Chapter 4
Upadhyay's Interpretation of Hindu Identity

Introduction

Upadhyay's lifetime coincides with Hindu revivalism of the second half of the nineteenth century. The quest for Hindu identity, which was part and parcel of this revivalism, led to a search for roots in Indian antiquity, thus acquiring the nature of a 'Hindu' cultural recovery. It is here that the correlation between the national space and cultural space began to take place in the nationalist discourse. For the majority of Indian nationalists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century the rediscovery of the Hindu past had been an essential part of defining the emerging national space.

One of the major ways Hindus in which Bengal responded to the British rule in the second half of the nineteenth century had been by focusing on their own cultural ethos. This response involved both interpretation and reinterpretation of Hindu traditions. A significant element of this hermeneutical complex was the focus of their identity as Hindus. One of the basic concerns faced by many Hindus centred around the question of defining the quiddity or essence of being 'Hindu': What does 'Hinduism' really mean? What is the foundation of Hinduism? What does it really mean to be a Hindu? In the writings of Brahmabandhab we see these questions appearing consistently. As we shall see shortly, the Hindu identity or 'Hinduness' or Hindutva as Upadhyay prefers to call it, is beset with complicated issues and problems.

The focus of this chapter is the 'Hindu' component in Upadhyay's 'Hindu-Catholic' synthesis. The objective is to delineate Upadhyay's interpretation of Hinduism. What are some of the concerns which guide Upadhyay's interpretation of Hinduism? How does he understand Hindu identity? What is the relationship between Hindu identity and the emerging national identity? What are the categories used by Upadhyay in his quest to understand Hinduism? These are some of the questions which guide our investigation. The method used for such exploration is diachronic in the sense that Upadhyay's interpretation of Hinduism is explored through various stages of development in his thought. In exploring the development
of his thought on Hinduism this chapter focuses on various stages, namely, the ‘sanitized’ form of Hinduism, Hindu-Catholic synthesis, Vedanta as the foundation for Hinduism, and Hindu nationalism. In delineating the development of his interpretation we shall also focus on the continuities and discontinuities entailed in Upadhyay’s understanding of Hinduism.

Upadhyay’s interpretation of Hinduism is intrinsically related to the question of Hindu identity. This identity formation process in the nationalist thought of Upadhyay can be seen as a cluster of attitudes towards other competing groups such as non-Aryan groups, depressed classes, reformers, Muslims and Europeans. As far as Upadhyay’s thought on Hinduism is concerned we can see four broad phases or stages. The criterion used in the demarcation of these four phases consists in a significant change in Upadhyay’s perspective regarding Hinduism. In other words, a major paradigmatic change marks the transition from one stage to another. The major paradigmatic changes in four stages may be described as (1) Sanitized Hinduism (2) Christianity in Hindu garbs (3) Quest for Hindu identity and (4) Hindu nationalism as cultural nationalism. However, we need to keep in mind that these stages are not water-tight compartments; there are residual perspectives carried forward from one stage to the next. We shall follow Upadhyay’s articulation on Hinduism in its chronological sequence.

1. First Phase: Sanitized Hinduism
The first phase in Upadhyay’s articulation of Hinduism extends from 1894 to 1897. The beginning of this period is marked by his conversion to Catholicism. What is the major thrust of Brahmabandhab’s perspective on Hinduism during this period? During this stage Upadhyay engages in a vigorous critique of traditional Hindu beliefs and practices. Indeed, at this point in life, his newfound Catholic faith serves as the guiding principle in his critique of Hinduism. Upadhyay attacks various Hindu beliefs and practices which he thinks are not consonant with true religion, which indeed for him was Catholicism. To put it differently, he wants to purge or sanitize Hinduism from what he sees as questionable beliefs. We shall focus briefly on some of the Hindu beliefs and practices which come under Brahmabandhab’s scrutiny.

1.1 Vedic Theism
In the very first issue of Sophia Upadhyay had given as one of its objectives ‘to facilitate the comparative study of different religions’ to ‘help the seekers after truth to arrive at the true
knowledge of the True Religion.' Obviously, the True Religion for him is the Catholic religion which has become the chief criterion to evaluate the truth and falsity of all other belief systems. To put it differently, during this period for Upadhyay, Catholicism represents the highest ideal and several aspects of Hinduism fall short of Christian ideals. For example, in an article titled "The Unity and Indissolubility of the Marriage Bond" (1894) he writes: "Hinduism, which rises higher than other religions in its ideal of marriage, falls short of that of the Catholic Church. It is not very strict about the unity and indissolubility of the marriage tie."

It is important to note that during this period for Upadhyay Hindu belief system represents both positive and negative elements. On the positive side he finds Vedic Theism as an antidote for the 'evils' of Hinduism such as polytheism, nature worship and idolatry. According to him, 'the primitive form of man's religious belief was Theism'; it is opposed to fetishism, polytheism, nature-worship which are later corrupt accretions. In 1894 Upadhyay clarifies the meaning of Theism in the following manner: "By Theism we mean the belief in (1) the existence of God, (2) the moral sense in man, (3) the law of retribution according to Individual merit or demerit."4 Brahmapandhab points out that "if it can be shown that the Vedas inculcate the worship of one God, there will be a signal triumph over the opponents of Theism and the rational doctrine that God manifested Himself from the very beginning will be strengthened by a most forcible evidence."4 Thus, during subsequent years he spends considerable time and energy to show that Vedas indeed contained Theistic elements. After having engaged in a prolonged debate regarding the finer points of interpreting the Vedas in a four part article in the pages of Sophia, Upadhyay notes:

The more we study the ancient literature of India, the more we are convinced of the primitiveness of Theism. Amidst physiolatry and idolatry, anthropomorphism and pantheism, amidst the darkest aberrations of the Indian intellect, irrepressibly flashes.

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2 Upadhyay gives the following reason for positing Theism as a primordial state of man's religion: "The reason for our assertion is that we cannot conceive without violating our nature and common sense that He who made man hid Himself from him." B. Upadhyay, "Theism in the Vedas-Part I," Sp-M (January, 1894), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 249.
out the sublime idea of the One True God, to be darkened and corrupted again by the perversity of man.  

The last part of the above quotation merits some attention. It is obvious that for Brahmabandhab Vedic Theism contains the ‘sublime idea of the One True God’ but was ‘darkened and corrupted’ by perversity in subsequent ages. As we have seen before, this corruption has much to do with India’s decline in Upadhyay’s thinking. This idea of primordial purity of Vedic times which becomes corrupted was originally propagated by the Orientalists like Max Müller. This specific Orientalist theme of the ‘Indian golden past’ will be taken up by nationalists like Upadhyay in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. For Upadhyay, Vedic Theism which is a ‘brilliant’ achievement of ancient Indian intellect becomes the point of contact between Christianity and Hinduism. He writes in the article titled “Our attitude Towards Hinduism (1895):

A careful student of religious history of mankind will find that the doctrine of universal Theism held by the Catholic Church is verified even in the most corrupt faiths of the lowest race, that amid the darkest gloom of superstition and error flashes out not unoften the true light which manifests in the order of nature the invisible things of God. But nowhere has that true light shone forth so brilliantly as it has shone forth in India. Nowhere has human philosophy soared so high except, perhaps, in ancient Greece.

In the same article he goes on to show the ‘sublime conception the primitive Hindu had of the Divine Being’ by quoting eight verses from the Upanishads and from the Gita. Though the Hindus had such sublime truths, for Upadhyay, it differs from the religion of Christ. The difference consists in the distinction between natural religion and supernatural religion, a distinction which plays a key role in Upadhyay’s thinking. “The religion of Christ,” writes Brahmabandhab “is supernatural. All the doctrines of Christ, the Holy Trinity, the Atonement, the Resurrection, from beginning to end, are beyond the domain of reason.” In resonance with traditional Catholic teaching, for him Christianity which goes beyond the realm of reason (and not against) possesses ‘supernatural nature.’ In the Catholic tradition,

7 Upadhyay clarifies: “Christianity occupies a unique platform, a platform unreachable by reason. But though the religion of Christ is beyond the grasp of nature and reason, still its foundation rests upon the truths of
the supernatural dimension, which cannot be comprehended by reason alone, is provided by Revelation and tradition. What about Hinduism? He clarifies his notion of Hinduism: "The truths in Hinduism are of pure reason illuminated in the order of nature by the light of the Holy Spirit. They do not overstep reason. Therefore Hinduism with all her truths is in no sense a rival of Christianity." He points out the reasons for his focus on Hinduism:

It is on account of the close connection between the natural and the supernatural that we have taken upon ourselves the task of expounding the Hindu scriptures systematically and of fishing out the Theistic truths from the deluge of Pantheism, idolatry, and Anthropomorphism... and to form, as it were, a natural platform upon which the Hindus taking their stand may have a view of the glorious supernatural edifice of the catholic religion of Christ.

At this point in time Upadhyay is highly critical of 'Advaitavad' of Sankara which he equates with Pantheism. In the same article he notes: "In our attempt to cull Theistic truths from Hindu scriptures we will not forget to show the utter falsity of the prevailing Hindu error of Advaitavad (Pantheism)." "Our attitude towards Hinduism," concludes Brahmabandhab, "is that of an impartial friend who is anxious to find out what is true and good in object of friendship and abjure what is false and evil."

1.2 Upadhyay’s Critique of Advaitavad
During this period Upadhyay understands Vedic Theism as diametrically opposed to Vedanta in general and Advaitavad of Sankara in particular. This position of Brahmabandhab merits our attention because he would engage in a volt face regarding Advaitavad at a later stage. Quoting Taittiriya Upanishad Upadhyay outlines the foundation of Vedanta philosophy: "He is Brahman from whom these objects (visible and invisible) are originated, by whom they are preserved, in whom they are ultimately absorbed." At the end of the three part article titled "Vedanta Philosophy" (1894) Upadhyay summarizes the main themes of Vedanta in the following way:

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There exists one Being only without a second. The apparent multiplicity is only a projection of him. He is periodically enveloped by Maya (illusion) and produces dreams like the human mind in sleep. Those dreams constitute the multiplicity of beings. He becomes many by ideating and not by dividing his substance. There is no such reality as dualism. The sense of dualism is an illusion. A being subject to the illusion of dualism must pass through the misery of repeated births and deaths till he arrives at the supreme consciousness of ego and ego only. That state of consciousness in which ego is the subject and ego is the object, that state of spiritual elevation where all relationship is eliminated, where oneness of self reigns supreme, is mukti (salvation).\textsuperscript{13}

One of Upadhyay’s difficulties with the Vedantic notion is that it does not allow room for the Christian idea of creation. “The doctrine of the one eternal being without a second, from whom proceeds this universe and in whom it is ultimately absorbed, is the corner-stone of Hinduism. Hinduism repudiates the doctrine of creation and teaches that nature is Brahma and Brahma is nature.”\textsuperscript{14}

In 1895 Upadhyay critical about the Vedantic concept of the identity between Brahman and atman: “I am God under the bondage of delusion. Vedanta tells me “tat tvam asi (thou art God)” but ajnanam (ignorance) has made me think that I am not He and hence my misery.”\textsuperscript{15} In the same article he criticized Vedantic notion: “Am I then God? What a poor God I must be! I have heard that God is omnipotent. What has laid omnipotence so low? Is there any other power more omnipotent than omnipotence? There must be! Otherwise, how can an infinite, omnipotent God be reduced to finitude, weakness and misery?”\textsuperscript{16}

Brahmabandhab finds Advaitavad offensive and vows to fight against it: “We will wage a war – a war to the knife – against this monstrous doctrine and will not retire from the field until we hew it asunder. We invite all the faithful who believe in God, the Father almighty,


Creator of heaven and earth to join us in our crusade against Advaitavad (Pantheism).\textsuperscript{17}

Upadhyay outlines the dangers of Advaitavad:

A careful consideration will show that Advaitavad is the old. Old spirit of pride which wriggles itself into newer and newer forms as the ages run on. It is this spirit that made Lucifer aspire to sit on the throne of the Almighty, it is this spirit that tempted Adam to become a god, it is this spirit that led India under the bondage of error and unholiness for such a long, long period. This pantheism is the cause of all the dirt and filth that befoul her gods, her heaven and her worship.\textsuperscript{18}

Upadhyay also criticizes Gita’s understanding of \textit{Purusha} and \textit{Prakriti} within the context of creation. He summarizes the process of creation according to Gita:

There is one Supreme Soul which is called \textit{Purusha}. He is without beginning. There is another eternal principle, called \textit{Prakriti}. It is the principle of illusion or ignorance. It limits the unlimited \textit{Purusha}. The contact of \textit{Purusha} and \textit{Prakriti} results in the limitation of the former, and the \textit{Purusha} thus limited is called \textit{Mahat} or \textit{Buddhi}, the aggregate of all consciousness. This \textit{Buddhi} is in time differentiated and results in the formation of individual egos. From the ego come mind, the five senses, also mouth, hands, feet and the organs of generation and excretion, and five primordial ethereal elements, earth, water, fire, air and space (akasa).\textsuperscript{19}

“\textit{The question of questions},” observes Brahmabandhab, “which has puzzled the Hindu philosophers is – how can the unlimited and illimitable \textit{Purusha} be limited?” According to Upadhyay, these philosophers ‘have escaped this crucial question by saying that the limitation is apparent and not real.’\textsuperscript{20} He brings the following objections:

\textsuperscript{19} Upadhyay points out the difference between Geeta’s and Samkhya understanding: “This theory differs from that of Samkhya system in this that the latter holds that there are many souls each supreme by itself and that \textit{Prakriti} is a real non-sentient substance and a mere illusory principle.” B. Upadhyay, “The Process of Creation According to Gita,” \textit{Sp-M} (July, 1895), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., \textit{TWBU-II}, 270.
\textsuperscript{20} Upadhyay gives the following examples from the viewpoint of Hindu philosophers in order to clarify the relationship between \textit{Purusha} and \textit{Prakriti}: “If a pure crystal is brought in contact with a red flower, then the crystal appears to be red while in reality it is virgin white. A space enclosed by material partitions may appear disintegrated from the whole, but it is not so; break the partitions and the apparent limitation disappears in a moment...Likewise, \textit{Purusha} is one, immutable, immovable, inactive, not an agent, neither a creator, nor a destroyer, but when \textit{Purusha} is reflected in the \textit{Prakriti}, it appears to be many, mutable, movable, active, an agent, a creator and a destroyer. He who comes to know the nature of \textit{Purusha} and \textit{Prakriti}, and that the contact of the two is only an illusion, is emancipated from the bonds of \textit{Prakriti} which is the cause of all desires and aversions.” B. Upadhyay, “The Process of Creation According to Gita,” J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., \textit{TWBU-II}, 270-71.
Granted that the limitation is apparent and not real, it does not smooth matters at all. How can the Purusha, the infinite Intelligence, be deluded into the belief that He has become limited? To attribute delusion to the infinite wisdom is the height of folly. How revolting is it to be told that almighty God has forgotten Himself and ceased to think that He is God! India believes in such a God, a deluded God! Who will emancipate her from this dreadful, soul-killing belief?²¹

At this stage Upadhyay’s criticism of Hinduism follows the pattern of British historians, western travelers, European missionaries as well as reformers like Rammohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen.

1.3 Upadhyay’s Critique of Krishna
During this period Upadhyay’s critique of Hindu pantheon in general and of Krishna of Bhagavat Purana (BP) in particular merits our attention. He finds BP, a classical Hindu text which was composed around 10 or 11th century C. E., and a popular source of Krishna devotion in most parts of India, as a cause of immorality:

Bhagavat abounds with the tenderest sentiments towards God. But the life of Krishna as depicted in it has been the source of incalculable mischief. It has deluged India with the grossest impurities. Some of the Vaishnava sects, as the Kartabhajas of Bengal and the Vallabhacharyas of Western India, who are the devout imitators of Krishna, are living examples of the worst kind of immorality.²²

Brahmabandhab expresses his fears regarding the ‘moral safety’ of India on account of BP: “For the moral safety of India Krishna of Bhagavat should be denounced and abjured by all right minded patriots.”²³ Upadhyay points out the warning contained in BP itself about the dangers of imitating Krishna by quoting Suka, the narrator of Krishna’s life: “The violation of religious laws by the gods and the daring acts of the glorious do not bring on any stain as fire is not stained by feeding upon impure substances. But those who are not gods should never commit such deeds even in thought.” Despite such warnings, for Brahmabandhab, Krishna of BP represents ‘a shocking ideal of an incarnate god.’ “Bhagavat is full of bhakti (loving devotion),” writes Upadhyay, “but no amount of sophistry can explain away the stern

fact that it is sullied by the immoral life of Krishna." In January 1896 the question of Krishna of BP resurfaces again in Sophia. Number 8 of the restatement of the objectives of Sophia reads as follows: "To show that Jesus Christ is the only God-man and that the life of Krishna, the most prominent of Hindu incarnations...as depicted in the Bhagavat, one of the most sacred Hindu scriptures, deserves to be blotted out of the memory of man, and that the sooner it is blotted out, the better for the spiritual and moral welfare of India."

1.4 Upadhyay’s Critique of Hindu Pantheon

For Upadhyay not only Krishna of Bhagavat, but most of the Hindu pantheon reflects corruption and immorality. To substantiate his claim Brahmabandhab gives a long list of gods and their questionable orientations in the following manner:

Brahma, her [India’s] personal god and Creator, the first emanation from the impersonal supreme being, could not create man without being defiled with a woman. Vishnu, the second divine person of her [India’s] mythological triad incarnated himself as Krishna, who stands unrivalled amongst the sons of man in his voluptuousness. Siva, the third manifestation of her Divinity, is a habitual drinker and smoker of hemp, and is notorious for his shameless and unclean behaviour – it is too indecent to be described in detail – towards Mohini ... on the occasion of the distribution of amrita (nectar) amongst the gods and demons. Indra, her king of gods, violated the bed of his guru (preceptor). Her heaven is peopled with infamous women, Urvasi, Menaka, Rambha etc., whose business is to dance in the court of heaven and defile religious ascetics. Her men and women worship the unholy and obscene emblem (linga) of Siva. Can unholiness go further?

Indeed, Upadhyay’s charge-sheet against the Hindu pantheon reflects his Christian perspective which appears consistently in his writings during this period. And according to traditional Christian perspective God is essentially a mystery and this mystery is unveiled primarily in and through revelation. For instance he writes: "The inner life of God is a mystery transcending our reason. God is infinite Reason and Will, and his reason and will is fully satisfied in knowing and loving himself." The fundamental flaw of Hindu thought,

according to Upadhyay, consists in its attempt ‘to soar with the wings of reason to the region of mystery.’

Upadhyay was not alone in questioning the cultural ethos of Hindu past. A byproduct of Western education had been an enthusiasm for rational and critical enquiry among the Bengali intelligentsia. As historian Tapan Raychaudhuri has noted, “rational assessment of current needs and received traditions, both indigenous and alien, became a hallmark of Bengali thought in the nineteenth century. Arguably, this development marked a total discontinuity in the history of the region.” Bengal renaissance had brought several Hindu beliefs and practices under the scrutiny of rational and critical inquiry. For Rammohan Roy, though the Upanishads contained elements of monotheism, the Hindus had departed from that ideal. Roy had questioned such practices as sati and idolatry. Roy also felt the futility of much that was central to the ancient Hindu civilization. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar described Vedanta and Samkya as ‘false systems of philosophy.’ Against the background of constant and consistent European allegation about the questionable Hindu beliefs and practices it is not entirely surprising to find Upadhyay wanting to have a sanitized version of Hinduism.

2. Second Phase: Quest for Hindu-Christian Identity

The second phase of Upadhyay’s articulation of Hinduism extends from 1897 to 1900. During this phase we see some significant readjustments in Brahmabandhab’s perspectives on Hinduism. His major concern now is to present Catholicism to the Hindus of India in a meaningful way. It may be fruitful to recall that during this period he was actively engaged in setting up a Catholic ashram on the banks of Narmada River. His prime concern was to de-Europeanize Christianity in India. At this point in time Upadhyay was also in active search for theological-philosophical categories to present Catholic truths which made sense in Hindu context. Perhaps the most important paradigmatic change in Upadhyay’s approach to Hinduism during this period is the adoption of Vedanta, which he denounced not long ago, as the vehicle for conveying Catholic truths.

2.1 Christianity and Hinduism: Interfaces

One of the early articles of Upadhyay which deals with the question of Hindu-Christian synthesis is titled “Hindu Philosophy and Christianity” (1897). After delineating the scope and role of philosophy in helping revealed religion, Upadhyay shows how Aristotelian philosophy nurtured Christian thinking. By the same logic he wants to make ‘Hindu philosophy the handmaid of Christianity.’ Such a project stems from his conviction that ‘the Catholic Church will find it hard to conquer India unless she makes Hindu philosophy hew wood and draw water for her.’ Upadhyay’s conviction is based on his notion of ‘development’: “The development of the Christian religion has not come to an end. It will grow, blossom and fructify till the end of time. Indian soil is humid, and its humidity will make the ever-new Christian Revelation put forth newer harmonies and newer beauties, revealing more clearly the inviolable integrity of the Universal Faith deposited in the Church by the Apostles of Jesus Christ.”

Six months later he wrote an article titled “An Exposition of Catholic Belief as Compared with the Vedanta” (Jan. 1898). This article is very important in the sense that it represents a major shift in Upadhyay’s approach to Hinduism. He proposes to show: (1) how far the Christian and Catholic religion agrees with the Vedanta (2) in what fundamental points the former is opposed to the latter. To achieve this he proposes to compare five principal doctrines such as Parabrahman (Supreme Being), his relation with finite beings, the destiny of man, sin and salvation. However, the article and the proposed project remained incomplete since he did not go beyond the exposition of Parabrahman. At any rate, here we have, for the first time, an indication of his ‘conversion’ to the Vedanta of Sankara, for Upadhyay writes: “In representing the Vedantic doctrines we shall take the great Sankara as our guide and authority.”

2.2 Hindu-Catholic Identity

Another significant article written by Upadhyay in the same year is titled “Are We Hindus.” This article is important since here we have for the first time a clear exposition of Upadhyay’s notion of ‘Hindu-Catholic.’ He writes: “By birth we are Hindu and shall remain

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Hindu till death. But as dvija (twice-born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholic; we are members of an indefectible communion embracing all ages and climes.” Behind this declaration is Upadhyay’s distinction between natural and supernatural religion which we have indicated before. Thus, his well known dictum: “In short, we are Hindus so far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu Catholic.” Such paradoxical juxtaposition was most clearly reflected in his death.

Upadhyay’s concept of Hindu-Catholic identity, as we have indicated before, is built on the distinction between the ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural.’ Apart from this, Brahmabandhab made another basic distinction, namely, the distinction between Samaj dharma and Sadhan dharma. Here, Samaj dharma stands for the social and civic customs and Sadhan dharma, for the quest for salvation or mukti. Within the framework of this distinction the supernatural faith of Catholicism is distinct from the social customs of a given tradition and culture, provided they do not conflict with faith and morals. Again, here Upadhyay’s thinking is intrinsically linked to the distinction between natural and supernatural religion. In Upadhyay’s perspective, Catholic faith which represents supernatural faith, can and must take the social customs of Hindu tradition. For Brahmabandhab, such adaptation was the condition for the possibility of making Catholicism intelligible in India.

2.3 Hindu Resilience
At this point we must note one of the important elements in Upadhyay’s interpretation of Hinduism. Hinduism, for him, is a living reality, and not a dead civilization of antiquity. In an article titled “Why we are Fallen,” (1898) Brahmabandhab writes:

Is India doomed? The eternal decree of God almighty has, it seems, foreordained differently. Why has he allowed the Hindu race to persever so long in the course of existence? Where are now those ancient nations whose deeds have been recorded in golden letters by historians? Where are the Egyptians and Phoenicians? Where are the Babylonians and Assyrians? Where are they? They are gone never to rise again. But the Hindu race has persevered. India has passed through fiery ordeals and tremendous crises; she has undergone most excruciating trials. Barbarous aliens have deluged her soil with the blood of her own children and robbed her of wealth and glory. It can be well said that no sorrow is like unto her sorrow. Still the people of India have lingered


33 For the discussion of these two concepts of Upadhyay, see, P. Turmes, “Samaj Dharm and Sadhan Dharm,” Clergy Monthly, Supplement to Vol. XXVII (December 1963) 330-334.
on bound together with the tie of a common, ancient tradition. There must be some deep significance in her marvelous survival.\footnote{B. Upadhyay, "Why we are Fallen," \textit{Sp-M} (January, 1898), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., \textit{TWBU-I}, 285.}

For Brahmabandhab such capacity for ‘marvelous survival’ holds out the hope for the future of India. Though there are signs of degeneration and decay Upadhyay believes in India’s future glory: “We believe that India will rise again and be exalted in glory. We fondly cherish the hope that the day will come when she will bloom as a hundred-petalled lotus and madden the whole world with the fragrance of her virtue. Apart from this belief and hope in her future greatness we find it hard to explain the miraculous length of her life.”\footnote{B. Upadhyay, "Why we are Fallen," J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., \textit{TWBU-I}, 285.}

2.4 Upadhyay’s Conversion to Vedanta

Upadhyay’s writings in 1898 would show his concerns about two interrelated projects: (1) establishment of an Ashram and (2) presenting Catholicism in and through Hindu thought patterns. Regarding the establishment of Matha or monastery Upadhyay writes: “Considered from all points of view it is extremely desirable that steps be soon taken for the founding of a Matha in India where Hindu Catholics may be trained to monastic life. There should be two classes of \textit{samnyasis}, the one contemplative and the other itinerant.”\footnote{B. Upadhyay, "A Catholic Monastery in India," \textit{Sp-M} (May, 1898), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, \textit{TWBU-II}, 203.} In January 1899 he did begin a Catholic Matha on the banks of Narmada with a few friends. At this point in time Upadhyay is also increasingly drawn toward Sankara’s Advaita philosophy. He writes about the need for adopting Vedantic categories in India: “We must fall back upon the Vedantic method in formulating the Catholic religion to our countrymen. In fact the Vedanta must be made to do the same service to Catholic faith in India as was done by the Greek philosophy in Europe.”\footnote{B. Upadhyay, “The Cloths of Catholic Faith,” in \textit{Sp-M} (August, 1898), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, \textit{TWBU-II}, 207.}

An important turning point which marks Upadhyay’s conversion to Vedanta is his article titled “The True Doctrine of Maya” written in February 1899; here he finds points of contact between Thomism and Vedanta. In this article he points out that in Catholic religion we can find ‘all the religious truths found in scattered, fragmentary and distorted form are united into
one perfect sphere of universal truth." "A beautiful illustration of this," writes Upadhyay, "is found in the relation of the Thomistic philosophy, which is preeminently Catholic, to the philosophies of Arya Varta." The specific point of comparison taken up by Upadhyay is the notion 'maya.' In an interesting hermeneutical effort Upadhyay says that maya could be interpreted as 'contingency.' In this article, the notion of asat is conceived, for the first time, as that which is, but has no right to be; what was, what is, but does not exist of necessity or in the terminology of the scholastics, a contingent being. Upadhyay interprets maya as the 'fecund divine power (sakti) which gives birth to multiplicity.' He explains: "This fecundity is called maya because its character is inscrutable. It is eternal but its operation is not essential to the being of God. By it non being (asat) is made being (sat). By it that which is nothingness by itself is filled with the richness of being. By it darkness is illuminated with the glow of existence. It is maya indeed!" He sees a parallel between Vedanta and the teaching of Aquinas: "The Vedantists affirm all that is not Brahman to be maya, in the sense of illusion; and they are right, because creatures in themselves, apart from Brahman, are indeed darkness, falsity and nothingness (tenebrae, falsitas et nihil), as St. Thomas teaches (see Summa Theologica, 15th Paris edition, Vol. VIII)."

He wrote "The True Doctrine of Maya" in February 1899 in Sophia; in March 1899 Sophia ceased to exist. This was precisely the time Upadhyay was facing difficulties regarding the establishment of his Catholic ashram project. Already we have seen that the Papal delegate Zaleski was opposed to Upadhyay's project. With the opposition from the Catholic hierarchy Upadhyay's ashram project went into cold storage.

3. Third Phase: Hinduism as Cultural Foundation
The third phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hinduism extends from 1900 to 1901. Despite the opposition from the hierarchy, Upadhyay's concerns about dressing Indian Catholicism in the 'oriental garb' have not yet waned completely during this period. In the year 1900 we see a number of articles by Brahmabandhab which sought to create Hindu categories to articulate Catholic truths mainly through a new journal started on 16 June, named Sophia, now

appeared as weekly. He continues to explore themes such as Vedic Theism and Vedanta in this journal. But there is a subtle change taking place in Upadhyay's thinking regarding Hinduism which we shall explore in this section. And that change, on the one hand, has to do with Upadhyay's consistent opposition to European/Orientalist interpretation of Hinduism. In several articles written during this period Upadhyay would point out that Europeans/Orientalists have not understood, in spite of their erudition and scholarship, the 'spirit' of Hinduism. On the other hand, the change in Upadhyay's thinking has to do with his grappling with Hindu/Indian identity. Behind these changes we can discern a contested arena of interpretation regarding Hinduism. The larger question reflected in Upadhyay's writings during this period is: who is entitled to interpret India's cultural heritage?

3.1 Sankara's Advaita as Foundation

From June 1900 onwards Upadhyay explores Sankara's Vedanta extensively. For him Vedantism 'is the religion of the Upanishads as taught by Vyasa and expounded by Sankara.' Though there are other schools of Vedanta such as Ramanuja and Madhva, for Upadhyay Sankara's Vedanta has preeminence over others, a claim supported by statistics and 'scientific analysis': "Statistics show that seventy-five percent of the Vedantists belong to the school of Sankara. Moreover, the other two schools cannot stand the scientific test of analysis." The same Upadhyay who denounced Advaitavad in no uncertain terms has now something very different to say about Sankara's Vedanta: "We are convinced that it [Vedanta] will play as important a part in giving a direction to modern Indian thought as did Greek philosophy in moulding different schools of European philosophy."

He goes on to add: "A new era of philosophy is to be created in India along with her rejuvenation, and the Vedanta philosophy will be its basis." For Upadhyay the foundation of India's cultural rejuvenation is Sankara's Vedanta. He defends Vedanta in the following manner: "But there are errors in it, they say. Granted, but were there no errors in Plato and Aristotle? Aristotle believed in the eternity of matter, and still there is scarcely any philosophy that has contributed so much to the strengthening of scientific theism as his

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system.” He reiterates the role and scope of Vedanta: “We hope to prove by demonstration, by and by, that theistic science cannot flourish in India if the Vedanta be ignored.”

3.2 Upadhyay’s Critique of Orientalists
In the same article Upadhyay suggests that the Orientalist scholars have neither understood nor represented Hindu philosophy correctly and Vedanta remains ‘a hidden thing to the non-Hindu mind.’ He is critical of Orientalist scholars such as Thibaut and Max Muller:

M. Thibaut of Allahabad is an erudite Sanskrit scholar. His translation of the Vedanta philosophy is a monument of scholarship and diligence. But after all it is a gigantic failure. He has translated his European mental impressions of the Vedanta into English words. The Hindu Vedanta spoken by a Hindu mind in a Hindu way still remains a hidden thing to the non-Hindu mind. Even professor Max Muller has, according to many competent Sanskrit scholars, failed to represent Hindu philosophy correctly in his latest book, The Six Darsanas.

In the context of Orientalist misperception of Hindu philosophy Upadhyay writes: “We feel that a strenuous effort should be made to render the Vedanta faithfully into English and French that the European savants may understand its true nature and scope.” In another brief note written in November 1900 Upadhyay makes the following request to European Orientalists:

We humbly request our European missionaries to unlearn some of their notions about Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. Even those that have studied Hindu thought in the original have been misled because they are not in touch with the traditions of the country. There may be honourable exceptions but exceptions prove the rule. We have not read the works of German and French Sanskritists. But Max Muller and Thibaut in spite of their profound scholarship have not seen the flesh-and-blood countenance of Hindu Philosophy. It is extremely desirable that European writers should have their writings and speeches on Hinduism brought into line with tradition, before they take to criticism.

After the Zaleski episode we can discern a growing antagonism in the writings of Upadhyay towards Europeans in general. It is not only the erudite Orientalists who have misunderstood Hinduism but also the scholarly European missionaries. Of particular interest in this context

is his criticism of Hegglin, S.J., Professor of Sanskrit in St. Xavier's college, Bombay on the question of maya. Hegglin had published an article in which he had criticized Upadhyay's notion and suggested that "the term maya has become too degraded to be introduced into "Christian theology" as a substitution for "creation or "creative will-ing [sic] of God." Upadhyay outlines the state of the question in the following manner:

We hope to show on the very ground covered by the Rev. Father that the term maya is more expressive of the doctrine of creation than the Latin root "creare." Whenever we speak of creation we should be careful to make explicit three facts implied in the creative act. First: there is no necessity on God's part to create. Second: the coming into being of finite objects with the implication that they did not exist. Third: the finite perfections are contained in the infinite in a pre-eminent way. Now the term "creation" expresses only the second significance, while maya conveys, as we shall show later on by quoting chapter and verse, all the three. 48

In his article Upadhyay suggests that Fr. Hegglin has entertained a mistaken notion of maya. He writes:

In his letter the Rev. Father attempts to show that the system of Sankara holds this world to be an illusion, an unreality. The question is: who has Englished maya as "illusion"? Who has metamorphosed vyavaharika into "unreality"? Europeans have Europeanised the Sanskrit terms according to their choice and it is their choice that is to be condemned and not the real sense of the terms. 49

Upadhyay hopes "to show by a series of articles supported by the authority of original texts as well as of tradition that the Vedanta has been misunderstood by Europeans as a rule. Even Professor Max Muller and M. Thibaut have failed to grasp its central meaning." Now for the first time Upadhyay suggests in the same article that Vedanta may be superior to that of scholastic philosophy in translating Christian truths: "It is our rational belief that the Vedanta, rightly interpreted and brought into line with modern thought, will make the natural truths of Theism and the supernatural dogmas of Christianity more explicit and consonant with reason than was done by the scholastic philosophy." 50 He admits that 'in holding this belief one is not necessitated to accept all the Vedantic doctrines to be true.' However he adds: "If Aristotle who taught eternity of motion could be incorporated into the Church, the Vedanta

can be assimilated more so because of its highly metaphysical nature.” He writes: “The march of intellect under the inspiring direction of the Catholic Church was arrested by the religious revolt of the sixteenth century. Again that orderly march is to be renewed and the impetus, it appears, will come from the East.”

From February to April 1901 Upadhyay wrote a lengthy three part article in which he criticized Thibaut’s Introduction to Vedanta. Upadhyay writes: “M. Thibaut has, to the great misfortune of the civilized world, seen the Vedanta through coloured glasses. He seems to be indoctrinated with a certain kind of European philosophy which is fundamentally opposed to Vedantic Theism.” Brahmabandhab goes on to state that “M. Thibaut’s rendering of Sankara’s commentary into English would be eminently praiseworthy had it not been for his bias.” Hence Upadhyay’s critical appraisal of the Orientalist: “M. Thibaut’s bend of mind is perfectly alien to Vedantic thought.” In the four part article Upadhyay engages in exegetical exposition of three key terms of Vedanta, namely, nirguna, abheda and avidya, which, according to Upadhyay, are the sources of misunderstanding in Thibaut’s work. In 1901 Upadhyay spent much time clarifying various aspects of Vedanta through a number of articles.

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52 Upadhyay’s criticism of Thibaut is from a Christian perspective, for he writes: “In a great many enlightened centers of Christendom the ancient philosophical Theism of the Fathers has died out and given place to an empirical philosophy which has mingled the life of God with nature and confined the Infinite within the bounds of cosmic relations.” B. Upadhyay, “M. Thibaut’s Introduction to Vedanta,” TC February 1901. J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 293.
53 Apparently Upadhyay seems to reject the European Enlightenment framework within which the Orientalist approached Vedanta. Much of the Enlightenment philosophy which had worked within empirical framework had sidelined Christianity and by parity of reason, theism. Against such enlightenment perspective Upadhyay writes: “It seems M. Thibaut has taken this empirical Theism as his standard and judged the Vedanta philosophy by its light. It is this glamour of European light that has stood in the way of his vision and precluded him from perceiving the golden halo which surrounds the Parabrahman of the Vedanta.” B. Upadhyay, “M. Thibaut’s Introduction to Vedanta,” TC February 1901. J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 293.
3.3 Anxiety over Hindu Identity
During this period Upadhyay is increasingly concerned about the effects of excessive European influences on Indian educational system. In his view, western influences which have crept through the colonial educational system have been detrimental to the Hindu mode of thought. "European philosophy," writes Upadhyay, "is aggressive and by unceasing onslaughts is attempting to destroy Hindu thought. Our existence as a race is at stake. We must make a bold stand to preserve our integrity. Political bondage extending for centuries has not been able to extirpate us. But this invisible invasion of the domination of Hindu thought will either destroy us or make bastards of us. Let us be forearmed." Upadhyay's effort at the educational front has to be seen within the context of Hindu identity. Most of his plans of education centered on strengthening Hindu cultural ethos which he felt was under the threat of westernizing influences. In this context Tapan Raychaudhuri points out a well known yet inadequately emphasized fact:

Western education, as introduced in Bengal, was and remained exclusively secular and no alternative or complementary systems modified the consequent exclusion of religious instruction from the curricula. The Christian missionary colleges and the few institutions set up by the Brahmos did provide for the study of scriptures, Christian and Hindu respectively. But such study had no roots in the belief system of the majority of the students. The strong rationalist bias of the rest of the curricula and the mode of instruction ensured that religious faith could not be structured around intellectual persuasion for the bulk of the modern intelligentsia... Neither customary ritual observance, nor such limited knowledge of the indigenous religious traditions as one acquired from the home environment could counteract the overwhelming power of reason-based knowledge acquired through the formal system of education.

Upadhyay's search was for an alternative mode of education based on Hindu/Aryan cultural ethos. His Saraswati Ayatan was meant to be an answer for the onslaught of westernizing influences on Bengali youth. Upadhyay stresses the need to invigorate Hindu mode of thought:

We shall never be able to think vigorously unless we are taught to think as Hindus. No doubt, our education cannot be complete if we do not assimilate European culture, but there must be first a healthy constitution to befit us for the process of assimilation. European science makes our herbs and trees grow most luxuriantly but only when they are planted in Indian soil. No science, no culture would be of any use to them if

they were transplanted to a foreign land. Our universities are producing only bastard bantlings who can think neither like a European nor like a Hindu.  

On several occasions Upadhyay writes about 'Hindu' thought. What does he mean by 'Hindu' thought? He tries to articulate the meaning of 'Hindu' thought in the following manner:

By Hindu thought we do not mean the various doctrines, tenets or theories prevailing among different philosophical schools or sects in India. It is a trend of thinking which has given a peculiar direction to all Hindu speculations. There is one 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 Europeanisation.

We see another significant development in Upadhyay's thinking on Hinduism during this period. There is an increasing tendency in Upadhyay's thought of identifying Hindu thought with 'Indian' thought. For Brahmabandhab, the creators of Indian cultural ethos are the Aryans and by parity of reason, there is an unmistakable projection of Aryan race or Hindu race as the rightful inheritors of emerging national space in Upadhyay's writings. From the perspective of Upadhyay the decline of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the very decline of India; the progress of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the progress of 'India.' The territorial contours of the emerging national space in Upadhyay's writings are not very explicit: sometimes this national space is identified as India, sometimes as Bengal, sometimes as Bharat and sometimes as Hindustan.

3.4 Identity: Regional and National

Often Upadhyay shuttles between the 'national' and regional identities. For example, while writing about the significance of Durga Puja for Bengalis Upadhyay notes that the 'readers in the Western and Southern presidencies are, perhaps, not aware of what is Durga Puja.' He goes on to note the difference of signification attached to Durga puja in various parts of British India: "The strange thing is that Bengal, effeminate Bengal, goes mad over this power-worship. The strong Hindustani, the stalwart Punjabi, the heroic Rajput and the sturdy

Mahratta are not half as much stirred in the celebration of the worship of the Goddess of Power as the delicate Bengali.⁶⁰

There is one aspect of the above quote which merits our attention in the context of the emerging national space. In the scale of comparison Upadhyay has included Bengali, Hindustani, Punjabi, Rajput and Mahratta which form the traditional Aryan ‘heartland.’ Upadhyay writes: “Durga Puja is believed to be the celebration of the anniversary of Rama’s conquest of Ravana – the triumph of the Aryans over the non-Aryans. Rama is said to have worshipped sakti (power) to conquer his monster-enemy.”⁶¹ For Upadhyay the triumph of the Aryans over the non-Aryans is a ‘national triumph’ and Durga puja is the celebration of that ‘national’ victory. Upadhyay laments over the lack of ‘national’ spirit among Bengalis during Durga puja: "Not a spark of chivalry kindles the breast of the Bengali, not a thought of past glory and greatness crosses his mind, not even a teardrop moistens his eye at the sight of his misery and degradation, during this commemorative season of national triumph."⁶² Upadhyay’s notion of cultural-national space reflects the assumptions of Aryan Race theory which is deeply embedded in Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy.

3.5 Integrity of Hindu Society
In 1900 we see a growing anxiety in Upadhyay’s writings regarding the integrity of Hindu society. For him the ancient India was united and one under Aryan supremacy and through the assimilation process of non-Aryan races ‘the newly formed Aryan society grew in strength and greatness.’⁶³ According Upadhyay, though this initial unity diminished because of ‘political and sectarian divisions,’ ‘still one heart throbbed throughout the length and breadth of the country.’⁶⁴ He writes: “When any calamity overtook the father-land, when clannish jealousies tore the national heart, patriots and bards could appeal to the entire race by touching one common cord which bound together every Aryan child, notwithstanding the

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prevalence of stupendous differences.” Upadhyay writes further: “Even now, that national chord, though torn and beaten to dullness, vibrates sensitively enough to shake the frame of every true-born Aryan, when it is moved by the threnodies of Rajput chivalry and Mahratta heroism.” He postulates the cause for the present Hindu decline as the presence of ‘alien’ races, especially the Muslims:

But alas! India is no more one. Alien races have come and settled in the country which cannot be assimilated into the fold without destroying the racial integrity. An irreparable chasm divided the Aryan inhabitants of India from the Semitic settlers. In spite of amity between the two races and their common citizenship under one benign rule, that ancient unity can never – humanly speaking – be restored to make the Aryavarta one integral whole again.

Upadhyay’s interpretation of India’s past merits some attention. It is not entirely clear which ‘India’ he is referring to when he says that ‘[i]n ancient days India was one.’ Further, he describes this ‘ancient India’ in terms of a ‘nation.’ He was convinced that the Aryans were the creators of this primordial nationhood. Within such interpretative scheme, non-Aryans are located at the periphery of this imagined nation. It is important to note the way Upadhyay calibrates racial configurations in the construction of identities.

In Upadhyay’s view, India’s unity is under threat. According to him, when ‘a serious breach threatens the life-unity of India it becomes absolutely necessary to diligently devise ways and means for consolidating the integrity of the Hindu society.’ He points out that ‘laxity and looseness in enforcing the salutary conditions of social life will bring into the fold heterogeneous elements which will endanger the very esse of the society.’ Against the potential disintegration of Hindu social order Upadhyay suggests that certain conditions must be laid down for every member of the society under the pain of excommunication. These

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conditions do not pertain to the uniformity of belief among the Hindus, but rather to social practices.\textsuperscript{71}

Upadhyay suggests two ‘tentative’ conditions for every Hindu: (1) not to interdine and intermarry with non-Hindu races, such as Europeans and Mahommedans and (2) not to eat beef. According to him, “intermarriages with alien races will make hybrids of us and destroy our national integrity. It should be repressed with a high hand. Interdining often leads to social aberrations and hence it should also be prohibited as a rule.” He points out that, beef eating shocks Hindu sentiments horribly and to violate that sentiment is to break up the entire Hindu edifice.’ However, fowl and pork are not included in the prohibited food ‘because the Punjabis and Mahrattas eat fowl, and Rajputs and Sikhs eat pork.”\textsuperscript{72}

3.6 Upadhyay’s Interpretation of Caste
An integral dimension of Upadhyay’s understanding of Hinduism is the caste system. In fact he devoted several articles to caste system during this period. For Brahmabandhab the ‘Hinduness’ or Hindutva does not consists so much in beliefs. In his interpretation ‘Hinduness’ consists in a social system and within this framework Caste system plays an important role. Let us begin with Brahmabandhab’s interpretation of caste system. Upadhyay advises a Brahman who inquires in the pages of Sophia whether there is any ‘natural basis’ to the caste system or it is a ‘mere convention got up by my ancestors for purpose of self-aggrandisement.’ In the query the Brahman suggests that the caste system is merely a convention and it is an ‘engine of oppression.’ He was also ‘seriously meditating upon abjuring it by throwing away’ his sacred thread. Upadhyay replies: “You will commit a great mistake in throwing away your sacred thread. We deliberately advise you to preserve your caste. The caste-system has not a bad origin as you suppose. It was framed on the basis of human constitution.” Upadhyay goes on to explain his notion of caste system:

According to Hindu psychology man is composed of four divisions – first, the organs of work, as hands, feet, etc; second, the organs of sense; third, manas or mind which governs these organs; and the fourth is buddhi or intellect which deals with supersensuous things. Society has four parts, corresponding to the four divisions of the nature of man. The working class represents the organs of work; the trading or the artisan class represents the senses, inasmuch as they minister to their comforts; the


ruling class corresponds to the mind which governs the senses; and the sacerdotal class, whose function is to learn and teach the scriptures and make others worship, is a manifestation of *buddhi*. The psychological division of man and society is the natural basis on which this ancient system of social polity was framed. To regulate a vast community by dividing it into well-defined and coordinated group is not self-aggrandisement.\(^73\)

Upadhyay conceives society as an organic whole: “A society to be worth the name should be an organism. And an organism is a unity in diversity – the unity binding its diverse members into a coordinated whole, and the diversity enlivening the unity with action and re-action and thus keeping the whole up above the level of dead oneness.”\(^74\) For Upadhyay the Hindu caste system is the result of ‘natural’ evolution and we should not disrupt such a process:

The caste is an evolution of Hindu nature. Its accidents, accretions, stereotyping excrescences may be removed but the essential constitution of the system cannot, we think, disappear. As there must be a gradual readjustment of social divisions and as that readjustment is likely to be modeled after the ancient Hindu principle of unity and diversity, is it not advisable to be patient and not give oneself up to vandalism? If evils have crept into the caste-system, try to minimize them. If certain annoying accidents cannot be removed without destroying the integrity of the social fabric, suffer them to remain unmolested for the time being as lesser evils. Why to break away and cause a breach in the process of natural evolution?\(^75\)

In *Sophia* (1900) Upadhyay wrote that the caste system is the natural evolution and it represents the ‘genius’ of the people. He postulates the greatness of the Hindu race because of the existence of caste system:

The caste system is a natural evolution of the social instinct. Far-sighted, learned men formulated it in consonance with the genius of the people. The greatness of the Hindu race was achieved largely through the regulating influence of caste. It was caste that preserved the Hindus from being transformed into hybrids of the Semitic stock. It is this social polity which still checks mammon-worship on the European scale.\(^76\)

He argues that the caste system should be maintained for the sake of social integrity. Upadhyay also dismisses social reformers’ efforts to disrupt the caste system:

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But we should not condemn the substance on account of the badness of accidents. We are not prepared to create a revolution at the bidding of a few denationalized, English-educated reformers. The migrations of Mahomedans into India have broken her political unity. And it is not desirable to violate her social integrity by dragging a few units out of the coordinated whole on the plea of sentimental brotherhood. It is yet to be proved that Hindu society has been so radically changed as not to be at all compatible with the primitive principle of social divisions.

Upadhyay is highly critical of social reformers who want to dismantle the Hindu caste system; against the notion of 'brotherhood' advocated by Indian social reformers he wants the social difference and stratification to be maintained:

But some of our Bengal reformers are uncontrollable. They will not rest until they see all old landmarks which go to constitute social variety clean washed off. They are seized with a sickly, sentimental idea of brotherhood. They have been tutored by certain European freelances that not to have uniform fellowship with anybody and everybody is unjust, immoral. They are chips of socialists. Social differences and divisions there must be.

It may be recalled that his trip to England made him even more antagonistic toward the British. His writings between 1900 and 1901 would suggest that he is disillusioned with the state of the church in India. By the end of this period it would appear as though his enthusiasm to dress Indian Christianity in oriental garb had dampened considerably. In 1900 Sophia weekly came to an end; in March 1902 Catholic authorities banned Upadhyay's journal The Twentieth Century. After these ecclesiastical censures he began writing in Bangadarsan on issues pertaining to Hindu society almost with a vengeance. Now on, anti-Europeanism becomes more and more explicit in his writings. He sees European domination detrimental both to national progress and to the progress of Hinduism. Now on his energies are focused on Hindu identity as the basis of Indian national identity. One important aspect of his approach to Hinduism is the growing concern to strengthen the Hindu identity. Somehow Upadhyay is convinced that cultural regeneration is the condition for the possibility of national regeneration. Here, for him, cultural regeneration consists in the regeneration of the Aryans/Hindus.

4. Fourth Phase: Hindu Nationalism

The fourth phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hinduism extends from 1901 to 1907. The beginning of what might be called the Hindu nationalist phase of Brahmabandhab is marked by his writings in *Bangadarsan* from mid 1901. Another major landmark in his Hindu nationalism is the starting of *Sandhya* in December 1904. As Sumit Sarkar points out, radical politics and aggressive Hinduism often got inextricably combined in the pages of *Sandhya.*

His interest in Catholicism, for all practical purposes, becomes somewhat marginal. The most pressing concern for him during the *Swadeshi* agitation centers on strengthening Hindu identity. We can discern two interrelated aspects dominating Upadhyay thought: (i) During this phase his anti-European stance becomes more forceful and (ii) His articulations of Hindu identity become more and more resolute. There are several articles and speeches of this period which reveal Upadhyay's new perspective on Hinduism.

4.1 Upadhyay's Notion of 'Hindutva'

One of the clearest articulations of Upadhyay's understanding of Hinduism can be found in an important essay titled "The One Centredness of the Hindu Race," written in 1901. In this essay published in *Bangadarsan* he delineates the 'Hinduness' or the Bengali term used by him "Hindutva" of the Hindus. The significance of this article consists in his effort to synthesize his views on Hinduism written earlier and brings to focus the meaning of 'Hinduness' or *Hindutva.* Upadhyay begins his exposition by describing what Hindutva is not: "Let it be said at the outset that the Hindu's Hinduness is not founded on any particular basis. The Hindu's Hinduness does not depend on any particular religious belief."

To drive home the point more forcefully, Upadhyay cites Adaitavada, Daitavada, Vedanta, Samkya system, Saivism, Vaishnavism, and Saktism as examples of Hindus holding diametrically opposed views. "If Hinduness were based on consensus of belief," observes Upadhyay, "the designation 'Hindu' would have disappeared ages ago." According to him, considerations of food and drink cannot be the basis of Hindu's Hinduness. He asks the following questions:

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Now whom shall we call Hindu and whom shall we exclude from Hinduness? If the Maharashtrians and the Sikhs were left out there is no doubt that there would be a void in the innermost core of the Hindu race. Now if Hinduness is neither founded on religious belief nor rests upon agreement concerning rules about what may or may not be consumed, then where lies its foundation? On what support does the Hindu's nationhood rest?

Upadhyay describes Hindutva positively as follows: “The basis of Hinduness, its essence, are the duties of caste and stages of life and the one-centredness (eknisthata) directing them.” According to Brahmabandhab “there is a distinctiveness to the mode of Hindu thinking, and Hinduness is founded upon this distinctiveness.” In order to bring out the uniqueness of Hindu mode of thought Upadhyay compares and contrasts it with the Western way of thinking:

Concerning the ground of a particular thing, it is the Hindu's distinctiveness to enter the core of that thing. And the distinctiveness of the European perspective is to know the relation between one thing and another to perceive unity through that relationship. The mark of the first is one-centredness or interiority, while that of the second is many-centredness or integration.

Upadhyay maintains that in spite of the diversity ‘one and the same current of thinking’ flows beneath the Hindu thought and he calls it ‘one-centred’ way of thinking. He buttresses this claim by going back to Vedic times. Here, Upadhyay reiterates the notion of Vedic Theism. The Vedic worship of and chants to elemental deities such as agni (god of fire), vayu (god of wind) and varuna (god of water) represent, according to Upadhyay, the most ancient Hindu way of apprehending ‘the Agent (karta) of that phenomenon [fire, wind, water etc.] within.’

Brahmabandhab dismisses the opinion of Western scholars who maintained that the Vedic seers ‘used to worship five elementals as deities’ because they were ‘unable to distinguish between an inanimate power and consciousness.’ He goes on to describe the meaning of

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85 Upadhyay had written on this theme before: “The Vedic sages, whenever they saw any striking natural phenomena ... immediately realized the Free Agency causing them to come into being. They did not see God who is the first as well as the final cause of all that exists, at the tail-end of an indefinite chain of sequence like the ‘enlightened’ theists of the day whose spiritual vision has been obscured by the prevalent false theory of cause and effect. Their [Vedic] theism was natural and vigorous, which did not allow an indefinite chain to stand between the creature and Creator.” B. Upadhyay, “Vedic Theism,” TC (May 1901), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 312.
‘one-centredness’ of Vedic Theism by superimposing on it his earlier Vedantic interpretation of asat as contingency:

In the heart of the contingently-existent (asat), changeful, unstable, name-and-form filled universe dwells the existent, still, stable, nameless and formless essential reality (sartattva). Unconcerned with action and the result of action, the seers would behold in the womb of the visible object the completely invisible Golden Germ (hiranyagarbha). This insight is called one-centredness.

Upadhyay sees further evolution of one-centredness in Visistadvaitic teaching. “Here, Brahman is the sole cause of the world, and there is no entity other than Brahman. Multiplicity is placed within the unity of Brahman.” This, for Upadhyay is not yet the highest point of one-centredness of Hindu thought: “There is no doubt that this conclusion of Ramanuja’s is superior to the Samkhya oneness, still it is not the highest resting place of the Aryan devotion to oneness.” “There is a one-centredness to Visistadvaita,” writes Upadhyay, “but it cannot satisfy the Hindu’s one-pointed intelligence inspired by the seers. In Hindustan it is difficult to come by even one in ten who adheres to Visistadvaita.”

For Upadhyay, the “highest fulfillment of the Hindu’s one-centredness is in Sankara’s teaching of pure non-duality (suddhadvaita). He describes the quiddity of Brahman according to such non-duality: “Brahman is ‘one only without a second’ (ekam evadvitiyam), indivisible, changeless, fulfilled (aptakam), impervious to relation (sambandhanirapeksa), self satisfied (atmarata), unattached (asanga), pure, absolute (kaibalyamay).” Upadhyay notes: “No doubt he [Brahman] is the cause of the world, but the seed of that cause cannot be found in his reality. His being the cause of the world or the Creator is not essential to him.”

For Upadhyay in Sankara’s Vedanta we see the ultimate culmination of one-centredness of Hindu thought. According to him, “Vedanta has climbed the very heights of oneness.”

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87 Upadhyay illustrates: “Just as the tree is one, but its root and branches manifold in difference; just as the ocean is one yet manifold in the play of its waves; just as the clay is one yet seen to be many in pitcher and bowl, so Brahman is one yet manifold.” B. Upadhyay, “The One Centredness of the Hindu Race,” J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 123.
88 Upadhyay explains of the limitations of Ramanuja’s position: “If multiplicity is placed within the essence of Brahman then oneness’ absoluteness (kebalata) or purity is lost... Again, if the seed of multiplicity is placed ultimately (paramarthikdhvive) in the perfect Brahman then when that seed gradually develops we shall have to admit change (parinam) in true being. A changing Brahman! This does not ring true.” B. Upadhyay, “The One Centredness of the Hindu Race,” J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., TWBU-II, 123.
Upadhyay summarizes the evolution of one-centredness of Hindu thought as follows: "The tendency to one-centred thinking, the seeing into the thinghood of a thing, the experience of ultimate non-difference between Agent and effect, the knowledge of the deceptiveness of multiplicity, comprise the Hindu's Hinduness. We find its beginning in the Veda and its completion in the Vedanta." This one-centredness constitutes the 'spiritual vision' of Hindu society. Now Upadhyay makes a significant transition; he connects this 'one-centredness' of Hindu thought to the caste system: "This spiritual vision has been made manifest in the duties of caste and stages of life. The aim of caste division is to make the different non-different, the many united." He attributes India's degeneration to the break-up of Hindu's one-centredness:

From the day that the influence of this one-centred thinking started to wane and the violation of duties of caste and stage of life began, from that day began India's downfall. Where today that one-centredness! Having acquired western knowledge, the children of the seers have become many-centred and opposed to the duties of caste and stages of life. So long as the seer's unitive insight and the re-appearance of the duties of caste do not occur, India's revival is impossible.

This essay concludes on a note of openness based on relativism, for Upadhyay shows a remarkable sense of receptivity to western influences at this stage: "But in our effort towards a resurgence of devotion to oneness let us not be opponents of the European devotion to the many. This devotion to the many will nourish our nationhood." His stress is on the need to be rooted in what he perceives as the core Hindu value. He concludes the essay with the following exhortation: "If the Hindus abandon their Hinduness and become European, they will quickly die. But if taking their stand on their Hinduness, their nationhood, their one-centredness, their duties of caste and stage of life, they take up European culture (anusilan), they will henceforth prosper."
4.2 Upadhyay’s Anxiety: ‘Racial-Self Preservation’

Upadhyay’s Bangadarsan articles written in Bengali reveal the contours of his cultural nationalism. While stressing the need to be open to other cultures he insists that the Hindu should not forsake his cultural ethos. He writes: “The Hindu accepts and integrates [foreign elements], but not at the expense of forsaking his own ground or foundation. This one-centred open-mindedness is the distinctive virtue of the Hindu race.” He sees Vedanta as the foundation of Hindu culture: “Vedanta must forever remain the foundation-place for the Hindu, but it must be developed and brought into fulfillment by contact with German philosophy.” In matters of social reform, Upadhyay says that “we should stand upon our own foundation. And varnashramic way of life is that foundation.” He is wary of importing political models from Europe. “One thing is certain though,” writes Brahmabandhab, “that if we do not wish to lose our racial identity we must base our new polity on the traditional political code of the seers.”

During this period one of the major concerns of Upadhyay is the question of Hindu identity and the ‘self-preservation’ of Hindu race. So overwhelming is this concern that practically every article written by Brahmabandhab during this period reflects the theme of Hindu identity and ‘racial self-preservation.’ Dismissing Bishop Welldon’s charges of ‘disloyalty of educated India’ towards the British Empire, Upadhyay writes: “There is no disloyalty. The popular desire for the continuity of the British rule is absolute. But there is a deep discontent – an expression of the hard struggle for racial self-preservation.” The same theme surfaces in his important article “Social Penance”: “The preservation of the Hindu race from corruption and dissolution is a problem which has urgent claims to the attention of all patriots. It has survived tremendous revolutions, and now it cannot be left to perish.” Writing about the newly proposed Education Bill Upadhyay observes: “English culture has done us great good but its beneficence has been frustrated to a great extent by its aggressive

character. It has a tendency to wrench us away from our national stability and break our integrity as a race."^99

4.3 Configurations of Hindu Society

Upadhyay's interpretation of Hindu caste system is located within the framework of Hindu identity and racial self-preservation. In Brahmabandhab's reading, the Western education and cultural adaptations by Indians are eroding the traditional social system. To make matters worse, Indian social reformers and liberal minded Indians are questioning the very basis and validity of Hindu caste system. As far as Upadhyay is concerned these two factors are causing a grave danger to the very existence of the Hindu society. Let us delineate briefly how Upadhyay understands Hindu society. For him, Hinduness has two constituent elements:

Hinduness *(Hindutva)* is divided into two parts; religious practice *(dharma)* and spiritual insight *(jnana).* Dharma concerns everyday life *(byabaharik)*; it functions through injunction and prohibition. *Jnana,* however, which pertains to the ultimate realm, makes known an eternal, fully-perfect reality. The *Vedas* are *dharma*’s foundation, while the *Vedanta* is the treasure-house of *jnana.*^100

Upadhyay places the Brahmans at the highest rung of the caste ladder as the leaders of the Hindu society. "The Brahmin caste *(varna)* was created to bear the difficult burden of this leadership. Their special task is instruction and worship... It was the Brahmans who bore the burden of establishing society on oneness."^101 "The basis of Hinduness (Hindutva) is the code of stages of life with Brahmans taking the lead."^102 It is not entirely surprising to see in its inaugural number Sandhya "declared that the Vedas, Brahmin leadership and caste were all

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^100 B. Upadhyay, "The Downfall of the Hindu Race," *Bangadarssan* (January-February, 1901), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., *TWBU-II*, 146. The same idea is expressed in another article of Upadhyay: "Brahminism has two departments: *dharma* and *jnana.* Dharma is the regulation of the vocation of man by religious laws; *jnana* is the knowledge of God. The former is represented by the Vedas, Samhitas (codes of law); and the latter by the philosophy of Vyasa and Sankara." B. Upadhyay, "India's Downfall," *TC* (30 October, 1901), J. Lipner and G. Gispert-Sauch, ed., *TWBU-II*, 141.


According to Upadhyay, due to various factors the Hindu society has fallen from the ideals of true dharma and jnana. He attributes the caste miscegenation as one of the main causes for the decline of these ideals and the subsequent Hindu downfall. He holds the Sudras responsible for the decline of Aryan-Hindu ideals. Several articles of Upadhyay reflect blatant racist thinking. In the context of mixed marriages his remarks about the tribals are less than charitable: “It may not be such a bad thing to inter-marry with the women of an inferior race, but if the Kols and Bhils were to keep marrying our girls would we not be cut to the quick?” Another reason, and Upadhyay dwells at some length at it, for the further degradation of Hindu ideal is the advent of Buddhism.

4.4 Identity Politics: Upadhyay and Aryan Race

From the semantic viewpoint, for Upadhyay Aryan race is synonymous with Hindu race in the Indian context; often he uses Aryan and Hindu interchangeably in his writings. Being intrinsically related to the notion of Hindu race, the Aryan idea in Upadhyay’s thought is also linked to the caste system of Hindu society. There are four aspects to be noted here as far as Upadhyay’s notion of Aryan race is concerned: First, the notions of Aryan-Hindu-caste form a unity in Brahmabandhab’s thought. Secondly, it is important to note that the Aryan-Hindu-caste triad is intrinsically linked to Upadhyay’s notion of Indian nation and nationalism. Thirdly, the Aryan-Hindu-caste triad also forms an essential part of Upadhyay’s notion of Hindu-Catholic synthesis. Fourthly, in Upadhyay’s thought the Brahmans who are at the apex of this Aryan-Hindu-caste triad play a key role.

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103 Sumit Sarkar writes on these words of Upadhyay: “Strange words these, coming from a man who had been once a Brahmo and then for quite some time a Catholic.” Sumit Sarkar, The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908 (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973. Reprint, 1994) 259.


Upadhyay wrote consistently about the past 'glory' and the present decline of Indian/Hindu society. Such writings reflect the emerging nationalist concerns about interpreting Indian history with a specific focus on Aryans as the architects of India’s cultural heritage. The major problem faced by nationalists like Upadhyay was this: if India had a ‘glorious’ Aryan past, how to account for the present ‘decline’? Upadhyay’s answer to this question is simple: the Aryans and their culture degenerated due to the intermingling of races. Most of what Upadhyay writes about the Aryan and non-Aryan races of India is rooted in the stereotypes generated by the Orientalists. Eventually many of these stereotypes had been accepted as ‘facts’ by a vast majority of people. This is what Upadhyay has to say about the mixing of Aryans with the non-Aryans:

In ancient times the dark-skinned non-Aryans who worshipped wood, stone, ghosts, ghouls etc., were called Sudra. They were bitter opponents of the Aryan cult (aryatantra). They were kept at arm's length lest by mingling with them Aryan blood become contaminated, mixed castes (samkarjati) arise and Vedic religion (dharma) be obstructed.  

According to Upadhyay this mixing of races and the subsequent ‘contamination’ had serious implications. The non-Aryan Sudras, who are ‘ignorant,’ could not live up to the high ideals of the Aryans.

Aryan society had been regulated by the discipline of restraint (nibritti); the newcomer [sudras] found this burdensome. They had mingled no doubt, but were unable to enter deep into the Aryan code of practice (aryaniti). These ignorant people of mixed descent, alien and opposed to the discipline of restraint as they were, weighed heavily on the bosom of Aryan society. And this speedily blocked the path of progress.

The biological aspect of Aryan race as well as the ‘dark’ skinned non-Aryans propagated by Aryan Race theory is well entrenched in Brahmabandhab’s racial thought. Upadhyay interprets the mixing of Aryan and non-Aryan races which eventually led to the formation of Hinduism in The Tablet, a well known English weekly:

The non-Aryans were admitted into Aryanism as Sudras or labourers on the condition of their obeying the law of hereditary vocation...Whenever new settlers came or new

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tribes were conquered, they were, sooner or later, assimilated into the Aryan fold. Thus Aryans, Scythians, Turanians, Dravidians, Mongolians were brought together under one social regulation, and the united community came to be called Hindu, i.e., living on the banks of the Sindhu (Indus). 109

Here we must note one important element in Upadhyay’s thinking, i.e., that Hinduism comprises Aryans as well as non-Aryans. For him, though the Hindu fold includes both Aryans and non-Aryans, the real core of Hinduism is constituted by the Aryans. In The Tablet Upadhyay goes on to describe the ill-effects of admitting alien people into the Hindu fold in the following manner: “The Hindu grew in strength and wisdom, and his social organization gave him a marvelous vigour. But the assimilation of too many alien races proved, in the long run, to be very unwholesome. Many of them were ill-fitted, and could not enter into the spirit of Aryanism.” 110 In what might be an example of Upadhyay’s explicit passages on racism, we read:

If the far seeing authors of our sacred texts had not strictly regulated our interaction (acar byabahar) with the Sudras, then even the little Aryanness (aryatva) left to us would have been lost. Rajaputana, begetter of heroes, would today be full of snub-noses and yellow eyes; instead of lotus-faced Hindu beauties, females with low brows and grotesque faces would adorn literary groves. 111

For Upadhyay, the ‘spirit of Aryanism’ or Aryan ideal is paramount in the regeneration of Hinduism and by parity of reason, in the regeneration of India.

Conclusion
The first stage in Upadhyay’s interpretation of Hindu identity may be termed as ‘sanitized’ version of Hinduism which lasted from 1894 to 1897. During this period Upadhyay engages in a vigorous critique of traditional Hindu beliefs and practices which he thought were not in consonance with true religion. At this point in his life, his Catholic faith serves as the guiding principle in his critique of Hinduism. During this period, for him, Catholicism represents the highest ideal and several aspects of Hinduism fall short of Christian ideals. It is important to note that at this point in time, for Upadhyay Hinduism represents both positive and negative

elements. On the negative side, he is critical of Hindu pantheon\textsuperscript{112} in general and of Krishna of *Bhaagavat* in particular. Vedanta too comes under Upadhyay's critical scrutiny. He concludes that the Vedantic system is incompatible with Catholic doctrines, especially that of creation. On the positive side, he finds Vedic Theism as an antidote for the 'evils' of Hinduism such as polytheism, nature worship and idolatry. He insists that in spite of some negative tendencies, Hinduism does possess 'sublime' truths. A byproduct of Western education had been an enthusiasm for rational and critical enquiry among the Bengali intelligentsia and Upadhyay was not alone in questioning the cultural ethos of Hindu past. Bengal renaissance had brought several Hindu beliefs and practices under the scrutiny of rational and critical inquiry.

The second phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hinduism lasts from 1897 to 1900. During this phase we see some significant readjustments in Brahmabandhab's perspectives on Hinduism. His major concern now is to present Catholicism to the Hindus of India in a meaningful way. During this period he was actively engaged in setting up a Catholic ashram on the banks of the Narmada River. His prime concern is to de-Europeanize Christianity in India. At this point in time Upadhyay was also in active search for theological-philosophical categories to present Catholic truths which made sense in Hindu context. Perhaps the most important paradigmatic change in Upadhyay's approach to Hinduism during this period is the adoption of Vedanta, which he had denounced not long ago, now he would use it as the vehicle for conveying Catholic truths. He was convinced that just as Aristotelian philosophy nurtured Christian thinking in the West Hindu philosophy could serve Christian thinking in India. Upadhyay saw no contradiction between being a Christian and being a Hindu at the same time, a conviction which he seems to have carried till his death. Behind such a conviction is the distinction he made between natural and supernatural religion. A significant aspect of Upadhyay's thought is his diagnostic quest for India's present state of decline. He devotes considerable time and energy in showing the causes of India's degeneration. He situates India's decadence not so much in the political realm, but rather in the way Hinduism has interpreted reality. For Upadhyay Hinduism and Hindu philosophy are the foundations of Indian cultural ethos. Indian cultural ethos, as he sees, is the legacy of the classical Hindu heritage.

The third phase in Upadhyay’s articulation of Hindu identity lasts from 1900 to 1901. He continues to explore themes such as Vedic Theism and Vedanta in this journal. From June 1900 onwards Upadhyay explored Sankara’s Vedanta extensively. Upadhyay who had denounced Advaita not long ago, now becomes convinced that Vedanta ‘will play as important a part in giving direction to modern Indian thought as did Greek philosophy in moulding different schools of European philosophy.’ At this point in time Brahmabandhab is increasingly concerned about the effects of excessive European influences on India which he felt were detrimental to the Hindu mode of thought. There is an increasing tendency of identifying Hindu thought with Indian thought in Upadhyay’s writings. For Brahmabandhab the creators of Indian cultural ethos are the Aryans. By parity of reason there is an unmistakable projection of Aryan race or Hindu race as the rightful inheritors of emerging national space in Upadhyay’s writings. From the perspective of Upadhyay the decline of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the very decline of India also; the progress of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the progress of ‘India.’ The territorial contours of the emerging national space in Upadhyay’s writings are not very explicit: sometimes this national space is identified as India, sometimes as Bengal, sometimes as Bharat and sometimes as Hindustan. Often he shuttles between the ‘national’ and regional identities. In 1900 we see a growing anxiety in Upadhyay’s writings regarding the integrity of Hindu society. For him the ancient India was united and one under Aryan supremacy; but now he sees the signs of decline and decay all around. Upadhyay is very critical of any efforts which he felt would threaten the integrity of the Hindu social fabric. It is against his anxiety of the Hindu social fabric that Upadhyay’s pronouncements on the caste system need to be located.

In the fourth phase, Upadhyay adopts Hindu nationalism or cultural nationalism and this period lasts from 1901 to 1907. A major landmark in Upadhyay’s Hindu nationalism is the starting of Sandhya in 1904 December. In spite of opposition from the Catholic hierarchy Upadhyay remains a Catholic; from now onwards he disengages himself from any theological controversies. The most pressing concern for him during the swadeshi agitation centers on strengthening Hindu identity. So overwhelming is his concern for racial self-preservation that practically every article written by Brahmabandhab during this period reflects the theme of Hindu identity and ‘rational self-preservation.’ In mid July 1901 Upadhyay had expressed his anguish over the ‘loss of self’ and the loss of ‘spirit of manliness’ under colonialism. In
Brahmabandhab’s reading, Western education and cultural adaptations by Indians are responsible for eroding the traditional social system. Upadhyay is very critical of Indian social reformers and liberal minded Indians who questioned the very basis and validity of Hindu caste system. As far as Upadhyay was concerned these two factors were posing grave dangers to the very existence of Hindu society. During this period Upadhyay compared and contrasted materialistic West with that of ‘spiritual’ India. Perhaps the most striking expression of his cultural nationalism is reflected in his exhortation given to fellow Bengalis on the eve of the Swadeshi agitation: “Whatever you are, be a Hindu, be a Bengali!” In the next chapter we shall delineate Upadhyay’s interpretation of Catholicism.

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