Chapter 3

National Identity as Cultural Identity: Upadhyay's Political Thought

Introduction

Central to the Indian nationalist discourse of the late nineteenth century is the imagination and construction of a ‘national space.’ Nationalists imagined and constructed this national space, as distinct from the existing colonial space, in the diverse realms of the physical, metaphysical, religious, social, cultural and political. The emergence of the national space in the nationalist discourse coincides with the awakening of a new political consciousness and it marks out a distinctive narrative break in Indian history. We need to bear in mind the fact that the imagination of national space in the emergent nationalist thinking was not a monolithic entity. Rather, it was a complex ensemble which included the reinterpretation of India’s past, diagnostic investigations into India’s present degeneration, restructuring the present, contestations for the public sphere, clarification of India’s role and mission, and identity formation in terms of religion, race and caste. To put it differently, it is through the complex interpretation of India’s past and present that the notion of a distinct national space began to crystallize in the nationalist discourse. In this chapter the term national space denotes the complex of interpretations and the hermeneutical horizon in the nationalist discourse regarding India and its past within socio-cultural and political framework.

For many Bengali nationalists at the tail end of nineteenth century ‘nation’ was an ambiguous concept. Often ‘nation’ in the nationalist discursive practices coincided both with Bengal and with the territorial boundaries of British India. The early nationalists were more concerned about the contours of meaning and identity of the emerging national space than the territorial geographical dimensions of the national space. Carving out a national space out of colonial space meant investing it with a cultural identity and meaning. To put it differently, envisioning the nation as a pan-Indian entity is intimately tied to the production of meaning. During both pre-Swadeshi and Swadeshi periods, Bengali intellectuals like Upadhyay played
a significant role in the articulation of identity formation as well as the production of meaning in the emergent national space.

The questions this chapter seeks to explore are: how does Brahmabandhab Upadhyay envisage and interpret the national space? How does he interpret India and its past? How does he deal with the question of cultural and religious identity? Upadhyay wrote on a wide range of topics such as politics, Hinduism, Christianity, social issues, education, and culture. In spite of such diversity, at a deeper level we can detect a unifying thread in Upadhyay’s thought and writing; and that thread is precisely the imagined national space. Seen as an overarching conceptual category, the notion of national space brings into unity what might otherwise appear as disparate fragments in Upadhyay’s political thought. This Chapter proposes to delineate the complex nuances of Upadhyay’s nationalist thought through various stages of its development.

1. Framework of Upadhyay’s Nationalist Thought

As far the nationalist thought is concerned, we can see two distinct stages in Upadhyay’s political perspective. These two stages can be termed as pre-Swadeshi period and Swadeshi period. In the pre-Swadeshi stage Upadhyay is a moderate nationalist. Often he is even positive about the British presence in India during the pre-Swadeshi period. Yet, at the same time, Upadhyay is also critical of certain aspects of British colonialism during this stage. As we have already noted, it is with the Bengal Partition and the subsequent Swadeshi movement that Upadhyay becomes an extremist nationalist. Since we have already dealt with the Swadeshi phase of Upadhyay’s political extremism in the previous chapter here we shall focus on the broader framework of his nationalist thought.

1.1 Nationalism within Constitutional Framework

In the post Mutiny years a distinct development had been the adoption of Hindu cultural ethos within the nationalist framework. Nationalist consciousness began to acquire a measure of clarity in the second half of the nineteenth century. One component of this growing awareness was a great pride in the Indian past, especially the classical traditions of Hindu ethos.\(^1\) But such adoption also involved a paradox. On the one hand, the nascent nationalist consciousness embraced the heritage of Hindu culture as the focus of its identity and gloried in the Hindu past. On the other hand, as Raychaudhury points out, well into the 1870s the early

\(^1\) Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, xi.
nationalists “also rejoiced that India was part of a glorious, world-wide empire and nurtured hopes of a steady progress under Britain’s providential guidance.”

It is within such paradoxical stance that we need to understand Upadhyay’s perception of colonialism right up to Bengal partition in 1905. In 1898 he wrote an article which reflects the complete identification with the colonial powers: “In the glory and exaltation of the British people is our glory; in their dishonour is our dishonor; in their shame is our shame; with them we rise, with them we fall.” For instance an article titled “European Domination” published in 1900 reflects such paradox:

Our religion teaches us to submit with all our heart to the reigning power. It is sinful to treat the sovereign authority with scorn and contempt. Rebellion is a crime deserving the most grievous penalty. In spite of this precept we advisedly exhort our countrymen to raise a hue and cry against European domination and exert their utmost to overthrow the foreign yoke. No time is to be lost. Hundreds of volunteer corps are to be raised throughout India to fight the cause of independence. The most sanguinary war - a war to the knife - should be commenced without delay... Now that the iron is getting to be hot, we should be prepared to strike and should make no secret of our intentions.

Prior to 1905 Upadhyay’s nationalist thinking is rooted entirely within the framework of constitutional means. There is no question of disloyalty to the colonial powers arising in Upadhyay’s thinking at this point of time. As another article written in 1900 reveals the solution sought by him is by exerting ‘constitutional and moral pressure’ on the British government:

English fellow-subjects! Do not suspect us of disloyalty. To hear the very word pollutes the ear of an Indian. We are weak, we are poor. We cannot live without England. Loyalty is not a luxury with us; it is a necessity of our being. We quarrel with you because you are stolid and do not care to consider with deference our growing aspirations. You must and should remain supreme but we will make you, by constitutional and moral pressure, govern us through the counsels of our representatives.

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2 Tapan Raychaudhuri, Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal, 2.
As we have seen Upadhyay returned to India from England with considerable disillusionment and bitterness. Now on, through the pages of Sandhya he began his campaign against the British.

A decisive turn in Upadhyay’s nationalist thinking is taken with Bengal partition. As a radical nationalist, Brahmabandhab began to spell out in Sandhya the need for complete independence for India. The words used in Sandhya and Jugantar for this purpose were swadhinata, (Bengali word for freedom), and swaraj. As Peter Hees has noted, the word swaraj has an interesting history behind it. Shivaji and his successors had used the Sanskrit word swarajya, i.e., one’s ‘own kingdom or domain’ to designate the territories under their direct rule. This term swarajya was revived by Maharashtrian nationalists like B. G. Tilak in its abbreviated form, swaraj, which had a deliberately vague sense of ‘self-rule.’ By 1906 Swaraj had become the primary term of Indian nationalist discourse. Upadhyay wrote in Sandhya his vision of swaraj using apocalyptic and utopian imageries: “I see the fort of Svaraj built in various places. There shall be no connection with the foreigner. These forts will be purified by the incense of sacrifice, resounding with the cry of victory, filled to overflowing with corn and grain.”

During this stage Upadhyay’s political stance becomes radical. Upadhyay’s paper Sandhya had become very popular in Bengal with its earthy style and rustic humour. As Bipin Vihari Das Gupta, former editor of Bande Mataram, points out, “Sandhya became a most powerful vernacular organ of the new school of thought. Its style, its biting sarcasm, its refreshing wit, its ruthless criticism won for it a unique place in Bengali vernacular journalism.” According to historian Majumdar, through Sandhya, Upadhyay “created a new colloquial Bengali style suitable for the masses, and his message, put in an inimitable form of his own, had an immediate and profound appeal to all ranks.” As Animananda notes, “[t]he teacher and the pupils read it [Sandhya] at school; the coolie and carter read it in the street; they read it, laughed at it and not unfrequently sighed.” At day’s end people of Calcutta were anxiously waiting for a taste of Sandhya’s ‘inexhaustible fund of humour and its interesting verdict on

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6 Peter Hees, Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern History, 3.
7 Quoted by Animananda, The Blade, 137.
10 Animananda, The Blade, 134.
current questions. According to Majumdar, the writings of Bande Mataram edited by Aurobindo Ghosh, Sandhya, edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, and Jugantar, practically revolutionized the political attitude of Bengal.

1.2 Colonial Space vs. National Space

Upadhyay devoted two articles in 1901 on imperialism in which he engages in a critique of colonial ideology. There are some significant developments in these writings as far as Brahmabandhab’s political ideas are concerned. In these articles, for example, India’s problems are not seen primarily within the framework of Hindu worldview, but rather as the result of British imperialism. Further, the notions of self-government and freedom get more and more focused in these writings. In fact, for Upadhyay, self-government becomes the condition for the possibility of India’s progress. However, in these articles Upadhyay sees the British rule of India as a boon. He postulates the Anglo-Saxons as the mediators of modernity in the world; and India has profited considerably from the ‘civilizing’ mission of the British colonizers. In an article titled “Our Poverty” Brahmabandhab delineates the paradoxical situation of British colonialism:

It is undeniable that the Anglo-Saxon race forms the back-bone of modern civilization. Eliminate England from the era of modern culture and the wheel of time will be turned centuries back. What would be America, the hope and centre of the New Age, without her? The East, especially India, would lie in torpor but for the contact, though at times sanguinary and painful, with the English. The Anglo-Saxon is a noble race created to conquer and to rule. England’s mission is imperial. But it so happens that she often makes her imperialism the end and not a means to human progress. She conquers, governs and spreads enlightenment, but unfortunately at the expense of peoples inferior to her in might.\(^{13}\)

According to Upadhyay, India’s moral degeneration is because of the contact with a dominant nation. He admits that Indians ‘would have been dead long ago’ in the absence of ‘this living touch’ with the British and ‘new life, new vigour have been infused to our dying frame.’ However, according to Brahmabandhab, “the scope of the free play of our newly acquired activity is being steadily denied us.” He writes: “Safety of life and property guaranteed by Pax Britannica is a boon for which we shall always be grateful to England and

\(^{11}\) Bipin Vihari Das Gupta, “The Svadeshi Movement,” 142.

\(^{12}\) R. C. Majumdar, ed., Struggle for Freedom, 52.

ready to uphold her political supremacy in India. But England's sovereignty must be made compatible with the progress of our people."\textsuperscript{14} According to Brahmabandhab only self-governance can ensure India's progress:

There can be no progress until England gives us the privilege of self-government. Educated India is practically unanimous on this point. We must have a responsible share in the government of the country under the aegis of British Paramountcy. The heart of youthful India has been stirred up to secure this legitimate right, but has encountered a withering rebuff.\textsuperscript{15}

Upadhyay is critical of the double standard of the British with regard to freedom. "The government is beneficial," writes Brahmabandhab, "but the temperament of the Anglo-Saxon clogs the onward course of our downtrodden country. He loves freedom too much to give it to an inferior race. He must possess a thing wholly and not in common with others. He is too imperialistic to cooperate with a weaker party. He can patronize but not fraternise."\textsuperscript{16}

The notion of 'racial self-preservation' is very significant in Upadhyay's political thought in the sense that the integrity of Hindu society is seen as the need of the hour. He devoted considerable time and energy, through his journalistic engagements, elucidating the need to preserve the Hindu social integrity. In fact we do detect an element of obsession in his writings about the preservation of caste system which he finds absolutely essential for the racial self-preservation. In Upadhyay's political thought the notion of racial integrity is also intrinsically linked to the emergent process of nation-building. In the article Upadhyay enumerates the effects of colonial rule on Indians in the following manner:

In spite of this good will towards the permanence of British rule, India is a mass of seething discontent. We feel as if we have been shut up and hedged about. Our hearts pulsate with new hopes and aspirations, but they are being crushed under a heavy weight. The imperial nature of the Anglo-Saxon has pressed us tight and we fail for breath because we do not find field enough for the exercise of our youthful vigour. Hence this inanition, this poverty of thought and activity, notwithstanding paternal and beneficent legislations.\textsuperscript{17}

Perhaps one of the most significant effects of colonialism expressed by Brahmabandhab is the 'loss of self' which he puts in terms of the loss of masculinity. Interestingly Tagore uses the same terminology to express the loss of self under colonialism in his novel which captures Upadhyay's inner struggle. Upadhyay expresses his anguish of the loss of masculinity in the following manner: "We shall lose the spirit of manliness and self-help if England does not give up exclusive control and cooperate with us in the government of our country, and we shall be incurably impoverished if she does not accommodate herself to our aptitudes as well as failings."

1.3 National Space: Identity and Difference

Integral to the creation of the national space within the nationalist discourse is the enunciation of India's 'difference' with other nations and cultures. Articulation of dissimilarity entail a double dimension of forging both identity and difference: On the one hand, such differences mark out Indian national space from other national spaces as something unique. On the other hand, this differentiation strategy was central in forging collective identity in most nationalist discourses. Orientalists portrayed an image of India as ontologically different from the West and this image became crucial to the reconstruction of the national space in the Indian nationalist discourse. The writings of Max Müller in particular reflected an image of India as a land of lofty spirituality and as an embodiment of primordial community whose very existence symbolized an implicit critique of the West, the cultural 'other' of Europe. The idea of a lofty spiritually oriented India vis-à-vis a materialistically oriented West became part and parcel of the nationalist imagination. Indeed, there is an important corollary to this nationalist imagination. The materialist West was also seen as victorious, masculine and strong, whereas India, though spiritually superior to the West, was weak, passive and unorganized.

The articulation of such difference between India and Europe forms a key theme in the writings of Upadhyay. In several articles he accepts that each culture is unique and each

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18 Indranath, the protagonist of Tagore's Char Adhyay uses the same terminology to indicate the loss of self under British colonialism: "They [the British] had the power completely to crush out our manhood, but their better nature did not allow them to do it. For that I cannot but admire their manhood. No doubt that manhood is deteriorating by the continued exercise of irresponsible power all over their empire, and in such deterioration are being sown the seeds of their own downfall." Rabindranath Tagore, Four Chapters, 29.


20 Manu Goswami, Producing India (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004) 15.

nation is great in its own sphere. In "Modern Education and Hindu Thought," Upadhyay points out that each nation possesses its own peculiarities:

We believe that the Hindu race possesses noble susceptibilities, high aspirations, and speculative mode of thinking, peculiar to itself; but at the same time we hold that other nations are gifted as well in their own way. These national or racial peculiarities are not to exclude one another, but should be steadied and perfected by mutual adaptation and communication.\(^{22}\)

Upadhyay builds the national space within such a pluralistic perspective. It is important to note that prior to the *Swadeshi* movement Brahmabandhab envisages the possibility of mutual interaction between cultures with a view of enrichment. After laying the foundation for the Hindu uniqueness and identity Upadhyay specifies the reason for the ‘innate’ vigor of the Hindu race:

There is a common mode of thought which has more or less shaped Indian philosophies. This thought has flowed on uninterruptedly from the Vedic period, sometimes as a full-flooded stream, sometimes as an invisible undercurrent, down to the present age of Europeanization. To a great extent the longevity of the Hindu race may be attributed to the innate vigour of its thought.\(^{23}\)

"Where are the Egyptians, Phoenicians and Babylonians?" asks Upadhyay. "They were, but now they are not. But the Hindu persists in his existence notwithstanding tremendous convulsions, political, social, as well as religious."\(^{24}\) The continued existence of the Hindu race, for him, is the indication of the vitality which holds out the hope for future regeneration. He also sees an important mission for Hindu race in the future: "We believe Hindu thought will play as important a part in moulding the coming era as Greek thought did in forming Europe. We have been led to this conclusion, not by a spirit of vanity due to our belonging to the Hindu race but by careful study and sober thought."\(^{25}\)

In "European Domination," Upadhyay affirms plurality of cultures and says that 'each is great in its own sphere.' But note that for Upadhyay the need of reinforcing ‘indigenous’


ways in philosophy is more urgent than the 'agitation for political privileges.' He writes: "We do not at all insinuate that the Hindu system of thought is superior to that of Europe. Each is great in its own sphere. What we deplore is the domination of the latter over the former. Agitation to acquire political privileges is, no doubt necessary, but the movement to enable us to think things and their origin and relation in the indigenous way, is supremely important."^26 For Upadhyay, the Hindu thought is a lofty one, but under colonialism it has come under westernizing influences, thus threatening to erase the Hindu uniqueness and identity. In "European Domination" Brahmabandhab goes on to delineate the dialectics of 'difference' in the formation of national identity by comparing and contrasting the 'Hindu mind' with the 'European mind': "The Hindu mind has a natural aptitude to penetrate into the origin of things while the European mind is prone to see the relations of things." He describes the Hindu mode of perception:

Each and every phenomenon opens up to the Hindu intellect the vista of the absolute Reality existing by itself. The sunrise or the sunset, the zephyr or the cyclone, the rushing waters or the seven-tongued fire, are each like a transparent glass in which the Being of the formless, unrelated One appears mirrored, as it were, to the Hindu vision. A Hindu is not satisfied until he transcends all relations and perceives a pure Existence unfettered by the tie of interdependence, Intelligence beyond the limitations of subject and object, a Self-Sufficiency which reposes within itself without the necessity of any pilgrimage outside its Infinitude.^27

After having described the Hindu mode of apprehending reality Upadhyay goes on to compare and contrast the European mode of perceiving reality:

A European, on the contrary, sees the universe with its harmonies, diversities and symmetries, inter-relations and correlations, and rises to the notion of the Almighty Maker who presides over the cosmos and the supreme Mind who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked and who shows mercy to the penitent, but he seldom soars so high as to apprehend the Being who is more than a Maker or Mind.^28

The same Upadhyay, who vehemently wrote in the preceding paragraph that 'we do not at all insinuate that the Hindu system of thought is superior to that of Europe,' implicitly reverses his position: "Outside the pale of revelation there is not a single European philosopher of note

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who has arrived at the conception of the pure Absolute. The natural bias of a European can be best understood when he thinks unaided and uncontrolled by the influence of the revealed religion." This statement of Brahmabandhab regarding European philosophy is somewhat complex. In one shot Upadhyay is achieving a twofold objective. On the one hand he implicitly upholds the superiority of Hindu philosophy which had investigated the Absolute in a 'lofty' manner. On the other hand, he also engages in the critique of agnostic western philosophy which had grown outside the influence of Christianity and had become highly 'secularized.' He writes: "Kant, whose power of analysis is marvelous, has declared that the Absolute cannot be known by reason. According to Hegel, the Infinite, if not related to the finite, is equivalent to zero." Here, Upadhyay's critique of European philosophy is from the Hindu-Christian perspective.

For Upadhyay creation of a national space requires reinforcing 'Hindu mode' of thought which is now under threat of erosion. He writes: "We do really desire that Hindu thought should be steadied by European thought... But we do not wish the former [Hindu] to be annihilated or disfigured by the latter." Upadhyay now specifies the uniqueness of the 'Hindu mind' in terms of Advaita philosophy: "The Hindu mind reached the loftiest height attainable by human reason in the discovery that the phenomenal existence of this universe depends upon an eternal existence which has no necessity to be correlated with temporal entities, but is self-satisfied. This truth is the very life of the Hindu race and cannot be parted with or compromised on any account." Indeed, for Upadhyay, the Hindu race having reached the 'loftiest height attainable by human reason' forms an important dimension in the national identity creation.

We can see the theme of identity-difference scattered through Upadhyay's journal articles and letters. In several articles, Europe, the cultural 'other' of the East is seen as predominantly a materialistically oriented culture. European culture, for Upadhyay, is 'represented by excessive commerce, over centralized capitalism, grinding competition, earth-hunger, love of comfort and enjoyment - all of which are pervaded by the spirit of worldliness and selfishness.' Several letters written during his stay in England reflect the

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theme of identity and difference. We shall briefly focus on how, in some of these letters, he compares and contrasts the way the English and Indians treat nature. He begins the long and drawn out comparison by describing the way in which the English treat nature: “Close observation will show that for the Englishman, be he peasant, merchant or professor, prowess is all important. Everyone is determined to subject Nature to his or her use.” In the letter from Oxford he goes on to narrate the English love for adventure:

If the English decide that on a certain date a flag must be planted on some lofty snow-clapped mountain-peak, then sure enough on that very day the lion-ensign will flutter in that inaccessible place. Live or die - they've got to see what's on the other side of the North Pole! How many ships have disappeared in the icy depths, how many men have perished, yet their resolve to keep exploring holds firm... The whole race is burning with the fires of avarice.\(^1\)

Indeed, behind such spirit, Upadhyay admits, there is ‘real self-denying spirit to overcoming nature in this way.’ He compares the English manner of dealing with nature with that of the Hindu:

The Hindu’s principal ideal is withdrawal from action (nibritti). The highest disciplined path (sadhan) for the Hindu is to conquer Nature without selfish desire (niskam), to have the lordship accrue to one. If you want to be lord, you must be lordly. He who has nothing but needs is not entitled to lordship. But he, who by virtue of the surplus or abundance of his own entitlement has transcended need, is truly ruler; he is lord, power’s master.\(^2\)

“What’s the point,” asks Upadhyay in the letter, “of conquering Nature for one’s use, of enslaving her, if without her one loses one’s peace of mind? Such victory - hardly victory, but defeat - is really to acknowledge abject servitude.” Upadhyay points out the futility of such a conquest and victory: “…If, having shed blood through a rain of cannon balls, I amass gold from the very depth of the desert, and if I use that gold in terrible strife for my own ends, and if that gold then causes conflict, and I lose it, and suffer the gall of that loss, where is the


difference between slavery and human prowess?"\textsuperscript{33} Brahmabandhab describes the Hindu’s relationship with nature in the following way:

The Hindu doesn’t find it congenial to increase the intensity of his longings through the various constituents of Nature. The Hindu is wont to function in conjunction with Nature, in a detached manner. He is the noblest of men for the Hindu who, having based himself on the most sublime, boundless, all-encompassing Unity, then wanders freely as a lord amidst the trifling manifestations of plurality. Nature serves such a one, no doubt, yet he himself is not caught up in Nature’s ties. He is able to carry on secure in himself, having accounted all pleasure, all worldly power as nothing. Nature’s wealth is for him but a superfluity, of no consequence whether it’s there or not...where one is fully secure in oneself, there can be no need for extraneous things. The Hindu’s ideal is to attain selfless lordship.\textsuperscript{34}

In the next letter from Oxford he wrote: “To tell the truth, I don’t like the vain display of English civilization one little bit. All this manhandling of Nature is getting on my nerves.”\textsuperscript{35} Hidden behind these comparisons is the effort to sift through the distinctive elements of two contrasting worldviews of the rulers and the ruled. In Upadhyay’s interpretation the Englishman, the ruler, is caught up in the web of attachment and worldly ties whereas the Hindu, the ruled, who is beyond such worldly ties, soars in freedom. By a clever inversion of preferences and values, on the one hand, Upadhyay shows that though ruled by the English, the Hindu is potentially free because of his approach to reality. On the other hand, the English though rulers, are caught up in slavery. The English desire to conquer, govern and amass wealth is his bondage. In Upadhyay’s view, the Hindu worldview is far superior to that of the English.

2. Upadhyay’s Interpretation of National Identity

Integral to the creation of national space in Upadhyay’s thought was the question of national identity. The configurations of this national identity are not entirely clear at this stage of nascent nationalism. This identity oscillates between regional and the wider ‘Indian’ identity. The key ingredients in shaping the national identity consist in the diagnostic quest to the present degeneration of India and the interpretation of India and its past.


2.1 Diagnosis of India’s Degeneration

Upadhyay devoted considerable time and energy in showing the causes of India’s degeneration. In an article titled “Degeneracy of India,” (1897) Upadhyay locates the decline of India in Hindu worldview. It is important to note the change in perspective in Brahmobandhab in locating the source of India’s decline. He situates India’s decadence not so much in the political realm, rather in the way Hinduism has interpreted reality. He poses the question of India’s decline and immediately contrasts the present state with its past glory:

Why has India been laid so low? Has not her Maker adorned her with many precious gifts? Her power of seeing straight into the inner nature of things, of soaring high above sickening details into the peaceful region of unity, is unparalleled. Her tenderness and mildness is like that of a woman. Her chivalry is the theme of poets like Valmiki and Vyasa. She has been lodged in a garden of delight. Her hoary mountains, romantic valleys, magnificent rivers, fertile soil - are not they special gifts of love? How then has she come to such a pitiful condition? What can be more humiliating than the fact that she cannot govern herself?°

He attributes India’s degeneracy to the traditional Hindu understanding of karma: “What is the reason for her fall, her abuse of so many precious gifts? One of the most potent reasons which have wrought her downfall is her doctrine of karma. In her very youth she was most unfortunately bound with this fetter and her progress was cut short.” He explains the essence of the law of karma: ‘As a man sows, so he reaps.’ "It manifests," writes Upadhyay, “the justice of God who renders to every man according to his works.” According to Brahmobandhab, the misapplied doctrine of karma has been the cause of India’s woes. He clarifies:

Indian philosophers have jumped from the premise of karmic law to the unwarrantable conclusion that there can be no vicarious suffering, that each individual bears his own burden. The noble privilege of feeling and suffering for another, which exalts man to the likeness of him whose essence is love, has been declared by the Hindu religion to be a chimera. Man has been made an unfeeling machine.°

Upadhyay points out that since the doctrine of karma does not foster self-transcendence, responsibility and the virtue of self-sacrifice have been absent in India. More importantly, for

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Upadhyay, there is another crucial implication of the karma doctrine: “The cohesive power of moral relationship which binds human society into an organic whole, has been destroyed.” He goes on to compare the misapplied law of karma to ‘a vampire sucking the very life-blood of India.’ According to Brahmabandhab, the law of karma, as understood by Indian philosophy, leads to despair and darkness because the doctrine holds that the present individual existence of man in bondage and sin is the result of a previous bondage, and the previous one to another one before that, and so on ad infinitum. He goes on to describe the implications of the doctrine in the following manner:

Then the legitimate conclusion is that man is eternally in bondage. And that which is eternal is necessary. The state of bondage, being necessary to human existence, cannot be removed. The Hindu religion which teaches that man is eternally a bondsman, a slave to sin, plunges its votaries into despair. This despairing thought has darkened the mind and heart of India and dulled her sense of sin, for who can bear the idea that one’s nature is irredeemably sinful?

Indeed, at this stage, Upadhyay’s reading of Indian decline is from a Catholic perspective. He comes back after six months to the same topic in Sophia under the title, “Why we are fallen” (1898). Here again Upadhyay’s diagnosis of Indian decline is along the lines of the previous article. He writes:

India has fallen. She has passed centuries in a state of utter degradation. Thanks to “Pax Britannica” that she has, after all, been blest with safety of life and property. But has the English Raj raised India from her fallen state and made her great? How can it? India must be raised by her own children. We should not depend upon others for the attainment of national greatness. Greatness is growth and not a mechanical exaltation. England can give us opportunities - she has already given us many: may God bless her - for the free exercise of our activity, but if we have no self-reliance and do not exert ourselves we shall remain as degraded as we are now till the end of time.

Here, along with the notion of Indian decline, he introduces a significant idea, namely, self-reliance; India ought to be saved by Indians themselves. After expressing his optimism regarding India’s regeneration and restoration to its past glory, Upadhyay lists four reasons for the present degenerated condition of his country. The first reason given for India’s

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degadenation consists in worshipping ‘finite manifestations of God as God.’ He writes: “The first blunder that the Hindu race has perpetrated consists in upholding a false philosophy which teaches that men … should honour the finite manifestations of God as God.”42 The second blunder, according to Brahmabandhab, consists in upholding the doctrine that man is God, that the perfect has become imperfect.43 The third reason given by Upadhyay for India’s degeneration is ignoring sin or moral guilt. As an example of this disregard for sin, in the same article Upadhyay quotes Swami Vivekananda’s statement in the World Religion Parliament: “It is a libel to call man a sinner.”44 The fourth blunder is the perversion of the law of karma. We need to remember that these articles are written at the height of Brahmabandhab’s religious activism as a Catholic.

2.2 Interpretation of India and Its Past
We find one of the earliest comprehensive interpretations of Upadhyay about India and its past, in an article titled “National Greatness,” which was originally a public address given by him on 8 July 1896 in Karachi. In this article he focuses on ‘the elementary qualifications that befit a nation to compete for the acquisition of greatness.’ Dwelling upon the initial conditions that a nation must fulfill for greatness, Upadhyay considers the ‘present state’ of India. More to the point, he attempts to identify ‘the fundamental defects which have arrested the march of the Indian people as a whole towards the goal of greatness.’45 However, before explaining the ‘substratum’ of national greatness, he asks a series of questions:

Does greatness consist in grand conquests, forced annexations, land-grabbing and infinite earth-hunger? Does it consist in retaining and feeding millions of idlers armed cap-a-pie ready at a moment’s notice to besmear the mother earth with the blood of

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42 Upadhyay writes further: “This is a monumental error, nay, a crime. Human reason must begin with the infinite and end with the infinite… This blunder must be rectified; this national crime must be expiated. Brahmns and Chandals, philosophers and peasants, should join hand in hand and heart to worship in spirit and truth the timeless infinite spirit.” B. Upadhyay, “Why we are Fallen,” J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-I, 286.

43 The underlying idea behind ‘man is God’ is the Advaita notion ultimately derived from Chandogya Upanishad (VI, 8), “Tat tvam asi’ or Thou art That. Cf. Max Muller, The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy (1899. Reprint, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1928) 122.’ Similarly, Upadhyay alludes to the Hindu notion of avatara, when he denounces the notion that ‘the perfect has become imperfect.’

44 In 1896 Upadhyay had denounced Vivekananda’s interpretation of human condition in the following manner: “To the shame of mankind, especially of India, it was declared by an Indian in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago that “it is a libel to call man a sinner.” B. Upadhyay, “Vedic Idea of Sin,” Sophia-monthly (July 1896), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-I, 274.

her own children? Does it consist in getting the largest share of nuts when others have taken the trouble of climbing the tree and getting fearfully scratched? Does it consist in illuminating the Dark Continent with the flashing sparkles of rum and whisky and blackening the gorgeous lands of the East with the dark soot of gunpowder?... Do steam engines, electric telegraphs, smoking chimneys and gigantic joint-stock companies make up greatness? They may or may not. They may be the products of accompaniments of greatness but they do not form its substratum, its essence. 

Obviously, these rhetorical questions of Upadhyay and the implicit answers are meant as a taunt at the exploitative character of European colonialism in Asia and Africa. According to Brahmabandhab, "[g]reatness consists in a passionate love for some idea." "I do not mean by the term "idea" some fancy or whim," clarifies Upadhyay, "but an eternal verity, a part and parcel of the Universal Mind which manifests or symbolizes itself through particular objects. It is the passion for such an idea that makes a nation great. Idea rules the world and not brute force." To put it differently, for Upadhyay, greatness consists in being gripped by an 'ideal.'

Upadhyay focuses on the reason for the greatness of England. According to him, England 'possesses unquestionable greatness' in spite of many deficiencies. England's greatness, Upadhyay notes, 'is the result of her love of order.' As he points out, "England's constitutional progress ... represents steady and orderly growth." With a tinge of English humour Upadhyay goes on to describe the characteristic passion of John Bull, a generic name for the English: "Hurry, expedition, sudden change, is extremely repugnant to John Bull. Even he drives away or beheads his monarchs in an orderly way. He always adheres to order at any cost; and this passion has made him and his country great.'

Next, Upadhyay dwells on the greatness of India. At this point, it is very important to note that for Brahmabandhab, who follows the hermeneutical framework of the Orientalists, contemporary India presents a sorry picture in comparison with the 'golden era' of ancient India. Upadhyay writes:

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47 As an example Upadhyay portrays a man who is gripped with an ideal: "Look at the ill-clad, slim, bony, jaunty man standing in the midst of a national assembly, cheered, applauded, nay worshipped by thousands. How is it that he has superseded power beauty, riches and has become the cynosure of all eyes? Because he is a man inspired by some idea. He has seen in the mind of his mind, felt in the heart of his heart, an ideal." B. Upadhyay, "National Greatness," J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 61-62.

Everyone will admit that ancient India was great. Why was she great? She was enamoured of an idea, the idea of the Infinite and Absolute. Her sages speculated about the Infinite and Absolute, not for the fun of playing mental gymnastics, but because it was a matter of life and death to them. They practiced torturing austerities, they emaciated their bodies with the most rigorous fasting, they controlled their respiration for the purpose of withdrawing their minds from the region of relationship and raising their souls to the abode of the Absolute. Their scriptures, rites and ceremonies, their system of philosophy, their cult and discipline, all tended to the elevation of the human mind towards the infinite Being. Aberrations there were and extravagances, but all showed the struggle of their heart to possess the Absolute.

Following the Orientalist hermeneutics, especially that of Max Muller, Upadhyay suggests that ‘in ancient India the natural reason of man reached its culmination in regard to the speculation about the Infinite.’ After having presented the ideal that gripped ancient India, Brahmabandhab asks: “Have we any ruling idea that governs us? Have we inherited the love of the Infinite from our ancestors? If not, vanity of vanity, all is vanity.” For Upadhyay, in the absence of that ideal, ‘we are like unfruitful trees that will be hewn down to be burnt; we are like those blossoms that are born only to be trampled upon.’ The article seems to suggest that for Upadhyay contemporary India has not yet been gripped with an ideal, for he writes: “Children of India must be inspired with some divine idea before they can be great. India must partake of the Universal Mind to be fashioned according to it to rise in the scale of nations.” Brahmabandhab does not clarify the meaning of partaking in the ‘Universal Mind.’ In this article he suggests that India needs to fulfill three conditions before it can become great: (1) self-respect (2) respect for women (3) ‘bearing one another’s burden.’

From the perspective of investigation we shall focus on the most important aspect of Upadhyay’s interpretation of India and its past, namely, ‘self-respect.’ According to Brahmabandhab “[s]elf-respect can be effectively engendered by dwelling upon the glories of the past.” When we are ignorant of Indian history how can we dwell upon the past glory, asks Upadhyay. He points out this lack of appreciation of Indian history by juxtaposing several examples:

Our students, our historians, can accurately describe the battles of Marathon and Salamis and the exploits of the Greeks in their encounter with the Persians, but they have scarcely heard of the chivalrous deeds of Puru when he fought against the great

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Alexander. They know how the women of Carthage cut their hair for the purpose of supplying cordage for warships, but they do not know how Rajput women lighted up a funeral pyre and jumped into it, one by one, cheerfully and heroically, to save themselves from being violated by the Mlecchas. They will tell you how the Greeks died to a man in the pass of Thermopylae, but they are totally ignorant of a similar incident in the siege of Chitor.\footnote{Italics added. B. Upadhyay, “National Greatness,” J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., \textit{TWBU-II}, 63.}

Before proceeding further it is important to note one of the examples given by Upadhyay regarding Rajput women lighting up the funeral pyre and jumping into it. By mid nineteenth century Indian nationalist historians began to write Indian history and many of these historians accepted the broad hermeneutical and historiography framework already worked out by imperial historians.\footnote{As Partha Chatterjee points out, the “identification in European historiography between the notions of country or people, sovereignty, and statehood is now lodged firmly in the mind of the English-educated Bengali.” Partha Chatterjee, \textit{The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories}, 95.} An important element of colonial historiography has been the periodization of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and Christian periods and the portrayal of Muslims as the enemies of Hindus. Both in the colonial and in the nationalist history appear the “stereotypical figure of “the Muslim,” endowed with a “national character: fanatical, bigoted, warlike, dissolute, and cruel.”\footnote{Partha Chatterjee, \textit{The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories}, 102.} Upadhyay’s example of Rajput women can be found in the book of Taranicharan, Bengali nationalist historian titled, \textit{Bharatharser Ithias} (Indian History) written in 1858. The context was the Arab invasion of Sindh in 712 A.D. under the leadership of Kasim, nephew of the governor of Basra (modern Iraq) who wanted to claim damages for an Arab ship which had been seized at an Indian port near modern Karachi. The battle was between Kasim and Dahir, king of Sindh.\footnote{W. W. Hunter, \textit{A Brief History of the Indian People} (Edinburgh: Morrison & Gibb, 1881) 98-99; G. U. Pope, \textit{Longman’s School History of India} (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892) 11.}

Taranicharan describes the outcome of the battle as follows:

Finally, after displaying much heroism, [king Dahir] was killed at the hands of the enemy. His capital was besieged, but Dahir’s wife, displaying a courage similar to her husband’s, continued to defend the city. In the end, food supplies ran out. Deciding that it was preferable to die rather than submit to the enemy, she instructed the inhabitants of the city to make necessary arrangements. Everybody agreed; everywhere, pyres were lit. After the immolations [of the women], the men, completing their ablutions, went out sword in hand and were soon killed by the Muslims.\footnote{Taranicharan Chattopadhyay, \textit{Bharatharser Ithias}, Vol. I (1858. Reprint, Calcutta, 1878) p. 38. Quoted by Partha Chatterjee, \textit{The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories}, 103.}
Significantly, in Taranicharan’s account there is no mention of what Upadhyay makes of Rajput women’s motive of immolation to save themselves from ‘the violation of the Mlecchas.’ Perhaps, it is taken for granted by Upadhyay that the Mlecchas are the violators of women by default. The same scene with minor variations can be found in W. W. Hunter’s history book written in 1881. In his narrative Hunter highlights the valour of Hindus and describes the Hindu bravery in the following manner:

The despairing valour of the Hindus struck the invaders with wonder. One Rajput garrison preferred utter extermination to submission. They raised a huge funeral pyre, upon which the women and children first threw themselves. The men having bathed, took solemn farewell of each other, throwing open the gates, rushed upon the weapons of the besiegers, and perished to a man.56

These details are given also in Elphinstone Mountstuart’s *The History of India* (1905) where the source is given as James Todd’s *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, or the Central and Western Rajput States of India* (1829-32). As Partha Chatterjee points out, what is a story from Rajput folklore in Todd, having entered modern historiography in Elphinstone [and Hunter] as the slaughter of a “Rajput tribe by Mahometans” becomes in Taranicharan an episode in history of the resistance by “Indians” to Muslim conquest.57 For Upadhyay too, the Rajput women who jump ‘cheerfully and heroically’ into the funeral pyre ‘to save themselves from being violated by the Mlecchas,’ become symbols of Hindu resistance to Muslim invasion.

From the first decades of nineteenth century Bengali nationalist historians like Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, Kshetranath Bandyopadhyay, Krishnachandra Ray, Kshirodchandra Raychudhuri, Taranicharan, began the interpretation of Indian history often basing on puranic chronology, Mughal chronicles, scraps of hazy information and folklore as authentic history of India.58 By the closing decades of the nineteenth century the nationalist interpretation of Indian history was well entrenched in Bengal. According to such nationalist interpretation,

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58 For a detailed history of Bengali nationalist historiography, see, Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. 
the history of the ‘nation’ was glorious and it abounded in wealth, natural resources, wisdom, philosophy and religiosity. In the nationalist reading of history, the decadence began to set in with the Muslim invasion. Invariably in most of nationalist account the nation is seen in a decadent state, a state of affairs made worse by British colonial rule. For the Indian nationalists reminiscence of the golden era of ancient India offered a glimmer of hope in the present context. Partha Chatterjee points out that this “nation was sometimes called Bengali, sometimes Hindu, sometimes Arya, sometimes Indian, but the form of history remained the same.”

It is against this nationalist background of reinterpretation of Indian history Brahmanandhab writes about the need to be gripped by an ideal:

When we study the history of our past we shall be able to realize that ruling idea which has all along dominated the head and heart of India, her peculiar virtue and aspiration. Then shall we know that she has a special function to perform in bringing about the consummation of this little globe of ours and its denizens. Then shall we find India had a status which no other country has. Then shall self-respect be engendered in the bosom of the now degraded and degenerate Indians.

For Upadhyay as well as for other Indian nationalists the Indian classical past remained the ideal to which India must return, if it were to regain greatness. For Upadhyay, like Vivekananda, India has a mission to fulfill. At this point in time, this mission is in the intellectual realm and in the realm of ‘ideas.’ It is important to note that this mission is directly linked to the classical past of India which is seen as the ‘golden’ era. Familiarity with this golden past is the condition for the possibility of India’s future greatness. But as far as Upadhyay is concerned, India ought to be gripped with that ideal before it can dispense its mission.

2.3 Nationalism and Masculine Ideal
At this point it may be fruitful to focus briefly on the masculine ideal exemplified in the Kshatriya ideal which had gripped Upadhyay right from his younger days. Indeed, among the nationalists Brahmanandhab was not alone who looked up to such Kshatriya ideal of masculinity, strength and power. In his younger days Gandhi too was fascinated by this ideal and led him to eat meat. Gandhi’s friend had persuaded him to eat meat with the following logic: “We are a weak people because we do not eat meat. The English are able to rule over

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us, because they are meat eaters.” Gandhi informs us that the well known Gujarati poet and patriot Narmadasankar Lalshankar Dave’s (1833-1866) couplet about the Englishman was in vogue in his younger days: “Behold the mighty Englishman/He rules the Indians small/Because being a meat eater/He is five cubits tall.” Gandhi gradually became convinced that ‘meat-eating was a duty’ and with considerable difficulty he managed to eat the meat cooked by his friend. Nandy explains the nationalist attraction towards the masculine/Kshatriya ideal during colonialism:

In the colonial culture, identification with the aggressor bound the rulers and the ruled in an unbreakable dyadic relationship. The Raj saw Indians as crypto-barbarians who needed to further civilize themselves. It saw British rule as an agent of progress and as mission. Many Indians in turn saw their salvation in becoming more like the British... [Indians] did resurrect the ideology of the martial races latent in the traditional Indian concept of statecraft and gave the idea a new centrality. Many nineteenth-century Indian movements of social, religious and political reform - and many literary and art movements as well - tried to make Ksatriyahood the ‘true’ interface between the rulers and ruled as a new, nearly exclusive indicator of authentic Indianness.

The fascination of the masculine/Kshatriya ideal also needs to be located against the widespread colonial-Orientalist depiction of Hindus as effeminate. Nandy notes: “Like many other social reformers and political leaders of his time, Bhavanicharan believed that there is direct relationship between cultural practices of the British and their political success; that if Indians could somehow model themselves on the British, political success would automatically follow.” To put it differently, nationalists like Upadhyay were trying to play the game with the rules set up by the British. Many nationalists try to beat the British power...


63 In his Autobiography Gandhi writes: “It began to grow on me that meat-eating was good, that it would make me strong and daring, and that if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome.” M. K. Gandhi, An Autobiography or the Story of my Experiments with Truth, 35.


65 Rev. W. Ward wrote: “In short, the characters of the gods, and the licentiousness which prevails at their festivals, and abounds in their popular works, with the enervating nature of the climate, have made the Hindoos the most effeminate and corrupt people on earth.” Rev. W. Ward, A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos: Including A Minute Description of Their Manners and Customs, and Translation From Their Principal Works (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817) p. xciv.

66 Ashis Nandy, The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self, 57-58.
symbolized by masculinity by adopting the posture of Indian masculine ideal of kshtradrharma. Nandy writes: "Like Vivekananda and unlike Gandhi, he [Upadhyay] never quite grew out of the belief." In later life Upadhyay would champion a brand of nationalism bordering on terrorism and violence. All these 'masculine' strategies against the British were doomed to fail. Interestingly, Gandhi, a master political strategist, refused to play the game by the rules set up by the British and set up his own rules. By a clever strategy Gandhi inverted the British equation of power with masculinity and violence. And the British lost out against Gandhian strategy of non-violence.

3. Upadhyay: Cultural Nationalism
In this section we shall focus specifically on the creation of Indian identity in the context of emergent nationalism. One of the key aspects consists in the fact that the nationalists like Upadhyay engaged in carving out a national space out of the existing colonial space. However, this national space had to be invested with a definite identity since the imagined nation in the emergent nationalist discourse had to be different from the existing colonial space. Here, religious and cultural dimensions played a significant role in the creation of identity in the emergent national space.

3.1 Nationalism as Cultural Imagination
In its broadest sense, nationalism is an ideological movement that draws upon national identity in order to achieve certain political goals. In forging this national identity, in most cases, as history testifies, culture plays a key role. Amilcar Cabral (1924-73), who was a political theorist and a major figure in the struggle against colonialism in Africa, writes:

The fact that independence movements are generally marked, even in their early stages, by an upsurge of cultural activity has led to the view that such movements are preceded by a "cultural renaissance" of the subject people. Some go as far as to suggest that culture is one means of collecting together a group, even a weapon in the struggle for independence.

67 Ashis Nandy, The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self, 58.
68 For the Gandhian inversion of the masculine ideal, see, Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, 48-55.
70 Amilcar Cabral, "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle," pp. 55-61 in Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality, eds., Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Massachusetts, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 56. Cabral was influential throughout the
National identity creation has sought the help of religious identity in many countries including India. Religious identity and affiliation have often played crucial role in the national identity creation from the inception of Indian nationalism. In the nineteenth century as it is today, the boundaries between religion and culture had been thin. According to Juergensmeyer religious nationalists 'are individuals with both religious and political interests.' In this context W. Pinch has suggested that "given the degree to which religion obtruded into the political process in colonial India, studies of political action predicated on religious institutions can and should be complemented by inquiries into the political meaning of religion." As Isaiah Berlin points out, there are "nationalists who see in the political power of a nation the sole source of spiritual life. Such persons maintain that extreme and 'frightful' measures needed for protecting the state or the church or the national culture in moments of acute crisis may be justified, since the ruin of these institutions may fatally damage the indispensable framework of all other values." When we investigate Upadhyay's nationalist thought, the 'political meaning of religion' assumes a special significance in the context of identity creation.

3.2 Upadhyay and Cultural Nationalism

A question can be raised here: can we call Upadhyay's nationalism, 'religious nationalism'? To answer this question we need to understand Upadhyay's conception of 'religion.' For Upadhyay, it is Hinduism which has provided the foundations for the creation of Indian civilization. That being said, it must be noted that for Upadhyay, 'Hinduism' remains a cultural system rather than a faith based system like Christianity and Islam. Right through his life he had maintained this distinction. What is usually designated under monolithic 'Hindu Religion' by others, Upadhyay prefers to call 'Hindu thought,' Hindu Varnasramadharma, Hindu philosophy and 'Hindu' way of life; he does not call Hinduism a 'religion.' We shall see shortly the distinction made by Upadhyay between Hinduism and Christianity in terms of

world as an outstanding theorist of anti-Imperialist struggle and for his insistence on grounding ideas in the careful study of a given social reality. The quote is taken from his speech which was delivered in 1972, a year before his assassination by Portuguese agents.


'natural' and 'supernatural' religion. For him, Christianity is a religion and the truest religion is, indeed, Catholicism. From this perspective it seems reasonable to suggest that Upadhyay's nationalism could be termed more correctly as cultural nationalism rather than religious nationalism.

However, when we speak of Upadhyay's nationalism as cultural nationalism, some qualification is required here. Various aspects, such as spirituality, philosophy, ways of life, Hindu 'thought,' caste system and even the racial identity are subsumed in what Upadhyay calls 'Hinduism.' It was Rajaram Mohan Roy who coined the word Hinduism in 1816 and it soon became popular. Hinduism, in spite of huge internal differentiations and regional variations, came to be equated to not only as a 'religion' similar to Christianity and Islam, but also began to be projected as a World Religion by the tail end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the process by which Hinduism came to be seen as a 'religion' is by no means a simple process; complex and multiple mechanisms had contributed to it. This process itself had begun, inadvertently though, in the late eighteenth century Orientalists-administrators like Colebrooke, Halhed, Wilkins and William Jones. Added to this process was the administrative measure such as the introduction of the Hindu personal law, a process which had its beginning in the administrative measures taken by William Hastings in 1772. Further, the census which began in the mid-nineteenth century further contributed to the perception of Hinduism as a monolithic 'religion' when the population had to be categorized according to religious adherence. Thus, in spite of internal differentiation and regional variations, by the end of the nineteenth century Hinduism began to be considered 'a' religion like Christianity and Islam.

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74 The Oxford Dictionary traces the first use of the word 'Hinduism' to 1829 reference in the Bengalee (Vol. 45): "Almost a convert to their goodly habits and observances of Hindooism." The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1933] 1961) p. 293. This information seems to be incorrect. As far as documentary evidence is concerned, Rajaram Mohun Roy was the first one to use the term 'Hinduism.' The word 'Hindooism' appears in Roy's Introduction to the translation of Yajurveda written in 1816. Roy writes: "For the chief part of the theory and practice of Hindooism, I am sorry to say, is made to consist in the adoption of a peculiar mode of diet; the least aberration from which (even though the conduct of the offender may in other respects be pure and blameless) is not only visited with the severest censure, but actually punished by exclusion from society of his family and friends." Raja Rammohun Roy, 'Introduction' to the translation of Yajurveda written in 1816. Roy writes: "For the chief part of the theory and practice of Hindooism, I am sorry to say, is made to consist in the adoption of a peculiar mode of diet; the least aberration from which (even though the conduct of the offender may in other respects be pure and blameless) is not only visited with the severest censure, but actually punished by exclusion from society of his family and friends." Raja Rammohun Roy, 'Introduction' to the "Translation of the ISHOPANISHAD, one of the chapters of YAJUR VED: According to the commentary of the celebrated SHANKAR-ACHARYA: Establishing the unity and incomprehensibility of the Supreme Being; and that His worship alone can lead to Eternal Beatitude," in The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy, Vol. I, ed., Jogendra Chunder Chose (First published in 1906. Reprint, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1982) 73-74.

Though, evidences would suggest that it is more appropriate to call Upadhyay’s brand of nationalism cultural nationalism rather than religious nationalism, his cultural nationalism shows the same characteristic features shown by what is usually termed as ‘religious’ nationalism. While Upadhyay considered Hinduism as a socio-cultural entity, as we have noted earlier, the same phenomenon or various aspects of that phenomenon, is termed by others as ‘religion,’ or as ‘religious.’ Keeping in mind Upadhyay’s own understanding of ‘Hinduism’ we can still focus on what might be called the ‘religious’ dimensions of his cultural nationalism. Thus, those aspects which Upadhyay dealt with in his writings such as spirituality, social dimensions of Hinduism, worship, Hindu and Christian doctrinal issues and interpretations of religions can be subsumed under the heading ‘religious.’ However we need to respect Upadhyay’s own interpretation of Hinduism since it involves significant implications in terms of identity.

In delineating his nationalist thought we have noted the intrinsic connection between nationalism and Hinduism. In Upadhyay’s thought cultural nationalism and Hindu nationalism merge into a single unity. As Juergensmeyer points out, for many of the religious nationalists there is no clear distinction between religion and politics and that the distinction itself is a mark of Western ways of thinking. Religious nationalists ‘see a deficiency in society that is both religious and political in character, one that requires a response that is religious as well as political.’ The merger of cultural and religious nationalism becomes more articulate later in Gandhian nationalist thought.

4. Nationalism: Hermeneutical Horizon

It is important to locate Upadhyay’s nationalist thought against the background of the wider conceptual and theoretical dimensions of nationalism. A number of scholars such as Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawn have pointed out the contingent and constructed nature of nation and nationalism. Such a perspective stands in contrast with absolutist perspective which portrays nation and nationalism as a historical necessity. Those absolutist perspectives which

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57 "For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life; politics were the arena of public interest; without the former the latter would become debased." T. N. Madan, "Secularism in its Place," *Secularism and its Critics*, ed., Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) 305.
portrait nation and nationalism in terms of historical necessity also have manifested extreme
tendencies. A clear case of such extreme nationalist tendencies can be seen in Nazi ideology
which led to the extermination of millions of innocent people. It would be a mistake to
consider such ideologies as a thing of the past; such ideologies are alive even today, in
countries like India. There are nationalist ideological strands in India beginning from the
second half of the nineteenth century which portrayed minority communities as evil and alien
to the ‘motherland.’ In this section we shall focus on the conceptual and theoretical
dimensions of the phenomenon of nationalism.

4.1 Nationalism: Conceptual Perspectives
According to Gellner, modern world takes the centralized State for granted, but it is not
impossible to imagine a social situation in which the State is absent. “By contrast, the idea of
a man without a nation seems to impose a far greater strain on the modern imagination.”
“A man without a nation,” writes Gellner, “defies the recognized categories and provokes
revulsion.” The ideas of nation and nationality have become so naturalized that they are
taken for granted as common sense. As Gellner points out notions of nation and nationality
are not intrinsic attributes of human beings but are historical creations:

> A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in
> any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does from time to time occur, but
> only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind. All this seems
> obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very
> obviously true is indeed an aspect, to perhaps the very core, of the problem of
> nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now
come to appear as such.

If ‘nation’ has come to appear as natural and even as a necessary aspect of human society, it
is firmly embedded in historical, political and economic dynamics of the modern world.
There is no denying the fact that such dynamics are part and parcel of historical evolution of
human beings. But they are by no means ‘absolute’ as some forms of nationalist ideologies
purport it to be. Gellner describes the ‘relative’ nature of nation and nationalism:

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79 Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 6.
80 Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 6.
In fact, nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity. Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances. Moreover, nations and states are not the same contingency. Nationalism holds that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent. The state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state. It is more debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state.\(^1\)

As Hobsbawm has suggested constructions of ‘traditions’ or ‘invented traditions’\(^2\) as he calls them, are “highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the ‘nation,’ with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All these rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation.”\(^3\) However, there is a marked tendency among many nationalists to resist the suggestion that nationalism, nation and state are constructed realities.

### 4.2 Nationalism: Theoretical Perspectives

Ernest Gellner has given one of the succinct formulations of nationalism. He describes nationalism in terms of the political principle which states that the legitimate political unit is co-extensive with the national unit, the violation of which tends to create nationalist sentiments:

Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of this principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Hobsbawm defines ‘invented’ tradition in the following manner: “Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, eds., Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-14, here, 1.


Gellner points out that there are several ways this political principle can be violated. He states one of the most significant forms of the violation of the political principle enumerated above:

There is one particular form of the violation of the nationalist principle to which nationalist sentiment is quite particularly sensitive: if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled, this, for nationalists, constitutes a quite outstanding intolerable breach of political propriety. This can occur either through the incorporation of the national territory in a larger empire, or by the local domination of an alien group.

The type of violation and the outrage described above by Gellner forms the crux of Indian nationalism in general and of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay’s nationalist thought in particular. It also needs to be noted that Indian elite class who offered willing collaboration to the colonial government came to see the foreign rule as a ‘violation’ only slowly and gradually. The transition from collaboration to protest against colonialism in the second half of the nineteenth century also marks the rise of nationalist consciousness in India.

We shall see briefly Benedict Anderson’s oft-quoted definition of nation as an ‘imagined’ community which has found wide acceptance among the scholars of nationalism. Anderson defines nation in the following manner: “In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: It is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” Here, the term ‘imaginary’ does not mean fictitious or false. According to Anderson, in the first place, the nation is “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Secondly, the “nation is imagined as limited, even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other

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85 Gellner explains the ways in which this principle is seen as violated. “The political boundary of a given state can fail to include all the members of the appropriate nation; or it can include them all but also include some foreigners; or it can fail in both these ways at once, not incorporating all the nationals and yet also including some non-nationals. Or again, a nation may live, unmixed with foreigners, in a multiplicity of states, so that no single state can claim to be the national one.” Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 1.

86 Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 1.


nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind." Thirdly, the nation "is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm." And fourthly, the nation "is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings." At this point it needs to be stressed that Anderson does not use the term ‘imagined’ as though it were fictitious or false.

According to Anderson, the growth of nationalism needs to be located within the matrix of religious communities and dynastic realms together with the growth of print capitalism. For Anderson, these factors supported nationalist ideologies in their efforts to associate particular languages with particular territorial units. The emergence of print languages in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries further laid the foundation for national consciousness in the sense that they created combined fields of exchange and communication, giving a new fixity to language. Moreover, the emergence of print was instrumental in creating languages of power considerably different from that of the older administrative vernaculars. Thus, certain conditions such as print capitalism provided an impetus for the emergence of nationalism. In short, according to Anderson, the idea of nation and nationalism provides the template for identity and the populations work hard at the cultural and ideological level to create themselves as cohesive ‘imagined’ communities.

5. Templates of Indian Nationalism
Against the conceptual and theoretical perspectives outlined above we shall now focus on the contours of Indian nationalism. A well defined form of state had been in existence during colonial times in terms of numerous institutions. Elaborate and intricate institutions such as judiciary, police, military, and structures of civil administration constituted the colonial state space. It is against such a well defined colonial space that the idea of a national space began

to emerge in the Indian nationalist thought. However, whether or not the idea of a consolidated nation with well defined territorial boundaries existed in the nationalist thought is an open question.

5.1 Conception of India as 'Nation'
The growth of an Indian National Consciousness, which is part and parcel of Indian nationalism, is a complex development. The conception of India as a ‘nation’ began to appear in the second half of the nineteenth century. Prior to that period the notion of India as a unified political entity was absent; what was present was ethnic and regional identities in India. R. C. Majumdar, a well known historian, made the following observation in a lecture given in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1960:

It will no doubt appear very strange to you if one asks, what is India? In the twentieth century we have been accustomed to take India to mean the whole of the country or sub-continent known by that name in Geography, as a national political unit. As such India has a precise meaning to us. But to our ancestors, who lived under British rule even a century and a half ago, India in this sense had no meaning and no existence. They talked of the Sikhs, Rajputs, Marathas, Hindusthanis, Bengalis, Oriyas, Tamils etc, but had no clear conception of an Indian....To a Bengali the Marathas were not only as much a foreigner as the English, but they were hated foreigners. The Marathas tried to form an alliance with the English in order to ravage Bengal. The Bengalis requited it by offering prayers and thanksgivings to god at each successive victory of the British against the Marathas and other Indian peoples. The conception of India, as a whole, was to be found only in the literary works of a past age, and still survived in theory, but it had no application to actual politics till the sixties or seventies of the 19th century.\(^3\)

Thus, as Majumdar has rightly pointed out, what we had before the emergence of nationalism was a region based identity. There is a certain measure of agreement among the historians on the absence of an Indian nationhood before the British rule.\(^4\) Majumdar summarizes the situation of the nineteenth century subcontinent in these words: “Nowhere in India did the conception of national State supersede that of the dynastic state. The allegiance of the people, if any, was due to the ruler and his dynasty, but not to a regional state.”\(^5\) Such a situation is entirely understandable and is very much analogous to the state of affairs which existed

\(^3\) R. C. Majumdar, *Three Phases of India’s Struggle for Freedom* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1961) 1-2.


\(^5\) R. C. Majumdar, *Three Phases of India’s Struggle for Freedom*, 3.
before the rise of nationalism and nation-states in the nineteenth century Europe.\textsuperscript{96} As R. C. Majumdar points out,

So long as there was no conception of India, there could not have been any idea of freedom of India, far less any struggle for attaining it. But in reality, the case was perhaps worse... In Bengal, for example, the British rule was regarded by the Hindus as only a change of masters, and to a good one from the bad. The great leader of Bengal, Raja Rammohan Roy, publicly offered thanks to God for having delivered the country from the yoke of the tyrannical Muslim rulers and placed it under the Government of the English. Another eminent Bengali leader, Prasannakumar Tagore, proceeded even further and said that if God offered him the choice between independence and British rule, he would ask for the latter. Indeed freedom was not only not thought of; it was not even desired.\textsuperscript{97}

The desire for freedom is a slow and gradual development in the nationalist thought. The notion of political self-determination is a distinct idea rooted in modernity. If the second-half of the nineteenth century saw the height of British colonial power it was also a period which saw India’s transition into modernity in political terms. It is during this period which saw the emergence of the ideology of nationalism which eventually led to the formation of India as a nation. Transition from region based identity to the imagined pan-India identity marks the creation of national space in the nationalist thought.

5.2 Indian Nationalism: Theoretical perspectives

There seems to be a significant number of scholars who treat nationalism exclusively as a Western product. Within such Western perspective nationalism elsewhere is a reflection of the basic ideas produced by the Western world. To put it differently, within such Eurocentric perception Asian and African nationalism of nineteenth and twentieth centuries are directly or indirectly, Western products. Such a view is reflected in the writings of Benedict Anderson.

\textsuperscript{96} Pochhammer points out three reasons for the absence of the idea of a unified Indian “nation” in earlier times. Firstly, the composition of the population is not easily definable; that it is composed of different races and ethnic groups is something India has in common with Europe. Even though anthropologists clarify a particular racial type as “Indian,” the differences between its peoples are so great that to take race as the common basis for forming a nation is out of question. Secondly, the economy, one of the strongest forces holding India together, assumed its role only very recently. So long as manufacture played only a modest role as compared with agriculture, the subcontinent, in spite of trade links, could not be regarded as one economic unit. It is reasonable to suggest that it was with the advent of the British railways the subcontinent eventually became one economic unit. Thirdly, culture which depends upon a commonality religion, as the basis for the unification of India, had not been a factor which produced cohesive political effect in India. Different peoples of India, though they had more or less the same cultural basis, grew into separate political units and developed their own languages. For instance, Dravidian languages differ much more from those of Sanskrit origin than the Indo-European languages of Western Europe. See, W. Pochhammer, \textit{India’s Road to Nationhood: A Political History of the Subcontinent}, 432-434.

\textsuperscript{97} R. C. Majumdar, \textit{Three Phases of India’s Struggle for Freedom}, 2-3.
According to Anderson, the former colonies have been unable to depart from the models created in the West in order to create new models of nationalism. In other words, for Anderson, colonial countries have followed the models of nationalism provided by Western nations. The subtext contained in Anderson’s thesis amounts to a denial of autonomy and ‘agency’ to Afro-Asian nationalism. Indian scholars like Partha Chatterjee,98 K. N. Panikkar,99 and Tapan Raychaudhuri100 have challenged the assumptions of Anderson. Partha Chatterjee puts forward his objection in the following manner:

I have one central objection to Anderson’s argument. If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain “modular” forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity, Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized.101

The central issue raised by Chatterjee is regarding the denial of nationalist ‘agency’ of former colonial countries in Western writings on nationalism. Western writing, as exemplified in Anderson, seems to suggest ‘follow-the-Western-leader’ paradigm. Like Hegel and Marx, writers such as Anderson tend to co-opt Asian and African countries into the grand text of a universal history whose leaders are obviously Western nations. According to Chatterjee, standard Indian nationalist history follows the assumptions of Western writers like Anderson:

In India, for instance, any standard nationalist history will tell us that nationalism proper began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress. It might also tell us that the decade preceding this was a period of preparation, when several provincial political associations were formed. Prior to that, from the 1820s to the 1870s, was the period of ‘social reform,’ when colonial enlightenment was beginning to ‘modernize’ the customs and institutions of a traditional society and the political spirit was still very much that of collaboration with the colonial regime; nationalism had still not emerged.102

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Some Indian scholars resist such interpretation and offer alternative reading of Indian nationalism. In Partha Chatterjee's interpretation, anti-colonial nationalism creates its own realm of sovereignty within colonial matrix well before it begins its political battle against the British. Chatterjee describes the process of creating the domain of sovereignty:

It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the "outside," of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture.

To put it differently, nascent Indian nationalism or proto-nationalism creates a 'cultural/spiritual space,' which according to Chatterjee, is the distinguishing feature of Indian nationalism. Such cultural space was instrumental in the nationalist efforts to create a cultural identity. Interestingly nearly fifty years before Chatterjee propounded such an idea sociologist A. R. Desai had noted the same phenomenon:

One striking peculiarity of the Indian national development was neither its pioneers nor subsequent leaders evolved or accepted the materialist philosophy. All leaders of Indian nationalism, in the philosophical, political, or cultural field, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gokhale, Tilak, B. C. Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh, Lala Lajpat Rai, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi, Abul Kalam Azad, Iqbal, Jagdish Chandra Bose, and others, stood for, in different ways and varying degrees, a revision of traditional religions. None of them, however, challenged or repudiated religion or the God-idea on which it is based. None of them subscribed to the philosophy of materialism.

References:

103 K. N. Panikkar describes such standard interpretation of Indian nationalism: "The emergence of modern ideas and the development of social protest and religious dissent in the nineteenth century have been generally viewed as a consequence of the introduction of European ideas and institutions in India. To the British colonial and administrator-historians, this impact-response framework was useful in projecting the civilizing role of British rule and the manifold blessings bestowed upon the people of India by the dissemination of western knowledge." The characterization of the eighteenth century as a dark age was part of this framework. K. N. Panikkar, Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India, 3.


105 A. R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1948. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1976) 295-96. Desai writes: "Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in spite of his rationalist approach, could not overcome his belief in the divinity of the Vedas. His successor, Debendra Nath Tagore, endeavored to achieve a synthesis of reason and intuition. Keshab Chandra Sen proclaimed himself as a prophet entrusted with messages from God to be delivered to humanity. Pal and Aurobindo subscribed to the cult of spiritual mysticism. Lajpat Rai, the Arya Samajist, divinized the Vedas. Finally, Gandhi, the greatest leader of Indian Nationalism, invoked 'the inner voice' when he was confronted with a complicated political or social problem." Ibid., 296-97.
According to Partha Chatterjee, creation of two distinct domains, namely, material and spiritual/cultural, has important implications. In his reading, Indian nationalism claimed the realm of the spiritual/cultural as its sovereign territory and refused to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain:  

The colonial state, in other words, is kept out of the “inner” domain of national culture; but it is not as though this so-called spiritual domain is left unchanged. In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a “modern” national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power.

According to Chatterjee the dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power. As he points out, the difficulty entailed in understanding Indian nationalism stems from the fact that “we have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a political movement much too literally and much too seriously.” Chatterjee maintains that the cultural dimension of Indian nationalist movement is not given the attention it deserves. It is within such spiritual/cultural framework that most Indian nationalists, including Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, began to create the new national identity. It is within such cultural framework that Indian nationalists, who were mainly from the elite class, began their reinterpretation of ‘agency’ related to socio-cultural reforms. Partha Chatterjee describes the dynamics:

In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the rise of nationalism led to a refusal on the part of the Indian elite to let the colonial state enter into areas that were regarded as crucial to the cultural identity of the nation. This does not mean a halt to the project of ‘reform’: all it meant was a shift in the agency of reform – from the legal authority of the colonial state to the moral authority of the national community. This shift is crucial: not so much because of its apparent coincidence with the policy

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106 Partha Chatterjee qualifies his interpretation in the context of nineteenth century social reform which is made up of two distinct phases. In the earlier phase, Indian reformers looked to the colonial authorities to bring about by state action the reform of traditional institutions and customs of Hinduism. But in the latter phase, though the need for change was not disputed, there was a strong resistance to allowing the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting ‘national’ culture. According to Chatterjee, the second phase was already the period of nationalism. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 6.


of non-intervention of the colonial state in matters of religion in the late nineteenth century, but because of the underlying assumption in nationalist thinking about the role of state legislation in religion – legal intervention in the cause of religious reform was not undesirable per se, but it was undesirable when the state was colonial.  

Partha Chatterjee is making a significant point as well as delineating a conceptual framework to interpret Indian nationalism by which he postulates the autonomous character of Indian nationalist agency which is independent of Western influences.

5.3 Indian Nationalism and the ‘Orientalist Filter’

Historical evidences would suggest that the autonomous nature of Indian nationalism which seeks to move away from Western influences cannot be pushed too far. It may be the case that the ‘cultural/spiritual’ component forms the unique aspect of Indian nationalism. However, this study would like to suggest, on the basis of historical evidences, that the ‘cultural/spiritual’ aspect of Indian nationalism, including that of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, depends either directly or indirectly on the Orientalist constructions of India and its past. This study maintains that acknowledging Orientalist influences does not necessarily diminish the autonomy of Indian nationalism. In acknowledging the composite nature, there is no denying of autonomous character of Indian nationalism. Indeed, Indian nationalist movement has autonomy of its own but such autonomy has to be balanced and carefully nuanced. Such balancing requires paying attention to the ideological context of the nationalist discourse. G. Aloysius delineates two sets of ideological contexts for the articulations of nationalism in the following manner:

The first is the set of beliefs and articulations of the British concerning the subcontinent’s society and culture. The numerous ways in which ‘they’ [the British] represented India provided the ideological environ within which the nationalist self-perception took place. The second is the set of beliefs and articulations again of the British, concerning their own national society and culture, i.e., the ideal nation; the number of ideological premises, often implicit, that underlay the new juridico-administrative infrastructure also provided the environ within which the self-perception of the nation took place.  

A number of scholars have drawn attention to the influences of the Orientalists on both the early phases of Indian nationalism (‘renaissance’ phase) as well as the latter phase. According


to Romila Thapar, the “nineteenth century Indian ‘renaissance’ broadly accepted the European Orientalists’ view of the early Indian past which was derived largely from Brahminical textual sources and which conceded the correctness of the colonial comprehension of our past.” As N. Bhattacharya has pointed out, nationalist historians, even while opposing colonialism, accepted categories and interpretations propounded by Orientalists:

While the nationalists mounted a critique of colonial ideas, they continued to accept many of the key categories through which imperial representations of Indian society were fashioned. Nineteenth century imperial history had shrouded India’s past in darkness, denuded its history of any evidence of change and achievement, and stamped its people with permanent marks of inferiority. To constitute a sense of self, nationalists returned to the ancient past and rewrote history, identifying golden ages when literature and culture flourished, economy and society developed, territories were unified and law and order were established.

The emergence of printing technology, newspapers, journals, text books and documentation did play a part in the spread of Orientalist as well as imperialist interpretations about India. G. Barrier notes that Indian nationalists shared some of the assumptions of imperial historians: “In spite of differing assessments of the consequences of colonial domination, Indian nationalists frequently accepted at least some of the assumptions of imperial historians. Indian nationalists relied primarily on printed documents, biographies or parliamentary papers.”

Conclusion
Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, along with other nationalists, played an important role in forging a sense of collective cultural identity and in formulating the notions of nationhood. The colonial discourse had legitimized their continued existence through the claim that India was not a nation. Against this colonial claim, the anti-colonial nationalism required to forge a national identity. In the process of confronting British colonialism Indian nationalists like Upadhyay felt the need to create a national identity through the mediation of complex


mechanisms. Out of several competing claims of what constituted such national identity, a common Hindu heritage, based on the classical Hindu ethos originally created by the Aryans was projected as the core structure of nationhood. Upadhyay’s nationalism was a response to a situation in which the ‘loss of self’ was looming large in the political and cultural horizon. His nationalism was conditioned by what he perceived as the urgent need to consolidate those aspects of culture and identity which were at the verge of disintegration.

Upadhyay did borrow some of the idealized images of ancient India popularized by the Orientalists. The colonial officials regarded Brahmanic scriptures as the most authentic source books on India. This colonial perspective, which began with the administrators of the East India Company, resulted in these texts becoming the sources of civil law. Indian nationalists like Upadhyay directly or indirectly subscribed to the Orientalist interpretation, especially the ‘Romantic’ version of India, as essentially ‘religious’ and spiritual. There are numerous writings of Upadhyay in which India is depicted in terms of lofty spirituality. In this regard, Upadhyay is not the only nationalist to portray India fundamentally in ‘spiritual’ terms; Vivekananda had done it before him. Both the Orientalist and nationalist ‘filter’ involves a restrictive reading of India and its past.

Indian nationalists like Upadhyay sought to create an autonomous national landscape outside the framework of the colonial structure and space. This significant aspect of the national space consisted in the religious and cultural spheres of the populace. Here, in the religious and cultural aspects of the imagined national space, some of the nationalists like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay sought fiercely to keep out colonial influences. It is important to bear in mind that not all nationalists dealt with every aspect pertaining to the imagined national space comprehensively and exhaustively. Usually, if one or other aspect figured prominently, other aspects received only marginal attention in the framework of a particular thinker. Upadhyay’s cultural nationalism percolated into his interpretations of Hindu identity on which we shall focus in the next chapter.

114 Lata Mani, Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) 110.