Introduction

My thesis examines the relationship between nationalism and Orientalism and shows by way of arguments how nationalism complies with Orientalism rather than negates the Orientalist project, since both are pedagogic disciplines ‘representing’ the Orient. I intend to scrutinise how nationalism is a kind of “Orientalism-in-reverse” (‘Azm 5). Nationalism differs from Orientalism as it gives voice to its muted subjects. By nationalism as Orientalism-in-reverse, I imply that nationalism is a pride in cultural achievements rather than humility, which Orientalism breeds among its subjects. Significantly, the nationalists in their pride of cultural achievements accepted the cultural essences formulated by Orientalism. The British Orientalist, William Jones had founded spirituality as intrinsic to the nature of the Hindus who were “sunk deeply in the mythology of an ancient religion” (Cited in R. King 113). The nationalists did not step outside the Indian past, that is, they accepted the Orientalist formulations of a ‘glorious’ Indian past and its subsequent decline. Therefore, they thought it imperative to eulogise the past cultural ideals which could defend the invasion of “inner” spirituality from “outer” materialism (Chatterjee, Partha Chatterjee 120).

My methodology involves the analysis of M. K. Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj and An Autobiography and Jawaharlal Nehru’s The Discovery of India and his Autobiography, which are my main texts since India was a textual subject for the Orientalists as well as for the nationalists. The first significant challenge to Orientalised India came from nationalism. While agreeing to the notion of an essentialised India, the nationalists transformed the object of knowledge—India—from passive to active. European historian of British India, Percival Spear has conceived of India as a “sponge, which absorbs all that enters it without ceasing to be itself. […] Hinduism has shown a remarkable power of assimilating as well as absorbing […] . Like a sponge it has no very clear outline on its borders and apparent core at its centre” (Cited in Inden, “Orientalist Constructions of India” 429). Despite following this concept about India, Gandhi and Nehru “used Orientalism against imperialism” in positioning non-violence and toleration as the strength of Indian culture (Ludden 273). Both these nationalists were a product of Western education. They had voraciously read European literature and incorporated some of the Western thoughts in their anticolonial discourse. To determine their cultural
identity they reflected upon the Orientalist essences of the ancient origins of Indian culture. This implied that their nationalist discourse supported the colonial definition of a timeless Indian culture with its trait of toleration and non-violence. Remarkably, Gandhi accepted: “I have nothing to be ashamed of if my views on *ahimsa* are the result of my Western education” (M. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma* 199).

I do not seek to trace the genealogy of Indian nationalism. My research is restricted to nationalism as represented by Gandhi and Nehru before independence, since they are considered the forerunners of India’s struggle for independence. Nationalism is replete with many slippages. It offers freedom, equality, and self-assertion, yet some of its ideologies endorses the same Orientalist assumptions that it vigorously opposes. I concentrate on nationalist ideologies through some of the writings of Gandhi and Nehru who are as different as chalk and cheese, but inscribe India within Orientalist epistemology in their own ways.

My research is inspired by Said’s theory of Orientalism that forms the backdrop against which I focus the nationalist predicament as outlined above. While Orientalism is a literature of dissent and confirms Western scholarship as a clever manoeuvre for defining the East as submissive and vulnerable, it lumps the entire Europe as “racist, and imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric” (Said, *Orientalism* 203-4). Edward Said’s *Orientalism* is a breakthrough in cultural studies that attempts to show the complicity of European scholarship and imperialism. Consequently, Said’s thesis spells out the same distorted and unified negative image of Europe that he condemns and “accuse[s] orientalist scholarship of having done to the countries east of Europe” (Ludden 252). Despite the various critical responses, Said’s *Orientalism* helps to examine Western epistemology and its underpinnings. I focus on Indian nationalism as a cultural space and apply the theory of Orientalism as a critical tool that posits nationalism vis-à-vis Orientalism.

I attempt to view nationalism neither as a European derived monolithic construct nor as a nativist agenda, though I have included both perspectives in my study. My understanding of nationalism is variegated, that is, nationalism draws upon the colonial model of defining Indian traditions, but in emphasizing its differences, it tends to establish an indigenous/native vocabulary. From this zone of overlapping between the
indigenous and the Western discourses emerges the paradox of the Indian nationalist predicament, around which my research revolves. Nationalism was a response to the colonial narrative that reproduced an Oriental mystic and timeless India as marks of national identity. Despite the fact that it was the colonial and Orientalist imagination on which the nationalist movement premised, the nationalists reversed the imitative aspect to construct a community within the parameters of a self-defined Indian culture and direct it as a popular/mass agenda.

The mutation from native informants to native participants not only provided subjectivity to the East, but also enshrined a homogeneous community with common descent, language, culture, religion, and aspirations. Undeniably, this was a prerequisite for national solidarity against alien invasions. However, what is neglected in the nationalist agenda of homogeneity is: who are responsible for the appropriation and transformation of the people into a national community? Can there be an ‘authentic’ representation either by the nationalists or the Orientalists? Is nationalism an excavation of the same ‘site’ explored by the Orientalists, but not with the purpose of annihilating our national achievements? These oft-ignored questions have been analysed in the course of my thesis. Nevertheless, I have been wary of propounding reductive answers or alternative domination/resistance formulae.

I am interested in unveiling the in-built power governed ideologies in nationalism and Orientalism and thereby show their alliance. According to Gandhi and Nehru, the fixity of the past was the foundation, an experience, and a self-critical idiom by which India could gain insight to rejuvenate and regenerate its inner strength. The nationalists continued to rework on the traditional epitomized India constructed by the Orientalists, to invert the European paradigms of hierarchy. Precisely, nationalism is “continuity-through-inversion” (S. Sarkar, Beyond Nationalist Frames 163). My thesis is an attempt to critically examine that facet of nationalism, which was unable to reject Orientalist configurations. I proceed from the hypothesis that it is extremely difficult to weed out alien ideas from the native mind. In other words, perhaps so intertwined are colonial and indigenous values that the reification of an ‘Indian’ tradition seems to be hazy. By positing nationalism as a colonial legacy, I argue that nationalism is not a departure from essentialisms and political ideologies; rather it works within the polarities/binaries of the
Self and the Other. But nationalism is not a replica of Orientalism. On the other contrary, it emphasises the rejection of colonial stereotypes, yet maintains the continuity and imagination of a precolonial past composed by the Western historians and Indian mythologies. The imaginative sphere so carved could not move beyond a grandiose and spiritual past.

This research is not a revisionist project of history or a search for ‘real’ or ‘true’ India. Neither does it tend to adjudicate nationalism as a slavish Western image. What it seeks to explore is the “essentialization of difference” (Pieterse and Parekh 9), that is, as a ‘site’ of cultural resistance, nationalism is preoccupied with the centre-margin discourse in which the difference from the centre is articulated in the subjectivity of the periphery. Nationalism is a resistance in Homi Bhabha’s sense of mimicry. It is appropriation and reformation of the Other “as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, Location of Culture 86). The distorted image of the coloniser produced attempts to dislocate its Other through parody, “mockery” and “mimicry” (Young, White Mythologies 188). Such a resistance is able to ‘speak’ from the authorised ‘sites’, that is, where the “presence” or the “centre” in Derridean terms articulates the cultural identity of the Other (Derrida 90). In this way the “observer becomes the observed” (Bhabha, Location of Culture 89). Nevertheless, it is “hybridity that makes visible the denied knowledges” and subverts the dominant colonial discourse of authority (114). “Hybridity” is an invention in the cultural space of colonial authority and expresses the colonial and the indigenous knowledges simultaneously. Nehru’s sense of a dual identity, that is, an “alien critic” anxious to define his ‘Indiannness’ is ambiguous in its desire to resemble and differ (Nehru, Discovery 50). Nehru was constantly disturbed in identifying with the Indian masses. His anglicised education made him a “mimic man” (Bhabha, Location of Culture 87). Nehru’s anticolonial approach was therefore articulated from a “hybrid” position. His “hybrid” sojourn in the Discovery was instructed by colonial documentation. However he appropriated the past in invoking Indian epics and myths.

Of course, the colonial interaction was not one sided, that is, the British imperialism not only affected Indian culture but was itself transformed by the native impact. The “shared colonial experience”(Veer, Imperial Encounters 3) accounts for the
psychological effect of colonisation on the metropole and the colony. Here I will not indulge in evaluating the effects on the Europeans, but problematise the sustained binaries of Western/Eastern, centre/margin, and spiritual/ rational. It was not possible for nationalism to escape this polarity. The nationalists imagined the West as modern, irreligious, and violent. In retaliation, nationalist narratives sustained the myth of a spiritual, tolerant, and non-violent India. Hence, the Orientalist model of imagining India was countered by constructing India as an antithesis of the West. While the nationalists indigenised the European representations of India, their purpose of cultural revivalism and inversion of Western ideologies was to remake a self-image of India.

Interestingly, most of the known nationalists had been products of Western education. Besides many nationalists, Tagore, Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Nehru belonged to the elite section that entered into the nationalist movement after a sufficient transformation. Gandhi’s reading of the English translation of the Gita and Aurobindo’s introduction to the Upanishads after reading the English translated works of the Orientalist Max Muller” (Heehs, “Shades of Orientalism” 176) reveals the Orientalist moorings that spawned nationalist constructions. Evidently, the nineteenth-century nationalists wrote autobiographies during those times when it was mainly recognised as a Western genre, though it was Indianised (M. Gandhi, Autobiography ix).

The nationalists had their own idea of India. Gandhi, for instance, refuted the European obsession with the writing of history (M. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj 45), instead he took refuge in nationalist allegories, myths and symbols. However, the practice of engineering India, whether in historical or mythic categories, was not without the play of imagination. Colonialism in Indian society justified its domination and gained its hegemony through the circulation of Oriental archives. In fact, Orientalism as cultural system asserted the centrality of religious texts in the study of Hindu mind (Inden, Imagining India 85-130). However, the scriptures were given textual standards according to the official discourse produced by the Orientalist (Mani 94-5). Thus colonialism introduced the perception of the past to the nationalists who reintroduced an alternative past

The concern here is not with the heroic saga of nationalism and its emancipatory role. Nationalism revived the need for cultural belonging, but promoted the bifurcation
between the Indian Self and the European Other. Nationalism thus operates within the ambit of Orientalist tropes. The Orientalist myth of a glorious Indian past and its subsequent degeneration becomes an acceptable form. The earliest romantic Orientalists, like Jones and Colebrooke, comprehended the essence of Indian civilisation in its classical age that had declined, and it was left for the colonisers to restore it. By translating the ancient Hindu scriptures, the Orientalists inscribed their own meanings. To counter the European images and linguistic dominations, nationalism continued to refurbish Western stereotypes, but reinterpreted the ancient texts to invent an alternative discourse.

The organisation of the past has been crucial to the construction of identity. But reactions towards the representation of the past differ. While some nationalists have antipathy towards the linear Western narratives, others find it a means to catch up with the West. Yet the nationalist politics sustain the past as an inevitable dimension arranged either as popular memory or history. The mythic sense of time disrupts and challenges the Western notion of chronological and linear flow of events. Thus the ancient scriptures, in the form of epics and fables, are instrumental in presenting traditional philosophy in stark contrast to the Western social theory, which operates on cognitive paradigms of rationality. Though the fundamental perception of India as a religious land remained unchallenged, religion is not associated with irrationality or otherworldliness. Rather it is purported as scientific wisdom of the ancient seers. A large section of the Indian gurus/spiritual preachers including Gandhi, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and to certain extent, Nehru, recognise myth as an indigenous variant of collective memory (examined in chapter 5). Therefore, the Indian myths versus colonial documentation of the past together foster the construction of India.

The nationalists (Gandhi and Nehru) mobilised the cultural resources of the past favouring the myths and epics which were “living repositories of popular memory” (Chatterjee, “Introduction” 8). Nationalism is a doctrine that propounds liberation and autonomy. In identifying an ‘uncontaminated’ cultural space, it gives way to conflicts and ethnicity. The power holders determine what constitutes ethnicity or nationalism. I will not hesitate to expose those nodal points where nationalism as a cultural artefact regresses to “pre-existent forms of social organization” (Smith 11), and eventually
appeals to traditions as a repository of ancient memories.¹ British imperialism significantly achieved its control over the natives through a network of knowledge in the form of religion, traditions, and Oriental institutions. This emergence of knowledge hinges upon Foucault’s relation between power and knowledge which admits that “power and knowledge directly imply one another” (Foucault 27). Said’s Orientalism draws upon Foucault’s power/knowledge nexus in evaluating Orientalism as a cultural phenomena. The Asiatic research studies and the translations of ancient scriptures suggest the apparent absence of a high cultured Indian society, in contrast to a ‘glorious’ past. With the creation, rather endorsement of a deficient and backward society the imperialists privileged a language of contrast between the East and the West. The European perception of India varied with the passage of time. The Western historians, like Marx and James Mill, conceptualised Indian society as despotic and stagnant. They vehemently opposed the romantic notions of the Orientalists. Contrary to them, these historians condemned a primitive India driven by the absence of a centralised administration (Turner 22). Although European Indology shifted its position, it retained its theme of the East versus the West. The nationalists rejected this scholarship to inscribe their knowledge of India. In this sense, they were no different from their Western counterparts. However nationalism cannot be simply theorised as an imitation of the West. Nationalism was an ambivalent resistance that subverted the ‘centre’ through “mimicry” and “menace” (Bhabha, Location of Culture 87). This corresponded with a Calibanistic approach adopted to curse the colonial master (Loomba, 189).

In arresting a classical Indian past and its subsequent decline, social reform vectors the course of the nationalists and the colonialists. Implicit in the reforms are elitist appropriation that tend to speak for the entire nation. Interestingly, nationalism endorses the Orientalist’s evidences and archaeological surveys. The canonical Hindu scriptures, widely translated and circulated by Orientalist scholars, became textual standards for the nationalist discourse. This is not to proclaim Indian nationalism as a second-hand or caricature of European epistemology. Despite the narratives of collective consciousness invoked by the nationalists, the search for the roots of Indian culture was appropriated within the Orientalist space. I investigate the ideological power of
nationalism, which was fundamental to Orientalism as well. Yet it does not imply that nationalism is a collaborated imperial design nor an exclusive celebration of homegrown/desi discourse. The Orientalists valorised the Indian past as superior and sometimes as despotic. To counter the Orientalist’s knowledge, the nationalists strived to revive traditions and paradoxically reworked on the Orientalists predetermined notion of India’s past. The colonial archives were saturated with Orientalist commentaries, travel accounts, and administrative surveys. These inscriptions branded India as a religious and spiritual community entrenched in traditional myths and culture. It is worth considering that the nationalists, to conjure up an image of a spiritual India, had resurrected the past in the same fashion. The study of the past was an important constituent of understanding cultural meanings and values. The production of colonial knowledge asserted colonialism as “a cultural project of control” (Dirks, “Introduction” 9).

This grid of past knowledge enabled the Indian reformers to “appropriate tradition and resistance as refuge” (10). The colonial cultural project which enshrined the objectification of Indian language, customs, and traditions in the representation of a complex and diverse nation, survived as a colonial legacy in the form of Indian nationalism. The colonisers as administrators, historians, and Orientalists comprehended India as a caste divided society, where spiritualism degenerated into superstition and in which the people lived in poverty, were passive and had no historical sensibility (Said, Orientalism 97). Paradoxically, as a rebuttal to the argument, the Indian reformers/nationalists addressed the same issues, but oriented the discourse in India’s favour. They stressed the presence of history as an oppressive tool of the colonisers, though most of the nationalists relied upon Western archives to produce an antithetical discourse. The division into caste was considered necessary for the division of labour and in passivity was embedded India’s power of tolerance unknown to the Europeans. Thus, the nationalists could not escape the typecast cultural pattern of an imagined India which resulted in the nationalist predicament in fashioning India as a nation.

The core feature of nationalist resistance was to precipitate an alternative tradition as a response to the European masternarratives. No doubt, nationalism opposed the British rule and significantly propelled a search for national identity, yet itself created a discourse impregnated with power ideologies, cultural meanings, and
historical/mythical sensibilities. Insofar as indigenous narratives are concerned, they were extrapolated from Western textual practices. However, they were assigned an essentialist twist in support of Indian traditions. Orientalism's parallel often debunked India's precolonial society as stagnant and in dire need of 'progress' as defined by the Western lexicon. The nationalists could not, for instance, displace the myth of static and village India. Notably, Gandhi directs attention to the city/village binary. On one hand, he concedes that the city figures as a "snare" that enslaves men and proliferates vice. On the other hand, the village or indigenous community was free from immorality and corruption. The village as a critique of Western civilisation was Gandhi's formula to win swaraj (M. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj 55). Indeed such a revival of the past is akin to the political theorist, Ernest Renan's concept of a nation as "a soul, a spiritual principle." In paying reverence to the ancestors, Renan believes their contribution towards a "heroic past" lays the foundation of a nation (19).

The citation of Max Müller, a German Orientalist who studied the Vedas in the works of both Gandhi and Nehru illustrates their predicament in escaping the Orientalist framework. Max Müller had never visited India before he wrote about its village communities that lacked the spirit of competition (Thapar 3-5). He gives an account of the Indian villages as: "To the ordinary Hindu, I mean ninety-nine in every hundred, the village was his world, and the sphere of public opinion, with its beneficial influences on the individuals, seldom extended beyond the horizon of his village" (Müller 44). The power of imagination configured an India which seeped into the nationalist rhetoric. By variously representing the past memories, the nationalists built a collective consciousness that could refute Western narratives. This implies first, that India remained a venerable site of essentialism and secondly, that textual accounts were retained in articulating narratives. As such, the fixed coordinates of village communities, caste, and religiosity were a common denominator.

Hindu scriptures followed the oral traditions until Max Müller's attempt to edit the Rg-Veda (Veer, Imperial Encounters 120). Gradually, the textualisation of the smritis and the shrutis produced a corpus of texts referred by the colonisers. Paradoxically, these texts became archetypes of the nationalist discourse after transcription. The Vedas were
authorised as the core philosophy by the Orientalists to suggest the ascetic and mystic orientation of the Indian tradition. The image of India as ascetic was emphasised in nationalist tropes, however the Orientalist presumptions were inverted in reinterpreting the scriptures. The Vedanta philosophy was rendered “compatible with social activism and worldly involvement” (R. King 134).

The invocation of tradition was integral to mass mobilisation. Since tradition harnesses popular consent and manipulate mass homogeneity, the essential concern of the nationalists, especially Gandhi and Nehru, was to activate public consciousness. To label Gandhi as a follower of tradition obliterates his resistance to many traditional concepts that had become archaic and could no longer serve the interests of the people. Hence, it is essential to locate Gandhi as a “critical traditionalist”, (Parekh, Colonialism 35) who could reconstruct tradition as an effective alternative to Western modernity, yet could not overcome certain dogmas that had equated tradition to scriptural authority. In this context Gandhi wrote:

I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. [...] . My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. [...] . But I claim to know and feel the truths of the essential teaching of the scriptures. I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. (M. Gandhi, Collected Works 21: 246)

In asserting their differences, the nationalists (Gandhi and Nehru) premised their self-identity in anti-materialism and spiritualism. In a situation where the nationalists sought to regain India’s prestige, nationalism was predominantly a response to and thus shaped by colonialism. Europe in the fifteenth century had a holistic vision of religion. The Christian missionaries recognised only Christianity, the Judaism and Islam as the religious systems of the world (Stietencron 74). The Christians experienced hostility from the two religious systems. With this concept of intolerance and antagonistic coexistence, the Europeans accepted Hinduism as an exclusive religion that could not coexist with other religions. I shall again examine the strand of religious identity to scrutinize its contribution in the formation of Hindu identity. Invoking the idea of a
singular, overarching religious identity, fostered a nationalist consciousness. However, the insistence on an all-inclusive Hinduism squeezed the nation's heterogeneity to form a uniform and universalistic approach. To a considerable extent, the vision of a singular Indian religion had been a European perception, later imbibed by Hindu reformers and spiritualists. This does not imply that nationalism was not antithetical to colonialism. Nationalism challenged the values attached to precolonial India, yet it derived its theory of opposition from Western constructions.

Remarkably, the constant use of “inner” spiritualism and “outer” materialism can be traced in the works of Indian nationalists and spiritualists (Chatterjee, Partha Chatterjee 120). Western social theory of rights, liberty, equality, and independence find space in Gandhi’s political theory “but it moves beyond that language” and takes care of “moral responsibility” and the individuals (Terchek, “Gandhian Autonomy” 58). Several prominent nationalists endeavoured to displace the Western image of India. While dismissing Western sciences and rationality as mundane in contrast to spiritual identity, nationalism projects Indian traditions as superior to European sciences. Another response was to relate Indian traditions in terms of Western science. Vivekananda’s Vedantic philosophy exemplifies the presence of rationality in the Indian metaphysics much before the European Enlightenment. He mentions: “Kant’s greatest achievement was the discovery that ‘time, space and causations are modes of thought’ but Vedanta taught this ages ago and called it ‘Maya’”(Cited in Basu 183). When I assert that nationalism is Orientalism-in-reverse, it is not tantamount to saying that the Indians are incapable of shaping narratives on their own or to deny the nativist perspective embedded in nationalism. Crucially, the native and the nationalist ideologies collated in legitimising their political projects of ‘knowing’ India through a mythic reversion to the past. In doing so, these ideologies could not get away from the teleological modes of representations which are found in the nationalist imaginations of both Gandhi and Nehru.

Nationalism gave a moral twist to the Western political theory, yet it could not move beyond the adaptation and adoption of European universal norms. It is imperative for nationalism to theorise its own narratives and imagine an “immemorial past” without acknowledging “the contingency of its origins, its constructedness” (Kaviraj, “Reversal
Makarand Paranjape disagrees with the “derivativeness” of Indian nationalism. He believes that associating indigenous terms like *praja* and *swaraj* with nation and freedom respectively amount to “cultural suicide” (Paranjape, “Reworlding Homes” 115). According to Paranjape, the nativeness of nationalism is due to an “alternative modernity” instead of a counter-modernity which is not dialectic or pits the Self against the other (125). In Paranjape’s views Gandhi is positioned in a slot who images a “new home” (126) for India which is the consequence of the negotiations between the “inner” and the “outer” (125). In subaltern/nativist perspective, Gandhi is upheld as a postmodernist in his conception of a nation as decentralised and the focus on peasant consciousness as opposed to the elitist national movement (Wadhwa 2, Kumar and Gupta 408-10). Gandhi’s native idioms are regarded as different from the Western political theory. *Swaraj*—derived from the *Vedas*—as a substitute for independence and *satyagraha* were highly charged political idioms (M. Gandhi, The Collected Works 45: 263-4). *Satyagraha*—a popular protest movement—was a precolonial form of resistance. It was known in different names—“dhandak”, “hijrat”, “traja” and “dharna” (Hardiman 41-5). These protests exerted a moral pressure on the wrongdoer since the protestor either used to sit outside his opponent’s residence till his demands were fulfilled or threatened to inflict self-injury. These ancient practices of the mass resistance forced the ruler to succumb under moral pressure. Gandhi’s method gave the entire phenomena a different perspective. Though he “ritualised [. . .] the older forms of resistance” (51), he reshaped them as non-violent and free from the hatred of the opponent.

Despite reiterating its differences from Western discourse, “nationalism could neither ignore the West completely nor capitulate to it entirely: the West and its ideals of material progress had to be assimilated selectively without any fundamental damage to the native “inner” Indian self” (R. Radhakrishnan 84). The concept of caste, for instance, was seen either as an ordered form of community or as an institution, which hindered India’s progress. Whatever stand the nationalists took, it hinged upon caste as a distinguishing feature of Indian society.

Chapter 1 enumerates varying perspectives of Indian traditions on both sides of the colonial divide. Tradition has been examined to explore the continuity of constructing India in essentialist terms. The underlying aim is to make explicit the
intermittent change of traditions by either the colonisers or the indigenous elites both of whom conceptualised Indian traditions largely as Hinduized or Sanskritized. In fact, the elitist presentation, while concentrating on national solidarity, is a discrepancy in the Hinduized Indian tradition that neutralises the distinctiveness of non-Hindu traditions. That is, nationalism was an all-inclusive movement. It “imagined” a community with a distinctive Hindu identity and sidelined the other religions. I probe the cultural practices fashioned and renewed through nationalism, which succumbed to Western episteme.

In chapter 2, I have examined Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj as the text which spells out a distinctive Indian identity located within the ambit of spirituality as opposed to the materialism of the West. Gandhi’s vision of India as a “praja” that could attain swaraj by self-control carries a metaphysical connotation (Parel, “Gandhi’s Idea of Nation” 276). Instead of the words ‘nation’ and ‘freedom’, Gandhi’s usage of the native idioms reinforces his position as a nationalist who challenges the European discourses with the religious and traditional vocabulary. It is imperative, therefore, to trace the transformation of religious/traditional space into a political terrain, and why nationalism was invested heavily with the images of village communities, peasant consciousness, womanhood, caste, and spirituality. The interpretation of Gandhi’s political discourse, in the considered text, is three fold. First, Hind Swaraj is interspersed with the testimonials from the European authority. Although Gandhi’s assimilation created his own political discourse it was premised on Western commentaries and readings. Secondly, the villages, fundamental to Indian society, were fixed as “solid foundation of Oriental despotism” (Marx and Engels 350). However, in Gandhi’s imagination the villages were organised political entities. Referring to Sir Henry Maine’s comments on Indian villages, Gandhi emphasised that, “the Indian races have been familiar with representative institutions almost from the time immemorial. The word panchayat is a household word throughout the length and breath of India” (M. Gandhi, Collected Works 1: 94-5). Thirdly, the resuscitation of the glorified past embodied in the traditions, gender, caste and spiritualism was influenced by Oriental scholarship.

In Chapter 3 and 4, I have examined the writing of an autobiography which developed from a spiritual itinerary to self-reflection (Parekh, Colonialism 272-6). As a Western genre, writing about one’s achievements was centred on individual experiences.
This genre took account of the cultural surroundings and its effect on the person writing about himself (Drabble 53). However, such a form of writing was inconsistent with Hindu philosophy. This philosophy restrained individuality and stressed upon the individual in relation to his society. It was believed that Hinduism was hostile to the expression of the ego. This was exemplified in Sanskrit literature which had no contribution from this genre. Anonymity was considered as the “proudest distinctions of the Hindu culture” (Cited in Parekh, Colonialism 278). Therefore, the autobiographical genre as a self-reflective articulation was not practised in precolonial India.

Gandhi and Nehru’s autobiographies were concerned with Indian civilisation that had been effected by colonialism. However, they both Indianised the autobiography in postulating the Self as an extension of the nation. This implied that their search for an ‘authentic’ India corresponded with self-discovery. The nation was imagined as “soul”/“spirit”. Gandhi stated that his Autobiography comprised of his “experiments in the spiritual field” (x). While Nehru was bewildered by the majestic “soul” of India which preserved India’s “immemorial culture” (Nehru, Autobiography 429). This defined the Self as a ‘site’ of spiritual struggle. In mystifying self-glorification exhibited in the Western genre, they modified personal revelations as a spiritual exploration. However, the structure of the autobiographies of Gandhi and Nehru often resemble the genre from which they endeavour to depart. For instance, Nehru delineates the political disturbances in the Congress that reflected his anxiety. Similarly, Gandhi describes his health problems which he overcame by a disciplined diet (M. Gandhi, Autobiography 374-8). Thus these nationalists are unable to “Indianise autobiography without Westernising the Indian cultural tradition” (Parekh, Colonialism 290).

In Chapter 5, I have analysed Nehru’s ‘discovery’ of India motivated by the Oriental surveys and the study of the Hindu scriptures. Usually, Gandhi and Nehru have been studied as diametrically opposite personalities. However, I undertake a fresh analysis to point out their varied construction of India, which coalesce around essences that straitjacket the idea of a nation. Significantly, the nationalists’ search for the self implied a search for a national identity. Unlike Gandhi who relied upon Indian myths, Nehru tried to resolve his dilemma of the “queer mixture of the East and West” by incorporating history and myth (Nehru, Autobiography 596). It was in the history and
myth that the colonisers and the colonised tried to justify their ‘authentic’ accounts of India. For instance, Gandhi’s *Ramrajya* was a “political order located outside of history” (Khilnani, “Gandhi and History” 114). Gandhi’s reply to the chronology of history was in the affirmation of myths (Nandy, *Intimate Enemy* 55). Gandhi preferred to “play with historical events through gestures and actions” (Khilnani, “Gandhi and History” 113). This meant that the past events continued in the present time and could be activated through cultural symbols. For instance, Gandhi’s protest march, the fasts, penance and the outdated method of weaving were precolonial practices. The alternative record of the past opposed the unilinearity of historical events and sometimes referred to the Indian myths.

Finally, by way of conclusion, I sum up the main arguments of all the preceding chapters, stressing the underlying thesis that nationalism is Orientalism- in -reverse. I interrogate the reworking of Indian traditions in the construction of India which are very much in continuation of the Orientalist notion of ‘Indianess’, an exploration into possibilities that sustains the lost metaphysical past. In the light of the above arguments posited to analyse the link between the antithetical projects of nationalism and Orientalism, it is arguable that Nehru and Gandhi, as nationalists felt at liberty to fashion the future of India, but unlike the Orientalists, their dialogue is not with the West; it is with their fellow citizens. They accepted many of the Orientalist assumptions, but rejected the narratives which rendered the Indian past as a “tale of invasion, conquest, bloody warfare, Oriental despotism” (Lal 83). Thus the nationalist predicament centres on the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Orientalist essences. Nationalist resistance altered the dominating influences “into tools for expressing a deeply held sense of identity and cultural being” (Ashcroft 20).
Notes

1 The past memories have propelled the U.S. and its allies to propose holy crusades against the *jihadis*. The obsession with the word crusade is a hangover that survives until today.

2 See Peter Heehs, “Shades of Orientalism: Paradoxes and Problems in Indian Historiography,” *History and Theory* 42. 2 (2003) where Heehs draws attention to the various styles of Orientalist discourse.