

**HISTORY COMMUNITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS
A STUDY OF HINDI JOURNALS
(1900-1930)**

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Certificate

Certified that the dissertation entitled **HISTORY, COMMUNITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS: A STUDY OF HINDI JOURNALS (1900- 1930)** by **AVINASH KUMAR** in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil.)** of this University, is his original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or of any other University.

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Avinash

PREFACE

The motivation for the topic primarily comes from the sources themselves, which though in abundance, have hardly been worked upon. The period, termed as the second and the most important phase in 'Hindi Navjagaran', also saw the development of Hindi language and literature, even as the national movement took a sharp turn during these years. My attempt will be to discuss certain aspects of the multifarious debate, covered by these journals.

Here I want to point out the difficulties, regarding my research work. Many of the journals I looked at, were in bad condition due to which, certain page numbers were missing. Also at many places, the author's names were missing. I have used 'Anonymous (Anon.)', at all such places, in my references. Also, there was no proper cataloguing or even archival preservation at most of the places. Moreover, many of them were scattered in different personal libraries, collections etc., due to which I could not consult many of the issues. These factors, I feel, may have led to a certain lopsidedness in my readings of these sources, for which, I would beg readers' indulgence.

Chapter One

Introduction & Historiography

There have been several attempts to explore the intellectual, ideological processes which emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth century colonial India. Problems have always emerged over the complexities of underlying linkages within such processes, which directly fed into the twentieth century mass-movements in northern India. In this context, the tendency has often been to regard the socio-cultural developments in Bengal and Maharashtra, as generally valid for the whole of India. This seems doubtful, when one realises that India has had a longer multilingual literary tradition, than most other cultural regions in the world.

In the growing atmosphere of nationalism, a trend appears to be to identify a 'national literature', which could project a unified national character and culture. Doubtlessly, there was a dynamic interaction between several of these modern literary traditions on the one hand, as well as with several other localized forms of expression on the other. Still, they retained their region-specific distinctive features, which are hard to ignore. The study of Hindi movement or 'Hindi-Navjagaran' (as it is more popularly known), becomes important, precisely because of these factors.

II

Before I discuss the existing literature, it will be useful to look at the changes, which were visible in the newly emerging environs of the print-industry from late nineteenth century onwards.

Roger Chartier writes that, "when the printing profession proposed a new instrument for knowledge and entertainment, multiplied the possible usage of the written word, and instigated new forms of social technique, it transformed the cultural practices and cultural concepts of those into whose hands its products fell".¹ While this created a market which reached beyond those who knew how to read, and beyond the readers of the books alone,² the wide distribution of identical bits of information provided an impersonal link between people who were unknown to each other.³ Benedict Anderson finds this observation crucial, while arguing that a key element in the creation of 'imaginary

¹ R. Chartier, The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France, Princeton, 1987, p.145.

² *ibid.*, p.159.

³ E.L. Eisenstein, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, Cambridge, 1979, p.132.

communities', is the role of publication - or 'print-capitalism' as he calls it, in making ties possible beyond a specific locality.⁴ He thus sees this phenomenon as crucial in the formation of modern nationalism. Similarly Ernest Gellner, while discussing the emergence of print-language and associated style of transmission, points out that, "only he who can understand them, or can acquire such comprehension, is included in a moral and economic community, and that he, who does not and cannot, is excluded".⁵

Yet, at the same time, we find contradictions becoming more visible and divergent traditions becoming more difficult to reconcile. Pointing this out, C.A. Bayly has argued that, "where an interest group survived and prospered, whether it was formally a 'caste', religious or secular association, this reflected the successful combination of four crucial elements : a viable ideology, publicists, printers and patrons".⁶ Yet, it is important to note that owing to the nature of the printed text, ideology

⁴ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, Verso, London, 1983.

⁵ E. Gellner Nations and Nationalism, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, p.127.

⁶ C.A. Bayly, Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880-1920, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, p.120.

gets transformed by the former, in what has been termed as the ideology of the text.⁷ It is mainly due to an effect of the productive modes to conceal and 'naturalize', ideological categories, dissolving them into the spontaneity of the 'lived'. Ideology, thus, is present in the text in the form of its 'eloquent silences'. It is with this idea in the mind, that Barbara Metcalf writes, "The publications of religio-cultural spokesmen and leaders, contesting for the loyalties of newly 'imagined communities' whose characteristics they seek to define are not primarily evidence of movements, attitudes or social change - though of course, they are that too. They are themselves the subject of the story that has to be told."⁸ It is the latter part, we are more concerned with.

III

Discussing the different phases of 'Hindi-Navjagaran', Ramvilas Sharma sees it as a unified, simply linked by a chain of temporal moments,

⁷ T. Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, Verso, London, 1976.

⁸ B.Metcalf, "Imagined Community: Polemical Debates in Colonial India", in Kenneth W. Jones (ed.), Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages, New York, 1992, p.235.

and succeeding each other in what is presented as a natural process. Thus, while its beginning is perceived from the war of 1857, the tradition progresses 'unhindered' through Bhartendu phase, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi phase (the celebrated editor of **Saraswati** and upto 'Chhayavad'. The movement for Sharma, was not only marked with antifeudal, pro-peasant and secular characteristics, but was also autonomous and distinct from the traditions of Bengal and Gujarat.⁹ Sharma, thus, sees this movement as a positive step in the formation of national identity, which also based itself on the modern scientific rationalism. The problem, with this approach is that, it refuses to look into the existing or growing contradictions, which resulted in further fissions within the Indian society.

Discussing the Bhartendu-phase of the late nineteenth century, Sudhir Chandra has shown that not only 'Hindi Navjagaran' shared many common traits with other regions of India, but specifically Bhartendu Harishchandra himself was heavily influenced by people like Bankim Chandra Chatterji.¹⁰ Further, Chandra has successfully shown that the

⁹ Ramvilas Sharma, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi aur Hindi Navjagaran, Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1989.

¹⁰ S.Chandra, The Oppressive Present; Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India, OUP, Delhi, 1992.

contemporary debate was marked by a sense of 'ambivalence' in terms of values sought to be imposed by the then intelligentsia. Thus, often we witness a continuing intermeshing of what were termed as 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Simultaneously even the concept of 'nation', which was emerging, was marked by contradictory conceptions of a 'composite nation' on the one hand, while a predominantly Hindu one, on the other. But Chandra, does not go on to explain this phenomenon, which could be due to a combination of several factors. Thus, existing primordial identities as well as the imposition of a 'colonialist discourse', which re-imposed and reformulated these identities, have not been delved upon in detail.

Attempting to analyse this process, Christopher R. King, sidelining the existing divisions within the Hindi areas, argues that the Hindi movement consciously linked up the issue of language with religion and further sought to establish a differentiated identity on this ground. This in turn led to the rise of communal consciousness in this area.¹¹ Krishna Kumar also echoes this, while pointing out that even the school text-books

¹¹ Christopher R. King, One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India, OUP, Bombay, 1994. Also see, Christopher R. King, "Forging a New Linguistic Identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868-1914" in Sandria Frietag (ed.), Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment, 1800-1980, OUP, 1989, pp.179-230.

were consciously given a Hindu-colour in the process. People like Ramachandra Shukla with their comprehensive works like 'Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihaas', sought to give 'khariboli' Hindi a respectable past, while simultaneously choosing an overtly Hindu tradition at the expense of a composite one.¹²

While, both King and Kumar deftly show the development of Hindi movement and its divisive politics, they don't give adequate attention to the larger context of nationalism, which may have spurred this movement to take specific directions. King, therefore, also fails to place this movement within an overall movement for the search of a glorious, ancient past.

In the backdrop of this short discussion, the questions which emerge before us are; how a literary language is created, how its history (or histories), is narrated and what social and political conditions lead to certain social groups taking these question in a comprehensive manner. The need therefore, is to look for both; various ideological self-representations of a society through texts, as well as, as the working

¹² Krishna Kumar, "Quest for Self-Identity: Culture, Consciousness and Education in the Hindi Region (1880-1950)", Occasional Papers, NO.XVI, NMML, New Delhi.

of those specific ideologies, which remain behind the emergence of certain texts in a specific historical circumstance.

IV

The classes which were in the centre of literary movements prior to the nineteenth century developments were not the urban-elite, but mostly coming from the artisanate , the peasantry, the women, the shudras etc.; coming from the lower-rings of society. Bhakti movement could be one example in this regard. With the coming of the print, the meaning of 'literary' however, got inextricably linked with the printed form, "and because of this privileging of print in a predominantly non-literal society, the social weight in the very process of literary production has shifted towards the leisured class and the professional petty bourgeoisie,...."¹³ More specifically, the class which formed the backbone of the Hindi-movement during late nineteenth and early twentieth century, mainly consisted of teachers, lawyers, court-goers, traders and money lenders, people with landed connection in the countryside as well as

¹³ A.Ahmad, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures, Verso, London, 1992, p.255.

families supported by urban employment. The patrons also included princes, estate-owners etc., who gave large amount of donations to several literary journals as well as different institutions associated with the cause. It were, thus, those people who also formed the backbone of local-level politics in the coming years.¹⁴

The cause of Hindi, provided a suitably rich and subtle ideology to this class looking to back up its political and economic power.¹⁵ This movement also proved further useful for this class due to a new base of social cohesion, in the form of nationalism (specifically Hindi nationalism), in the context of a gradual loss of other primordial loyalties. Even the immigrant communities, e.g. Bengalis, etc., were thus subsumed within this movement.¹⁶

The other factor which played a crucial role in this context, was that

¹⁴ See, e.g. C.King, op.cit., Bayly, op.cit., Twelve of the top twenty donors of Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha were princes. Similarly, many of the journals like **Arya Mahila**, **Manoranjan** had princes and queens as their patrons, while caste-based journals like **Rajput** etc., had clear landed connections.

¹⁵ For the discussion of a similar nature, see, T. Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1983, pp.17-53.

¹⁶ See, E.Hobsbawm, "Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914", in E.Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, CUP 1983, p.303, see also, Bayly, op.cit.

of caste. The two languages which held the sway over the government services, almost till the end of the 19th century, were English and Persian, respectively. The latter was also the language of the court. Thus, the more lucrative departments like revenue and judicial, were monopolized by only certain communities and castes, like Muslims and Kayasths, which had a much earlier grounding in these languages, due to various socio-political factors. But, by the end of the nineteenth century, most of these jobs began to get saturated. Newer departments like education, giving more room to vernacular languages like newly emergent Hindi, attracted the attention of the earlier dominant castes as well as other high-caste Hindus like, Brahmins, Rajputs, Khattris and Baniyas. It were these castes, which mainly formed the backbone of 'Hindi-Navjagaran'. The three founders of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, for example, included a Brahmin, a Rajput, and a Khatri, all three made their carriers in education - two in government service, and one in both government and private service.¹⁷ This also gives us an idea that the vast mass constituting mainly of lower castes and classes, generally remained outside the purview of this

¹⁷ King, op.cit., in S.Frietag (ed.) op.cit., pp.197-98. See also T.V. Sathyamurthy, Nationalism in the Contemporary World: Political and Social Perspectives, London, 1983, pp.192-95.

movement, as the rift remained wide between them.

This can also be seen as a gap in terms of popular and literate culture.¹⁸ Another factor which gave a specific shape to this movement due to involvement of these castes and petit - bourgeois class, was their comparatively less exposure to western ideas and institutions and their deeply embedded existence in the structure of caste, clan and Sect.¹⁹

While a certain 'colonialist discourse' objectified and standardized, and thus, contributed to the rise of different vernacular languages including Hindi,²⁰ the colonial government also in the capacity of the distributor of state patronage, sought a legitimation for itself. This

¹⁸ See, J.Dasgupta and J.Gumperez, "Language, Communication and Control in North India", in Fishman, Ferguson and Dasgupta (eds.), Language Problems of Developing Nations, New York, 1968, pp.154-163.

¹⁹ D. Washbrook, "To each a language of his own: Language, Culture, and Society in Colonial India", in Penelope T.Corfield (ed.), Language, History and Class, Basil Blackwell: UK, 1991, pp.179-203.

²⁰ See, King op.cit., Bernard S.Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command", in R.Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies, vol.IV, OUP, Delhi, 1985. Also see, David Lelyveld, "The Fate of Hindustani: Colonial Knowledge and the Project of a National Language", in Carol A.Breckenridge and Peter Vander Veer (eds.), Orientalism and the Post-Colonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993, pp.189-214.

certainly did not go unrewarded by the contemporary Hindi intelligentsia. When in April 1900, the U.P. government's head Anthony McDonald agreed to give Nagari a place in the courts; **Saraswati** in its May 1901, issue hailed the government in such terms : "Hail the justice loving government of Northwest and Awadh'. Hail Lord McDonald" This, though, did not remain a dominant view for long, in the context of growing nationalism.

A class-specific agenda for the movement had also been set, which sought to legitimise itself through various means. Using the Gramscian term 'Heteroglossia' (the socially stratified national language), one of the scholars has pointed out that, it is subject to the power-relations and hierarchy of society in which a dominant discourse imposes itself on News, presenting itself as universal and ideal.²¹ Yet, it has to be pointed out in this connection, that the fight and movement for a national language, as such remained confined within the Hindi-speaking areas alone. Most other regions with their different linguistic nationalisms, vehemently opposed the idea of dominant national language.²²

²¹ Craig Brandist, "Gramsci, Bakhtin and the Semiotic of Hegemony", in New Left Review, no.216, March/April, 1996.

²² See D.Washbrook, op.cit., and T.V. Sathyamurthy, op.cit.

V

Before I end this chapter, a short discussion about the nature and scope of the primary sources is necessary. The most important journal in this phase is **Saraswati**, whose editor Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, through his immense contribution in various aspects, initiated the second most important phase of 'Navjagaran', also known as 'Dwivedi Yug', in his name. It was during Dwivedi's editorship, that the prose of Khari-boli came of age, while, poetry also began to be written in it, hitherto, a preserve of the Brajbhasha. The first modern Hindi story 'Indumati'(a historical fiction), was published in January issue of 1901. The first two academic pieces of literary criticism, were also published the same year, namely, 'Hammir-Hath', 'Pt. Sridhar Pathak ki Kavita'. The journal also published translations from world-literature (mainly English though), biographies of prominent people, latest scientific inventions history-related essays etc., thereby covering a wide range of area. This was also due to the fact, that due to lack of newspapers in those days, these journals alone satisfied readers' urge on the issues. The contribution of Dwivedi, can be gauged from the fact that in 1903, while other writers contributed only nineteen

essays, Dwivedi himself contributed fifty-five essays.²³ All these factors made **Saraswati** not only first modern journal in Hindi, but also the most popular one.

Still, it was not politically overt in its attitude, the need for which was fulfilled by journals like **Maryada** and **Pratap**, which not only criticised British policies on various grounds, but also initiated several debates on political issues, political philosophy etc.; **Pratap's** editor being another great personality, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi.

Though, initially the centre of these journals were few, like **Saraswati** was published from Allahabad etc; the coming of the mass-movements as well as development of printing facilities led to further spiralling out into different regional centres, esp. from 1920s. Thus not only smaller towns like Bhagalpur (**Shri Kamla**), Gaya (**Lakshmi**), Merath, Kanpur etc., came to be centres of publishing, but quite a few of the journals were also published from outside the 'Hindi-heartland'. Thus a prominent journal like **Matwala**, was published from Calcutta, **Jyoti** from Lahore, **Hindi-Chitramay Jagat** from Poona etc.

While many of these were published entirely on individual efforts,

²³ S.Chaturvedi, "Saraswati Ki Kahani", in S.Chaturvedi (ed.), Saraswati HIRAK Jayanti Ank (1900-1950), Allahabad, 1961, p.13.

quite a few others had institutional backing as well. Thus, **Saraswati**, was brought out by Indian Press, owned by an immigrant Bengali, Chintamani Ghosh, with the backing of Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha (in the initial years). An overtly Hindu organization like Bharat Dharma Mahamandal brought out four journals simultaneously, namely, **Nigamagamchandrika**, **Manoranjan**, **Arya-Mahila** and **Devnagar**, while **Stree-Darpan**, a journal solely devoted to the women's cause, was run by the women from Nehru family.

Though, most of them remained more or less similar in their content and scope, there were few other journals which devoted themselves for certain specific cause. Thus, **Vijnan** and **Bhugol** were solely devoted to the cause of promotion of science. One other category, which sought to distinguish itself was, that of women's journals like **Stree-Darpan**, **Grihalakshmi**, **Arya Mahila** and later **Chand**. The last one, espoused certain radical reforms in these years, though it began to be published from mid-nineteen twenties only. Still, as we will come to see later, they all, not only had common grounds to share, but ultimately fell within one broad paradigm, i.e. of nationalism. There were still few others, which distinguished themselves on their stress on literature, e.g. **Madhuri**,

Sudha, Vishaal Bharat etc. There are not too many estimate's available about these journals' circulation. Dwivedi, himself gave one account in 1906: **Saraswati's** membership is about to reach fifteen hundred mark".²⁴ Another estimate of 1919, put **Saraswati's** (monthly) sale at 4,000, while that of **Pratap** (weekly) at 9,000 among various other ones.²⁵ While most of these journals were distributed by sale or prior consription to a general public; their reach was not limited only to these immediate buyers. **Saraswati**, itself along with various other journals was subscribed as standard reading-text by many Madrasas and Pathshalas.²⁶ The rise of voluntary associations and public meetings, social-religious assemblage, created new arenas for oration and public recitation of many of these journals.²⁷

²⁴ Letter written on 10.10, 1906, in Baijnath Singh 'Vinod' (ed.), Dwivedi-Patrali, Kashi, 1954.

²⁵ "Memorandum on Newspapers", U.P., 1919, Home Police (A) File 740/1921, p.9. U.P. Archives, quoted in Dr. Brahmanand, Bhartiya Swatantrata Andolan aur Uttar Pradesh ki Hindi Patrakarita, Vani Prakashan, Delhi, 1986, p.67.

²⁶ Letter by Dwivedi to Sridhar Pathak on 29.4.1906, in 'Vinod' (ed.), op.cit.

²⁷ David Lelyveld, op.cit., p.204.

Certainly, with all these means, their reach increased quite significantly,, even at times among non-literate people, though a clear estimate in this regard, is difficult to establish.

VI

It is with this background in our minds, that we approach the next chapters. Chapter two, tries to look into the various facets of the construction of a glorious Hindu past, undertaken by these journals. This chapter also attempts to discuss certain aspects of East versus west debate, which based itself on the glorious past & its supposed achievements. Chapter three attempts to concentrate on various layers of the contemporary debate on community-identity in the context of emerging mass-nationalism. It also tries to locate other possible bases which sought to place themselves as alternative visions, even as the contradictions within them were too wide. The last chapter, makes an attempt to look into the women's question vigorously taken up by these journals. The stress here is to see the inter-connections between women's questions, social-reforms and nationalism.

Chapter Two

Anchoring Nationalism in History

Towards the latter half of the 19th century the economic critique of British rule was fairly established and had even begun to expand its scope. However, almost simultaneous if not parallel to these critiques was a rapidly emerging questioning along social and cultural lines of the colonial project. Clifford Geertz calls it the first formative stage of Nationalism. He sees this phase as,

Confronting dense assemblage of cultural, social, local & linguistic categories of self-identification & social loyalty that centuries of uninstructed history had produced with a simple, abstract, deliberately constructed, and almost painfully self-conscious concept of political ethnicity - a proper nationality in the modern manner.¹

The process of constructing an oppositional identity to that generated by colonialism operated simultaneously at several levels of consciousness. Consequently, the criticism heaped upon British rule for the destruction of an 'Indian civilization', resulted in the idea of that very, 'authentic', Indian civilization, which also sought to represent the national community.

¹ Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Culture, New York, Basic Books, 1973, p. 239.

On the one hand, it served as a response to the British rejection of the notion of India as a nation, while on the other, it congealed as a base on which an idea of a continuing, everlasting, Indian society could be founded. This base was cohered by the construction of a 'glorious, sanskritized, ancient past' on which the modern nation could proudly represent itself thereby also coming to terms with its present subjugated state. It is in this sense, that Sudipto Kaviraj suggests,

To give itself a history is the most fundamental act of self identification of a community. The naming of the Indian nation, I wish to suggest happens in part through a narrative contract. To write a history of India beginning with the civilization of the Indus Valley. ²

Thus, we find a series of essays covering all these journals which glorify the ancient Indian past, e.g., "Bharatvarsha Ki Shilpa Vidya" (**Saraswati**, 1900), "Prachin Hinduon ki Shresthata" (**Hindi Chitramay Jagat**, 1914), "Prachin Bharat Mein Strion ki Awastha", "Prachin Bharat mein Vijnan aur Shilp Ka Vikas" (**Vijnan** 1919) and even specific ones like "Murals of Ajanta Caves" (1901, **Saraswati**), "Mahakavi Bharavi" (1900, **Saraswati**) etc., or plays of Harsha, Kalidasa, or even essays like, "The history of

² Sudipto Kaviraj, 'Imaginary Institution of India' in Pandey & Chatterjee (ed.), Subaltern Studies, Vol VII, OUP, Delhi, p.16

Lichhavi Vamsa" (1917), "Anhilwara ke Solankiyon Ka Itihaas" etc. The titles of these essays, give us an idea, of not only how ancient Indian society was sought to be situated in history (in the modern sense) and glorified, but also was marked by an emphasis on an elite and high culture. E. Gellner, has pointed this out that,

Generally speaking, nationalist ideology suffers from pervasive false consciousness. Its myths invent reality, it claims to defend folk culture while in fact it is forging a high culture.³

A more concrete example of this phenomenon is expressed in a poem by Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi (1901), where, addressing poetry itself, the poet states,

though you were present in ancient India with Kalidasa & Bhavabhuti, it seems that you died with them, though you again emerged in the 'Phirang-Desh' but for few years only. It is us, who are to blame for your absence in this country.⁴

'Poetry', the word here, symbolises the overall culture also. While, the social potential of poetry (and in larger terms, culture itself) was recognised & exploited by the contemporary writers, this itself (i.e.

³ E.Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 124.

⁴ M.P.Dwivedi, 'He Kavite', Saraswati, June, 1901.

culture), was held to be the requisite prerogative for the foundation of modern Indian civilisation & subsequently, modern nation. Yardsticks like, Bhavabhuti, Kalidasa & 'Phirang-Desh' i.e. Europe, themselves establish the notion of modern, high culture which was being sought to be established.

DISCOVERING A HISTORY

The evolving notion of an ancient Indian culture, rooted itself in various processes of 'discovery' directed at exhuming the past. The momentum that thus emerged, initiated itself through a dialogue on notions of history as a discipline. Defining history in an article titled 'Itihas' the author argued,

The sequential description of the rise and fall of any important country or community (Jati), is history History is the only means through which we can know about the civilization of any country or specific community.⁵

The notion of History was sought to be defined only with respect to a country or community (often used interchangeably), the implication being that only a 'living history' could give a fresh lease of life to a dying nation.

⁵ Anon., "Itihas", **Kanya-Manoranjan**, July 1915, p.262.



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Thus,

if a country has an existing history, it will reform itself to a better position only if its past has been glorious, even if at present it might be in a fallen situation."⁶

A similar position was put forward by Mahavir P. Dwivedi who in a speech in March 1923, stated ,

even if we lose freedom, we should not let our history go away. Because if history is intact the lost freedom can be won back, but if it [history] is destroyed, even if we manage to get freedom, it will be possible only through great difficulties.⁷

Evidently for the authors the importance of History lay only in the context of a nation or a country and therefore in the contemporary circumstances it became necessary to win back its freedom. Another agenda constituted by their writings was the intertwining of notions of a glorified past concurrent to or as a prelude to an ineluctable decline. The historical allusion being a trajectory wherein Hindu eminence symbolised a civilizational high that was rather tragically eroded through Muslim conquest. Thus,

⁶ Ibid.,

⁷ The speech made as the Chairman of 13th Sahitya Sammelan at Kanpur in March 1923. Bharat Yayavar (ed.), **Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi Rachnavali**, Vol I. p.76.

"it is not necessary that description of only pride-evoking national-glory should take place. Rather, details of a community/country in various different situations, even though they might be full of pain & distress, evoke a special feeling in the hearts of its coming generations. To evoke such feeling is the aim of history."⁸

The evocation of a somewhat parallel narrative of a civilization apogee (Hindu period) followed by a civilizational nadir (muslim conquest) sought to generate a conception of innate confidence and strength tempered by the need to exercise caution. What could be understood through history as the intrinsic greatness of the nation had now through various errors found itself fettered. The implication simply being that an inherent national genius and greatness lay shackled because of the historical labyrinth of miscalculations.

The narrative moreover sought to root itself as deriving from the universal laws of history that were invariably constituted by civilizational peaks and troughs. In the case of India, the above mentioned article, suggested two such iron laws; (1) To fall prey to one's own deeds & (2) lack of strength due to absence of unity.⁹

⁸ Santram B.A., "Bharatiya Schoolon Mein Itihas Ki Shiksha", **Saraswati**, August 1916.

⁹ Ibid.,

From being debated in respected high literary journals, the need for history was equally stressed for school going children. In an essay titled 'History & the Class-room', the author, Prof. Ramdin Pandey, averred that history was the 'grandfather' of all subjects.

...if the children of a country don't know any thing about their country's condition, civilization, and its ideals, they would never be able to inculcate love or pride for their own country.¹⁰

These discussions sought to establish (apart from generating a nationalist consciousness) that India was a nation and more importantly, that India was always a nation. This legitimation drive, also tried to argue on the basis of universalizing this theme, of an immemorial ever continuing nation. Thus, in article titled 'Rajneeti aur Itihas', the author asserted

the existence of nations in the world was always there & would be forever. Even in ancient times, nations were present everywhere & even now they are everywhere. Sometimes, they were called by the name of tribes or clan (the english term used here) & 'Dharma' (religion) & are still called so.¹¹

¹⁰ Prof. Ramdin Pandey, "Itihas aur Varg-Bhavan", **Sudha**, April 1928, p.259.

¹¹ Anon., "Rajneeti aur Itihas", **Maryada**, May 1913, p.23.

In the case of India, this was further sought to be concretised.

there is no doubt in the fact that before their coming to India, the Aryans definitely had an institution akin to nation, because otherwise it would have been impossible for them to win over the forest dwellers & settle here there after.¹²

This view was, however, contested. Some, alternatively, argued that the concept of a nation was relatively new and that India had borrowed it from the west. The August, 1911 issue of **Maryada**, published a translated version of an essay by G.K. Gokhale, which argued,

English rule in a certain sense was better because, even though the Indians had excelled in religion, philosophy, literature, science & craft for which the whole world respected them, yet the development of community feeling, or the idea of national freedom was not evident in India, as compared to the western countries.¹³

Yet, such examples were few. The innumerable arguments and counter arguments, in fact, invariably concentrated on the idea that India was a nation and possibly a nation from the immemorial past. History, therefore became a pliant tool in enabling these constructions.

¹² Anon., "Rashtra aur Rajneeti", **Maryada**, July 1911.

¹³ G.K.Gokhle, "Bharat Mein Prachya aur Pashchatya", **Maryada**, August 1911, p.174.

THE ISSUES

In an article published in **Saraswati**, the author while underlining the importance of history, cited certain examples which through the elucidation of history would become easily accessible to the layman.

According to him,

then the 'Dharma-rajya' or just role of Rama, and Yudhishtir; the love & generosity for the subjects of Vikram and Bhoja; the internal dissension between Prithviraj and Jaichand, the Muslim attacks on the Hindus, Udaipur's Maharana Pratap's patriotism and bravery, Aurangzeb's atrocities on the Hindus subsequently the fall of the Muslims & the strengthening of Sikhs & Marathas; Lastly, East India Company's attempts to strike its roots, & then the revolt of 1857, & finally the assertion of the power by Queen Victoria etc. are examples which are not useless or boring for the history lovers & scholars.¹⁴

One can discern three important themes in this description. One is of course, the earlier mentioned theme of identity and presence from time immemorial. Second, a certain, Hinduistic notion of history of India was sought to be created, where early Hindu glory was exemplified by Rama & Yudhishtir; leading to later infighting & subsequent fall at the hands of the Muslims & even further on to British rule. The underlying theme here being an emphasis on ancient Indian/Hindu glory. The third theme is the

¹⁴ Anon., "Itihas Kya Hai ?", **Saraswati**, January, 1913.

fusion of myth, fiction and history, which go into the making of this grand narrative of Hindu/Indian history. Thus, Rama, & Yudhishtir's rule are equally authentic as that of Vikram & Bhoja's and even that of Prithvi Raj & Jaichand.

In the above context, it is interesting to note that even though the antiquity of the 'Indian Nation' was sought to be established, it was, paradoxically, inspired by the European notion of 'National histories'. Thus, even the tools employed to achieve a sense of a national history had to invest in the effort, a pseudo - scientific and rational colour. In this context B. Anderson has rightly pointed out that,

The paradox of imperial official nationalism was that it inevitably brought what were increasingly thought of & written about as European 'national histories' into the consciousness of the colonized - not merely via occasional obtuse festivities, but also through reading rooms & classrooms - Magnacarta, the Mother of Parliament & the glorious revolution, glossed as English national history, entered schools all over the British Empire.¹⁵

¹⁵ B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London, Verso, 1983, p.118. Anderson further points out " The barons who imposed the Magna Carta on John Plantagenet did not speak 'English', and had no conception of themselves as 'Englishmen', but they were firmly defined as early patriots in the class rooms of the U.K. seven hundred years later." We find several such instances elaborated by our sources.

Not only was a 'nation' being constructed, with its projection back into antiquity, but more so a 'Hindu nation'. Indian history was divided in terms of Hindu, Muslim & Christian rule respectively. At the same time, the ancient period, in its totality was labelled as Hindu, in its attempt to appropriate different and numerous traditions. Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi argued that 'Hindu' cannot be attributed to Muslims as generally believed, as this term is a thousand years older than the Muslim religion itself. Also, its reach extended from Persia to Israel [ancient], to Greece etc. At the same time, Dwivedi argued that the term 'Hindu' denoted all positive values including, bravery, scholarship, grandeur, freedom etc.

...it [Hindu] is the pride of our country, the denominator of the importance of our community which will revive the community life of this fallen, half-dead Indian Aryan community".¹⁶

But mere claims to an antiquity wherein a Hindu nation existed in a somewhat pristine state of glory were not sufficient. It had to be situated in an actual time frame, according to the parameters of 'modern history'. Thus, we see a flood of essays discussing the time period of various historical figures, political, literary and others. Articles like

¹⁶ Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi, "Hindu Shabd ki Vyutpatti", **Saraswati**, June 1906.

"Market-Prices from Chandragupta Maurya's times till present" which appeared in **Saraswati** were typical of the trend. In the article the author sought to cohere the Mauryan period through a modern economic analysis thereby inadvertently attempting to authenticate the period through its links with the present. At the same time, the datings of various historical figures were often intermixed with that of various mythical or fictional ones, in order to lend credence to the notion of India being the oldest civilization.

This also served the purpose of legitimising these myths as true happenings of the past, especially as refracted through the modern discipline of history. In an article published in **Madhuri**; the author quoting Tilak argued that Aryans had come to India in 6000 B.C., which according to him was more authentic than Maxmueller's, who put it around 1200 B.C. According to him,

...there have been 34 kings in Magadha from Bimbisar (Buddha's contemporary), to Yudhishtir's contemporary Jarasandha; Every king's average ruling period is about 25 years. This comes true by counting the time period between Queen Victoria and William the Conqueror.¹⁷

¹⁷ Anon., "Prachin Bhartiya Sahitya aur Dharmik Vikas", **Madhuri**, 30 July 1922.

Another example would be that of 'Vatsaraj Udayan', who's dating was given as, born in the seventh generation from Pandava Arjun.¹⁸ It was this kind of history writing that enabled the contemporary writers to argue that Hindu civilization was the oldest surviving civilization. Many essays were marked by crude attempts to make Indian society forever present. In a translated piece of Harvilas Sharda's 'Hindu Supremacy', the author while discussing the Vedic notion of time averred that, "Greek's imaginary time, Egypt's Sufi time and modern Europe's 'stone age' seem novices before the Hindu civilization."¹⁹

By quoting only European scholars he further suggested that the Europeans were restricted by an historical imagination that could barely extend over 6000 years, while the Hindu experience embraced millions & billions of years. The contrast in the time frame therefore was unsettling for the Europeans and consequently explained their inability to comprehend it.

The most important source that fed these arguments were the 'Vedas', which were held as the most ancient book existing in the world.

¹⁸ Anon., "Vatsaraj Udayan", **Madhuri**, 30 July 1922.

¹⁹ Jagat Bihari Seth, "Hamara Puratanatva", **Maryada**, Aug. 1911, p.159.

Almost every article on ancient history, referred to the 'vedas', as the source book for historical happenings. One of the authors even argued that the vedas for reasons of sheer antiquity, had the right to be termed as divine knowledge, as compared to Zend-Avesta, Quran etc. He further took their time back to 30,000 years & even quoted a scholar that, "finding the time of vedas is like trying to hit one's head on the wall".²⁰

The debates on the timings of such texts or even mythical figures were not only essential in terms of constructing an 'Indian civilization', but also significant in situating them on a 'secular', linear' time scale, (in B. Anderson's terms), thereby bringing the Indian world at par with the rest of the world.

There were attempts as well to subject Indian history to a more rigorous scrutiny. Thus, a person like Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi himself was conscious of several anomalies in the existing beliefs about ancient India. In one essay, he contested the belief that civilization first came to India. He asserted that this statement cannot be held true in absence of strong

²⁰ Prof. Satyavrat Vidyalkar, "Ishwariya Jnan-Ved", **Sudha**, May 1928, p.396.

evidence.²¹ In another piece, discussing the Dravidian contribution to the Indian civilization, he held them to be older than the Aryans and further stressed that, "the credit to the Aryans for bringing civilization, is now proved to be false".²²

One can perhaps also discern a trend that emerged by the late 1920s, which began to question the dominant beliefs on Aryan/Indian antiquity. In another article, the author while discussing, Chandragupta Maurya's dates, argued that "though the Puranas tell us that 5000 years have passed in Kaliyuga from Raja Parikshit till today; but this doesn't seem to be convincing." He further, argued that, through the inscriptions of Hathigumphan caves, Chandragupta Maurya's reign could be dated around 325 B.C. Yet, it was the same author who still insisted on fixing the dates of the Mahabharata-war and argued for the help of Matsya and Vishnu Purana in this regard.²³

²¹ Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi, "Prachin Sabhyata Ke Smarak Chinhon Ki Khoj", **Saraswati**, September 1914.

²² Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi, "Dravid Jatiya Bharatvasiyon Ki Prachinata", **Saraswati**, March 1925.

²³ Umesh Pd. Bakhshi, "Mauryavanshiya Chandragupta Ka Samvat", **Sudha**, July 1928.

THE SOURCES

The last example cited above, raises the important question of sources that were being used in this history-making. Here, as argued earlier, we see that myths, historical texts, and even archaeological excavations etc. were used, often intertwined, to weave/construct/imagine a history of ancient India. In an essay titled 'Bhartiya Itihas ki Khoj aur Uska Fal', the author (a prolific writer on history in those days) enumerated a list of what he considered to be sources for the project of History writing on India. According to the list, these sources on the one hand included Research Journals like 'Indian Antiquary', 'Asiatic Researches', 'Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal' etc. while on the other, he counted different Puranas, Mahabharata and Ramayana, Harshacharit, Rajtarangini etc.²⁴ One can see these two sets of sources, being referred to in all these essays, and mostly together with equal ease, for the construction of an 'Indian history'. Another essay, mentioned that "Puranas, Itivritta, Akhyayika, Uddharan, Dharma-Sastra & Artha Sastra: Only these are History." It further sought to legitimise Mahabharat once again as 'true' history, as it gave a long list of knowledge including the

²⁴ Rai Bahadur Pt. Gauri Shankar H.Ojha, "Bhartiya Itihas Sambandhi Khoj aur Uska Fal", **Vijnan**, Jan 1920. p.180

genesis of history, details of old dynasties and all kinds of knowledge. More interestingly, the author further tried to situate the Ramayan in a historical setting by asking the students to imagine themselves to be with Rama and find out about the contemporary situation including climate, food-habits, living conditions etc.²⁵ Ironically enough, the exercise was entirely within the parameters set by European scholars. Thus, this article also quoted Encyclopedia Britannica (1911), for the definition of history and thereby sought to appropriate its expanded definition for history to include mythologies, epics etc.

Another essay, sought to establish 'Vyasa' as a true historian, who had been a witness to the war of the Mahabharat. The article argued that the Mahabharat was a 'historical' document and valid as an eye witness account in the sense of being a direct reportage of events.²⁶ The tendency to blur the boundaries of myth with its clutter of fanciful metaphors and allusions with that of the positivist and empirical traditions of scientific history achieved a certain acceptance amongst historians in the period of our review. Thus we can clearly discern an almost paradoxical

²⁵ Ramdin Pandey, op.cit., pp. 259-261.

²⁶ Rajaram, "Mahabharat aur Usmein Arya-Jati Ka Sachcha Itihas", *Saraswati*, Oct 1914.

movement in a single motion of an intermingling if not a confusion of myth and modern historical traditions.

However, this form of history writing did not escape being contested and criticised. An author under the pen name 'Satyashodhak', argued that,

...it is appropriate for the Hindi- writers to emulate the best method in history-writing which prevails in Europe... barring the Rajtarangini there is no other ancient text, which can be termed as 'history', in accordance with the modern thoughts. Ramayan, Mahabharat, Raghuvansa etc. are poetries & epics. Certain events described in them might be historical, yet these texts can not be called history.²⁷

As is evident, Satyashodak's criticism attempts to advocate a more pure allegiance to the then prevailing historiographical traditions of scientific history by rejecting any recourse to myths, epics etc as valid sources . Even Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi argued that,

...texts like 'Bhoja-Prabandh' etc. which are available, are not history. They are merely imagined stories -- 'Historical' material is available in the form of ancient texts, inscriptions, temples, Stupas forts etc.²⁸

Dwivedi in this context, stressed the importance of archaeology: " This department [Archaeological Survey of India] has preserved the glory

²⁷ Satyashodhak, " Itihas ka Adhyayan", **Saraswati**, February 1914.

²⁸ Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi, "Puratatva Ka Purvetihas", **Saraswati**, Jan 1923.

of ancient India, more than any body else."²⁹

Yet, in any case, this attempt merely reflected the then intelligentsia's desire to acquire legitimacy from the West. Even India could now boast of a history, which European Nations already possessed. However, though apparently 'sanitised' by being purged of myths and epics, Indian History continued to orient itself with a strong Hindu-centric vision.

Oddly enough, the credit for discovering this history went to the British and other European scholars alone. Thus, even Dwivedi argued that,

the lesson of ancient Indian history has been taught to us by the westerners. They not only taught this to us, but themselves constructed, parts of history and placed it before us. We should be grateful to them in this regard.³⁰

Not only were there, numerous such references to the great contribution of the British scholars, but most of the essays on history were replete with references to these scholars' findings, as well as their research journals. In an earlier mentioned essay, the author wrote, "Asiatic Society

²⁹ Ibid.,

³⁰ Ibid.,

of Bengal was established through the labours of Sir William Jones. Then began the 'discovery of Indian history'." ³¹

In another essay titled, "Bhagvad Gita Ka Nirman Kab Hua?" by Lala Kannomal, published in **Saraswati** (1915), the author quoted names ranging from Max Mueller to Prof. Mc Donald and E.A. Hopkins. To quote the author, "Western scholars have thoroughly researched Bhagavad Gita and have read it with great interest." In another essay titled, 'China Turkistan' **Saraswati** (1902), Pt. Ramnarayan Mishra gave a detailed report on one Mr. Stein, who had discovered the remains of an ancient Hindu culture in these areas, thereby implying the wide reach of Hindu tradition. The author ended the article by thanking him profusely, "blessed be Lord Stein and blessed be the English government."

Still, there were exceptions, which raised doubts about this excessive reliance on western wisdom. One Jaganmohan Verma writing "Kuchh Dhatuon aur Shabdon Ka Itihas" in **Saraswati** (1912), argued that authenticity of sparkling wisdom of the ancients could be a false belief, as these scriptures were not written at a given single moment, but had evolved through years of polishing and re-working by different scholars.

³¹ Rai Bahadur Pt. Gaurishankar H. Ojha, Op.Cit., p.172.

Yet, these doubts always remained in a minority. Ironically, the construction of an authentic Indian tradition, sought to be created vis-a-vis western civilization, was done with the help of British scholarship only. Sudipto Kaviraj has outlined this phenomenon, when he argues that 'Indianness' is also an historical construct.³²

On a different plane, loss of this glorious history was attributed to the destruction of Muslim invaders. In an earlier mentioned article, the author wrote that,

...in the times of the Muslims, most of the Hindu states except Rajputana were destroyed. Various ancient cities, temples and Maths and other religious places were destroyed and ancient libraries were burned down. Thus various ancient texts, inscriptions etc. were also destroyed leading to their loss to subsequent generations.³³

The barrage of constant references to destruction by Muslims, in a way completed the equation, in the nation building process being worked

³² S. Kaviraj, op. cit., p. 14. He further argues, "And interestingly, it was European writers writing on India as part of a Counter-Enlightenment movement, who constructed this India and presented it to Indians looking for an identity." The irony was, that, even this Counter-Enlightenment programme was bound to fail, as the bases of 'Indian Wisdom' were defined within this Enlightenment Rationalist discourse alone.

³³ Rai Bahadur Pt. Gaurishankar Ojha, Op.Cit.,

upon by the contemporary writers. India had a 'great tradition', which had to be preserved on which the modern nation could base itself; yet it got destroyed by the alien, Muslim barbarians, the outsiders to the community. And, the third party, viz. the English, had given them back their history, which was to be used against both of these. Thus, while the English proved to be a benefactors in a way, the Muslims were the treacherous insiders. The reconfiguration, of national community was already on during this period and was given a crucial turn by this discovery.

THE CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

In this section, I will try to locate the cultural foundations on which this 'great tradition' was trying to establish itself.

Discussing a rather recent play, 'Satya Harischandra' written by Bharatendu Harischandra, Kamta Pd. Guru, underlined its importance among other things for highlighting patriotism, respect for old institutions and the fulfillment of duty by the king and the Kshatriyas.³⁴ This in a way laid down the values, which were to be emulated by the contemporary society as well. Thus, the contemporaneity of a modern text, was sought

³⁴ Pandit Kamta Prasad Guru, "Satya Harishchandra" , **Saraswati**, Jan 1913.

from an ancient mythical setting. Further, this mythical/historical setting was also building itself into a tradition to be looked upon with pride by the Indians. This tradition consisted of people ranging from, Gautam, Kanad, Manu to Rama, Krishna, Kabir to Swami Vivekananda.³⁵ Another similar poem published in Shri Kamla, (June-July 1917), titled 'Prachin Bharat per ek Drishti' repented the loss of people like, Vedavyasa, Dandi, Raghu, Janaka, Krishna, Bhima, Drona, Arjuna, Karna, Ahalya, Kunti, Sita etc. Their might was flaunted such that, ancient India gave its wisdom to the whole of the world. In an essay titled, 'Garm Desh aur Sabhyata' the author, asked this question, "Do not the social institutions of all ancient countries look like modelled on India's social Institutions?".³⁶

The author, further tried to argue that even the names of those countries were given by Indians and this 'great tradition' not only developed on its own, but also contributed to the knowledge of the whole world, besides civilizing them. This was possible because as against other countries/communities, where freedom of thought and speech was not

³⁵ Nathuram Sharma Shankar, "Saraswati Ki Mahavirta" (a poem), **Saraswati**, Jan 1907.

³⁶ Govardhan Lal M.A., "Garm Desh Aur Sabhyata", **Madhuri**, 30 July 1922. p.75.

possible, India always gave that space to its people. Examples of Kapil, Buddha, Krishna, Shankaracharya etc. were cited.³⁷

Even the character of the ancient Indians was defined as something different and sublime as compared to the rest of the world in the past as well as present. Thus, the inspiration to build a modern society was drawn from these elements as well: "Now, will ever ancient India's contentment, generosity, love for nature, compassion, simplicity & competition - less, contradiction less development take place in the world ?" ³⁸ One can note the stress on an absence of competition and contradictions in the society, which was evidently coming from their realization of being left far behind, in a rapidly advancing industrial world.

We have earlier said that the identity which was being created was primarily Hindu. The intelligentsia, in fact, seemed relatively less concerned with an elaborate and minute definition of this Hindu tradition. Thus, while some writers included Buddhist tradition as part of the Hindu tradition, there were others, who insisted on a 'Sanatan, Vedic' Hinduism. This was evident, even in so-called non-religious topics like art. Thus one

³⁷ Badri Dutt Sharma, "Jatiya Jeevan Ka Adarsh" , **Saraswati**, October 1914.

³⁸ Govardhan Lal M.A., op.cit.,

of the authors divided Indian art in to three sections viz. Bhuddhist, Hindu & Yavan. According to him, "Hindu art is also called 'Rajput art' - Buddhist & Rajput art were related to religious issues.... These paintings led to the freedom of man." ³⁹ The author further quoted the famous poet Maithili Sharan Gupta's comments on these paintings: " This is a work of the gods, mortals can't do it! while, we never tire of calling it as a piece of labour". The author further suggested that though the Mughal painting was also very good; yet it was related to social, earthly matters. Thus, even though the Buddhist and Hindu Rajput paintings were one in their aspirations i.e., religious freedom, Mughal paintings, conversely, was different in its outlook. By an almost similar reasoning, it was pointed out that though Buddhism and Hinduism were two different religions they could still be united, as their 'prime Goal' was the same.

There were other writers (who were certainly in majority), who thought that the establishment of 'Sanatan Dharma', was the true ideal for a new nation. This was evident, even when they discussed this problem vis-a-vis other religions prior to the coming of Islam. Thus, Maithili Sharan Gupta wrote in 'Bharat Bharati', his epic-poem (which was

³⁹ Anon., "Hamari Chitrakala" , **Vijnan**, October 1918, p.24.

serialised in **Saraswati**), that,

Alas! The sun of Vedic-religion was surrounded by the Buddhist clouds. Then Jainism etc. prospered and differences arose. Yet, in the end it was Sanatan- Dharma which became victorious and lord Shankar pushed away the false notions of Buddhism. ⁴⁰

One of the most important markers of this Hindu identity was Varnashram Dharma. It was on this basis, that the contemporary evils of Hindu society were criticised, in order to create a unified Hindu identity which could encompass as many people as possible and thus take on the battle for freedom on all fronts. In this way, the internal dissensions within the Hindu society were sought to be neutralized.

Delving upon the 'problem' of why only "Hindu-nation' (Rashtra) and Hindu religion are called 'Sanatana' the author in a serialised essay 'Prachin Hinduon Ki Shreshthata' argued that it is so because it is based on certain universal principles. To quote him,

...the four stages of Varnashrama dharma described as the four organs of nation/male in Purush Sukta are very poignant. This is the sign of the development of the society and this is the reason due to which Hindu religion is still a living religion despite facing thousands, no, no (sic) lakhs of

⁴⁰ Maithili Sharan Gupta, "Ateet Bharat Ke Adhaha Patan Ka Arambh", **Saraswati**, Jan 1913.

troubles.⁴¹

Criticising the chaos perpetrated by the current caste-system, he traced its origin in the loss of lakhs of lives during the Mahabharat war, due to which the nation grew weak and was finally won over by the outsiders. Thus, the call given was clear and that was to rebuild the Hindu nation on the lines of Varnashram Dharma. Yet there were others, who further tried to legitimise the existing caste-system. Thus, in the earlier mentioned essay, the author argued that, "whatever be the faults of the old societies, they had at least one virtue that, due to prevalent caste-systems dissatisfaction had not gained ground & there was no social chaos like this".⁴²

On a different plane, while the Hindu nation was being projected back in the past, even its geographical outlines were either being redefined or reasserted. Only, a geographical entity, could concretise this ancient nation. There were several articles on the coming of the Aryans, an event which was generally accepted as the initial point in the narrative of the

⁴¹ Anon., "Prachin Hinduon Ki Shreshthata" , **Hindi-Chitramay Jagat**, Aug 1914, p.164.

⁴² Govardhan Lal M.A., Op.Cit., p.78

Indian nation. Discussing the ancient 'Hindu literature', one writer asserted that, "by the above discussion, it is clear that, the Hindu-Civilization's centre lay first in Punjab, then in Kurukshetra, then in Kanyakubja and Kashi and lastly in Magadh. This is, therefore, clear that the centre of our civilisation has been shifting from West to East."⁴³

Apart from this, the contemporary regions were sought to be situated within ancient Indian history, essentially a Hindu nation. This was done through, both by taking recourse to the writings of regional histories, as well as, situating them within ancient mythologies & epics. Further, as evidenced everywhere, here too they often went together. We find several essays on the history of different regions, cities etc., written in this mode. Describing the ancient glory of Bihar one Sakalnath Pandey, attributed it to having been the land of two regions, Mithila & Magadh. Ancient figures ranging from people like Kapil, Sita, Mahavir, Buddha, Karna, Jarasandha to institutions like Nalanda and even several Philosophies like Vedanta, Nyaya, Sankhya etc. were attributed to

⁴³ Anon., "Prachin Bhartiya Sahitya Aur Dharmik Vikas", **Madhuri**, 30 July 1922.

Bihar.⁴⁴ The important thing to note is not the fact that Bihar was being given the credit of many achievements but that its history and contribution was being situated in the same ancient Hindu tradition.

The other method of identifying and subsequently situating different regions in this historiography of the Indian nation was through flaunting of regional nationalism, invariably defined against the Muslim attacks during the medieval period. This ranged from the publication of the portraits of medieval Hindu heroes like Prithviraj, Rana Pratap etc. to direct discussions of their contribution to the making of Hindu Rashtra. Further, histories of places like Rajputana etc. were primarily written within this context of defiance of medieval Muslim rule only. Thus, we have essays like, "The history of Orchha," "The History of Mewar" etc.

The story of Shivaji was almost an obsession with these writers, often being repeated in different versions in all these journals. The prestigious journal **Vishal Bharat**, published a serialised history of Shivaji, written by the famous historian Jadunath Sarkar; which continued for months. According to Sarkar,

⁴⁴ Sakalnath Pandey, " Bihar Ka Prachin Gaurav", **Masik Manoranjan**, December 1913. pp.5-10.

He [Shivaji] only organised the weak, unknown and scattered people and gave them power and wove them into a nation, thereby, creating a new story in the history of the Hindus.⁴⁵

Historians of lower standing also wrote on Shivaji with equal ease and prolixity. Similarly, the story of Maharana Pratap was also repeated, and often, he was compared with the former, as to why one failed against the Muslims, while another won.⁴⁶

We will find a definite pattern emerging in all these regional histories, if we try to locate it in a larger perspective. While the nation, more specifically Hindu nation, was being conceived, constructed and situated in history, the first duty after the establishment of the glorification of the Indian/Hindu tradition was to define this community from within. With this aim in view, the Hindu community was sought to be reformed, doing away with the inherent contradictions, so that it could represent itself as a modern national community. But this was possible only when, the geographical outlines of this national community were also situated back in history. The discussion of regional histories and regional

⁴⁵ Jadunath Sarkar, "Shivaji Ka Pradurbhav" (Serialised essay), **Vishal Bharat**, July 1930, p.49.

⁴⁶ Anon., "Prachin Hinduon Ki Shreshthata", (no.6), **Hindi-Chitramay Jagat**, April 1915, pp.97-100.

nationalisms performed this task.

The above discussion brings us to the final part of this section, which is the problem of contradictions from without, to this Hindu/National community' i.e the issue of Muslims. We have already noted that in the process of inventing an 'authentic tradition', only the pristine glory of ancient India was being stressed upon and that too with a specific, exclusivist, high culture oriented outlook. At the same time, the 'troublesome', medieval ages, already labelled as the 'Islamic period' were completely overlooked; except when regional nationalisms against Muslim rule were to be publicised . We have already noted that, the Muslim invasion, was held responsible for the destruction of even the relics of the glorious cultural heritage of 'Indians'. More than that, the advent of the Muslims was seen as the beginning of the loss of freedom of the nation. Thus, we see, Maithili Sharan Gupta, the poet, describing the fall of India in such terms,

Lastly, we only were responsible for inviting the Islam, and lost the freedom forever. We, who had prospered under the spring of Rama Rajya, also had to see the deeds of Aurangzeb in the end.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Maithili Sharan Gupta, op.cit.,

Aurangzeb, as a historical figure proved to be a regular bait for most of the contemporary Hindi writers, when they discussed the muslim rule and consequently muslim character. He, was portrayed as a cruel ruler, who wouldn't even leave his brother Dara, a person believed to be sympathetic to Hindus, alive. Most of the paintings published of the Muslim rulers in these journals, either depicted them as barbarians or fully steeped in the life of luxury and pleasure; completely oblivious of the peoples' woes. Even though Akbar was generally believed to be a benevolent Emperor, numerous stories abound about his covetous designs on the wives of the Rajputs.

Medieval poets like Tulsidas's importance was stressed in their attempt to provide resistance to the Muslim cultural and social onslaught. In an essay titled "Tulsi Krit Ramayan par Maharashtra Mein Halchal", the writer, Laxmi Dhar Vajpeyi, while quoting other authors wrote,

Akbar, by destroying the soul of everybody (Hindus), was trying to establish a new religion. By initiating the tradition of marriage between Rajput women and the Muslims, he wanted to gradually weaken the institution of the four varnas of ancient Hindu religion and thus finally 'homogenise' them.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Laxmi Dhar Vajpeyi, "Tulsikrit Ramayan Per Maharashtra Mein Hulchul", **Manoranjan**, March-April 1914. pp.127-32.

He further, outlined the role of Tulsidas, who not only successfully resisted such evil designs, but also kept the flag of Sanatan Arya Dharma flying high. Even the fiction published in these journals was not short of such feelings. The very first story published in Saraswati, in 1900, titled 'Indumati' (generally believed to be the first modern Hindi story), had as its theme the barbarity of the muslim invaders and the valour of the Rajputs against them.⁴⁹

Similarly, any other kind of positive contribution to the development of Indian civilization was denied to the Muslims. In an essay published in 1917, *Saraswati*, the author H. R. Diwekar, established that the art of stitching was not a muslim contribution, but was a legacy of Hindu India only. A sense of belonging to this nation, to this land, had already been imparted to the ancient Aryans/Hindus and consequently, the contemporary Hindus, while the depiction of the Muslim invasions and rule as that of aliens, consequently helped to label the contemporary muslim-population also as outsiders. Even the social evils prevalent in

⁴⁹ Vrindavan Lal Verma's story , "Rakhiband Bhai", published in **Saraswati** (Sept. 1909), Had as its main theme, the infighting between two Rajput States who later unite against the common enemy that is, the alien muslims. Here the former belonged to this country , while the latter did not.

contemporary Hindu-society, were attributed to the foul rule of muslim kings.

Yet, there was also emerging an alternative vision of history which tried to resist the formation of such a dominant view. Discussing the tradition of Purda, one author argued that

...there are several evidences to prove that purda was prevalent in the high-Caste Hindu families even before muslim invasion. Valmiki Ramayan has several references to this. Not only Muslims but Hindu Kshatriyas used to collect beautiful women. Possibly Muslims emulated these Hindu kshatriyas only. The tradition of purda became strong or weak in muslim-society, in accordance with the difference in time and space, but it is nowhere related to the religion of Islam.⁵⁰

Yet, this was a very feeble resistance before the onslaught of a stereotyped version. Even these writers were torn with conflicts from within, as would be evident in the article cited below. This article on the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, although tried to portray Babur as a non-religious person, yet held him responsible for the destruction of the Ram-temple in Ayodhya. The writer though conceded that, "No muslim historian referred to its destruction and even Babar's autobiography,

⁵⁰ Shiv Sahai Chaturvedi, "Purde Ki Pratha", **Chand**, April 1926, pp.679-281.

doesn't talk about it." ⁵¹ But he stressed that it was not due to his own fanaticism but due to the fanaticism of his followers and his own hunger for Empire, that Babur did several things; one of them being the destruction of the most pious place in Ayodhya. Earlier, the author had stated, "though Babar held religious neutrality very important for his empire, yet his deeds in India would force us to fall silent for once".⁵²

It is thus clear, that any alternative vision to this dominant Hindu history was either too nascent or too conflict-ridden to pose any serious threat to the latter. And precisely because of this reason, we need to raise this problem, in the words of S.Kaviraj,

Even within seemingly homogenous history, it is often essential to ask whose history this is, in the sense of history for whom rather than history of whom. Within seemingly homogenous history there were conflicts between tendencies, the axis and the periphery, the mainstream and the embarrassing fringe, the self and the other. ⁵³

⁵¹ Ramchandra Tandon, "Ayodhya Mein Babar Ki Masjid", **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924, pp.434-37.

⁵² Ibid.,

⁵³ S.Kaviraj, op.cit., p. 4.

EAST VERSUS WEST

While a homogenous high culture based on a high tradition was constructed and in the process, a national community got outlined; it came as a logical outcome of the search for political power.⁵⁴

This tradition gave the intelligentsia a confidence, as well as helped in outlining a paradigm through which they could judge themselves vis-a-vis the West. Comparing the condition of contemporary Europe with India, one writer argued,

We want to draw the attention of the readers towards one specific problem. While reading my thoughts, they should not compare India's present condition with that of present day Europe. We concede, that, today they are happier than us but the question is are they really happy ideally ? Europe's progress today is material. It is never possible that they would be happy forever, through this kind of progress?⁵⁵

The line of comparison was drawn in terms of spiritual versus material where the spiritual development was given an upper hand over the material. The author further argued that each person in the west is busy earning more and more money, regardless of any ethics. Thus, "what

⁵⁴ P.Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments : Colonial and Post Colonial Histories, Delhi, OUP, 1994, p.77.

⁵⁵ Professor Mahendra Pratap Shastri, " Kya Europe Unnati Kar Raha Hai ?", **Sudha**, Feb 1928, p.3.

is true about every person, is also true about the whole nation. Today all the Western Countries want to extend the boundaries of their empire and money, any how".⁵⁶

Thus, began the demarcation of specific spheres of monopolies, in which India and the west had excelled respectively and through which India could invert the claim of the modern west, that it had civilized the Indian people. The search for power, thus could be completed. To quote from an essay earlier referred to,

All the great empires of ancient world had received the civilization from India only: that in all parts of the world, India had established its colonies and these colonies later became famous by the name of Egypt, Greece, Persia, China America etc. Even Scandinavia, Germany, (ancient) Britain received their civilization and religion from India only.⁵⁷

Thus we see a classic case of inversion of contemporary history; a story of people getting back their national pride through this act.

Not only this, but each contribution of the West was rejected, including the field of philosophy and sciences. Reviewing "Shrishti Vigyan", a book, the reviewer stated in the journal that

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.6

⁵⁷ Sri Jagat Bihari Seth, op.cit., pp.160-61.

the authors have tried to prove that Darwinian theory neither supports all the laws of the universe, nor does it show any future direction to the man. Along with this, they have discussed the importance of genesis of the vedas, power of the god, genesis of the language, etc. in accordance with the vedic religion ⁵⁸

Further, the process of creating the 'other' went as far as to even differentiate between the specific characters of the two communities. Thus,

while on the one hand Indians are benevolent, peaceful and truth loving, the English are greedy, selfish and authoritative. While India is spiritually on a very high plane, the West is facing the great war due to its civilizational faults.⁵⁹

Distance was sought to be created between the East and West in all walks of life; by which a respectability could be given to the Indian society vis-a-vis the West. Thus even taboos like sex were not left untouched taking the battle even to the 'private spheres' of life.

There are primarily four goals of life among the Hindus ... Europeans have destroyed the meaning of Kama Shastra (erotic sciences). This is inevitable because, marriage among them is only a social bond, or contract (Marriage is a contract, which can even be canceled if need be. But marriage is a prime sacrament (samskar) among them [Hindus].⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Anon., " Humari Manjusha", **Jyoti**, Jan 1921.

⁵⁹ Madhav Rao Sapre, " Purvi Tatha Paschimi Sabhyataon Mein Vibhinnata Aur Swadeshi Sahitya Ka Mahatav", **Saraswati**, Feb 1918.

⁶⁰ Gangapati Singh B.A., "Kamshastra", **Madhuri**, 25 November 1922, pp.440-42.

Similarly, even the field of arts and aesthetics was not left untouched and the politics of differentiation continued. Thus in the essay titled 'Hamari Chitrakala', the author averred that,

Take an example, If an Indian art critic finds any positive theme in any painting, he will definitely laud it, whether it will have any other positive features or not; but the western critic will definitely look at it with contempt. This means that the Indian critic is a scholar first and then a painter while the westerner is first a painter and only then a scholar.⁶¹

The author further pointed out the difference between the respective painting styles, in terms of perspective, light and shade etc. Not only was a difference sought to be established, but also the importance of sticking on to one's 'own tradition' was stressed upon, as a prerequisite for identity formation. In this connection, the thoughts of orientalist British scholars were also cited as further proof. Quoting the contemporary British art-critic, E.B. Havell, a contributor to one of these journals stated that, "Indians should respect the paintings created in the tradition of one's own country, religion and society."⁶²

The author further stated that emulating the western style would

⁶¹ Anon., " Hamari Chitra Kala", **Vijnan**, October 1918, pp.23.

⁶² Anon., "Bharat Ki Chitra Vidya ", **Saraswati**, Jan 1913.

be tantamount to committing the sin of deceiving one's own progeny or destroying the avenues by which they could access their own history, behaviour and life style.⁶³ Similarly, even the music of the two cultures came into the ambit of this debate: "European music portrays the celebration of life, while Indian music echoes the peaceful soul of the world."⁶⁴

Yet, despite all this self laudatory effort, the existing realities were too harsh to ignore. Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi, was one among the several people, who sought the answer back in history:

The Aryans had developed the mental faculties in an extraordinary way. But the kind of spiritual progress they made, they could not do the same in the field of crafts. This is doubtless.⁶⁵

In another essay he went as far as to sarcastically remark:", Indian thought tradition considers knowledge as the means of freedom, while the English consider it as the means of power, and this is the reason due to

⁶³ Ibid.,

⁶⁴ 'Mayawadi', "Kya Bhartiya Sangeet Pashchaty Deshwasiyon Ko Priya Ho Sakta Hai ?", **Sudha**, Feb 1928, p.93.

⁶⁵ Mahavir Pd. Dwivedi, "Bhartiya Puratanatva", **Saraswati**, Sept 1914, pp.13-18.

which they (British) rule over us.⁶⁶ The point also to be noted is that , despite the criticism, the basic premises categorising India as something different and oppositional to the West, was still accepted implicitly.

Consequently, there were thoughts about bridging this gap between the East and the West, so that East could also acquire the best attributes of the West. There were people who thought that the isolationist policy of the Indian people won't suffice, if they had to rebuild the country. In this context, criticism of Indian people was also put forward:

when any community severs all contacts with other communities; by holding itself as the best while considering others as Mlechhas, barbarians and uncivilized and starts believing that it knows everything and doesn't have to learn from any body else; stagnation takes place in that society. In the end it leads to the destruction or fall of that community. The same happened with Bharatvarsha.⁶⁷

This line of argument forced certain people to further argue that,

According to the laws of scientific knowledge, universal laws of the world have been discovered and are still being discovered, and the same will happen in the future also. There is no illusion in this scientific Knowledge unlike the stories and gossips of the ancient people.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, " Nireeshwarvad", **Saraswati**, August 1901.

⁶⁷ Janardan Bhatt, "Jatiyon Ka Sangharshan", **Saraswati**, August 1916.

⁶⁸ Girindra Mohan Mishra, " Manaviya Jnan Ka Kram Vikas", **Saraswati**, March 1913.

Thus, a set of people began to argue for the development along the western lines of industrial and scientific knowledge and gradually, they managed to sway the majority of the people. Nathu Ram Sharma Shankar, in his poem titled, 'Samalochak Lakshan', (*Saraswati*, Aug 1906), called those people the true scholars who knew how to handle machines, new inventions, agricultural sciences and chemistry. In a different essay titled 'Shiksha', published in *Saraswati* in July 1901, advocacy for the development of commerce was also made; emulating the English developmental strategy, as the role model for rebuilding the nation. There are several instances, where despite critiquing Britain for its other evils, its role of developing India was accepted with gratitude. Several poems, articles etc. were devoted to this theme. Not only this, but few authors also advocated emulation of the west even in terms of its national character. This was all happening through a stereotyped vision about the difference between East and West. Thus,

We need to learn not individual, but national or what is called, enlightened selfishness from the Christian inhabitants of England.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ 'Kunj', "England se Humein Kya Shiksha mil Sakti hai?", *Maryada*, Oct. 1911, p. 270.

Indeed some of them went as far as to declare that with 50- 60 years of western education, they have become completely western minded. They, consequently, declined to have any thing to do with 'their tradition':

Our aim and the sense of duty is completely in opposition to our ancestors and whether it be good or bad, we have changed our thoughts as well as our political systems; as one sheds old fashioned clothes in accordance with the changing times.⁷⁰

Certainly such voices were in minority, as every one knew the dangers of going along such a path. There was a clear chance of losing one's own identity, which in turn was based on a specific notion of Indianness which in town was based on a specific notion of Indian tradition. Yet, the conflict between this modernity and tradition was not easy to solve. A very poignant reminder came in the form of serialised play by the noted writer Jaishankar Prasad. Referring to the burning of 'khandava van' by the Pandavas on the plea of bringing civilization to those areas; the conversation between the two characters is worth noticing:

Manasa--Did you See? What superficial benevolence. These lords of the world. Sarma--you are twisting the great goal of Shri Krishna a person who is working for the welfare of everybody in accordance with the natural laws. And you

⁷⁰ Anon., "Bharat aur Pashchimiya Samsthayen", **Maryada**, May 1911.

criticise him ? ⁷¹

One can see the continuing conflict between the two thought systems in this conversation. While one tries to legitimise the destruction of the forest, in the name of natural act of development (alluding to the colonial onslaught), the other sees it as a mere ploy to subjugate the people.

Yet it was becoming more and more evident to the people that merely the formation of a distinct tradition won't suffice. The battle had to be taken to the Westerners' own home ground. Kaviraj points this out when he says that,

simple tradition could not justify the existence of governments, and exerted no valid right to rule. It was not easy to move to a criticism or defiance of British rule unless the argument of the greatest good of the greatest number could be taken away from the colonial administration. ⁷²

Through tradition it was only possible when it could be shown that the western material developments also fell with in the thought processes of ancient Indian philosophy. At one level, the answer was sought crudely by merely replicating the contemporary national developments of Europe

⁷¹ Pt. Jayshankar Prasad, " Janamejay Ka Nag-Yajna", **Madhuri**, 25 Nov. 1922. p.461.

⁷² S.Kaviraj, op.cit., p. 28.

in the ancient Indian scenario. Thus,

...the maps of the cities of Ramayan and Mahabharat were not made by the engineers of London and Paris. The dresses described in them had not come from Manchester; the ornaments which have been referred to, were not made in Germany. Pushpak Vimanas are not dreams.⁷³

At a more sophisticated level, arguments were put forward that economic and political developments of ancient India were also quite great. Detailed discussions were initiated over different socio political institutions prevalent during those times. In this manner an attempt was also made to replicate modern political institutions, of Europe in ancient India. In an essay titled 'Prachin Bharat mein Sabha Samitiyan'; the author by citing several sources like Atharvaveda, Valmiki Ramayan, Brihadaranyak Upanishad etc. sought to prove that democratic institutions like assemblies and councils were present in ancient India as well.⁷⁴

Still the more important battle was to be fought between the two specific thought systems, between the modern philosophy of science of the west and the eastern wisdom of antiquity. Critiquing the economic theories of Adam Smith, one scholar wrote that,

⁷³ Prof. Mahendra Pratap Shastri, Op.Cit., p.9

⁷⁴ Anon., "Prachin Bharat mein Sabha-Samitiyan", **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924.

When a community becomes free from bondage, its economy develops rapidly. Not only this, where a community's economy develops, then it also gets its freedom quickly. America is an example. But Adam Smith could not understand this fact. At the expense of freedom, he mistook division of labour and the working capacity of labour as the main factor behind the prosperity of communities.⁷⁵

The author referred to the Nyaya shastras in this regard. This was one of the methods, through which the right to self rule was legitimised.

It was further claimed that whatever has been achieved by the western sciences was achieved and theorized by Indian philosophy long back. Thus, the 'Big Bang theory' was likened with the three attributes of 'Parmatma' which gets covered by 'Mahamaya', while the seven attributes of protoplasm are termed as those of soul or 'atma'.⁷⁶ In another essay, the author declared that the western thinkers will have to agree in the near future that what they term as electron which is present in everything is nothing but that very 'chitshakti' which our own rishis have established thousands of years earlier.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Prof. Prannath Vidylankar, "Utpadak Shakti Tatha Sampatti", **Vijnan**, April 1919, p.27.

⁷⁶ Satyabhaktjee, "Prachin Bharat Mein Vijnan Ki Unnati", **Vijnan**, April 1919. pp.11-17

⁷⁷ Pt. Ganganath Jha, "Adhyatma Vidya Ke Bhautik Labh", **Saraswati**, March 1913.

The interesting thing to note in these numerous essays is that even when spiritual knowledge is proclaimed superior to that of the material west, this is essentially based and legitimised within the discourse/paradigm of Western Scientific knowledge. In an essay titled 'Jivan Ka Charam Uddeshya', the author 'Shri Abdulla' states,

Take any view, think about any community, every body's goal is to attain the salvation in one way or the other. When we wish for home rule or 'swarajya' or 'colonial Swarajya', then wishing for absolute freedom is not incredible. Through the route of theory of evolution only, we have pushed our speculations so far ⁷⁸

Further, the author quotes the Gita, not only to prove this line of argument, but also to suggest that the Darwinian theory of evolution was anticipated by Gita, ages ago. Nirala, the great Hindi poet, also echoed this sentiment few years later "Only the ablest lives: This is not the saying of the West, but it is Gita! It is Gita! [Yogya jan Jita Hai/Paschim Ki Ukti Nahin/Gita Hai Gita Hai].

Infact there is a constant reference to the theory of evolution, which also further suggested that the Indian version of this theory was better than the western, which also took account of the idea of cooperation. The

⁷⁸ Shriyut 'Abdullah', " Jeevan Ka Charam Uddeshya", **Vijnan**, Jan 1920, pp.165-69.

same essay tries to justify the caste system (an important marker of Indian/Hindu identity) by arguing that." Those who dare to jump several stairs at a time, fall so badly that their bones get lost for ever. The shudra's meditation during the Ramarajya is an example." ⁷⁹

Another essay tries to invoke the positivistic idea of universal law of nature by arguing that,

scientists don't enforce laws upon the world through their researches, rather they discover certain laws in it. If today some laws are found in the world then in the beginning of the development of the universe, we will have to concede to the existence of a specific knowledge power [Jnan Vishisht Shakti], apart from natural selection which took the direction of development from bacteria to man... Scientists, whether they are believers or non-believers, but the base on which science establishes itself, takes us to believe in God. ⁸⁰

A growing trend from this short discussion could be discerned through which the prominent attributes and aspirations of the Indian society like the caste system, belief in god, idea of swarajya etc. were sought to be legitimised through the western theories of knowledge; while a simultaneous attempt was made to give these very theories, an Indian

⁷⁹ Ibid.,

⁸⁰ Shri Gulab Rai, "Vijnan Aur Ishwarvad", **Vijnan**, April 1919, pp.2-3.

colour. There were objections at such attempts as well. Lampooning one such attempt to liken the western scientific discovery of elements it with the five existing, matters of Indian philosophy, one author argued that,

It is very difficult to decide that the theories, the methods through which the Indian began to study science, western scholars also gave precedence to those theories and methods only. There is not much evidence to show this, what's the use of such futile attempts? I consider such attempts only meant for idle past-time.⁸¹

Answering this accusation, 'Abdulla' though agreed to the futility of such attempts, yet did not rule out the possibility of combination of the Western sciences and Eastern philosophy. Thus,

Science is sovereign. If the English appropriate it, we should snatch it away from them. It is possible that (people) might be converting the Western perspective into an Eastern One. But this is the way to snatch the agenda. We should give the eastern colour to everything which looks western, by giving it an eastern soul.⁸²

It is clear, that the attempt to Indianise the western sciences and the creation of Indian philosophical tradition within the western scientific, rationalist discourse was not wholly an unconscious effort.

⁸¹ Chandrashekhar, " Kya Elements Aur Panchbhut Ek Hain ?", **Vijnan**, March 1920.

⁸² Shri 'Abdullah', "Pancho Bhoot Aur Darshan Vijnan Ka Vikas", **Vijnan**, May 1920.

SUMMARY

I have tried to argue in this chapter, how the discovery of history for the Indians was taken as the foremost task in the nation building process. A fusion of myth and fiction with the historical facts took place in this process. While, this history was further sought to be legitimised by situating it in a 'homogenous calendrical time' to use Anderson's term; this history itself was given to them mainly through the efforts of the western scholars consequently, even as the invention of the history of the Indian nation followed closely the footsteps of the western historiography on nationalism; a high and 'homogenous culture' [to use E.Gellner's term] was produced as a result of this process. This High culture/ Hindu nationalism while trying to define the community and smoothen the contradictions from within by means like stressing the attributes of 'varnashramdharma' etc. found an other in the form of Muslim community, which was at once held responsible for the downfall of this Hindu nation. A number of other local level traditions and cultural, social practices were either swallowed or displaced, which had evolved out of continuous interaction of societies through the ages. It is with all these concerns, that

Eric Hobsbawm has stressed the need for investigating these traditions.⁸³

While this task was under process this 'High culture' also tried to contest the hegemonic claims of the western knowledge systems. As an antiquated tradition was not capable of performing this task, it had to finally fight the battle within the discourse of western knowledge system itself. This indeed, while it gave an ironic twist to the whole debate, it also set an agenda on which the contemporary politics on various issues could place itself and which is the concern of our next chapter.

⁸³ E.Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in E.Hobsbawm and T.Ranger (ed), The Invention Of Tradition, CUP, 1983. To quote him, "And just because so much of what subjectively makes up the modern 'nation' , consists of such constructs and is associated with appropriate , and in general , fairly, recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as ' national history') , the national phenomenon can't be adequately investigated without careful attention to the 'invention of tradition'".

Chapter Three

Defining The 'National Community'

We have seen so far how a hegemonic idea of an Indian past was constructed on the basis of a selective appropriation of Indian/Hindu culture. In this chapter my attempt would be to argue how a 'national community' was being defined strictly in terms of its 'national culture'. This 'national culture' was not only a homogenised one but also exclusivist in its scope. The political movement that was gaining momentum in this period simultaneously worked itself in different, inter connected spheres of the ongoing national debate.¹ But the immediate plan was to identify a 'collective body' as a community that could stand by for the nation and on whose behalf, the demand for self rule could be raised. This was central to the thoughts of the many participants of the debate at that time.

Elizabeth Eisenstein has suggested that "The thoughts of the readers are guided by the way the contents of the book are arranged or

¹ S.Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India", in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, (eds), Subaltern Studies VII, OUP, Delhi 1992, p.10. To quote him, "any involvement with the structure of colonial power- the whole range of political things in the colonial world from its political economy to its world of significations to its politics of language, the battle between the high language of colonialists and the vernacular- must be seen as political.

presented."² For instance, the opening two sides of the journal 'Saraswati', facing each other are contrasted in a very specific manner. On the left side usually, there is a picture of a prominent person whose biographical details would be given elsewhere in the same issue. These pictures including the ones of the contemporary Viceroy and the King of England were meant to suggest the positive contributions made by them to India, more specifically addressed to the 'Hindi community'. On the right hand side is the column, 'Different Topics' which contained news extracts from English and the other regional language newspapers. The idea then was to position 'community' (Hindi/national) vis-a-vis the 'broader community' [world (America and Europe)/other states of India]. This capturing of the reader's first attention, can be taken as our point of departure in discussing the crucial question of community identity.

The famous satirist Parshuram questions the very bases of this community identity in a classic case of satiric inversion called 'Ulat-puran' (translated from Bengali by Dhanya Kumar Jain). He begins challenging the European origins of Indian nationalism. 'Ulat-Puran' depicts India as the conqueror of Britain and disclaims their national identity. He says,

² E.L.Eisenstein, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, Cambridge, 1979. p. 89.

"you [The British] never know what freedom is . You have passed your days first under the Romans, then Anglo-Saxons, Danes, Normans etc and other warrior communities. Your community thus cannot be a stable one, your country is not your own. You were never a unified lot... Different communities, different languages and different religions have kept Europe divided for ever....³

On the one hand, this piece tries to invert the entire gamut of power relation between India and Britain by questioning the accepted criteria of a nation as one that is based on an identity of people with a single principle whether it be language, religion or race. On the other hand, it tries to outline the possible criteria on which a nation could be founded. But the hegemonic hold of 19th century Western historiography on nationalism over the minds of the contemporary Hindi intelligentsia led them to borrow their [Western] assumptions even as they pursued their goal for a distinct 'national culture' Parshuram's critique therefore had little currency.

³ Parshuram, "Ulat-Puran", Vishal Bharat, p. 122, July, 1930.

RELIGION AND DHARMA

The model which appealed most to the contemporary scholars was that of a religion based nationalism, backed by an 'ancient yet living religion'. Inspiration was also provided by their understanding of western nation based on Christianity. **Maryada** an overtly political journal, came up with a series of articles on this theme. One article titled 'Dharma our Rajneeti' regrets that "the Aryan community, having moved away from its religion, comes up with a statement that there is no connection between religion and politics."⁴ This not only anticipated the need felt by many to dissociate religion from politics but also sought to put religion as the prerequisite of national politics-- " We can argue forcefully, that religion is no religion if it is without politics and that politics is no politics if it is without religion."⁵

Another article observed- "a community can never be called great, or its people called civilised, if it be ignorant of its religious texts. There is hardly any nation, where one would not find books on the Christian

⁴ Dwij, "Dharma aur Rajneeti"; p. 273, **Maryada**, Oct. 1911.

⁵ *ibid*; p. 273.

religion Only religion leads to the process of nation-building."⁶

One can, therefore, see the connections being made here, as well as the grounds, on which these connections are being justified. There is also an attempt to pre-empt allegations of a national community conceived on a narrow and limited structure. The common refrain is to establish a difference between 'dharma' and 'religion', where the former signifies a whole way of life including various philosophical beliefs, rituals, an everyday code for interaction among people.

One author writes "while religion is narrow in its scope, 'dharma' is wide while the former leads only to personal transcendence; the latter leads to the liberation of the whole community."⁷ In this manner, the road was cleared for Hinduism to pose itself as the harbinger of nationalistic feelings. This was visible in different journals that cut across a wide cross section of ideological positions. Thus, a popular journal like '**Madhuri**' published an essay that said that the Hindu religion is the embodiment of national feelings. It questioned, "Is it possible that nationalistic life would

⁶ Major Vamandas Bose, "Hindu Sahitya Samriddhi"; p. 182, **Maryada**, Aug. 1911.

⁷ Pt. Ramdutta Bhardwaj, "Dharma aur Hindu-jati", **Chand**, Nov. 1925, p. 58-62.

not be awakened after acquiring the knowledge held in the Bhagvadgita?"⁸

The author further drew parallels from the Reformation period in Europe and argued; "In a relative sense, whatever we observe there, we find here, eg. the religious movements acquired a political form in India as well."⁹

The attempts to draw a political and social legitimacy for this idea of nationhood is clearly visible in these arguments as they try to follow the history of Europe to its last detail.

The idea was to assimilate the attributes of 'Hindu culture' and religion with that of the national character. Thus, the opening issue of the weekly journal '**Abhyuday**' (1906) announced their agenda as a fulfillment of the national soul by drawing a lineage of 'Bharat, Bhagvadgita, Bhagvat, Bhagirathi, Bharti, Bhasha and Bharatvarsha' and further added that "if you want to see the country rise, (abhyudaya): then you will have to take the teachings of Bharat, Bhagvadgita and Bhagvat to heart." Similarly in another essay titled 'Krishi-Sudhar' in Saraswati, Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, in the context of discussing the fall in India's population, reduced India to its Hindu population and expressed grave concern over the decrease in it.

⁸ Paripurnand Verma, Untitled, **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924, p. 524-25.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 525.

It is not only assumed that India belongs to the Hindus but the rest of the population is excluded as being 'outsiders'.¹⁰ Consequently 'Bharat', 'Arya-Jati' and 'Hindutva' are used as interchangeable terms.¹¹ What is more, attempts were made to legitimise the 'nation' by drawing leaders as Gandhi and Tilak into the same tradition, eg. a poet awakens its national audience with the following exhortation "Do not forget the name of Hindi, Hindustan and Hindu...Love India and always think of it. Always follow the footsteps of Gandhi and Tilak".¹² At the same time, the names of ancient heroes like Drona, Krishna, Arjuna and even medieval heroes like Rana Pratap & Shivaji were invoked to epitomize the 'continuing tradition' of the heroes of an 'everlasting nation'. We have already referred to numerous instances of this type in our previous chapter.

On a different plane, attempts were made to highlight another side of the 'Hindu-rashtriyata', so that even as its ideals became visible, its

¹⁰ G.B.Pant, "Krishi-Sudhar", **Saraswati**, July 1908.

¹¹ An example can be a poem titled 'Vyas-Stavan', by Maithili Sharan Gupta, **Saraswati**, 1908.

¹² Kari - Kinkar, "Kinkar - Kalap", **Kamla**, Dec. 1917, pp. 425-26. Another poem (Hridayodgar), by one Mahavir Pd. Vidyarthi, directly tried to draw the linkage between Sanatan-Dharm and Gandhi, while discussing the plight of the mother country, pp.408-9, **Kamla**, 1917.

contradiction could be done away with. An essay by Vidya Bhushan discusses the social problems of the contemporary world in terms of the problematic of fulfilling the ideas of equality and democracy; the conflict between labour and capital; international relation etc. But despite its introduction of these social dimensions, it dismisses the validity of new ideologies like communism as (according to him) it is not possible to do away with the 'natural' inequalities of society. He further suggests that only a world based on the ancient varna system can solve these perennial conflicts. The institution of shudras was justified on the basis of identifying them as people who had no positive attributes in terms of scholarship, power and money.¹³

The varna system was moreover applicable not only to Hindu society but also for the whole world. It was inevitable in this model, that a great deal of accommodation of high castes and low castes would take place and attempt would be made to glorify these different castes through the process of re- adjustment and accommodation. More importantly it served to integrate all these castes engaged in the task of the reconfiguration of their respective position in the hierarchical order of a unified Hindu body. This

¹³ Shri Vidya Bhushan, "Adhunik Samajik Viplav aur Vaidik Varna Vyavastha", **Jyoti**; March 1920, pp. 650-656.

also served to pre-empt any dissension within them. Thus a journal like **Shiksha**; primarily engaged in questions of education, discussed the above problem in a regular manner, through various serialised articles and letters. In a serialised essay titled 'Lala Bhagwandin Ka Swapna' a debate was initiated over the credibility of a little known caste named 'Muhiyals'. The debate was whether the 'Muhiyals' were Brahmins or not. References from the work of British scholars to census reports and their respective rituals were cited in order to give them a place among the for varnas.¹⁴

On the other hand, even well recognized high castes like the Rajputs came up with caste based journals, the import of which was to exhort their caste men to unite for their own development. The journal **Rajput** was most vocal in harping upon the lost glory of Rajput valour. At the same time, it sought to address the existing social evils like dowry, child-marriage and polygamy. Marriages were sought to be regularised according to certain codes and attempts were made to strengthen their unity. But despite the carving of a sectarian niche for itself, it was always stressed that the Rajputs belonged to the Kshatriya varna of the Hindu hierarchy.

¹⁴ Prof. Ramdas Rai; "Shriyut Lala Bhagwandi-ji ka Swapna"; **Shiksha**;31.July. 1913; 7th Aug. 1913.

Even a supposedly lower-caste like 'Mahabrahman' sought to establish its identity as one of the Brahmins by inaugurating a journal titled '**Mahabrahman**', which engaged in propaganda for their placement within the Brahmin set-up.

Thus the ideal of the Hindu nation was sought to be established through a re-articulation of these various caste and community identities and their re-fittings within the Hindu body. This ideal of the Hindu rashtra garnered support for its several political equations from various quarters. Western scholars were quoted as saying that the caste system had been very beneficial for the Hindu-nation; and it should therefore be continued. An essay in **Hindi- Chitramaya Jagat** compares the situation with Europe and argues that the lack of such an institution in Europe led to the growth of institutions like orphanages etc. It summarises its argument by saying that "Hindustan and caste differences have become so intermeshed that it is virtually impossible to imagine a casteless Hindustan".¹⁵ This was the stream advocating status-quo in opposition to the one that wanted reform in the name of the 'old' Hindu ideal of varnashrama dharma. The contempt for lower castes was so palpable in

¹⁵ Anon., "Prachin Hinduon ki Shreshthata"; essay no. 2, Hindi-Chitramay Jagat, p. 164-166.

some sections, that lamenting the sad state of India, one poet wrote, "Only here it is possible that, weavers, cobblers, bhangis etc. roam around like babus....here alone a sixty year old groom gets an eight year old wife."¹⁶ One can see that although child marriage is decried in the cause of social reform, the upliftment of the lower castes is seen with contempt. The agenda of social reform, thus, proved to be very selective, contingent upon caste & class considerations.

Yet there was also a strong protest for the cause of the lower castes and demands for their upliftment were growing stronger. The idea was to make the conflict ridden Hindu society appear smooth and thus posit it as a legitimate inheritor of the modern nation. This becomes clear when we see how the cause of untouchability was posited via-a-vis a threat of conversion mainly to Islam. Thus **Pratap** an acclaimed political journal known for its critique of religious antagonism, writes, "If because of the practice of untouchability any lower caste Hindus were to convert themselves to Islam, we would have committed the sin of cow-slaughter."¹⁷ He adds that all those 'untouchable' castes that consider

¹⁶ Roopnarayan Pandey; "Kya Samjhe?" p. 21, **Masik Manoranjan**, Dec. 19113.

¹⁷ Anon, "Dalitoddhar Vyavastha Patram", **Pratap**, May 12,1924.

themselves Hindus should be considered Hindus and they should be allowed to collect water from public wells except for the 'Bhangis'. This was in accordance with the directive of Sanatan Dharma Sewak Samiti, Banaras.¹⁸

Another essay in the journal **Chand** criticises the system of untouchability in the following words-"While a chamar who takes the name of lord Rama and a Dusadh and a Bhangi who despite being Hindu, cannot sit in front of us; ...but the fact that Jahura Begum (a prostitute) and her pimp Rasool Khan's shoes touch on lord Siva' and become purified by this contact is considered a great honour in our criminal society."¹⁹

Yet another article warned of the dangers of conversion by 'Vidharmis', who were trying to destroy the Hindu religion. It felt that the cause for the removal of untouchability should not be aimed at destroying the varna system. It felt that attempt of this nature would do great disservice to the 'nation' and 'community'. The alternative was to give concessions to the lower castes within their respective varnas. Among other directives was the provision of religious education for untouchables

¹⁸ ibid.

¹⁹ Shri 'Nirvasit'; "Smriti-Kunj"; **Chand**, Aug.1927, p. 503.

so that they understood the importance of the Hindu religion. It was however to be made clear to the untouchables that despite reforms; there wouldn't be a relation of 'roti-beti' between them and other upper caste groups. The author recognises the problem in the following terms-"The question of the abolition of untouchability has become the question of survival for the Hindu community".²⁰

THE 'UNIFIED' HINDU NATION

One can thus argue that the dominant trend among the Hindi intelligentsia was the construction of a strong unified Hindu body and consequently a Hindu nation. This Hindu body had to be educated since its contradictions like that of in built caste conflicts, needed to be negotiated. These contradictions were therefore deliberately posited vis-a-vis the contradiction from outside, which was supposedly posing a threat with its conversion programme and which had to be resisted at all costs. The outcome of this process was that the Muslims were further identified as the enemy, responsible for the conflicts in the Hindu society as well.

²⁰. Devakinandan 'Vibhav', "Hindu-Sangthan", **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924, p. 498-50.

Besides, the production of a certain historical consciousness had already labelled the Muslim as 'outsider' or 'alien'. In an article called 'Shiksha Kis Bhasha Mein di Jani Chahiye', in Saraswati (Nov 1916); one Sriprakash advocates Hindu-Muslim unity under changed socio political circumstances. Yet the Muslims are still referred to as the foreigners.

The alienating historiography referred to earlier had its base in a selective interpretation of ancient India. Thus even though the Muslims lived in the same country, they were given no place in its history. One Ramdas accused the Arya Samaj leader Bhai Parmanand of playing communal politics even as he confirmed other allegations regarding Muslims.- 'Muslims do not consider themselves Indians. They not only consider the Indian literature as alien but hate everything in an outright manner.....Everybody will agree that the above thoughts of Bhai Paramanand are true."²¹

Another essay in the same issue says, 'Hindu civilization and culture could not influence the Muslims. Muslims owned India but not

²¹ Ramdev; "Meri Jeevankatha ke kuch Prishth"; pp. 662-664; **Vishal Bharat**; Nov. 1930.

Indianness.²² As explained earlier, the criteria of Indianness was well defined, and the onus was put on the Muslims to prove that they were Indians. Whosoever behaved accordingly, was hailed as an Indian. Thus praising a Muslim scholar's interest in Sanskrit; the writer adds "due to his Muslim origin, he had to face great difficulties in learning the language, and this tells us a lot of his determination and grit."²³

The very basis of this homogenised 'true Indian culture' were constituted on sectarian lines. People like Bhai Parmanand who openly supported the unification of the Hindu community only confirmed the widely prevalent apprehensions when he wrote, "Hindu-Muslim unity can take place only when the different castes and communities of the Hindus are roped in one community. Till such a time is achieved, Hindus will remain scattered and Muslims would try to devour them."²⁴ He went so far as to advocate a geographical partition of the country between the

²² Anon., Urdu ka ek Hindi Kavi; Akhtar Husein Jaipuri; p.638, **Vishal Bharat**, Nov. 1930.

²³ Anon., Parlokgat Khan Sahab Abdul Aziz Khan, M.A., **Saraswati**, Dec. 1922.

²⁴ Bhai Parmanandji, "Chitthi-Patri"; **Vishal Bharat**, Dec. 1930, p. 765.

Hindus and Muslims.²⁵

Another article tries to replace the goal of independence with that of community solidarity among Hindus as being the most important task. On the one hand the author decries the Muslims for their attempts for conversion and their aspiration for getting 80% seats in governmental jobs; on the other hand, it challenges the Hindus to unite by calling them 'impotent', 'eunuchs' etc. He adds that the protection of religion and one's community is more important than the goal of 'Swarajya'- "if the community is gone, who will savour the fruits of Swarajya?"²⁶ In opposition to this line of thinking; an anti-religious journal like **Pratap** argues that ... " we too want to see the rise of 'Hindutva'(the term used as original) not because Ramjaan Miyan has to be defeated in a wrestling match. We want the unity of Hindus for spreading the spiritual message of our culture all over the world."²⁷ The religious basis for organising the nation was irrefutable, even as they decried the antagonistic attitude.

On a different level, Muslims were treated patronisingly even by

²⁵ ibid., p. 765.

²⁶ Anon., "Vividh Parichay, Hinduon ke prati Musalmanon ka Vyavhaar"; p.560, **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924.

²⁷ Anon., "Asha ya Durasha?", **Pratap**, 30 Oct. 1927, pp.3-4.

staunch nationalist thinkers. They were regarded as fools and an ignorant lot, who did not know their self-interest. Thus, describing an incident in which the Muslims had not responded to the 'good intentions' of the Hindus, one article wrote that, "This is the height of religious foolishness---but the Hindus should not become angry over this. This foolishness of the Muslims will certainly go. They will have to live with the 'kafirs' only and die in their country only."²⁸

Hindus in all these articles were given a martyred self-image and invested with benevolence and Muslims were shown predictably as not responding to this benevolence. The essay goes on to say that "if the twenty two crore Hindus become totally nationalistic, then the seven crore Muslims would be forced to align with them. Even if they didn't, Hindus alone would be sufficient to take on the might of the foreign rule and the Muslims together."²⁹ One can see how the British and the Muslim were mixed to posit them as a common target. Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi the noted writer discussing the affair of the famous poet Nazrul with a Hindu girl says that, "Nazrul is not ready to leave his religion. The girl of course

²⁸ Anon., "A Report"; p. 2. **Pratap**. May 12, 1924.

²⁹ Ramdev; op.cit., p. 664.

is so crazy that she is ready to go to any lengths because of her infatuation, which she calls love."³⁰ In the same article he refers to a meeting with a Bramho leader, his words - "we are awakened now, we are ready to take the Namshudras within our fold, we are also ready to die for the protection of the Hindu girls from the Muslim goons."³¹ The threat of the Hindu girls abducted by Muslim goons was a common theme in all journals of that time. Muslims were thus a threat not only from the outside, but also from the inside; not only in the public sphere but also in the private sphere.

There is an ironically laudatory piece on the Muslims that says that despite the Muslims' wrong doing, "we would praise their communal solidarity, brotherhood etc...but look at the Hindus, they remain unaffected even by the troubles of their own brother."³² The intention of the author was to suggest that, the supposed community solidarity of the Muslims, could become a threat for the Hindus, if they remained divided. In another article, the tradition of Hindu tolerance is invoked to critically evaluate the

³⁰ G.S.Vidyarthi; "Calcutta-Yatra ki kuch Batein"; p.311, **Pratap**, May 12 1924.

³¹ Ibid., p. 5-11.

³² Anon., "Vividh Praichay", op.cit., p.560, **Madhuri**, 11th May 1924.

merits and de-merits of Islam and thus achieve the integration of Muslims within the Hindu rashtra. According to this essay, "it is important that a nation can be called truly religious if only it studies the religious texts of other religions alongside its own religious texts... By studying Islam, the feeling of 'universal brotherhood' among our Hindu brethren will be strengthened."³³

The idea was also to show how the Hindus were going out of the way to integrate the Muslims within the nation. It is in this context that stray references to Muslim contributions and nationalistic gestures were made. Responding to a prominent Muslim Lawyer Hasan Imam's humiliation by an English official and his retaliation, **Pratap** wrote, "Like a true Indian, Imam said, 'you are asking for forgiveness from Imam not from an Indian. For the protection of the honour of my community, I will sue you.'³⁴ Through the stress on 'true Indian' and community which here reads Indianness., the attempt is to set a code of conduct for other Muslims whereby they can become true nationalists having transcended the Muslim identity.

³³ Anon., "Mohammed Paigambar", **Hindi-Chitramay Jagat**, June 1930, pp.136-137.

³⁴ Anon., "Mr. Hasan Imam Ka Apman", **Pratap**, July 12th 1918, p.6.

A summary of this section on Hindu-Muslim relations ranges from one extreme position to another. While the unity of the Hindus is held imperative for their defence against the Muslims; the liberal view point sees Hindu as the unit of the nation even as it decries communal attitudes. A Muslim code of conduct is also devised such that the onus of proving loyalty for the nation is shifted on to the Muslims. This was because the proposed nation of this dominant view was essentially based on a homogeneous national culture that had a distinct Hindu ethos and an invented one at that.

LANGUAGE POLITICS

In pursuance of the goal of a common identity via a common culture, the most open battle took place within the domain of language. This was set in motion by the dominance of English over almost all spheres of activity and thought. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi writes in one essay that the trace of a common identity is found mostly through languages.³⁵ In another essay, he speculates on why the victorious countries enforce their language upon the defeated ones. He comes to the conclusion that "Till the

³⁵ M.P. Dwivedi, "Dravidajatiya Bharat vasiyon ki Sabhyata ki Prachinta", **Saraswati**; March 1925.

time you do not awaken the hearts of the Indians who reside in the country, inculcating a sense of unity, community identity and nationalism; your political aims will not be fulfilled.³⁶

Hindi in this anti-colonial context appeared as the only suitable language to take the mantle of the national language. In a story titled, 'Vande - Mataram', the author depicts the plight of a poor student. Despite vigorous attempts to learn English, he fails and is unable to pass his exams. As a result, he commits suicide leaving his mother and wife destitute. The author moralises - 'Had there been home rule or arrangement for education in the mother tongue, it would not have been so difficult for people like Awadh Behari. But we don't have the right to teach our own children.. These people from the faraway, have snatched this right from us, which is against our religion, ritual, culture etc...'³⁷

At the same time, contemporary writers were aware of the severe shortcoming of Hindi, which was still developing as a language. To transform it into a modern language that would be at par with English and

³⁶ The inaugural speech in the 13th Sahitya Sammelan, held at Kanpur, March, 1923, Bharat Yayavar (ed.), Dwivedi Rachnavali, Khand-1, New Delhi 1994, p.74.

³⁷ Pt. Prashant Kavyatirth, "Vande Matram", **Kamala**, Dec. 1917, p.402.

other aspiring regional languages, several suggestions were made. The English educated writers were called upon to use their knowledge for the enrichment of the Hindi language. This is evident in the numerous translations of stories and philosophical essays in these journals. This also betrays the intentions of the Hindi intelligentsia in replacing English as the elite language.³⁸ In this connection, it is also important to note that while in the South the rise of linguistic nationalism was associated with the lowercaste assertion, in the Hindi belt, it primarily remained within the ambit of upper and middle castes. This is also supported by the fact that the new groups educated in vernaculars were also coming up during these decades. They were also looking for employment avenues in areas already dominated by the English educated elites. Thus the number of articles on the theme of saturation of government jobs during this time. The publisher of **Saraswati** compared the situation with Bengal in the opening issue of January 1900. He argued that in Bengal, the bureaucrats

³⁸ See for example J. Dasgupta and J.Gumperez, "Language, Communication and Control in North india", in J.A. Fishman, Charles A.Ferguson and J.Dasgupta (eds.), Language problem of Developing Nations, New York, 1968.David Washbrook also talks of the coming of hierarchical 'language-jatis' in this connection. See, D.Washbrook; "To Each a language of his own: language, Culture, and society in Colonial India", in Penelope T.Corfield ed., Language, History and Class, Basil Blackwell, UK 1991, pp.179 -226.

-- well versed in English, were renouncing the use of that language and adopting Bengali instead. He prescribed a similar adoption of Hindi. This can very well be seen in the light of the nationalistic urge to replace the foreign language. At the same time one sees that just as English and Sanskrit was a prerogative of the privileged few in those days; Hindi was also trying to acquire the same status if not by directly usurping their place.

While the coming of the print culture was responsible for giving a definite shape of Hindi as developed from its constituent dialects, it was the need of contemporary writers who wished to make it a language on par with English that further increased its turn towards sophistication. This was achieved not only through an introduction of Sanskrit terminology but by the induction of words from several other languages. The growing complexity of Hindi was seen with a great deal of satisfaction: "There is a great deal of difference between the spoken language and the written language. The language of our newspaper and books is definitely more complex than the practical language. Therefore, it is quite natural that written language should be different from spoken language."³⁹ Discussing

³⁹ Shaligram Verma, "Unnati ka Siddhant", **Vijnan**, July 1917; p.162.

the question of Hindustani over Hindi, Dwivedi wrote that "the language in which our sahibs converse with their servants or the people of different states interact is Hindustani, this dialect is only for speaking. It is not the language of literature. Only Hindi and Urdu can be suitable as languages of literature."⁴⁰

Among other attempts to give Hindi respectability and a national stature were, the attempts to establish its presence in ancient and medieval literature. There were several articles which proclaimed Hindi as coming into existence during the Mauryan period,⁴¹ while another school fixed the time of Hindi's origin in the 5th century A.D.⁴² Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit were instituted as its historical antecedents. The claim was also made that because Sanskrit is the base of most modern Indian languages, Hindi naturally assumed the position of heir apparent as far as a national language was concerned.

Development of Hindi was also seen as contributing to 'jatiyata' or

⁴⁰ M.P. Dwivedi, "Kya Hindi Nam ki koi Bhasha hi Nahin?", **Saraswati**, Dec.1913.

⁴¹ Anon., Untitled, **Hindi Chitramay Jagat**, April, 1915, p.110.

⁴² M. Dwivedi Gajpuri, "Hindi per Phutkar Vichar", **Maryada**, May 1913, p.32.

a feeling for the community. Nirala the famous poet, in the context of contemporary Hindi poetry said, that "whether the ideals were Indian or communitarian, the idea was to see how far poetry had progressed towards the freedom of our community."⁴³ Putting it in even more clear terms, another author wrote "If Hindi is to become the national language, then Hindi literature would have to acquire a wide purpose."⁴⁴

Hindi, that was based on Khari-boli, in turn tried to subjugate other regional dialects apart from the day to day local dialects. These regional languages moreover like Maithili, Awadhi, Braj etc. had a high literary status of their own. But in order to make Khari boli the most acceptable language, these other language had to be subsumed. Thus we find that Dwivedi, in his time as the editor of **Saraswati** calls upon the poets time and again to write poems in Khari boli rather than 'Braj Bhasha', that was still the popular language for poetry even as prose had begun to be written in Khari boli Hindi. Likewise there were long debates over the existence of Maithili as an independent language, e.g. Shiksha argued that Maithili

⁴³ Pt. Suryakanta Tripathi 'Nirala', "Hindi-Kavita-Sahitya ki Pragati", **Sudha**, 'March 1928, p.187.

⁴⁴ Shri lalitkishor Singh, "Hindi-Sahitya ki Vartman Dasha", **Sudha**, Feb. 1928, p.22.

was a local form of Hindi and not an independent language.⁴⁵

The Aryan-Non-Aryan controversy was the other area where legitimacy was sought for Hindi. Dwivedi characterised Hindi as part of the Sanskrit/Aryan legacy, while distinguishing it from the Dravidian languages. Hindi was thus projected as the national language to be applied to the Southern States as well in the 'larger interest of the country.'⁴⁶ It was this aspiration to become the national language that brought it in direct conflict with Urdu. The question of Hindi versus Urdu has been one of the most vexed problems in this context. It exceeded the limits of mere linguistic debate and went on to become a crucial focal point of the identity debate. It so happened that in the process of becoming a national language Hindi gradually acquired distinct religious colour. This became so apparent that work of the writes in these journals unconsciously or consciously regarded its readers as Hindu and addressed them alone, even when non-religious topics were being discussed. There were many articles that harked back to Pratap Narayan Misra's Slogan of the 1890's - 'Hindi,

⁴⁵ Anon., "Maithili Bhasha", **Shiksha**, 1st Jan. 1914, pp.2-3.

⁴⁶ See for example: Dwivedi's two essays "Deshvyapak Bhasha" and "Deshvyapak Lipi" published in **Saraswati** in Sep. - Nov. 1903 and Aug. 1904 respectively.

Hindu, Hindusthan.' Hindusthan here came to mean the land of Hindus. In another poem, the poet pleads India on behalf of Hindi - "if you can become the lord of the Hindus then become the lord of Hindi as well. Hindi! you fate will shine only then!"⁴⁷ There was in fact a flood of such poetry stitching the three terms - 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'.⁴⁸ In another article, the two authors write - "We are Hindus, our country Hindustan and our language Hindi. Who does not take pride in ones own country and language?"⁴⁹

Alongside this, Hindi patriotism, Hindi was being pitted against Urdu, Lala Hardyal eg., called all those Hindus -- traitors, Serpents and prostitutes, who instead of learning Hindi, learnt Urdu and read Ghalib & Momin. He linked these issues with family honour, which could be saved by Hindu Women alone.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Pt. Ramcharit Upadhyaya, "Naagri ki Naalish", **Saraswati**, Feb. 1914.

⁴⁸ Another instance would be that of Nathu Ram Sharma Shankar's "Mauji ki Mauj", published in **Madhuri**, 11.May 1924.

⁴⁹ Jayanti Sahay and Hardevi, "Matribhasha ka Mahatva", **Grihalakshmi**, June 1914, p.156.

⁵⁰ Lala. Hardayal, "Punjab Mein Hindi Prachar Ki Jaroorat", **Saraswati**, Sept 1907.

And yet there was an opposite stream that consisted of stalwarts like Shyam Sundar Das, Kamta Pd Guru, Ram Chandra Shukla & Mahvir Pd Dwivedi who thought that Hindi and Urdu were sister languages because they shared the same grammatical structure. Urdu was of course 'the younger sister'. Moreover, Urdu being part of Hindi, the Aryabhasha, the difference between Hindi & Urdu was a difference of vocabulary. Where Urdu was considered as consisting of Arabic and Persian words. This group advocated the introduction of popular words in Hindi, irrespective of their origins. Thus we see several people trying to classify Hindi according to its vocabulary, either as Persianised Hindi or Sanskritised Hindi or even that which borrowed popular words from English. Thus even as this group was agreed upon a flexible Hindi, the real fight was considered to be over the 'Nagari Script'. This script because of its use since old times was considered most appropriate for common purposes; only this could unite the country. There were demands to the effect that even Bengali & Gujarati should be written in Nagari. This was supported by the use of the Nagari script by languages like Marathi. One journal called **Devanagar** was solely devoted to this cause publishing articles of different languages (including South Indian) into the

Nagari script. Attempts were simultaneously made to point out the weaknesses of the Persian script which was identified with Urdu, an alien, just as Hindi was called the Nagari bhasha.

Even the liberal opinion was not devoid of its contradictions. In an essay written in 1903, Dwivedi wrote that there were two meanings of Hindi first as the language of Hindus and second as the language of Hindustanis. Justifying both he argues that only that language has the right to be the language of the nation that commands the dominant position.⁵¹ The number factor was clearly playing its role here. Dwivedi's thoughts were consistent, as late as 1923 when he says,

Hindus and Muslims are the two eyes of this country. There is no doubt that only Hindi can become our community's language and Nagari its script - still, we should try our best to learn the language-script of our Muslim brethren.⁵²

More important than Dwivedi's liberal assertion here, is the clear segregation he makes between Hindi as the language of the Hindus and Urdu as a language of the Muslims. In a letter however he writes,

⁵¹ M.P.Dwivedi, "Hindi Sahitya Ki Vartamaan Dasa", Saraswati, Feb. March 1903.

⁵² Dwivedi, op.cit., p.76, Kanpur speech 1913, Dwivedi Rachnavali-I.

By making a language the sole property of one religious ideology or community its scope for expansion is limited. Thus other religions & communities cannot benefit from it. The result is that both religions & communities would suffer the loss of the language.⁵³

Thus we see that the existing contradictions and conflicts were too many to lead to any amicable solution, as revealed in Dwivedi's various articulations.

Gellner, sees this process of 'homogenisation' and 'standardization' as the natural outcome of the growth of nationalism. Benedict Anderson stresses the importance of the development of print-culture on the one hand, and the emulation of various models of nationalism on the other. The favourite model in this respect is the existent imperial model of the colonies. In this context, while Gellner's stress on a homogenising culture comes as a mechanical outcome of the gradually industrialising society; Anderson leaves enough space for the 'human agency' to choose its own model, albeit, from the given ones.

In the essay, 'Desh Vyapak Bhasha' Dwivedi argues that the unity of a country as diverse as India requires one national language, one script and one religion on the lines of the 'European experience'. As "one

⁵³ M.P. Dwivedi, "Governor Sahab ka ek Satparamarsh", **Sudha**, opening issue, Aug 1927.

national religion could not be established under the existing circumstances", the debate had to centre around the questions of a national language and a national script in the interest of developing a national cultural identity.⁵⁴ But it still could not discard away the lure of the role of religion in it. The pressure for adopting the European Model of nationalism (as they perceived it) was so intense among the Hindi intelligentsia, that it forced a liberal person like Dwivedi to accept the presidentship of the U.P. Hindu Mahasabha in 1923 after his voluntary retirement from **Saraswati**.⁵⁵

CONTESTING NOTIONS OF COMMUNITY

In the process of creating a community, based on a model of religious nationalism, other possible models of creating alternative communities were either completely ignored, diluted or reformed, or lastly confronted.

Sudipto Kaviraj points this out when he says,

"It is remarkable but hardly surprising that the narratives of nationalism speak about some things in social destiny and not others. These narratives are explicit and detailed about freedom, sacrifice, glory and such things and usually very vague about the more concrete and contestable questions of

⁵⁴ M.P. Dwivedi, "Desh Vyapak Bhasha", **Saraswati**, Sept-Nov 1903.

⁵⁵ C.A. Bayly, Local Roots of Indian Politics, Allahabad 1880-1920, Oxford, 1975, p.108.

attribution, equality, power, the actual unequal ordering of the past society or of the future one."⁵⁶

In this regard as already pointed out, caste questions were either tackled with a liberal outlook advocating for reforms within a Hindu framework or the existing institutions were legitimised on various grounds. More importantly caste prejudice never became the central question in any of these Journals, which were too busy discussing the ancient glory of the Indians, the current Hindu Muslim problem, 'India versus England' problems etc. one can also glean an attempt in this regard to sideline the question by ignoring it altogether.

Still the divisions continued to grow further, much due to this very idea of nationalism which though did not go totally unnoticed by the contemporary writers. In an essay titled 'Jatiya Jeevan Ka Adarsh' the author wrote that

"in the situation we are in today; religion is becoming fanatical for us and politics a great problem. Then what can we benefit out of these? ... Our few educated brothers are destroying their energy and time by indulging in useless religious controversies."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ As Kaviraj ,op.cit., p.32.

⁵⁷ Badri Dutt Sharma, "Jatiya Jeevan Ka Adarsh", **Saraswati**, Oct . 1914

Any yet he still argued against the obliteration of religious and communal divide pointing out, that the religious and communal differences are natural. ⁵⁸ The only solution he could suggest was to ignore them by stressing on the freedom of thought .

A different way to address this problem was proposed by another author, who sought to turn the tables on the British by inverting the whole basis of community-creation. He asked,

"Is there any single opinion in England ? Do you have one language everywhere ? Doesn't the woman belong to one religion and the man to another ? then why this judgment for us only?"⁵⁹

In an attempt to give a secular base to the idea of the nation he further asked,

"despite the differences in religion can there be a difference in their joys and sorrows? Will there be a difference in political administration? if the plague comes then does it attack only the Hindus and leaves the Muslims..." ⁶⁰

A similar kind of sentiment can be seen in another poem titled 'Matri Bhoomi' were the poet writes,

⁵⁸ Ibid.,

⁵⁹ Anon., "Swarajya Ki Katha", **Shree Kamala**, July 1917, p.232.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*,

"even after death, the particles of the bodies assimilate in her (earth) only. Hindus are burned while yavanas and christians get buried in her only"⁶¹

Though one can still see the use of derogatory terms 'Yavanas' for muslims persisting.

On another different level of argument, few very radical reforms were proposed by a minority of people. Among them were expatriate students who were in direct touch with the western society. One Ram Kumar Khemka wrote,

"there should be marital relations among the four varnas... for the propaganda of these reforms we don't trust the sayings of Vedas, shastras, Quran or Bible."⁶²

A move away from religion was clearly on, howsoever feeble.

Simultaneously, a scathing criticism was made of the double speak of middle class urban reformers. This was more so apparent in fiction than in their 'essays', the genre of the day. 'Pagli' (the Mad Woman) is a story about the silent love of an untouchable girl Sudhia, who was taught by a progressive nationalist Radha Kant, who yet was unable to get out of his old caste prejudices. The story ends on a tragic note with Sudhia becoming

⁶¹ Mannan Dwivedi Gajpuri, "Matri Bhoomi", **Maryada**, Sept 1911, p.1

⁶² Ram Kumar Khemka, (From New York), "Idhar-Udhar Ki Batein", **Saraswati**. 1918.

insane.⁶³ Similarly, another story talked of middle class hypocrisy where a man, despite his compassion for a beggar turns away, once he comes to know that the beggar was an untouchable.⁶⁴

A rather ignorant and benevolent attitude can be seen directly in the contemporary writings itself, particularly on the plight of peasants. In an earlier referred to article on agricultural reforms, G.B.Pant sought to introduce reforms under the "considerate patronage of zamindars" only and argued for "some relaxation in debts during times of stress"⁶⁵ No alternative vision to this system seems to be possible for him. In another poem the poet held peasants' own stupidity and the lack of scientific method of agriculture as the two main responsible factors for their poor and wretched state, though, he also expressed his ire against the moneylenders who were sucking the blood of the peasantry.⁶⁶ Still the patronising attitude remained the same. We also have Pandey Lochan Prasad writing a poem 'Gram Gaurav' (Glory of the Village) in July 1912

⁶³ Vishambhar Nath Sharma 'Kaushik', "Pagli", **Madhuri**, July 30 1922.

⁶⁴ Krishnanand Gupta, "Achhut (untouchable)", **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924.

⁶⁵ G.B.Pant, op.cit.

⁶⁶ Ratnakar, "Bhartiya Krishak", **Manoranjan**, Feb. 1914, p.111

issue of **Saraswati**. He talked in terms of the simple dichotomy between town and country; 'the former being full of vices while the latter being full of virtuous attributes'. All other socio-economic aspects, exploitative relations, existing contradictions etc within the village society were left untouched.

A complete contrast to this kind of attitude was provided by somebody from the class of victims only. One Hiradom had sent a letter from Patna in Bhojpuri in verse form, which to Dwivedi's credit was published in **Saraswati**. This, rather, long poem targeted categorically all the upper castes ranging from Brahmins to Rajputs and even a middling caste like Ahir for their ruthless exploitation of the lower castes. Going further, the poet decried the hypocrisy of the contemporary intellectuals, " who did nothing except writing mediocre poetry", as well as those so called educated ones, "who go to courts with turbans on their heads".⁶⁷ Then comparing his own situation with them he questioned the validity of existing hierarchy in the society, because it was people like him who by putting their whole energy earned a legitimate livelihood and yet were subjected to exploitation. Talking of his ordeal at the hands of zamindars and his associates, the Government officers, he finally observed that "it

⁶⁷ Hiradom, "Achhut Ki Shikayat", **Saraswati** 1914.

seems that even God has abandoned us because we are untouchables".⁶⁸ Such a detailed and scathing critique of the whole of society was not to be found anywhere else, which by extension, became a critique of Hindi language itself. While the poem clearly outlined the emerging class consciousness of the downtrodden, it also pointed to the vast gap between the middle class, urban character of the Hindi language and a local language like Bhojpuri. Despite its apparent sympathy with the cause of the downtrodden, the Hindi intelligentsia's lack of any penetrating insight into the existing class-caste relations was solely responsible for the lack of writings on such themes. Though not to deny its due share, there were few essays on the theme of peasant exploitation by people like Dwivedi himself; they yet failed to see the inter-relation between the caste and class questions of the society.

Still the peasant question was increasingly being taken up by different people.⁶⁹ The contemporary attitude towards such issues can

⁶⁸ Ibid.,

⁶⁹ Few examples can be cited here: "Artt-Krishak" (Exploited Peasant), a poem by 'Sanehi' in **Saraswati**, Oct. 1914; "Bharat Ke Kisan" by Ganga Prasad Agnihotri in **Pratap**, May 12 1924, "Krishak-Krandan (the wailing Peasant)", another poem in Bhojpuri by an unknown poet published in **Pratap**, Oct 6-13 1929. The last poem is a contrast to the first in which the latter details its grievances to George Vth, the former Krishak Krandan took its grievances to Gandhi. One can notice the shift in the minds of the people moving

also be seen through a reportage by the famous hunter and writer shri Ram Sharma. In the November 1930 issue of **Vishal Bharat** he wrote a piece titled 'Banda aur Vaad-Vivaad', where narrating an incident of shooting of a Gazelle he talked about subsequent events in which the utter downtrodden state of a chamar and his complete lack of self honour seemed very shocking to him. Further extreme apathy shown by a 'lala' and the authors arguments with him in this regard were discussed in the latter part of the story. Yet the barrage of responses which followed in the later issues, centred mostly on the criticism of the writer for his killing of an innocent Gazelle, while completely ignoring the central theme of his memoir.

And yet a writer like Prem Chand was emerging during these years only who was to completely redraw the whole Hindi scenario within few years, even though his best writings appeared in his last years during the mid-nineteen thirties. One of his stories 'Balidan' can be seen as a precursor to the great epic 'Godan' (published after his death) where the central them was the exploitative relations existing within the village society due to which the central character Girdhari dies in the end. Even

away from a foreign ruler to someone amongst them for their liberation.

his wife Subhagi resembled very much the wife of Hori in 'Godan' imbued with a rebellious character, even when her husband was unable to break away from the age old exploitative rituals and customs.⁷⁰

Vishal Bharat had a regular column 'Hamare Gram', but most of its essays didn't go beyond the romantic vision of the reform through educating the ignorant peasants by sending a pack of committed youth in the rural areas.⁷¹ Inspiration from Communist Russia was sought mostly in regard to importing the latest agricultural tools or techniques like co-operativisation⁷² The pre requisites for such development, for example, a change in land relations etc were not touched upon.

Inspiration was, though, also drawn from the communist revolution in Russia in regard to the organisation of the labour class. One contributor wrote that,

"these days the civilization of a country is not identified by its temples , priests, literature or philosophy; rather by its industrial plants ,labour and ships only."⁷³

⁷⁰ Prem Chand, "Balidan", **Saraswati**, May 1918.

⁷¹ See for instance July 1930 issue of **Vishal Bharat**, p.96-98.

⁷² Jagannath Prasad Mishra, "Russ Ke Kisan", **Vishal Bharat**, Oct 1930 pp.473-476.

⁷³ Radha Kant Jha , "Bharat Mein Mazdoor Dal Gathan", **Madhuri**, 25 Nov 1922. p.401.

In this context the author included the peasantry also among the labouring class; and yet, while talking about their problems, his attitude remained very much within the prevalent capitalist framework. According to him, the "labour unions should be kept away from politics, for their own benefit; which are often misled by some outsiders."⁷⁴ Still there were many, who were gradually getting more interested in contemporary Russia. Many introductory articles were written on its egalitarian communist and secular social character.⁷⁵ There were direct debates on the ideology of socialism and communism as well. One essay advocated for socialism on the basis of a critique of laissez Faire Policy, exploitation of the labour class, and especially due to its suitability in the Indian situation.⁷⁶

One essay though conceded Marx's contribution in developing the theory of historical materialism it still criticised him for ignoring the equally dominant development of 'mental and spiritual freedom'. It further found the contradiction between the international brotherhood of the

⁷⁴ Ibid.,

⁷⁵ Take for instance, Paripoornanand Verma's essay, '1927 ka Russ', **Sudha**, Feb 1928 p.61; and a translation of Jawaharlal Nehru's Essay, 'Desh Ki Deenata Kaise Door Ho' in **Yuvak**, Feb 1929. This essay criticised the educated peoples attempts to lead the peasants and demanded that they should be given free rein to lead their own movements.

⁷⁶ Devraj Upadhyay, B.A, "Samajvaad", **Yuvak**, July 1929. pp.361-67.

labour class and the growing nationalism all over the world, too stark to digest.⁷⁷ It is apparent that in this case also the conflicts and contradictions were too many to immediately become a viable alternative for the Hindi intelligentsia at that time; even though the beginnings had been made. Journals like **Yuvak** which had clear socialistic outlook, always looked for the secularisation of society through the adoption of non religious symbols of national culture.⁷⁸ In E.Hobsbawm's words,

"entirely new symbols and devices came into existence as part of nationalist movement and status, such as the National anthem,... the National flag... or the personification of 'the nation' in symbol or image, either official,... or unofficial."⁷⁹

Despite all these attempts to look for other possible means of community creation they were too weak, either due to embryonic state of some of these ideologies, or due to existing contradictions within them.

⁷⁷ Mathura Lal Sharma, "Samyavaad ka Acharya Karl Marx", **Vishal Bharat**, Oct.1930, pp.410-16.

⁷⁸ For example an article titled 'Hamara Rashtriya Jhanda Kaisa Ho?' by Devraj Upadhyay published in Feb 1929, p.103-6 argued for a non religious colour for the flag, like white along with a Plough on it symbolising the Indian peasant ; as against any other colour symbolising different religions. Another article titled, 'Khadi ki Rajnitik Upyogita' by Buddhinath Jha 'Bhairav', published in 1929 pp. 378-381, argued for popularising Khadi in order to bring about a symbolic unity of Indian people on secular grounds.

⁷⁹ E.Hobsbawm, "Introduction" in E.Hobsbawm and T.Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, CUP, 1983, p.7.

Therefore they could not pose any formidable challenge to the idea of religion based national community, in this case, a Hindu national community.

Chapter Four

Women's Question

While, the movement for building a notion of the Indian nation was spiralling into different directions, several constituents of this 'nation' were simultaneously negotiating their role in it. But, as we know the Hindi movement was primarily restricted to the middle classes, it was this class which sought to appropriate different sections and communities in a specific way to give shape to its ideal of the 'Hindu nation'. Women's question, was also taken up with this aim, where questions of tradition, social reform, nationalism etc. were being contested in the name of women's emancipation. At the same time, it was deemed necessary to link up the issue of political 'swarajya' to the issue of internal 'swarajya', within the national community. This, although was more from the point of view of representing an already 'liberated', egalitarian India, than from initiating far reaching revolutionary changes within the society.

Partha Chatterjee sees this attempt in terms of inner/outer, spiritual/material dichotomy of nationalism, which sought to link up the home with purity & spiritual attributes and thus nationalism's attempt to keep this part of their life intact. This also, according to Chatterjee, explains nationalists' refusal to let the colonial state have any say in this

regard.¹ This, provides the key for Chatterjee for the sudden disappearance of women's agenda by the turn of the 20th century. While, this explanation can be generally taken as convincing in the case of Bengal, the phenomenon of 'the break' itself is not found in the Hindi-movement. Not only women's questions continued to be raised with great consistency in this phase, but the pitch and fervour rose further and further. This can be witnessed not only by the abundance of such issues in all these journals, but also by the rise of specific women's journals from early 20th century onwards. This 'continuity' in the Hindi areas can be partly explained through the fact that while Bengal witnessed the so-called modernization phase in early 19th century; the period of renaissance & associated social reforms started much later in the Hindi speaking areas, when nationalism as a political ideology itself had begun developing radical portents. Though, it is true that the central concern of all these journals remained confined to upper-caste, middle class issues like, Purdah, widowhood, child marriage etc., while at the same time, it made an attempt to accommodate the growing nationalist movement within its ambit. The resultant effect was the conceptualisation of a new national

¹ Chatterjee, P.; The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post colonial Histories; pp. 116-34, OUP, Delhi, 1994.

woman, who could fit both the role of a public woman as well as private woman under the changed circumstances. Yet, in both the places she was to be the 'accomplice', the 'helping partner' of a man and not as an independent entity in herself.²

The above mentioned phenomenon was the logical outcome of a male initiated, class-based reform, where women were merely seen as one among several passive objects. Thus, the social-reform while, itself was linked up with womens' issues, it was primarily and mostly from the male point of view. To cite an example, the regular column titled 'samaj-sudhar' (social reform), in the prestigious journal **Sudha** shows two young boys cutting the ropes of a fettered woman, while an old brahmin prepares to throw a fresh noose on her. The woman herself is shown as sitting quietly. This illustrates our argument that, social reform was an agenda, which was primarily being contested by & within the male community. In this context, women participants also echoed, the dominant male voice

² Kumkum Sangari & Sudesh Vaid have echoed the same point, "The historical role of the modernizing movement was that of 'recasting' women for companionate marital relationships & attendant familiar duties as well as of enabling middle class women to enter the professions and participate in political movement, in a limited way." (pp.19-20), '**Introduction**' in Sangari & Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, Kali for Women, N. Delhi, 1989.

mostly. Helene Cixous has argued the same in this regard that, "Most women are like this: they do someone else's, man's writing, and in their innocence sustain it and give it a voice, and end up producing writing that's in effect masculine." ³ This, then had important consequences for the contemporary debate on women's situation.

II

In the process of social construction of femininity, especially the Indian version, the most important step was taken in regard to its exclusion from the arena of colonial state. Further, this step itself categorised, and signified, the agenda of education for women, as being something different and (probably) quite opposite to that of man's education. This at the same time was taken as necessary in the light of the task of making a new India. In an editorial note on the falling of the bill on the establishment of ideal government schools for girls in the legislative council, the editor noticed that, "It was good that the bill was not passed, because the boys' education under the guidance of the govt. has

³ Quoted in Susie Tharu & K. Lalitha, eds. Women Writing in India, Vol.II, (p.16) OUP, Delhi, 1995, The main essay was titled, "La Sexe on La tite (Castration or Decapitation?)" trans Annette Kuhu, Signs 7:1, 1981, pp.49-55.

been a failure so far; creating hurdles for women in this new age by raising the question of their education, is completely uncalled for. Community based institutions (religious, caste etc.) run by different communities and which are imparting education to women, should be developed and strengthened. Further Indian women should be prepared for the service of the country."⁴ In this passage alone we can see two distinct yet intermeshed trends emerging. While religion, caste etc. are seen as the base on which women's education is to be based, this is essentially for the cause of nation and yet, it has to be different from the male education.

This difference was further emphasised in the supposed basis of what belonged to the male world and what to the females. Thus, explaining the reason for not giving news about the ongoing first world war, one of the writers remarked that, "**Kanya-Manoranjan** (the journal) doesn't find time from necessary essays that it can give more news of the country. Then, this monthly journal concentrates on imparting education to girls about their duties and morality, which is extremely important for

⁴ Anon., Stri-Jagat - Adarsh Sarkari kanya Vidyalaya Ka Prastaav, p. 692. in '**Jyoti**', March 1921.

them."⁵ This becomes important also in the light of the fact that contemporary so-called mainstream journals like **Saraswati**, **Hindi-Chitramay Jagat**, etc. were publishing regular columns like 'war diary' during the first world war, replete with long essays, photographs etc. And yet at the same time, there was an agenda, common to both type of journals, which was the construction of Hindu national identity, cutting across the gender divide. This was manifested in the continuous harping on the antiquity of the 'glorious Hindu tradition' through articles & essays on ancient history, teachings etc.; a theme to which we shall come subsequently.

Still the 'traditional' woman sought to be carved out, had all the necessary bourgeois ingredients, modelled on the lines of the late 18th & early 19th century construction of a proper lady in Europe.⁶ In this context, literature as discipline provided, a specific means to inculcate feminine values among women. At the same time, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out in the context of 19th century England, it also had the scope of neutralising the growing ambitions of the female community, by

⁵ "Samachar-Europe Mein Ghor Yuddh", '**Kanya Manoranjan**', p.63, November, 1914.

⁶ See, for example, Tharu & Lalitha (eds), Op.cit. p.9.

providing a supposedly 'harmless' field.⁷ One, Kumari Jnandevijee thus argued that, "Women have a natural inclination towards the easy option. Therefore, the best way to lead a contented life is "literature". ...Thus, if the women have to defend India's ancient glory, its magnificence, its past philosophical achievements; then (they) should take up 'literature'.⁸ Women were, therefore, readily encouraged to write poetries, stories or essays etc. Few famous names in Hindi literature like, Mahadevi Verma, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan etc. emerged during these years only. Similarly, the names in English poetry like, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu etc. were the most frequently referred ones in these journals. Their biographies were published, their writings translated etc. It was for this reason only that, even though with a seemingly liberal posture, political activity

⁷ Eagleton, Terry; Literary theory: An Introduction; Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983. To quote, "The '**softening**' & '**humanizing**' effects of English, terms recurrently used by its early proponents, are within the existing ideological stereotypes of gender clearly feminine. The rise of English in England ran parallel to the gradual, grudging admission of women to the institutions of higher education; and since English was an untaxing sort of affair, concerned with the finer feelings rather than with the more virile topics of bonafide academic 'disciplines', it seemed a convenient sort of non-subject to palm off on the ladies, who were in any case extended from science and the professions. (pp. 27-28).

⁸ Kumari Jnandevijee, Snatika "Visharada, Sahitya aur Srijati"; pp. 504-505, '**Chand**', February, 1926.

for women was not barred; it was not considered their natural field. Another article in this connection wrote that ever since Sarojini Naidu had entered politics, she had lost her true self, which was best expressed through her poems only.⁹

Yet, English was not to be the language of the Indian woman. This was due to the fact that, firstly, it represented an alien rule, against which the nationalist movement was growing and secondly, because, English in the Indian context represented the domain of outside, the polluted world; which had to be kept away from the Hindu woman (the carrier of the pure soul of the nation). This feeling was expressed in a disguised way by an author advocating against the use of English for women. He by taking help from Mahatma Gandhi's statements in this regard argued that, "To clear the examinations by memorising things and getting a job is the only aim of the present education policy. The knowledge imparted in the Indian languages through their present literature would be much more than is

⁹ Meghvahanjee, "Hindi Sahitya Ki Stri Kaviyan"; **'Chand'**, May-June 1925, pp.25-38. To quote the author, "...Sarojini Devi had revealed her soul in the most truthful way, when she wrote, 'For me, O my master, the rapture of song', because this is the best note of 'vina' of female heart."

currently being imparted through English."¹⁰ In this context, women were encouraged to take up even Sanskrit as a medium for education. Women were further employed in the task of furtherance of Hindi language, as they were held to be symbolising the 'true soul' of India. Lala Hardayal extolling the virtues of women, held then as his last symbol of hope for the popularisation of Hindi in Punjab because this was a question of family honour to be saved by Hindu women only.¹¹ Another writer, while outlining the curriculum of primary education for girls between five to eight years stressed on the reading & writing of Nagari (Hindi) as the two most important tasks.¹² In this regard, the issue of promotion of Hindi itself was given a specific gender angle, by projecting Hindi with feminine virtues. Thus, in the very first note of the publisher of *Saraswati*, the plea for Hindi was given as, "she is a young girl, who needs to be decorated and brought-up well by its lovers."¹³ The study of literature

¹⁰ "Striyan aur Angraji Bhasha"; '*Jyoti*', January, 1921.

¹¹ Lala Hardayal, "Punjab mein Hindi Prachar ki Jaroorat", *Saraswati*, 1907.

¹² Ganga Pd. Jee B.A., "Matri-Shiksha", *Chand*, November, 1922, p. 25.

¹³ The Publisher's appeal, '*Saraswati*', January 1900.

and specifically Hindi language in this context, became means to offer a new role to women, which simultaneously defined this role within a new patriarchal setup. In this context, Gauri Vishwanathan has argued that, "humanistic functions traditionally associated with the study of literature - for example, the shaping of character, or the development of an aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking - are also essential to the process of sociopolitical control."¹⁴

The acquiring of the modern values of society was thus incorporated into the aspired role of the ideal woman. This was expressed even in the more overtly Hinduistic journals like **Arya-Mahila** brought out by Bharat-Dharma Mahamandal; which while outlining the duties of women, stressed on the importance of education for the purposes like, cleanliness of the maternity-room, cleanliness of women themselves, the need for eradicating superstitions etc.¹⁵ Yet, the traditional role of the women was also defined on the basis of modern rational values. Thus, in an essay on the physical condition of the women, the author argued that, those women

¹⁴ Gauri Vishwanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India", Oxford Literary Review 9, 1987, 2-26, quoted in S. Tharu, K. Lalitha (eds.) op.cit., p. 27.

¹⁵ Anon., "Griha aur Grihini", p. 335, **Arya-Mahila**, July 1929.

who do not do household works, involving physical exertion, like moulding flour, filling water, cleaning the house etc., generally remain in bad health also, this was the reason that, there was a dearth of brave people like Arjuna, Bhima, Pratap & Shivaji.¹⁶

In the larger context, the absence of property rights of women were sought to be rationalised on the grounds of the prevalence of joint-family system in Hindu society in which "the householder lives and gets protected along with sons and grandsons, while the girls get married and go to other families."¹⁷ Though it was the same writer, who by comparing several ancient-laws in regard to the property of women, gave precedence to one law (Mitakshara) over another for giving extended rights to women and lamented that, "had this view of Vijnaneshwara been prevalent in India, women's condition might have been much better and their position vis-a-vis

¹⁶ Stri-Samaj - Stri-Jati ki sharirik-sthiti, Chandrawati Vibhav **Sudha**, July, 1929, pp.657-660. Also, can be cited, 'Bharatvarsha Ki Striyon Ki Sharirik Sthiti', published in **Grihalakshmi**, in October, 1914, which went as far as to defend the institutions such as early marriage etc. Another article arguing along the same lines was written by the edition of 'Mahila Darpan', Mrs. Sharadakumari Devi, 'Bhartiya Striyaon Ka Kartavya', in **Chand**, November, 1922, p.23.

¹⁷ Bholalal Das jee, "Hindu law mein Striyon Ka Adhikar", **Chand**, October, 1930 pp. 481-486.

men in the joint-family system would have been equal."¹⁸ Similarly, even seemingly radical demands like co- education were promoted on the grounds of tradition.¹⁹

Yet, a tradition like 'sati' was also sought to be disclaimed on the grounds that, it was not a religious tradition but just a custom acquired gradually through social practice.²⁰ Though the same contributor conceded at the same time that it was in existence even prior to the Muslim rule, yet, through a listing of several mythical, fictitious & recorded incidents in this regard, an attempt to give 'sati' a divine aura, could clearly be discerned.²¹ Further, in the process of building a glorious Hindu history, certain other traditions were sought to be legitimised, otherwise taken as immoral & horrendous. One of the contributors to 'Chand', wrote that the "tradition of Jauhar is greater & more pious than a barbaric tradition like sati, because it was not initiated by the fundamentalist religious authorities, instead, it is a product of the

¹⁸ Bholalal Das, "Stri-Dhan", **Chand**, November 1928.

¹⁹ Anon., "Prayag Vishwavidyalaya aur shiksha", **Chand**, Nov. 1925,

²⁰ Pt. Shivsahay Jee Chaturvedi; "Sati Pratha Ka Raktranjit Itihaas" (a serialised essay), **Chand**, August 1927.

²¹ *ibid.*

ingenious mind of the female-community."²² The author further linked it up with the onset of 'barbaric' Muslim rule thereby proving its rationale.²³ This, thus became, a constant trend, in which many of the irreconcilable traditions of the Hindu society were sought to be linked up with the Muslim rule, like Purdah, etc.; which also provided a legitimate 'other', in the construction of a unified Hindu identity. Further, this modern rational discourse only helped in claiming and constructing a tradition for Hindu identity, which was an imperative for the changed times, and yet, as pointed out earlier, it also helped in defining the role of woman as a modern person yet, spiritually confined within the home.

At the same time, names of ancient women scholars like Gargi, Maitreyi etc. were continuously harped upon. Several paintings on ancient Indian heroines were published in these journals, including those of Raja Ravi Verma etc. One important thing to note in this regard, is what Tapati Guha Thakurta has argued in the context of Ravi Verma's models of ancient India, that despite an Indian setting, they in their features,

²² Anon., "Jauhar ki Pratha", **Chand**, October 1926.

²³ *ibid.*

aesthetic construction etc. were essentially European.²⁴ Also, by its modelling of these paintings on upper class women, the icon of femininity served to differentiate the role model of the ideal woman from that of lower class, lower-caste woman, which could be projected as the true image of the 'traditional' woman as well. It was precisely this forged link between class and tradition, where the ideal womanhood was defined and canonized. Thus, while referring to the high status of women in ancient India, the editor of 'Sudha' wrote that, "Even though the country has fallen quite low at present, we can still stress our point that the woman is still respected in the elite/upper-class families."²⁵ And yet the values on which even the traditional woman was respected essentially bound her to home, in a subordinate role.²⁶ In this context, by putting her at par with the

²⁴ To quote her, "On the one hand, the upper-class ladies on whom he modelled his figure studies, on the other hand, the Europeans neo-classical imagery that surrounded him.....provided prime inspiration: The forms and formats through which to devise India's own modern brand of 'high art'", p.10 - Tapati Guha Thakurta; "Visualizing the Nation: The Iconography of a 'National Art' in Modern India", **Journal of Arts and Ideas**, No. 27-28, March 1995, pp.7-40.

²⁵ Editor, "Sampadkiya Sammati - Prachin Bharat mein Stri-Jati Ka Samman", **Sudha**, June 1928 pp. 560-561.

²⁶ In the same essay mentioned above, the writer quoted ancient Sage Daksha saying, "Wife is kthe root of the 'Grihastha - ashrama'... That woman who behaves according to the wishes of her husband, does not speak ill of anybody; is skilled; is loyal & obedient to her husband, is not human but a goddess. *ibid*.

goddesses; the sexuality of the woman was also sought to be eroded in the public life.

But the conflicts within this image building attempt were too many to reconcile easily. Arguing for the freedom of women, one contributor argued that, "till the time women don't participate in the world-affairs, politics, social- reforms etc., their status will remain low....of course, it is necessary that women should be taught house-management. Those who think that due to high education, the love between the husband and wife will be lost should look at Europe, where it is much more than in India."²⁷ The same article though denied the attempts to educate the women merely for the purpose of turning them into 'educated slaves', it at the same time rationalised the 'Pativrata woman' in terms of the contemporary situation, as well as stressing the ideal of Sita and Lilavati.²⁸ One can see that the conflicts were too many and attempts were also on, to find a kind of middle path which could fit both the ideals of modern bourgeois rationality, as well as keeping the 'Indian identity' intact. The ideal of Indian femininity had to cut across both these arenas.

²⁷ 'Satyendra', "Striyonki Paradhinata, **Maryada**, May 1913,pp.52-55.

²⁸ *ibid.*

III

The pressure of creating an Indian identity vis-a-vis the west was so intense, that they not only were projected as poles apart, but also as quite antithetical to each other. In this context, even the seemingly independent status of Western woman was sought to be decried on the lines of corrupt materialistic image of women. Several articles as well as even cartoons were published in this regard. I will illustrate just one example in this context. March, 1923 issue of **Chand** published a painted photo on page no. 360, of a woman dressed in a fancy saree reclining on an easy chair, while her husband dressed in traditional white kurta & dhoti, sitting on the floor, polishing her shoes. The text below the photograph read: "Bivi saheba had gone to theater with Mr. Champat Rai. Now Shrimati Jee is resting and the poor husband is polishing the shoes of his wife. The Lord husband - whoever laughs at my predicament; I pray to god that he may also meet the same end." Clearly the image of the westernized woman not only revolves around going outside (i.e. theatre in this case which is polluted), but also with a different man, quite an immoral act. Further, the husband is shown as the slave of his wife,

though supposedly the ideal role would have been opposite; i.e. wife being shown as polishing his boots.

One thing which was found common in depiction of women's nature in both East & West, was their vulnerability to sexual overtures, even though in India, they were sought to be prepared as mother and goddess in the public. Thus, Western attitude to give women extreme freedom was taken as a dangerous step in regard to making them sexually corrupt. Making such a reference to Napoleon's act in this regard & its 'disastrous consequences', one of the writers argued that, only after they were finally bound by their husband's wishes, then the things 'normalised'.²⁹ It was in this sense that, the image of the western woman was conceived, who were mostly termed as 'fashion-dolls'. In one of the editorials, the radical journal **Chand** argued that, those who argued for modelling the Indian woman totally on the lines of western culture were equally wrong as those, who were against their liberation. Arguing further on the 'basic' differences between men & women as well as between eastern & western civilization, it criticised the education being imparted to women in contemporary Hindi & English schools, which did not stress 'religion' &

²⁹ Sitaram Vishnulalit; "Pashchatya Deshon mein Striyon ka Darza", **Kamla**, October-November, 1917.

'morality'. Thus, "we not only consider female participation in meetings and other activities as good but think of it as necessary for the progress of the nation. But, giving as much freedom to Indian women, as in the western society; we consider it as very dangerous for the society."³⁰

The two values which thus differentiated as well as bound Indian woman were her being the icon of religion and morality. This was further stressed by the categorisation of women as possessing different natural attributes from that of men. Thus, one of the articles categorised woman as being the repository of tolerance, love, compassion, morality, as well as protector of religion, while the man was termed as possessing greater physical strength, working capacity and more importantly, as being more intelligent.³¹ Another, (a woman) though raised questions on the stereotyping of women as being a repository of religion or 'dharma', it still considered her best in terms of performing her 'natural' duties of loving and caring. It was on this basis that the writer, advocated for women's

³⁰ Ramrakh Singh Sahgal, "Sampadkiya Vichar - Rashtriya Jeevan mein Stri Ka Mahatva", **Chand**, November 1922, pp. 6-10.

³¹ Ramrakh Singh Sahgal; "Sampadkiya Vichar - Stri aur Purush", **Chand**, December 1922, pp.88-90.

liberty & sought to dispel men's fears in this regard.³² Thus, even though, protests were made against stereotyping of women in certain roles, they still fell within the prevalent discourse of femininity. In this context even resistance against oppression was condemned, if going beyond a 'limit'. The column of '**Chand**' had received a letter regarding disappearance of an educated girl along with her lover, due to her forced marriage with an illiterate boy, much younger to her. The editor while condemning her forced marriage also condemned the girl's act arguing that, "as it is, educated Indian women have got a bad name; such incidents will only worsen the things."³³ In any circumstances, thus, a radical step was forbidden for women, on grounds of several 'dangers'.

Once, women were shown as 'naturally' endowed with certain attributes, the contemporary evils like Purdah etc. could always be done away with. In this context Purdah was also decried as bringing ill-health for women, thereby providing a modern rational basis for the criticism. On the other hand a new kind of Purdah was defined where, "controlling one's

³² Sarlabai Nayak, M.A., "Striyon Ki Badhti Hui Swatantrata", **Chand**, December, 1922, pp. 97-100.

³³ Ramrakh Singh Sahgal; "Aap Puchiye: Hum Uttar Denge", **Chand**, December 1922.

senses, having modesty in one's eyes, not getting angry, staying in a cheerful mood, serving everybody properly, talking sweetly is the real purdah."³⁴

Similarly the problems of the widows was sought to be tackled as a result of the threat of their sexual fallibility.³⁵ Further, they were also categorised on the basis of their virginity and having offsprings, where only virgin widows without any issue were sought to be remarried, while widows above 22 years or with children were only sought to be educated so that they could earn their livelihood.³⁶ Such reforms, were thus very selective and attempted to remain within a prescribed limit, so as not to endanger the patriarchal form of the society, even though the latter could be readjusted. In this connection, certain issues were given preference over others.³⁷

³⁴ 'Ek Pathika' (Anonymous); "Purushon ke Striyon per Atyachar", **Grihalakshmi**, June 1917, pp. 166-169.

³⁵ **Chand & Pratap** came out with several pieces in this regard. See for example, April 1923 issue of **Chand**, "Vidhwaon ka Kaccha-Chittha" (Immoral deeds of the widows).

³⁶ Lala Kannomal, untitled, **Chand** (Vidhwa Ank); April, 1923.

³⁷ Kumkum Sangari & S. Vaid have also argued in this regard that, "in the Hindi speaking belt, women take up the issue of widowers remarrying with far more emotional involvement than that of widow remarriage."; K. Sangari & S. Vaid (ed.), op.cit. p. 14.

While these issues were taken up in order to project a liberated image of the Indian woman and even their moving out was legitimised in a limited way; yet their role as 'working women' was still frowned upon. Talking about the difficulties for women in the industrial work-places, one essay argued against their working inside the mines, because, 'not only working in the mines leads to the physical & moral downfall of women, but it also leads to the loss of peace & security of men working there.'³⁸ Not only work for women was sought to be restrained on moral grounds, but more realistically it had a distinct class base. Thus, pleading against the work for women, one Vidyawati Sahgal argued that, "lower class women who are forced to earn their livelihood, a loss of strength of character is always found in them."³⁹ Further quoting 1911 census report in this connection, the same person argued that most of them were practically 'prostitutes'.⁴⁰ Thus, while a distinct class based identity was sought to be established, it had also got the backing of colonial categorisation of the

³⁸ Umesh Prasad Singh, B.A. & Harishwardutt B.A., "Udyog dhandhon mein Bhartiya striyon ka sthan", **Sudha**, March, 1928; pp. 161-164.

³⁹ Vidyawati Sahgal, "Samachar Sangraha - Prayag Mahila Samiti", **Chand**, November 1925, pp. 102-110.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

Indian society in this regard. In this way, the central location of even the modern Indian woman was her home only.

IV

The companionate role of women was thus, essentially categorised in their stereotypical role inside the home. This view was generally made the base of all the construction about women, ranging from a more radical journal like '**Chand**' to a journal like '**Arya Mahila**', a clearly conservative Hindu one. As late as in 1930, **Chand** published essays which argued that, "despite being completely free, the girls of this country are loyal to their husbands & assist them in observing true morals of life. God only has divided the duties of men and women; ...the woman performs the duties of the home well; because she manages the house, is 'lakshmi'; has the undisputed authority inside the home..... for the welfare of their husbands & sons, they forget even their existence."⁴¹ One can see an attempt to legitimate this division of roles on the basis of power-sharing as well. Here, the female was shown as wielding authority inside the home, while the man's domain was outside; thereby the establishment of 'equal'

⁴¹ Sahityacharya "Mug", "Nasihati ki do batein", **Chand**, October, 1930 pp. 505-508.

relationship between the two. Further, their lives still centred around their husbands & sons. In this context, even education for them was meant primarily for the sake of making them eligible to educate their children, (mostly sons), the future leaders of the nation. In this context the duties of a Hindu-woman were identified with that of the nation, while at the same time, the 'cultural markers' of the nation (a Hindu one) were sought to be imposed upon them. Thus, "when women would learn to read, only then will they be able to serve and look after their husband & sons properly. I appeal to the Hindu-ladies that they should not abandon the culture of this country ('Desh Vesh') & the national language...."⁴²

There was a lot of discussion about 'Pativrata dharma' for women, which though could be interpreted differently, yet identified a woman's role as subordinate to her husband. Various poems like, 'Uttama Stri Ke Lakshan', 'Pativrata- Dharm', 'Stridharma shiksha' etc, were published which laid down a detailed code of conduct for women, especially in their in-laws' place. In this sense, a woman's home was primarily located in her husband's house only & not at her parental home.

⁴² Indumati Devi, "Mahila-Manoranjan - Striyan Padhkar kya Karengi", **Madhuri**, 11 May 1924, pp. 94.

Various of these journals, further regularly published articles on different rituals, fasts etc. observed by women for their husbands. Also, there were regular columns on knitting, music, etc. like 'household things', in which a woman was supposed to excel. Highlighting the features of the coming issue, **Chand** once published, "Cookery, character- building, entertainment, Ayurvedic medicines, child-rearing, tips for the benefit of women, other essays apart from biographies & stories."⁴³ The modern Indian woman had thus been confined essentially in a role of educated house-wife.

V

One of the most important element in the construction of woman, we have mentioned above; was her sexuality. According to the prevalent notion cutting across all these journals, the most dangerous element of a woman's character was her 'immense sexual hunger', because of which she became extremely vulnerable to all kinds of vices. While, the reforms sought to argue for widow-remarriage etc., on the basis of this plea; this very categorisation also provided the base for the conservative reactions to it. While arguing that, "from the very beginning, the ideal of Hindu

⁴³ **Chand**, November 1922, p. 64.

masculinity has been to satisfy the sexual appetite of young girls because, otherwise the results tend to become disastrous", one of the writers tried to legitimate the delinking of marriage with economic condition, early marriage & arranged marriage. He simultaneously pointed out the prevalent ills' of the western society in this regard.⁴⁴ It was on this very terrain only that protests started, and an attempt was made to place the woman's sexuality in a proper framework. Premchand certainly proved again to be a pathfinder in this respect. His celebrated novel 'Nirmala' (published in **Chand** in a serialised version) was though generally about a widower's remarriage & its consequences; Premchand gave it a new twist by introducing the character of Mansaram, who was Nirmala's foster son & almost her age. He later died due to his father's suspicions about their relationship, pleading for his innocence till the last. In a subsequent conversation with her sister Krishna. Nirmala says, "If even for a second I have seen him with any other feeling, let me go blind.....I know this, that if his intentions were not true, I could have done any thing for him.....yes, this sounds bad & it is; but no body can change human nature. You tell

⁴⁴ Pt. Balmukund Vajpeyi, "Poorviya aur Pashchatya Vivah Sambandh", **Nigamagam Chandrika**, February 1920, pp. 26-33.

me, if you are married off to a fifty year old man, what will you do?"⁴⁵

In another story on widow-problem, Premchand told the story of a young widow Kailashi, who always goes 'beyond limits', when her parents want to indulge her in other activities, like entertainment, religion & finally teaching. When confronted by them, she argues, "let me know at least, what this world wants from me. I have a soul, a consciousness, why should I become passive like an object? I can't indulge in self pity & live an isolated, austere life. Why should I do this?"⁴⁶ As a result, she not only stops observing sacred fasts like 'Teej' (meant for husbands) and 'Ekadashi' etc. but also starts living like a married woman; e.g. wearing a coloured saree, putting flowers in her hair etc.⁴⁷ While there were several who were arguing for limited emancipation of women within 'tradition',; this one story attacked the very basis, namely religion sanctioned patriarchy, which sought to control a woman. Needless to say, such examples were not too many & even most of them were full of self-contradictions. **Chand** published various articles supporting use of artificial contraceptives, property rights for women etc., but mostly within the ambit

⁴⁵ Munshi Premchand, "Nirmala", **Chand**, July 1926, p.227.

⁴⁶ Munshi Prem Chand, "Nairashya -Lila", **Chand**, April, 1923.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

of 'Hindu tradition'. This essentially weakened its arguments against those, who could claim themselves to be more legitimate heir to that 'tradition'. One Hukmdevi, while lamenting on the women's status as men's shoes, argued for 'internal swarjya', cutting across the religious bars.⁴⁸ This in itself was a radical step, not frequent in those days & yet, looking for an ideal model; she fell back on the same old 'ideal age' of Manu & Sita & Kaushalya.⁴⁹ It is apparent, that not only for those who sought reforms within a limited paradigm; but even for those who wanted to alter the situation completely; the construction of the ideal Hindu past, worked as a limiting factor.

Still, protests were made against the stereotyping of women into certain roles, as passive objects. Lambasting such dominating ideas; one writer criticised these people saying, "they regard women only as maids and for the purpose of sexual fulfillment. They think that a woman has no consciousness, no brain & neither any desire nor ambitions".⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Hukmdevi, "Stri jati kab tak jooti ban kar santusht rahegi?" **Grihlakshmi**, Oct. 1917, pp. 323-28.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Vijayshankar Dube, "Dubey jee ki Chitthi", **Chand**, October, 1930 pp. 556-559.

Still another form of protest came as a direct influence of certain western thinkers. While outlining J.S. Mill's arguments that, it is the idea of a husband - centred life for women, which has led to their loss of social & political rights, one contributor still could not help comparing this state of affairs with the 'Hindu past', where, "women have done a lot despite so little opportunities & are still doing it."⁵¹

Another article, a translation from English, discussed the state of women in Asia and argued for the right of divorce; late marriage; marriage according to one's own choice etc. & cited Japan's progressive stance in this regard. It went as far as to argue that, "If one is forced to go against the wishes of one's parents for a just cause, then its legitimate."⁵²

Again, protests also came from certain women, mainly representing upper class-background. Even though, they tried to break the existing hegemonic ideas in this regard; their reach could not go beyond a certain

⁵¹ Satyashodak, "Striyon ki paradhinata (J.S. Mill ke vichaar)", **Saraswati**, October 1914.

⁵² Saint Nihal Singh, "Poorviya Deshon mein Striyon ki Unnati" (trans.) Banarasi Das Chaturvedi, **Manoranjan**, May-June 1914, pp. 199-203.

point, proving to be a limiting factor. Still, voices were consistent in their mission. In a debate on the rights of women regarding employment, one Kamla Rani Watal while castigating both, English & Indian male society for not giving enough mental freedom to women for the fear of equal status said that, "even those people who support women's cause,.... want the women only to learn enough to be able to converse in English with their (husband's) friends in the drawing room."⁵³ She further, went as far as to suggest that, "when women will start working, our society will have to change certain laws & regulations (regarding household work)."⁵⁴

Certainly then, there was an emerging voice, however limited in its scope, which was attempting to look at things in the larger perspective, while simultaneously trying to represent the women's cause in its immediate context. Uma Nehru, coming from the prestigious Nehru family echoed this, even as other Nehru women continued to take generally accepted, dominant position. Thus, "the same social forces which have led subjects to confront their king, craftsmen to confront their patrons &

⁵³ Kamla Rani Watal, "Samachar Sangrah -Prayag Mahila Samiti", Chand, November 1925. pp.102 - 110.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

workers to stand up against their employers, have also brought women face to face with man."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Uma Nehru, "Hamare Samaj Sudharak", **Stree Darpan**, March 1918; quoted from, Vir Bharat Talwar's "Femnist conciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi, 1910-20", p. 204-32, in K. Sangari & S. Vaid (eds.) op.cit.

Epilogue

To summarize the discussion in a few words: borrowing its heritage from the nineteenth century socio-cultural debates, the Hindi intelligentsia, further reformulated its position to present an idea of an ideal national community, in the early decades of twentieth century. This happened, even as the conflicts threatened to grow further, not the least, generated by the emergence of mass-politics in these decades. The leaders of the 'Hindi Navjagaran' mostly the middle classes, certainly felt threatened in this changing scenario, and it also may have led to their further idealization of a Hindu nationalism, consciously or unconsciously. While, this Hindu nationalism, sought to present itself as the only viable model through various mechanisms on the one hand, it also sought to define the role of its own, various constituents, on the other. In this context, while the Muslims were held as 'outsiders' along with the British, other levels of contradictions from 'within', such as class, caste and gender etc., were sought to be neutralized through various means.

The debate over community-question was, thus, central to the minds of, the then intellectuals. The crucial role played in this debate was that of, the notion of a glorious Hindu/national history. The task which was

perceived by them, was to give a nation, its history. Only then, the nation itself, could be resuscitated.

The problem, which confronts us at this juncture is of, why certain 'narratives' are given precedence over others in a particular historical context; while the latter ones are left out. Further, are there other narratives possible, in a particular historical time-frame? In the context of our discussion, we find that different disparate, yet interconnected factors such as, the orientalist vision of history, the notion of scientific rationalism; the notion of nationalism itself as it emerged; as well as the role of colonial discourse in categorizing Indian society in a specific way etc., were responsible for giving a definite shape to this dominant idea of Hindu nationalism. Yet at the same time, the existing class-relations also got intermeshed with this notion to give the emerging ideas, a definite shape.

What then Terry Eagleton says about ideology, as sometimes involving distortion and mystification seems to be apt, also because, "it is less because of something inherent in ideological language, than because of something inherent in the social structure to which that language belongs."¹ [T. Eagleton, Ideology: An Introduction, Verso:London, 1991,

p.28]. Ideology then, also becomes a matter of 'lived relations', which tries to look for 'imaginary resolution of real contradiction'.² [ibid.] The need, therefore, is also to look into those material linkages, which give a shape to our lived relations to reality.

It is in the above context, that any study of this nature seems to be incomplete, until such questions are probed further, identifying the linkages within the social, material and cultural milieu of an epoch. Only then, can one hope to look at any phenomenon in a more cogent and comprehensive manner.

The present study, however, finds itself inadequate, also due to the sheer enormity of the sources itself. The epoch concerned with our present study, witnessed a large scale production of various journals, only few of which have been touched upon in our discussion. Moreover, the discussion of a journal itself needs to be done in its totality, e.g, in terms of its contents, precedence of certain issues over others, advertisements, news extracts etc., only few of which, have been discussed in the present study due to various constraints. Lastly, their reach among the masses and the nature of the public response have to be probed further, for any valuable study. The need, therefore, is to look into all these aspects.

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