Chapter IV
Politics of Identity and Modernization of Education

Introduction

Human societies have always been marked by group cohesion based on assumed kinship, religion, language or culture. These feelings are strengthened through the invention of 'myths-symbols',\(^1\) which are mostly imagined and in the process of reconstruction they are even manipulated. These myths and symbols were very strong instruments in identity formation and helped in creation of modern nation states.\(^2\) Religion, language, race etc were the resources for the creation of 'myths-symbols'. In nineteenth century India the landed elites and the urban educated intelligentsia (the new middle class) produced leaders who united small groups under one umbrella with a common goal to oppose colonial rule.

Post-colonial scholars have studied 'colonial discourse' to locate the changing conceptual landscape of cultural identity formation during the colonial period. The conflict is studied in two broad frames: one emphasizes the institutions introduced by the colonial government and the other emphasizes indigenous, primordial social constructs. The latter emphasized the identities of language,


\(^2\) Benedict Anderson, 1983, 1991. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the spread of Nationalism; Verso: London p. 44. The introduction of print as well as the imposition of the language of the ruling elites together helped in the creation of the mythic or the 'imagined community.' The leaders of the nineteenth century used the print media to spread the national consciousness—cultural or liberal consciousness. Readers were able to imbibe the community ideology and thus sowed the seeds of the national imagined community. Similarly, Urmila Phadnis has argued that a nation as well as ethnic communities is imagined, and language can contribute to the reality construction of these ethnic communities. See in Urmila Phadnis, 1989. Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia; Sage Publication: New Delhi and London, p. 259.
religion, caste or culture that united communities in terms of practical interests. British rule and modern politics provided the basis for social change, while the colonial regime was seen as establishing the arena of competition between groups. 1

Language is one of the important socio-cultural means to bring people in contact with each other and to develop group identity. Language and religion do not have a unique relationship in South Asia alone. Rather this relationship is part of the history of most nations, wherein language performs the task of national integration and reduces the gap between the elites and the masses. But this ignores the porous and development of intermediary loyalty. This is the process of identity formation where tribes become nationalities, and local caste groups join larger associations and language becomes the symbol of group identification, where religion is the basis for community. The role and ability of the leader becomes very crucial in the modern state as leader appeals to and embodies the sentiments of the people.2

Communities are formed when members of an ethnic group have developed an awareness of a common identity and have attempted to define the boundaries of the group.3 A community becomes a nationality or a nation when it mobilizes for political action in order to achieve sovereignty for the nation. The nation-state is

3 Any group or individuals who have some objective characters in common are communities. For details see Karl Deutsch 1966. Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality. 2nd ed. M.I.T Press: Cambridge, Mass, p.17
a state in which there is one nation or nationality or in which one nationality is
dominant, though there are very few such nation-states in the contemporary
world. Nationalism is a modern socio-cultural concept by which ethnic groups or
communities are mobilised to attain political ends. The loyalties developed for
the state is more often formed on the basis of groups belonging to one region,
language or religion.¹

The expression of identity during colonial rule often commences with the
assertion of the dissatisfaction of small groups against colonial suppression. This
opposition sometimes takes the form of the assertion of linguistic and religious
identity that challenges the dominant characterization of these groups. These
new identities could be constructed on the basis of gender, family, race,
language, religion, class or tribe etc. In the modern era we see its manifestation in
the North Western Province of colonial India. These new identities provide new
forms to oppressed social groups; whose identity is lost due to exploitation,
violence, disempowerment and marginalization under processes of imperialist
annexation. The alienation produced on account of a foreign language and
culture creates a variety of “morbid symptoms”.

In the last quarter of nineteenth century India sections of the Hindu community
began to project the experience of British colonialism onto the period of so called

¹ Joshua A. Fishman, 1968. “Nationality-Nationalism and Nation-Nationalism”, in Joshua A.
Also Walke Conner, “Nation-Building and Nation-Destroying”, in World Politics; xxiv, No.3,
“Hinduism and Indian Nationalism”, in E. Kedourie (ed.), Nationalism in Asia and Africa;
World Publishing Co: New York
'Muslim rule.' Thus, while they feared a new wave of cultural imperialism, but they simultaneously saw it as an opportunity to wrest power from the Muslim elite. Thus new groups formed in the last quarter of nineteenth century led by local elites for whom language and religion served as the epicenter of social mobilization. The response to Westernisation was quite nuanced and has been seen by scholars in terms of reformist, reviver, traditionalist, or revitalist responses. These responses were manifest in a variety of forms of resistance to colonial rule. These responses would link up with anti-colonial nationalism or sometimes even cultural nationalism.

Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism and Hindu Nationalism in the Late Nineteenth Century

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1 James Mill's *History of British India. Proposed a chronology of Indian History as the Hindu Civilization, the Muslim Civilization and the British period. Raja Shiv Prasad published *Itihaas Timirnashak after the revolt of 1857 which was taught to the children in Madrassas that antagonized the Muslims since it portrayed them as usurpers of Indian territories and foreigners with a different religion, language and culture. Leaders like Sir Syed demanded to stop the teaching of such book which tainted Muslim rule in India. For details see Veer Bharat Talwar, *Rassa kasj, and Romila Thaper, in K. N. Pannikar (ed.), 1991. *Communalism in India; p. 19

2 There is a great deal of scholarship on the subject of Identitarian politics in late nineteenth century and this includes the work of scholars such as Ram Gopal, David Lelyveld, R. Zakaria, W.W.Hunter, S.L.Gupta, Salil Mishra, Amrit Rai, Alok Rai, Francesca Orsini, Vasudha Dalmia, Krishna Kumar, John Zavos, Christopher King, Christophe Jaffrelot, Jyotindra Das Gupta, Beni Prasad, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Paul R. Brass, Ram Babu Saxena, Hafez Malik, N. S. Gorekar, Kenneth. W. Jones, Von Jurgen Lutt, Benedict Anderson, Peter Robb.

3 See chapter II and III for the different movements initiated by the newly educated intelligentsia. See also V. Dalmia. 1997. *The Nationalisation of the Hindu Traditions.

4 The literature on the Indian nationalism is rich and its varied manifestations have been elaborated upon in the works of Bipin Chandra, John Zavos, Kenneth Jones, Christopher Jaffrelot, Bimal Prasad, Gyan Pandey, Partha Chatterjee, Paul R. Brass, Ashish Nandy, Anil Seal, Sumit Sarkar, Salil Mishra. The evolution of nationalism and nationalist politics in North Western Province has been vital in the changing face of India's struggle for independence. 'Nationalism' for Brass in the nineteenth century India was the process by which the ethnic groups and communities were mobilized for action to attain political ends. See Brass, *op. cit, p. 9.
The growth of nationalism is seen as an integral part of the historical process that saw the rise of industrialism and democracy. According to Gellner and Hobsbawm the emergence of modern nationalism is an inevitable consequence of capitalism and industrialization.\(^1\) Partha Chatterjee points out that nationalism required replacement of traditional, group-based culture by civil society with an industrial culture; a larger group shares the same culture.\(^2\) Politically speaking the modern geographical entity called India was a creation of colonial rule. Even the awareness of an Indian past and its history must be dated to the nineteenth century.\(^3\) Post-colonial theorists see the origins of Indian nationalism as derivative from European political theory that evolved with the expansion of colonial power. The concept of the ‘nation’ is a modern concept; local social elites mobilized support to reach the threshold of political significance.\(^4\) The new educated elites were thus seeking to reorient the educational system in their attempt to found a sovereign state.\(^5\)

The process of the formation of the nation is imbued with subjective and symbolic significance that is aided by the development of group consciousness. The group community identity develops when a leader of particular group attaches a symbolic value to the group, glorifies its past by inventing a myth.


\(^3\) R. C. Majumdar. 1965. \textit{British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance}; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan: Bombay, p-4

\(^4\) This definition was offered by Benjamin Akzin 1964: \textit{State and Nation}; Hutchinson University Library: London; p.31. Akzin stresses the fact that nation must have transcend the purely local dimension.

\(^5\) The different shades of nationalism that are seen in the late nineteenth century include secular nationalism, cultural nationalism and liberal nationalism. See Anil Seal, 1971. \textit{Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century}; Cambridge University Press: London.
regarding its history and destiny, which is communicated to the group in their language.\(^1\) These symbols were selected, standardized and transmitted to the group in order to bind it together.\(^2\) As pointed out earlier this mobilization itself commenced from the requirement as to which community would exercise more influence and access more resources in the colonial state. The politics of communalism arose out of the wedge driven into the social fabric by colonial rule in the form of communal representation. This inability of some look beyond this aspect of colonial policy partially resulted in the crystallization of communal ideology in North India.

There was an ideological reorientation among these two warring groups from the 1920s onwards. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the burgeoning of Indian nationalism which was a composite nationalism. But three decades of Identitarian Politics had resulted in the emergence of two separate entities: Hindu nationalism and Muslim separatism. Gradually, even the leaders of the movement who did not espouse religious separatism but sought to carve out spheres of religious influence and identity were carried by the momentum of events into speaking in a new voice. The move was to carve out a nation united in its religious and linguistic identity. These fractures propagated rapidly and resulted in the partition of India on religious lines.\(^3\)


\(^2\) Some of the symbols harnessed in the creation of these identities included the Nagari and Persian scripts, the Shivaji festival; the Ganapati festival; the anti-cow slaughter movement, the evocation of the ancient Vedic past. Gradually these symbols came to stand in for religious identities. This symbolic mobilization provoked antagonism between the two communities, since the Muslim leadership construed this symbolic evocation as directed against their religious identity

\(^3\) See Suniti Kumar Chatterjee for discussion.
Thus in the last quarter of the nineteenth century we witness the rise not just of cultural nationalism but of the face of the politics of religion and language, that sometimes merged into each other.\(^1\) Northern India was the zone of this transformation and in particular the phenomenon was localized to the states of the Northern Provinces, Punjab and Central Provinces: thus there emerged Hindu reform movements such as the Arya Samaj, revivalist movements such as the Sanatanis.

Hindu revivalism, according to some scholars, is not the same as 'Hindu fundamentalism' since Hinduism is not a religion similar to the Semitic religions. It is characterized by the multiplicity of basic, beliefs, texts and practices.\(^2\) The Hindu revivalists sincerely worked towards creating a unitary consciousness among Hindus and to systematize Hinduism with one set of dictums and texts.\(^3\) Revivalism then emerges as a response to modernity among those Hindus who were aware of the modern religions and western culture. They were witness to the spread of modern education and its culture. This cultural onslaught produced a revivalist response amongst younger Hindus. Cultural nationalism is one of the responses to the spread of colonial modernity.

Indian revivalism was a cultural development specific to a stratified society.\(^4\) Krishna Kumar argues that revivalism is often misunderstood as anti-modern whereas it was a reaction to modernity and modern education. The majority of the revivalist leaders from the Arya Samaj, the Sanatan Dharma and similar organizations such as the RSS accepted modernity as a part of the philosophy of


\(^2\) See Krishna Kumar in K. N. Pannikar (ed.), 1991. Communalism in India, Delhi, P.174

\(^3\) Ibidem, p. 174.

political rights in India.¹ These organizations used a blend of modern and ancient cultures and promoted them through their educational institutions that propagated Hindu cultural consciousness, ultimately leading to cultural. Several late nineteenth century revivalist-nationalist leaders argued that the concept of self knowledge was linked with personalized- divinity. They thus hoped to incorporate the values of nationhood and statesmanship.²

Education facilitated the mass spread of the new cultural consciousness. In other words the spread of literacy enabled the spread of the new ideas about Indian culture. The spread of modern education did not prove as divisive in other regions of India as it did in NWP of Agra and Oudh. In the latter region language and the script became the bone of contention for government jobs.³ Further modern means of transportation such as the railways and communication with the introduction of the postal services resulted in the increase of the circulation of newspapers, magazines and journals. The expansion of literacy was accompanied by an increase in literacy related employment. But the jobs at the time were cornered by the upper castes, namely Brahmins and Kayasthas.⁴

Education as an Instrument of Revivalism

The role of colonial education in the nineteenth century was to develop and discipline the moral individual. The knowledge imparted in modern schools was

¹ See H. L. Erdman, 1967. The Swaraj Party and Indian Conservatism; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge also quoted in ibidem, p.175.
³ For details see Alok Rai, Op. cit; He discusses the growth of Hindi nationalism in the latter half of nineteenth century.
⁴ Krishna Kumar, op. cit. p. 175-176.
seen to produce a civilized and disciplined colonial citizen. Education was effective as a means of spreading 'moral influence' and Christian ethics.\footnote{See Krishna Kumar, 1991. \textit{The Political Agenda of Education}; p. 33. The role of colonial education was to influence India morally and treat her as a foot stand for extending the moral light of the West in Asia. In ibidem from Letter of Trevelyian to Bentick, April 9, 1834, quoted in John Clive, 1973. \textit{Thomas Babington Macaulay: Sacker and Warburg}; London, p. 361.} Colonial education emphasized the degradation and decay that characterized nineteenth century India. The task of the colonizer was to civilize those people who had fallen from a state of glory.

Spencer had pointed out that: 'while each individual is developing the society of which he is an insignificant unit is developing too'.\footnote{Quote from A. M. Kazamias (ed.), 1966. \textit{Herbert Spencer on Education}; New York: Teacher's College, p. 69 in Krishna Kumar, 1991. \textit{Ibidem}, p.37} His theories of social evolution influenced the newly educated class into believing that this small educated minority had the potential of shaping Indian society at large. The educated Indian sensitive about social issues was driven by an internal desire to change society. These ideas surfaced in the speeches and writings of journalists, reformers and political leaders such as Bhartendu Harishchandra, Bankim Chandra, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo Gosh, M. G. Ranade, G. K. Gokhale in Maharashtra, Pandit Malaviya in North Western Province and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab.\footnote{There were many in this list who believed that it was their duty to help their society become a modern nation with its traditional values; see Krishna Kumar, 1991. \textit{Ibidem}, p. 38; also Krishna Kumar, "Quest for Identity", in \textit{EPW}.}

Christianity did not win over many converts through colonial education as officials like Trevelyan and Elphinstone had hoped. In fact the response was mixed: there were some who were schooled in the image of the English, but the majority was confronted with a crisis of identity. This identity crisis drove them back to their communities and stimulated efforts to impart modern education in
the vernacular. The new education programmes deployed symbols to counter the foreign influences. The National Council of Education and Swadeshi were responses of this nature.

By the turn of the century education had strengthened the social standing of the higher castes as the educated among them were distinguished by their command over English that rendered the eligible for government employment. This also churned the traditional hierarchies. Sociologists indicate that there was minor improvement in the situation of the lower strata that had access to education. But this was not very significant.\(^1\) The educated class was not necessarily part of the ruling class within the colonial state, but they acquired a very distinct position in colonial society. They shared the power and privileges of the colonial administration, although they could only make requests and petition the government.\(^2\) This educated class had two distinct characteristics: they were marked by a sense of moral superiority and the urge to transform Indian society.\(^3\) They went on to form associations and groups to consolidate their community identity.

Education provided one of the means to blend the economic and social development of Indian society. Further, education became a symbol of secular ethnicity for it was felt within this class as the ‘truth’ provided by the Western knowledge was different from the ‘truth’ of the several branches of Indian Knowledge systems.\(^4\) But the secular element in Western knowledge did not

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\(^{1}\) For details see Krishna Kumar, 1991. *ibidem*, p. 36-37.

\(^{2}\) As we see in Hindi-Urdu controversy, there were so many petitions in favor of the use of Hindi and Nagari in the courts. The third time around Pandit Malaviya presented a well researched petition where he traced the history of the language and script. This was as true with the proposals to establish BHU and AMU.

\(^{3}\) Krishna Kumar, *ibidem* p. 38.

\(^{4}\) *Ibidem*, p. 39.
radically alter their cultural and religious attachments. The commitment to India's moral upliftment through education and social change served to escalate the search for self-identity.¹

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a number of changes in education in North India. New institutions in the form of schools and colleges were established, that sought to blend the modern with the traditional. Instruction in the religious texts was combined with instruction on logic and arithmetic. Most of these schools and colleges were established by the Arya Samaj.² Similarly Annie Besant started a Hindu school in Benaras. The new educational programs were oriented to the regeneration of the country.³ The new class of intellectuals was dissatisfied with the modern education in India which they felt benefitted the administration of the colony.

The second generation of modern educated intellectuals compared the economic and social development of India with that of the West and arrived at the diagnosis that modern education policy was directed towards India's growth but served colonial interests in addition to colonizing Indian minds⁴. The late nineteenth century intellectuals engaged with the ills of Indian society including religious superstition and the caste system. A general feeling began to sink in that the government was not for their welfare but for its own benefit. This

¹ Ibidem, p. 39.
⁴ David Kopf argues saying that the policy of East India Company in the first half of the nineteenth century which involved translations of Indian classics was not a cultural policy but an extension of their administrative policy- to understand the Indian mindset and functioning so that they could formulate policies to ensure their control over the colony. For details see David Kopf, 1969. British Orientalism and Indian Renaissance; Berkeley, pp. 13-21 as quoted in K. N. Pannikar. 2002. Op. cit., p. 9.
effectively meant that they had to take up the struggle for changing Indian
society by incorporating Western science with Eastern spirituality. The attempt
then was to launch a struggle against the ideological influences of the colonial
system of education by installing an alternative method of education based on
science and mass education through the medium of ‘vernacular’ languages.¹ The
emphasis on science education arose from the realization that the traditional
system of education prevalent in ancient India was not of much practical use in
the modern times.² The national system of education was launched in 1905.

Akhshay Kumar Dutta first proposed a national system of education and totally
rejected the traditional system.³ The Arya Samaj was a reformist movement that
had a following among the trading castes like Aroras, Banias, and Khatris as well
as the newly English-educated professional elite in Punjab.⁴ The Arya Samajists
also favored scientific education accompanied with Vedic education, as they
realised its importance in modern society. Science subjects were included in the
curriculum of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic institutions⁵ and also at Gurukul

p.10. For Akhshay Kumar Dutt student’s were to be introduced to modern science at a very early
stage in life. The alternative scheme of education had a liberal and enlightened system of
education that included mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, and anatomy with other
useful sciences.’ Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Sir Syed even felt that the traditional knowledge
was a stumbling block in the path of progress. For Sir Syed see G. F.I. Graham, 1974 (rprnt). Life
and Works of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, New Delhi, pp 248-249 as quoted in K. N. Pannikar, ibidem,
p. 10.
⁴ For details on the constitution of Arya Samaj see R. Kumar, ‘The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Lahore’,
148-212 as quoted in John Zavos, 2000. The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India; Delhi:
Oxford University Press; p. 48. See also Lala Lajpat Rai, A History of the Arya Samaj; pp158-160.
⁵ These were the first educational institution opened by Arya Samaj to propagate the ideas of
Dayanand Saraswati. The first among them was the DAV schools and college at Lahore. This
institution was established with an idea of pursuing the aims of Arya Samaj and also imparting
Kangri near Haridwar. The Arya Samaj asserted its departure from the colonial pattern of education and propagated the traditional system for the North Indian Hindu youth.

There writings of Harishchandra, Bal Krishna Bhatt, Pratap Narain Mishra, Radha Charan Goswami, Balmukund Gupta, Kartik Prasad Khatri and others contributed to the emergence of a socio-religious consciousness. These writers used the vernacular as the medium for mobilizing support for the Hindi movement. This resulted in the creation of the Hindi sphere and spread of consciousness related to society, health, religion and the new knowledge. Cleavages along religious lines emerged in particular between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in Punjab and Hindus and Muslims in Uttar Pradesh. Language became the epicenter of religious differentiation in the realm of education. As Raja Shiv Prasad wrote to the Education Commission in 1882:

“It was in 1868 that I wrote a memorandum on court characters in the Uppers Provinces, which I submit herewith with the information..... My object was to speak only about the characters. I would have won the battle, though I had all the Muhammadan officials against me; but now I have to cry out, ‘save me from English and Western Knowledge. It was the ‘college wing’ among the Arya Samajists who built the DAV institutions. As the Arya Samaj was one of the usurpers of Hindi movement, they helped in foundation of Nagari Pracharni Sabha at Benaras; and made the study of Hindi at the college as one of the important aims, whereas Urdu was an optional subject. Hindi was one of the important endeavors of the Arya Samaj and others who were involved with the Hindi movement. See also Lala Lajpat Rai, 1967. A History of Arya Samaj, edited by Sri Ram Sharma, Bombay, pp136-137.

1 The Gurukul at Kangri near Haridwar was established in 1902 that later became a university for Sanskrit and indigenous Indian Sciences. See the article by Satish Chandra, ‘Communal Consciousness in Late 19th Century Hindi Literature’ in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), 1991. op. cit, pp. 170-185.

my friends! My friends, my countrymen, the foolish Hindus, made a question of Hindi and Urdu language and left the question of characters quite aside.¹

Social differentiation along linguistic and religious lines had a deep impact on the cultural and national movement in Northern India. At the level of higher education, one of the outcomes was the creation of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, the seed for Aligarh Muslim University and the Central Hindu College, later Benaras Hindu University.²

The socio-economic constraints imposed by colonial rule served as a deterrent to the development of ideas during the nineteenth century; these were mostly the bourgeoisie liberal ideas.³ The early phase of English education had produced a stream of rationalist reformers who attacked miracles and superstition, for they believed in individual's cognitive ability to rationalize and look for truth and to tell the right from the wrong. However, towards the end of the century, the commitment to rationalism came with a new attitude, possibly more accommodating towards the scriptures.⁴ However, towards the end of the century, the commitment to rationalism came with a new attitude, possibly more accommodating towards the scriptures.⁵

Benaras Hindu University as a Community Project

² For details see Aparna Basu, 1974, Op. cit. See also her 1982, Essays in the History of Indian Education; Concept Publishing Co.: New Delhi.


The group identities based on language were later transformed into the religious identities and partial, fragmented and contradictory communities were formed. There were conflicts within the groups as in case of the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma. New schools, Gurukuls and colleges such as the Central Hindu College, were opened where emphasis was accorded to ancient Hindu values. Benaras Hindu University coruscates in this context as a community institution located in the heart of the Hindi-Hindu region. It came to be seen as a university for the promotion of Sanskrit, Hindi and the ancient Hindu scriptures.

Similarly, Muslim identity was also consolidated around language and religion. It has been pointed out that the fundamentalism and the aggressiveness among the Muslims were much more intense than amongst their Hindu counterparts. The significant difference is that the Muslims constituted a minority and so majoritarian communal consciousness was more alarming than that of the minority.¹ The British India Association fought a prolonged battle to open a college. Sir Syed finally succeeded in inaugurating the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875, which was mostly under the control of the British as most of the professors were English. But the college also admitted Hindus as students and later teachers. It maintained its secular character for a long time and even after it acquired the status of a university the medium of instruction remained English. MAO College was monitored very closely by the British but run by Muslims. This college was transformed into a university after the colonial government was petitioned by the Muslim League, and permission was granted in 1920 when the College was christened Aligarh Muslim University.²

² For details see David Lelyveld, Aligarh First Generation University.
The products of the College were the first generation builders of the University and were also the active participants in the nationalism and nation building. Those associated with the foundation of the College included Sir Syed, Agha Khan, Mohsin-ul-Mulk, Altaf Hussain 'Hali', Shibli etc. Several of them were important Urdu writers. By the turn of the century AMU had become the locus of a major literary movement, but ironically this was progressive literary movement that could boast of figures such as Sardar Jafri, Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chaughtai, Salma Siddiqui.¹

In other words in the first half of the twentieth century social forces had pushed the university in directions other than that envisaged by the founders. The second generation of AMU associated with the progressive movement were educated in English but wrote in Urdu. They were opposed to Muslim separatism that had raised its head at AMU. However, there was a substantial support in the university for the Congress. This may have surprised Sir Syed had he been alive as the context had certainly changed from the time when his own ideas were acquiring form.²

Communalism and the Rise of Hindu Nationalism

The germination of communal consciousness is contingent upon processes of assimilation and inclusion as well as differentiation and exclusion.³ The ascent of communal thought provided the social basis for new discussions on separatism.

¹ For details see Manzar Azmi, 1996. *Urdu Adab Ke Irtaza Mein Adabi Tehriqon Aur Rujhanon Ka Hissa;* Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy: Lucknow
³ Studies analyzing the rise of communalism in the nineteenth century undertaken by Romila Thapar, K. N. Pannikar, Bipin Chandra examine the inherent tension between processes of assimilation and inclusion on the one hand and differentiation and exclusion on the other.
India was composed of several linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic communities. The pre-colonial era was thus marked by conflict between these different identities. But these conflicts rarely broke out in violence or resulted in separatism. Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the political climate had radically changed, with government intervening in the resolution of local conflicts: the colonial state thus emerged as the mediator of identitarian conflict. In this role the colonial state pursued the policy of divide and rule that ensured prolonged its survival.

Nineteenth century India was not a unitary nation-state but a developing multi-national state. Different regional and sub-regional identities had not assimilated to constitute or envision a composite Indian culture. As these regional and sub-regional boundaries were still in the process of being defined on linguistic or cultural or religious lines: the boundaries of the Indian state were blur. Hindu revivalism on the other hand asserted that the religious identity of India was Hindu, and that modern India was united linguistically with Hindi standing in for the national language.

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2 See Peter Robb. 2007. Empire, Identity and India: Liberalism, Modernity and the Nation; Oxford University Press: New Delhi. This work concentrates on the colonial state and the construction of Indian identity. The impact of British rule on these religious communities and how the presence of third party widened the gap between Hindus and Muslims. It also gives a descriptive analysis of Muslim identity and growth of separatism in India.
4 Communal consciousness in late nineteenth century India had its social roots in the urban middle class. Bipin Chandra points out that communalism were an expression of deeply rooted interests, aspirations, and outlook of a middle class confronted by economic stagnation. See K. N. Pannikar (ed.), Communalism in India, p. 7.
The idea of the Hindu nation was propagated through schools and colleges and lodged itself in the early twentieth century imagination. The very phenomenon was mirrored amongst extremists. But since at the time their numbers were small the threat to the national was not of a comparable order.

The late eighteenth century was marked by the emergence of new equations between religious sects and the nobility of Northern India. This was also the period when the East India Company was moving from the status of a mere trading company to that of a power broker in Bengal. The Mahants, Gosains, Sadhus supported regional rulers or themselves made a stake for political power. In colonial north and central India, the realization dawned amongst sections of the Rajput nobility and other disempowered ruling elites that religion was an effective tool for creating new identities in the quest for political power. The politicization of the religious sphere transformed the nature of Hinduism that now was re-imagined as a Semitic religion. This meant that its institutions had to be reinvented or moulded in the image of religions that were familiar to the colonizer.

Reform can have a variety of sources. Revivalism itself was a product of conscious churning of the intelligentsia that saw its culture and religion threatened by the spread of modern education and Christianity. Revivalist reform like liberal reform had its social roots in the resistance to colonial cultural imperialism in nineteenth century India. If the educational system was the most

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3 Romila Thaper, in K. N. Pannikar (ed.), Communalism in India, p. 29.
4 Romila Thaper, in K. N. Pannikar (ed.). 1991Communalism in India, p. 30
5 Romila Thaper, in K. N. Pannikar (ed.). 1991 Communalism in India; p. 30
important institutional structure for launching the civilizing mission, revivalist reform had to launch its own educational institutions and rethink Indian identity.¹

What image of India would neutralize the seductions of Western education? The idea of the glory of ancient Hindu India was seen as an effective antidote. More specifically, in Benaras the poet, Bhartendu Harishchandra tried to create a place for Hindi as a national language. The Hindu religion was the home of the language. Bhartendu envisioned a Hindi University that popularizes Hindi and its literature. A sphere of informed public opinion would get around the Hindi speaking people of the region. Hindi was perceived as the symbolic instrument for resisting colonization and English was the language of the outsiders or the foreign language.² A “Hindu” could then be identified by his knowledge or the lack of knowledge of Hindi.

By the later half of nineteenth century associations were formed on sectarian lines in Benaras and Prayag. These were very important Hindu cities and were very active in the politics of cultural and religious identities. Benaras gradually became the capital of Hindu political identity – most Hindu sectarian organizations, no matter where they were established, shifted their headquarters to Benaras.³ Thus the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal Sabha was transferred to Benaras in 1903 and the Sanatan Dharma Sabha was formed in 1906.

³ Benaras Dharma Mahamandal in chapter II which shifted to Benaras in 1903.
By the last decade of 19th century the colonial government had started reinvesting powers with the rajas of Benaras from whom it had been earlier seized. This was to co-opt the Raja’s into their schemes and neutralize any militancy on the part of the conservative Hindus.¹ The friendship was very intimate during the reign of Maharaja Prabhu Narain Singh (1889-1931)— this may possibly be explained by his anti-Congress attitude.² The Maharaja’s tried to reinforce their authority by glorifying the Hindu festivals such as Ramlila and the importance of Shiva, “the ancient lord of Kashi” was reasserted.³ However, there is ambivalence among scholars for they are confronted by the fact that the Muslims of Benaras participated in the Ramlila and the Hindus joined the Muharram celebrations till the late 19th century.⁴

In fact, the joint observation of festivals was true of many parts of India till the late 19th century. The Hindus of Pune used to participate in Muahrram until the invention of the Ganapati celebrations.⁵ This reveals that the identities that had concretized by the early decades of the twentieth century were actually quite blurred even towards the last decades of the nineteenth century. The evocation of the antiquity of Hinduism and the aggressive campaign of Hindu India triggered the alienation of other communities and identities and subsequently the reinvention of the identities of those alienated by this process.

¹ Ibidem p.11,
⁵ Ibidem, 1414, also for more details see Stanley A. Wolpert 1962: Tilak and Gokhale: Reform in the Making of Modern India, Berkeley, p. 69.
The Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of Allahabad and Benaras had lived as neighbors for centuries. Their lives were interlinked through the economy and they shared social and cultural practices. The Hindu merchants and the Muslim weavers were dependent on each other for their livelihood. The Muslim population of Benaras was about 15-20% of the city's total population; of this only one quarter belonged to the Ashraf; the rest belonged to the community of weavers. They followed similar customs and traditions in many cases as that of the. The Ashrafs felt let down when the colonial administration supported conservative high class Hindus. They had conceded power to the British and were reduced to disempowered nawabs. The new Muslim leadership would come from the ranks of this disenchanted class. The orthodox Hindu leaders on the other hand belonged to a growing middle class. Those who came from Benaras and Prayag were orthodox in their religious practices. These leaders did not face encounter any opposition when campaigned for the cow-protection act or mobilized support for the Hindi language and script. Benaras was the best place to commence such movements since it was a place of pilgrimage and receptive to such issues.¹

The central questions that these cultural and ideological movements had to address were what were the cultural foundations of Indian society? How is it to be conceptualized as a modern nation on a par with other modern nation states? Sections of Indian society conceived it as following the path of the Western nations, while the other extreme wished to reconstruct from the core elements of ancient Hindu traditions.

¹Indian History produced by British historians in the 19th century portrayed the Hindu past as glorious and the Muslim Period as a dark-age. The historical discourse resonated with their colonial policies and the one justified the other. Further they legitimated Britain's civilizing mission in India. For Details see Veer Bharat Talwar. 2002. Op. cit, chapter II.
The Growth of Hindu Nationalism

Hindu nationalism has become the subject of immense historical and sociological interest particularly over the last decade. This is possibly due to the fact that from the perimeter of Indian political life, Hindu nationalism over the last two decades moved to its centre. Thus John Zavos' work on the pre-history of Hindu nationalism begins by drawing a distinction between Hindu nationalism and communalism. According to him communalism is not an ideology but rides on other ideologies that could extend it.

Therefore, the development of Hindu nationalism as an ideology needs to be 'divorced' from the process of communalization. 1 Hindu nationalism on the other hand exhibits a complex structure and its ideology has evolved over the period of time. 2 There are different shades of nationalism and similarly Hindu nationalism is also multilayered revealing different phases with specific changes in strategy and tactics, and the fundamentalist view of its members since late 19th century. As pointed out earlier that the process of formation of a communal consciousness was facilitated by the creation of organizations, associations, sabhas, sangathan. The formation of these associations intensified in the late 19th century North India. The forceful introduction of English as the medium of instruction catalyzed this process.

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As a structured ideology propagating a view of the Indian past, Hindu nationalism began to acquire form by the 1870s and 1880s. Communal sentiments were manipulated by the colonial state and religious revivalists orient socio-religious reform ensuring continuity with the past. The sectarianism of the early phase played a role in cementing a community this sectarianism was quite different from the communalism of the later decades which took on the form of a coherent ideology, a belief system that imagined a community of co-religionists. They proposed the ancient past as the Hindu culture and the religion was Hinduism.

The supposed antagonism between Hindus and Muslims which surfaced in the 19th century was according to these ideologues present in the past under Muslim rule. However, it is clear now that while this antagonism was not as intense as ideologues of Hindu nationalism suggested, there were tangible differences between the adherents of the two religions, who had nevertheless found a modus vivendi. Thus Pratap Bhanu Mehta clarifies that ‘communalism evolved not merely as a politics for socio-political and economic dominance, but also took shape as a coherent ideology, a belief system that imagined a community of co-religionists whose interests were diametrically opposed to another community of co-religionists’. The feature of Hindu nationalism is that it went further in imagining and propagating the idea that two opposed communities constitute two separate nations while sharing a geographical space.

Further, it saw its task as reconstructing the historicity of Hinduism, and recreating it as a unitary religion with a well defined genealogy and

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2 For more details see K.N. Pannikar, (ed.), Communalism in India; p. 2. Also Romila Thaper, ibidem, p. 1
community.¹ And as Zavos points out that while communalism must be distinguished from Hindu nationalism, the two share a space.²

By the second decade of the twentieth century the political landscape in the country began to change and the leadership of the Congress became increasingly weary of some of the communally oriented members within its fold.³ In any case, with the passage of time the ties of the communalists with the Congress would decline and the liberal nationalists would sever their ties by the third decade of the century with the Hindu nationalists.⁴ Within a decade or so of the revolt of 1857 opposition to colonial rule began to get increasingly politicized. Well before full-fledged nationalism emerged a number of associations and societies were formed that sought to articulate the interests of religious communities. This identitarian politics often split the consensus within composite local communities.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the rise of nationalist consciousness would drive a wedge into movements that were consolidated around religious and linguistic identities. However, the process of rearticulating the sense of Indian identity, and the instruments for the spread of this consciousness such as the educational curriculum were deeply contested in the public sphere. The

³ The membership of the Congress was composite. The religious radicals wore their religious identities on their lapels. In the twentieth century the Congress itself embarked upon reshaping itself as a party of the masses and began to penetrate the rural areas. In order to appeal to the masses religious symbols and icons were mobilized even by members of the Congress. For details see Bipin Chandra, “Communalism and the National Movement”, in Mushirul Hasan, 1981, Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India; pp. 186-198.
⁴ As suggested earlier the discourse on nationalism would change very radically from 1900 to 1910. See Aparna Basu; Sumit Sarkar; Vina Mazumdar; Bipin Chandra Pal etc for the national education and swadeshi movement and its influence on higher education. (Their books have been cited earlier).
important worth noting is that there were spectrums of responses, from the religious to the secular, to colonial education policy. Most of these responses were within the modernist idiom, though they differed amongst themselves about the significance to be attached to religion, traditional values, and the optic through which one engaged with the other community. Out of these contesting positions a number of educational and linguistic projects would emerge.