social classification and understanding” (Dirks 43).

The issue of religion is seen differently by the outcastes and the Dalits who believe in the Aryan and Brahminic hegemony over the so-called divine scriptures. “Hinduism is not the Religion of the Dalit” (Sadangi 66) is what the Dalits assert and accordingly, demand a deconstruction and reconstruction of entire history. Dalit leaders like Jotirao Phule demand the reconstruction of the entire religious edifice giving identity and self-respect to the outcaste who has been ruthlessly marginalized and negated through the ages.

There were others among Dalits who believed in total renunciation of Hinduism. Ambedkar observed that, “the Hindu religion...was based, at root, on the caste system, legitimizing the cruel oppression of the Dalit. Hence, if the Dalit were to free
themselves from the shackles of caste oppression, there was no way out for them but to convert to a non-Hindu religion” (Sadangi 69). Ambedkar himself converted to Buddhism in Nagpur in 1956 and materialized his idea that “I was born a Hindu…this was not in my power,… I can certainly choose not to die a Hindu” (qtd in Sadangi 69).

Escaping from the ‘bane’ of Hinduism has been a solution with the Dalits for some time now and many have changed their religion to become non-Hindus. “…over the centuries many Dalit have sought to escape from the shackles of the caste system by converting to other religions, particularly to Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Sikhism” (Sadangi 70). This in turn raises the issue of the other religions prevalent in India over a period of time. These alternate religions and the shifting to these religions by the Dalits was and is perceived as a threat to Hinduism. It is not intended to say that these other religions emerged as a rebellion to the Caste system. These alternative religions have been a part of the Indian set-up for a long time and have little to do with the Hindu caste system. It is rather the option to convert into these religions that is conceived as a threat by several fundamental Hindus.

In addition, there have been other religions which thrived at different times in the march of Indian culture. Islam is a major one while there are others like Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc. Religion, then, has been a feature of India since the very beginning and it pervades the collective Indian consciousness even today. Religion then is one factor that has governed and regulated India since the Aryan invasion. The Vedas are a classic example of the domination that religion has had over the lives of the people over the centuries. Moreover, there have been other religions as well that have made their presence felt and still occupy a vital place in Indian society and culture. Going beyond the domain of religion there is spirituality that has been a major factor identifying India across the globe for time immemorial. As discussed earlier, Raja Rao, in The Meaning of India, asserts the importance of the fact that it is India that makes Indians rather than otherwise. And this Indianness is a sense of sacrifice based on the philosophy of advaita, the non-duality, which in turn is also emphasized in the great Indian books, The Mahabharata and the Rig Veda.

The three aspects, then, hold, a significant place in India, holding together the heterogeneity of the vast country since a long time. The present research work
explores these aspects, namely Political History, Gender and Religion, keeping in mind their significance in the making of India as a nation.

Indian literature in general and the novel in particular has represented these aspects of India since the very beginnings. In fact, the rise of the Indian novel is attributed to an acute sense of social responsibility. K. Venkata Reddy opines: “The Indian novel, we may say, has emerged not simply as a pure literary exercise, but as an artistic response to the socio-political situation existing in the country” (1). Novel, the genre proper, came to India with the British and was readily adopted here. The social conditions prevailing in colonial India were one of the more important factors that actually motivated the rise of the Indian Novel. Reddy adds, “…the factors that shaped and moulded the growth of the Indian novel,...arose as much from the political and social problems of a colonized country…” (1).

The Independence struggle was one political theme in the novels then. The desire to liberate from the colonial yoke became the central concern of novels dealing with the political events and history of the country. The 20th century saw a substantial rise in such novels, especially with Raja Rao’s Kanthapura and Anand’s The Sword and the Sickle. Political novels continued well into independence with works like Bhabhani Bhattacharaya’s expanding their domain to areas of political history of the country.

History does not necessarily mean ancient history but includes recent history of the new country. Bhabani Bhattacharaya’s Shadow from Ladakh dealing with the Chinese invasion, Kamala Markandaya’s Some Inner Fury, K. S. Venkatramani’s Kandan, the Patriot, Narayan’s Waiting for the Mahatma and K. A. Abbas’ Inquilab are some such works. Hindi did not lag behind: works like Yashpal’s Dada Kamrad and Party Kamrad, Amritroy’s Beej, Rangey Raghav’s Sidha Sadha Rasta, among others, are a point in case.

It was not merely a reaction against the colonial order but a portrayal of the prevailing conditions wanting an improvement that found a place in the novel. These other themes included the status of women, the plight of the poor and religion among other things. As a result there are works like Dutt’s Sansar dealing with the social realism and Tagore’s The Wreck dealing with social relevance in addition to patriotic works like Chaterjee’s Anandmath. M. K. Naik observes in “The Achievement of Indian
Fiction in English": “The urge for social reform was...a significant aspect of the Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century; it therefore naturally became an important theme in some early Indian English fiction” (236). Mulk Raj Anand’s Coolie, Bhabani Bhattacharaya’s So Many Hungers, S. Menon Marath’s Wound of Spring, Kamala Markandaya’s A Handful of Rice are some works dealing with the plight of the weaker sections of the society. K. Venkata Reddy asserts: “Chaman Nahal is of the firm view that a novel must possess ‘synchronic relevance’, and it must concern itself with ‘a specific community’, a specific class, a specific society” (7). The Indian novel amply reflects this.

Women too find a place in novels. Works like Shevantibhai M. Nikambe’s Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife published in 1895 is one of the earliest examples dealing with women. R.C. Dutt’s The Lake of Palms: A Story of Domestic Indian Life is another work dealing with the issues of women and their place in the gender order of society. Lal Behari Day’s Govinda Samanta deals with the oppressed and the marginals in the social gender order. In the post-independence period, writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Kamala Das and Krishna Sobti dealt with issues relating to the status of women and the marginals in the society. The change in the perspective is evident in the words of Mandakranta Bose in “Emerging Voices”, “In the stereotype of the Indian woman as a submissive, homebound, mindless, object of pity, women of mid twentieth century India could see no reflection of themselves” (216). The women writers are no longer satisfied to remain submissive but rather assert their ‘voice’ through an attempt to create an écriture feminine. According to Samir Dayal, in “The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie’s Shame”, “…male self-deconstruction and …female self assertion” (47) became the guiding principles.

Coming to the third issue taken up in the research work, it appears that religion initially failed to occupy the limelight in Indian novel due to the position of the novel in the social milieu. It was the time when independence was the cry and unity was the catchword. As a result, religion and religious differences took a backseat. However, there have been religious works like B. R. Rajam Aiyar’s unfinished novel True Greatness or Vasudeva Shastri and A. Madhaviah’s Thillai Govindan. M. K. Naik quotes Aiyar’s Vasudeva Shastri, “Reader this is a religious novel...” (“The
Towards the 1930s and 40s came novels that undermined religion in the wake of a national movement for independence like A. S. P. Ayyar’s *Baladitya* and Anand’s *Untouchable*. It was largely the Gandhian age and hence all the differences were sidelined for a national cause. Partition brought up the issue of religion and identity once more in its ugliest form. Manto’s short stories present the event in its nakedness while works like Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* and Chaman Nahal’s *Azaadi* portray how fanaticism can turn human beings into beasts. Religion, since then has been a part of Indian novel consistently.

The Indian novel, then, since its beginning, has had strong social concerns. K. Venkata Reddy asserts that “the Indian novelist with a social purpose, like any good creative writer, writes with a social consciousness born of the phenomenon enacted around him. He is essentially a creative artist and realist who moves around the society and experiences the crises and tensions of the struggling classes, thereby arousing his deep creative impulse” (5). Colonialism, independence, partition and the ensuing turbulence, religion and gender have been several such ‘experiences and crises’ that have moved not only the Indian novelists but literature in general. Post-independence Indian novel has also seen the rise of the ‘quest for self and alienation’ in works like Arun Joshi’s *The Apprentice* and *The Foreigner* but social concerns remain at the centre of the Indian novel. More so, political history and the economic conditions of the marginal and the dominant have assumed significance. As Manmohan Krishna Bhatnagar asserts: “Socio-economic interest as well as political consciousness has now assumed the character of a dominant emotion” (4).

How critical the three issues, then, have been to Indian novel can be summed up in the words of Gajendra Kumar who asserts in *Indian English Novel: Text and Context*, “...[Indian English novel’s] thematic concerns, caste system, class system, religion, education and the status of women constitute,...the principal foci” (36). Keeping this in view, the first chapter of the research work shall deal prominently with the representation of politics and political history of India and see how the works under consideration engage with these. The second chapter, revolving around the idea of the ‘Self and the Other’, attempts to see how gender has been represented by each of the five novelists and the space offered to the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ in the narration. In
other words, it focuses on how the ‘power of representation’ has been distributed between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. The concept of women and the ‘power of representation’ has been analyzed on the principles of gender and the masculine and the feminine where masculine is the ‘self’ while feminine is the ‘other’. “Apart from Indian woman’s Sati and Savitri character as portrayed by early writers, Indian woman has become a rebel in Kamala Das, Bhabani Bhattacharaya, and Anita Desai to name but few” (Singh Charu 41). However, there are writers like Kamala Markandaya and Mulk Raj Anand who still place woman in the ‘traditional’ frame and negate any ‘emerging voices’. The second chapter shall explore this issue in the representation of India. The third chapter of the research work concentrates on religion, minority and identity. It also discusses how deeply the issues of religion, minority (especially in the context of the Dalits) and identity are implicated in one another. Religion has been the defining factor over the ages, even in the British era, especially with their ‘Divide and Rule’ policy, and continues to be so. The identity of an individual in India is primarily a group identity followed at a later stage by an individual identity. And the fact that it is religion that gives the individual this group identity underlines the magnitude of the role played by religion in India.

The present study centers around the representation of these three aspects in five novels written by authors belonging to different times and space, spread over a period of about eighty years. The earliest text is A Passage to India published in 1924, while the most recent text chosen is The Inheritance of Loss published in 2006. The other texts taken for the research Work are Midnight’s Children (1981), The Great Indian Novel (1989) and Kitne Pakistan (2000).

E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India deals with Dr Aziz, Adela Quested, Mrs Moore and Ronny in the backdrop of colonial India which slowly but surely takes the centre stage in the novel. Set in Chandrapore, the novel deals primarily with the critical issue of East vs. West and the (in)compatibility of the two in India. Starting from a point where the compatibility seems possible with the friendship of Mrs Moore and Aziz and Aziz and Fielding the novel moves on to the phase where Mrs Moore dies on her way back to England after Dr Aziz is accused of molesting Adela and Adela goes back dejected after saving Dr Aziz making any friendship between the West and the East seem a difficult and impossible prospect. In fact, the novel ends
with a stern refusal of any friendship between the East, the Oriental, and the West, the Occidental. The novel, with its colonial overtones and reference to religion through the Hindu-Muslim presence in the narrative offers a Western construct of India in the pre-colonial times through the eyes of a person who is, by common consent, considered to be a sympathizer of the East. Forster becomes a kind of an outside-insider of the Colonial Era, a person who does not belong to India but has some knowledge of the land by virtue of his visits to the country. There are other writers who have represented India in their works, especially like Rudyard Kipling. However, it remains that Forster's 'voice' is the most comprehensive and saner than any of his counterparts and devoid of any jingoism and 'white man's burden'.

The second novel, in chronological order, is *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie. A colonial writer from the West, Forster, gave the representation of India a colonizer's perspective. The other novels taken up in the research work build the Indian perspective towards the colonial yoke. A closer choice could have been Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja* or Khushwant Singh's *The Train to Pakistan* but the period succeeding Independence and partition was one that was marked more poignantly by the short stories of someone like Manto. His short stories like "Thanda Gosht" capture the emotion of the partition in its most raw form and moreover, in the wake of the overflow of the emotions, literature assumed the status of a social crusader revealing the horrors of the times. Devendra Satyarthi firmly believes that no literature based on hate and prejudice could be great as it gets reduced to a drama of degradation and human decay. The statement may seem too harsh but any literature biased by emotions certainly cannot be objective and dialogic because it has pre-decided and pre-determined ideologies and ends. The second novel, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, is a self-proclaimed piece of fiction, indicating a paradigm shift in the genre of the novel, from realism to self-reflexiveness.

Published in 1981, the novel uses the literary style of magic realism to construct the history of India from pre-independence times as seen through the eyes of Saleem Sinai, the protagonist and the narrator of the story. Saleem, born on the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947, and vested with the power to 'enter' into the minds of the people, has his destiny strangely fused with that of the country, the newly born nation, India. His life progresses with the life of the country and any crisis in his life
is reflected in a national crisis for which he holds himself responsible. The novel deals with the political intrigues, the role of women and religion in the lives of the people and how India moves on in the midst of all these things. Saleem’s narration begins from a time two generations before him when his grandfather Aadam Aziz returns from Germany as a doctor and utilitarian and goes on to the period when Saleem, the narrator is sitting in the pickle factory telling the story to Padma, the representative of the reader or the audience. The story is based on the memory of Saleem as all the events are narrated by Saleem to Padma. Rushdie’s presence in the research work gives the construction of India the Western, or the outsider’s, perspective. How a diasporic writer constructs India may be seen in Rushdie’s work. His presence becomes more pertinent in the light of the fact that as a writer of *The Satanic Verses*, he is the controversial outsider.

The third novel is *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor. Published in 1989, the novel draws on the great Indian epic, *The Mahabharata*, composed by the sage Ved Vyas and as the mythology goes, the scribe was none other than Lord Ganesha, the elephant headed God. In fact, the novel has eighteen books on the pattern of *The Mahabharata*. The novel adapts the story and characters of *The Mahabharata* and reflects India in the colonial and post-colonial times. Through the Great Indian Epic, Tharoor tries to ‘construct’ a Great Indian Novel. Tharoor attempts to recast and reset the epic with reference to 20th century India, before and after independence till the 1980s. In the process the historical characters are re-born in their 20th century avatars. Bhishma is Gandhi, Dhrirtrashtra is Nehru, Pandu is Bose, Vidur is Sardar Patel, Priya Duryodhini is Indira Gandhi, the Kaurava Party is the Indian National Congress, Karna is Jinnah and so on. The characters play their roles in 20th century India but are ‘related’ to the characters in the old epic. The characters of the Epic performing in the 20th century become prototypes of the personages who have (mis)shaped India’s destiny. However, there are modifications to the basic Mahabharata model, e.g. Dhritrashtra has only one daughter and no son, rather the Kaurva Party represents his hundred sons and Eklavya’s fate is shrouded in mystery as he refuses to cut his thumb but does not appear for the next examinations. The novel moves towards intertextuality in the sense that it draws on the Indian Epic *The Mahabharata*. 

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K. Raghavendra Rao asserts for India that it is "a subcontinent where the fusion of the past, present and even the future, creates a virtually timeless environment and culture" (151). To add to this the commonly accepted belief of the epic along with The Ramayana being one of the greatest literary achievements in Indian Literature makes the selection of The Mahabharata by Tharoor as the model for his The Great Indian Novel seem natural.

Tharoor, the ‘pravasi bharatiya’, finds place as a comparison to the other diasporic writer, Rushdie. His Westernized eyes and mind have tried to create an India and the Research Work looks at this construct of India and tries to find how much it varies from the other diasporic writer, Rushdie. The presence of two diasporic writers’ works separated by a mere eight years is to see how much their constructs of India vary in the backdrop of the similarity that both are exiles and writing from an outsider’s perspective, one who has a limited viewpoint of India.

The Fourth novel is Kitne Pakistan by Kamleshwar, composed in 2000. The novel was written originally in Hindi and later translated into English with the title Partitions. The novel belongs to the category of Regional Literature, Indian literature in languages other than English. The novel constructs an image of India and the world that reminds one strongly of Eliot’s The Waste Land and then Kamleshwar tries to find the reasons for this debacle and goes back to the ancient Greek and other mythologies, including Indian, to the rulers who have ruled India over the centuries and the British. The writer becomes the ‘adeeb’ who can commute through time and can make others move beyond the scope of time. As a result the representation of India is accompanied by various voices from the past attributing reasons for their actions. His construction of India is largely based on reasons that date back to many centuries. Kamleshwar presents a completely insider’s perspective to the construction of India. He wrote the novel originally in Hindi and hence for a certain audience.

The last novel is The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai, the daughter of Anita Desai. Published in 2006, the novel provides the latest and somewhat different perspective on India. It constructs India in the backdrop of the Gorkhaland disturbance in the East. Sai and Gyan fall in love with each other but it is the Gorkhaland issue that steals the centrestage and along with this is the issue of emigration, the desire to come back and the loss suffered by the emigrant. The construction of India in the novel is restricted to
this new kind of nationalism that is shown to be emerging in the novel even as globalization is spreading its roots in the wake of emigrations. The Great American Dream raises its head in the novel and acts as the symbol of globalization but the novel underlines the uneasy coexistence of militant nationalism with globalization and towards the end seems to assert the supremacy of ethnicity over globalization through the son of the cook, Biju. Kiran Desai, Indian born and educated in as many as three countries, India, England and America, ‘continues to divide her time between places’. She belongs to the new stream of writers who have a motherland, the place where they are born, but otherwise are global citizens living in several countries for short spans. She symbolizes the new globalization wave and her work hence is neither ‘local’ nor ‘diasporic’ but somewhere between the two. It is interesting to see where she stands as a writer amidst a regional writer like Kamleshwar, a colonial writer like Forster and such diasporic writers as Rushdie and Tharoor. Moreover, her stature as a woman writer offers a perspective of ‘women’ writing in literature.

It would not be out of place here to understand as to what exactly representation is. The simplest definition of representation may be that it is a sign that stands for something else. However, it is not as simple as it seems: it is problematic as signs, according to Saussure, are arbitrary and dependent on the culture in which they are inextricably implicated. These signs are the words that generate language. This in turn means that meaning is something that is created by the play of signs in a cultural context which in turn implies that language is culturally determined. Representation, then, is the process by which meaning is constructed and created and is dependent on culture.

Representation has played a crucial role in literature right from the very beginning and men like Plato and Aristotle have elaborated on it through the idea of mimesis. While Plato believed literature to be an imitation of an imitation creating a world of illusions, Aristotle saw it as an essential element of the plot. Modern age is the age of experiments and literature is no exception to it. While the traditional criticism, prior to the 20th century, emphasized on the representation of the social themes by the writers, modern theory shifts its emphasis on form and language. Starting from New Criticism to Post-structuralism and Post-Modemism, the emphasis lies on language and the perennial play of signs. The emphasis on language in the 20th century shifted the
emphasis of representation from theme to form wherein the ‘form begins to speak for the theme’."

The linguistic revolution of the 20th century begins with the structural linguistics of Saussure who asserts that, “We exist inside a system of signs” and hence cannot overrule their existence. He even implied that language is constitutive of reality rather than a reflection of it. The notion of representation becomes even more problematic as Saussurean linguistics suggests that language pre-exists reality. Stuart Hall asserts, “...language is the privileged medium in which we ‘make sense’ of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged...So language is central to meaning...” (1). It is Language which creates a ‘representational system’ that is shared in a culture and social set-up enabling meaning to have some reality. This ‘representational system’ is the one within which the writers and all humans work and communicate. Stuart Hall further adds: “How does language construct meanings?...Language is able to do this because it operates as a representational system...” (3).

This gets one to the ‘discursive’ part from the ‘semiotic’ part, i.e. the effects and consequences of representation. It is the question of authenticity as language depends on the cultural context and the social set-up wherein an author happens to be writing. In such systems of communication and writing, there are high chances that mistakes, errors and falsehoods may creep in the narration. Moreover, the cultural and social background that determines the ‘signs’ also determines their signification. Some ‘signs’ cannot be used in a particular social set-up and hence language either looks for a substitute for it, if it is a derogatory one in the concerned culture, or negates it totally, the latter being the case mostly in imperial set-ups. “...discursive approach...examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied” (Hall Stuart 6).

Secondly, a distinction between representation and re-presentation is important. Representation is when the emphasis is on showing something: the features, the qualities, attributes and other information about a particular thing. In re-presentation however, the emphasis is on a comparative aspect. The thing in question has already
been portrayed and now is being looked at again. The word uses 're' as a prefix to 'presentation' meaning thereby that something is being addressed again. In such a scenario there is a comparison with the older perspective of the thing and usually something new and different, sometimes completely opposite, emerges. Representation, on the other hand claims to offer objectivity to the object in the sense that there is no comparison to something else. The present research work emphasizes on 'representation' and not 're-presentation'. Five texts have been taken and an attempt has been made to analyze each objectively irrespective of any other evaluation of the issues taken up for research. Each work is complete in itself and has constructed an India or a section of India in it and attempt has been made to analyze how that India has been constructed with reference to the three aspects discussed earlier.

None of the texts selected for the present research work are 'factual', statistical representations of India. They are novels, a genre belonging to the canon of fictional writing and hence are in no way obliged to be 'chronologically' and 'historically' accurate. The research work does not try to assess their historical authenticity and proximity to chronological details. The following chapters shall analyze the representation of the three aspects in the five novels followed by a “Conclusion” wherein an attempt shall be made to analyze how the representation of the three aspects varies in each novel.