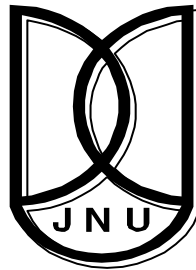


# **Nation and Identity in *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore***

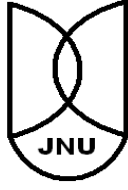
*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree of*

**Master of Philosophy**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This dissertation titled “**Nation and Identity in *Prince of Destiny and Hindupore***” submitted by **Mr. Somjyoti Mridha**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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### **Declaration by the Candidate**

This thesis titled “Nation and Identity in *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree, diploma of any university or institution.

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## **CONTENTS**

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1-9</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: Representing the 'Nation'</b>	<b>10-34</b>
<b>CHAPTER II: Formulating Identity</b>	<b>35-60</b>
<b>CHAPTER III: Constructing Marginal Identities</b>	<b>61-87</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>88-90</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>91-95</b>

## Introduction

Apart from a cursory mention in most of the histories of Indian English literature like K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English* (1961), or M.K. Naik's *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982), early Indian English novels, before the nationalist phase of the 1930's have been generally neglected by the literary critical fraternity, in spite of their significant contribution in the development of a literary tradition, substantial literary merit and contemporary popularity. Recently, through the path-breaking efforts of Meenakshi Mukherjee, Subhendu Mund, Alex Tickell, Gobind Prasad Sarma, Chandani Lokuge and Priya Joshi, these texts have been dug out from the annals of History of Indian English Literature books. Yet, most of the criticism primarily deals with their qualification as novels and their context of creativity while their content is still neglected. In those turbulent times of nationalist struggle, these Indian authors perform the task of imagining a nation and forming a national identity through these texts in English. These constructions becomes all the more intriguing as well as problematic because of the diverse sites from which they were published, their engagement with the colonial language, the Anglicized intellectual make-up of the authors and the expected readership in the imperial country coupled with the absence of a national readership.

While engagement with Indian English Literature has definitely gained respectability through the success of authors like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy and the path-breaking critical contributions of Meenakshi Mukherjee, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, to name a few, yet literary critics have, in general, neglected the domain of early novels in English, that is, before the nineteen thirties. One of the primary difficulties in conducting research in this area is the unavailability of the novels themselves even in this era of digitization and the paucity of awareness about these texts. This study primarily based on two novels published in the first decade of the twentieth century, namely, Sarath Kumar Ghosh's, *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909), and S.M. Mitra's *Hindupore: A Peep Behind The Indian Unrest, An Anglo-Indian Romance* (1909), is a humble attempt to fill the lacunae. While some of the novels, like the ones I have chosen, have been digitized and are easily available on the net, there is a lack of biographical information regarding the authors. None of the canonical histories of Indian English Literature have any information

regarding the authors. Therefore, I think it is quite pertinent to provide some preliminary biographical information about both the authors. At the outset, it should be clarified that these information have been culled out from various web sources and not from field work of any sort.

**Sarath Kumar Ghosh**—(1883-unknown) was a lawyer (“The Orient”), educated at Oxford and Cambridge University. He was connected with the aristocratic family of Ghoshpara. He became a novelist and delivered lectures on Indian issues in England and United States. He wrote four novels-- *1001 Indian Nights* (London: Heinemann, 1904), *The Verdict of the Gods* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1905) *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (London: Rebman, 1909) and *The Wonders of the Jungle* (New York: D. C. Heath, 1915). He also contributed to various periodicals like *Cornhill Magazine* and the *Harper's Magazine*.<sup>1</sup> Considering his popularity on both sides of the Atlantic (New York Times published reviews of his novel *The Verdict of the Gods* on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1905), he was the most well known face in the west, among the Indian literary personalities of the time, a position assumed by Rabindranath Tagore after his receipt of Nobel Prize in 1913. Alex Tickell states that during the creation of *Prince of Destiny*, the author was residing in London (“Writing the Nation’s Destiny” 528), in the same boarding house as Francis Thompson<sup>2</sup>, with whom he shared bonds of friendship. Quite interestingly, the English poet has a cameo presence in *Prince of Destiny*.

**Sidda Mohana Mitra**—(1856-1925) was an influential Bengali scholar who lived in Hyderabad and London and primarily wrote on the political condition of India. He has various works to his credit like *British Rule in India*, introduction by Sir James Fergusson, L. Ashburner, John Pollen and Colonel W. Loch (London: Dalziel and Co., 1905), *India and Imperial Preference* (London: Cobden Club, 1907), *Indian Problems*, introduction by Sir George Birdwood (London: J. Murray, 1908), *Life and Letters of Sir John Hall*, introduction by Read-Admiral R. Massie Blomfield (London: Longmans, 1911), (with her Highness the Maharani of Baroda) *The Position of Women in Indian Life* (London: Longmans, 1911), *Anglo-Indian Studies* (London: Longmans, 1913) and *Peace in India, how to attain*

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<sup>1</sup> Sarath Kumar Ghosh. Making Britain: Discover how South Asians shaped the nation 1870-1950. *The Open University*. < <http://www8.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/sarath-kumar-ghosh>>

<sup>2</sup> This information is not referred in the article. Alex Tickell gave this information in a personal conversation. He received this information from biographies of Francis Thompson.

it (London: Longmans, 1922). He also contributed to various journals and periodicals like *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, *Calcutta Review*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Hibbert Journal*, *Indian Review*, and *Nineteenth Century*. His position as an influential scholar can be deduced from the fact that two of his books were published with an introduction by Sir George Birdwood, regarded as an authority on Indian arts and culture in the late nineteenth century. Besides, Lord Curzon is believed to have quoted from his book in a debate in the House of Lords in 1912.<sup>3</sup> All his books were published from London and Tickell, in his recent book, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830-1947* claims that he took residence in London for sometime (169-170).

This research project focussed on the two novels—*Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*—because apart from minor differences in the plot, they are identical in their overarching concerns and politics. Both represent India as a quintessentially Hindu space through the microcosmic representation of a princely state, argue for harmonious co-existence of the British colonizers and their Indian subjects, have an ambiguous political position with respect to the national movement for liberation and engage with the idea of the putative nation and generate a discourse on identity which is peculiarly similar to each other. It is not that there are no differences, yet in this research project, primarily focused on thematic studies, the differences are underplayed, while their generic similarities have been dealt with in great details. In fact commentators like Alex Tickell and Sarma, who engage with both the novels, tend to provide a qualitative judgement in favour of *Prince of Destiny*. For instance, Sarma writes, “*Hindupore* is, however, narrower in scope and shallower in depth than *Prince of Destiny*...” (172). In this study, I have refrained from any such value judgement and analysed both of them from thematic perspectives.

Although this study primarily focuses on the two specific novels mentioned above, yet, in a limited way, I have tried to explore the primary concerns of literature and society of early twentieth century India. Dwelling on the limited ambit of these two novels, I have engaged with the chief concerns of the time—nationalism and identity. The study also explores the reconfiguration of Indian society in the aftermath of colonial intrusion and nationalist retaliation through the analysis of its representation in these two novels. This study explores their simultaneous negotiation with two diametrically opposing ideologies of

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<sup>3</sup> Siddha Mohana Mitra. Making Britain: Discover how South Asians Shaped the nation 1870-1950. *The Open University*. < <http://www8.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/siddha-mohana-mitra> >



nationalism and colonialism and deals with the ambivalence in their political sympathies towards nationalist movement in great details. It also engages with the theme of imagining a nation and constructing a national identity which is yet to exist in concrete political terms. Both these novels are concerned with the definition and construction of the British Indian Empire as a nation and provide an Indian perspective on the nationalist struggle, albeit an elitist and somewhat ambivalent account, primarily meant for the metropolitan reader. The inherent contradiction in their politics is of crucial significance and brings out the grey areas of the national movement during the early part of twentieth century. It is crucial to engage with such accounts and representation considering these authors' class affiliation and their Anglicized intellectual make-up. Besides these overarching constrictions, their ambivalence which curiously makes them both nationalist as well as loyalist may have been because of the context of creativity. Their location and the site of publication in metropolitan London as well as charges of sedition looming large over authors with anti-imperialist content in the hey day of colonialism literally made their situation precarious. In fact, Ghosh directly refers to the constraints under which they had to write in *Prince of Destiny*:

So far I have tried to expound the case for the British Government against its accusers. I have done so deliberately lest in the future course of this book an accuser should arise against whose charge I could find no defence. (Ghosh 145)

Even Alex Tickell refers to the charges of sedition as a determining factor in their political statements. While speaking about migrant Indian authors like Ghosh and Mitra, Tickell writes, they “were also wary of the dangers of sedition, and thus often pursued a conciliatory line in their middlebrow fictions” (*Terrorism* 170). It should be remembered that even the arch-nationalist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had to offer lip-service to the Empire in his largely nationalist novels (even in *Anandamath*), although the degree of ambivalence was far less in case of Chatterjee compared to Ghosh and Mitra. Probably, the language of the novels played a crucial role in determining their politics.

Besides, it should be considered that the notions of being nationalist, anti-colonial or loyalist are accorded undue significance while dealing with any individual or aspect of Indian literature and culture of the colonial era. There is almost an over-arching significance accorded to these ideological positions, which has a great influence in any engagement with the literary texts of the period. Sumit Sarkar throws some light on this

mind- set in his seminal study, *Beyond Nationalist Frames*, in the context of Tagore's novel *The Home and the World*:

Criticisms on the ground of insufficient patriotism imply an assumption, still far too widespread in different forms, that the entire field of early-twentieth-century Bengal (and Indian) history was, or should have been, occupied by the single colonial/anti-colonial binary. Everything else has to be accepted as of secondary importance, and nationalism valorised without qualification provided it appears sufficiently anti-colonial, in politics and/or in its indigenous cultural authenticity. (117)

This positioning of the binary construct becomes all the more crucial due to the positive value associated with the idea of being 'nationalist' or 'anti-colonial' which not only erases the grey areas of simultaneous modes of collusion and collision with the ideology of colonialism and colonial state but also obscures the fact that nationalist politics in the context of India voiced the concerns of and served the interests of elite Hindu patriarchy. The uncritical acceptance of the emancipatory potential of nationalism hides the fact that nationalist politics did not necessarily lead to the emancipation of the marginalised groups like women, lower castes or the minority religions. While this current research is in no way totally above the fallacy described yet, in a significant way it tries to look beyond this all too simplistic notion of nationalism and nationalists and provides in-depth analysis of the grey areas of negotiation with colonialism and provides sufficient critique of nationalism on grounds of its parochial outlook with respect to religion, caste/class and gender, primarily in the context of the novels chosen but also in the broader framework of the national movement.

While dealing with the issues of 'Nation' and 'Identity', this study will also engage with the colonial construct of Indian identity and explore the oppositional paradigm of representation created by these authors, especially, in contradistinction to colonial ideologies put forward with respect to India by James Mill, the British historian and Rudyard Kipling, the British literary giant of the era. The alternative discourse on identity is of crucial significance and showcases modes of resistance in the cultural arena, without being out rightly combative. As Ashis Nandy has rightly observed:

The colonized Indians did not always try to correct or extend the Orientalists; in their own diffused way, they tried to create an alternative language of discourse. This was their anti-colonialism... (Preface)

The oppositional paradigm is created in order to resist the over-arching narrative of colonialism. Yet, their discourse invariably becomes complicit with the narrative of colonialism. The current research project will not limit itself to the exploration of the binary paradigm of colonized and colonizer and their conflict, the studies of which have become commonplace with the efflorescence of Postcolonial Studies, but also proposes to look into the internal hierarchies of the indigenous society in terms of gender, class, caste and religion. While analysing the representation of social entities that are marginalised by the narrative of nationalism, this research decodes the over-arching ideologies of nationalism which was operating keeping into consideration the parochial interests of upper caste/class Hindu patriarchy.

The primary sources include the two novels already mentioned –Sarath Kumar Ghosh’s *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909), and S.M. Mitra’s *Hindupore: A Peep Behind The Indian Unrest, An Anglo-Indian Romance* (1909). While engaging with the study of these two novels, focusing on the themes of nation and identity, I have also taken into account Rabindranath Tagore’s novels, originally written in Bengali, *Gora* (1909) and *Ghare Baire* (1916). *Gora* is especially significant, since Tagore’s major concern here is nation and the national movement, not to speak of the year of its publication, which is similar to both the novels primarily dealt in the study.

Secondary sources directly pertinent to the novels dealt in this research are scarce. They consist of Meenakshi Mukherjee’s path-breaking contribution on early Indian English novels, *The Perishable Empire*, Alex Tickell’s essay, “Writing the Nation’s Destiny : Indian Fiction in English before 1910” and his recently published book, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830-1947*, and Gobind Prasad Sarma’s *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction*. *The Perishable Empire* is of crucial significance since my interest in early Indian English literature and the idea of this research project was conceived after reading this book. All the secondary works referred above contains small sections on Sarath Kumar Ghosh’s *Prince of Destiny* alone apart from Sarma’s book, *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction* and Tickell’s recent publication *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830-1947*. Sarma devotes a whole chapter entitled “The Struggle for Self-Government within the Empire” to both *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*. Besides these, there is a plethora of literature on nationalism and identity which is of crucial significance for this research. This research has significant bearing on Benedict Anderson’s

formulation of nation as an imagined community in his seminal book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. It is all the more crucial since the focus of this research is the exploration of ideas of nation and nationality in imaginative literature during the formative stages of nation building. Partha Chatterjee's rejoinder to Anderson's idea in *The Nation and its Fragments*, which accorded significant agency to third-world nationalism, is also of crucial significance in the context of this research. Chatterjee's dissection of nationalist ideology along the lines of caste, class, gender and religion in this book is of crucial significance in deconstructing the elitist discourse put forward by the novelists. Similarly, G. Aloysius' book, entitled *Nationalism without a Nation in India* also helped to formulate some of the important arguments in this research with respect to caste and religion and their relation with nationalism. Another crucial text that helped in formulating the arguments of this research is Anthony D. Smith's *National Identity*. This recent and significant expostulation on the topic of national identity gave me a holistic understanding of the concept and assisted in the analysis of Indian identity formation as represented in the novels. Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* gives a fuller understanding of the complex process of identity formation during the colonial era and in a significant way explains the complex process of simultaneous collusion and collision with the Empire undertaken by the novelists in their aesthetics and politics. Sudipto Kaviraj's engagement with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's aesthetics and politics in *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* is of seminal significance for this research since there is a generic similarity in Chatterjee's poetics and politics and that of Ghosh and Mitra. Sumit Sarkar's *Writing Social History* and *Beyond Nationalist Frames* are also of crucial significance for this research because of their nuanced engagement with the ideology of nationalism in the context of colonial India. Tanika Sarkar's *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation* and Indrani Sen's *Woman and Empire: Representations in the writings of British India, 1858-1900* provides in-depth understanding of marginalisation of women by nationalist discourses as well as the formation of feminine identity in the context of colonial India.

The methods employed in this research are inter-disciplinary. Hailing from a literature department, my primary objective in this research project has been to produce meaningful literary criticism on the novels I have chosen as my primary texts. Yet, in the process I have engaged with the broader topics of nationalism and identity formation in

India, its historical, sociological and cultural dynamics and situated them in the context of the novels to provide a holistic understanding of the texts as well as these historical phenomena. Close textual analysis of the novels by applying the theoretical formulations on the concepts of nation, identity and nationalism, both in general as well as specifically in the context of India, has been the methodology adopted in conducting this research. The secondary materials, evident from the above paragraph, consist primarily from the field of History and Political Science and are applied to provide a holistic understanding of both the novels in the context of the broader social phenomenon which were conducive for their genesis and their representation of those social phenomena. My research has been grounded upon qualitative methods aimed at gathering in depth understanding of the tactics engaged by the authors as well as modes of representation of nation, national freedom struggle and identity formation during the colonial era. In fact, there is an attempt to decode and interpret the culture of early twentieth century colonial India—both social and literary, through the cultural artefacts, the novels, in this research.

The first chapter deals with the representation of the putative nation in both the novels. The fictional territorial space of Barathpur in *Prince of Destiny* and Hindupore in *Hindupore* are microcosmic representation of India. It is crucial in the context of early twentieth century, in the absence of a concrete nation, to imagine a quintessential national space. Along with the representation of nation, this chapter also explores the ambiguous political affiliation of both the authors whereby, they betray a characteristic loyalist sentiment along with their nationalist anxiety. This chapter also explores the complex politics surrounding the history of the country which both the novels engage with. It also deals with the characteristic angst of these Indian authors for the proper representation of their motherland and its culture in the context of various kinds of colonial slur. The analysis of cultural nationalist interpretation of ancient Indian culture, symptomatic of colonial era, as represented in both the novels has also been undertaken.

The second chapter deals with the formulation of a national identity in the context of the novels. The various facets of the process have been dealt with. While religious discourses, especially Hinduism gains primordial significance in the construction of the new national identity, the oppositional stance toward the colonizer also has a significant magnetic pull in the same. This chapter also exposes contradictions and aporias in these formulations at a particular juncture in history during its formative stages. This research showcases the fascination of these authors with the notion of being ‘English’—something they claim for

their protagonists along with their assertive Indianness. Apart from theoretically engaging with issues pertaining to identity in the novels, this chapter also studies the life-style of the central characters which showcase a particular brand of quintessential Indianness in both the novels.

The third chapter deals with the marginal and peripheral identities within the ambit of the putative nation. The analysis primarily comprises of the narrative strategies employed to showcase the marginalisation of social entities with respect to religion, caste/class and gender and thereby reflect upon the socio-historical trajectory of their marginalisation. It explores the dynamics of representation in the context of both the novels, which in turn expresses the political and ideological foregrounding of the marginalisation of these social entities in colonial India of the early twentieth century. This chapter exposes the hegemonic nature of nationalism and showcases the parochial interests it served for the elite Hindu patriarchy.

## Chapter One

### Representing the ‘Nation’

India, anciently called the ‘Bharat Varsha’ after the name of a monarch called ‘Bharat’ is bounded on its south by the sea; on the east partly by this sea, and partly by ranges of mountains separating it from ancient China, or rather the countries now called Assam, Cassay and Arracan; on the north by a lofty and extensive chain of mountains which divides it from Tibet; and on the west partly by ranges of mountains, separating India from ancient Persia, and extending towards the Western sea, above the mouth of the Indus, and partly by this sea itself. It lies between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> degrees of the north latitude, and the 67<sup>th</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> degrees of the east longitude.<sup>1</sup>

--Rammohan Roy (175)

I can lose my way, I may drown, but that port of abundance is always there. That is my fully formed Bharat—full in wealth, full in knowledge, full in dharma.

--Gora. (Tagore 21)

These two quotations, apparently contradictory, show the two extremes of opinions regarding India during the colonial era. They are significant, since Rammohan Roy, writing about the Bharatvarsha, speaks of its geographical extent. The putative nation has been conceptualised as a concrete geographical space. On the other hand, Gora, Tagore’s memorable creation, the ultra-Hindu nationalist character speaks about the country in terms of abstract quality like knowledge and righteousness. Even temporally, they are significant, in the context of this study, since Rammohan Roy was one of the earliest persons to articulate the concerns of India as a country wrote this in 1832; while Tagore’s novel, *Gora* was published in 1909, the year both *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore* were published. Thus, the quotations reflect the range of opinions from the early nineteenth century to the time of the publication of the novels, the study of which has been undertaken here. The ideas of nation, nationalism and

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation has been taken from Rammohan Roy’s essay “A Brief Preliminary Sketch of the Ancient and Modern Boundaries and History of India.” published in 1832.

identity were germane to literary activity in the colonial period since the early nineteenth century among Indians. The primary engagement of the authors and intellectuals was the difficult task of negotiation with their Anglicized intellectual make-up and their nationalist aspirations. It is quite ironical that the vanguard of the nationalist thought came from the Anglicized elite who were the greatest beneficiaries of the colonial set-up in India. Yet, their modus operandi and agendas were very different from what we understand as nationalism today. In the early part of the twentieth century, when both the novels I am dealing with were published (1909), ideas of nation and nationalism were in a very nascent stage of development and remained under the aegis of the elite. The ambiguity inherent in the discourse also arose from the fact that the elite minority were themselves confused about the ways, nationalism may be developed into. Besides, the presence of diverse and often contradictory ideologies as well as mode of resistance prescribed by the leaders kept it in a perpetual state of representational and ontological crisis.

### **Colonial Allegiance and Nationalism**

The most intriguing aspect of the discourse generated in the novels, *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* and *Hindupore: A Peep Behind The Indian Unrest, An Anglo-Indian Romance*, is that both the novels simultaneously are anti-colonial and still vouch for allegiance to the Empire and British interests. They claim to provide an Indian perspective on the relations between India and England. Both the novelists lash out against the misrepresentation of India as well as the colonial oppression by the British yet they seem to relegate the onus of the misdemeanour to a particular official or the agent of Colonialism rather than on the inherently unequal and hierarchical system of colonialism itself. In fact they remain faithful to the logic of the Empire and Queen Victoria is apotheosized as a mother figure almost in contrast to the oppositional deity of Mother India, the icon of India. This dichotomy is symptomatic of the early nationalist leaders as well who, while protesting against the corrupt and abusive practices of the British, tend to accept the basic premise of the hierarchical system of Colonialism. The classic example is Dadabhai Naoroji who describes British rule of India as “UnBritish” in his book *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India*. These authors are at the same time vehemently opposed to the mis-representation of India,



ambiguously sympathetic with the Indian resistance towards colonial rule as well as colonial interests of Britain and extremely reverential towards British Royalty, the apex of the colonial system of governance. Yet what they produce, though not radically opposed to colonialism, has been unarguably interpreted as a nationalist endeavour by nationalist historiography. In the late nineteenth century and the early decades of twentieth century, a critical attitude towards British policies and allegiance to Britain went hand in hand and was not regarded as unpatriotic.

The early Indian English novelists were primarily engaged with the task of producing a discourse which will not only counter the colonial slur and common sense assumption of the British public but also in some ways produce something that is, authentically Indian in essence, though not necessarily anti-colonial. Although in the days of post modernism and post structuralism, terms such as ‘authentic’ are problematic and quite rightly so, nevertheless, that was their avowed objective. Yet, it will be unrealistic to imagine that Ghosh and Mitra, both belonging to the Anglicized elite class, hailing from Calcutta, would be thoroughly decolonised in their mental framework despite their upbringing and Anglicised education within a colonial framework. Even the Indian intellectual class was somewhat enmeshed within the ideological framework of colonialism and till the nineteen thirties never clamoured for holistic independence from Britain. In the early part of the twentieth century, nationalism not only meant anti-colonial protests but also giving voice to an Indian perspective, counteracting the propaganda of the colonial machinery, to assist in the cultural and economic regeneration of the land in order to be ready for self governance. At times it also attempted to create a space whereby both the British and the Indians could exist in comparative harmony within the inequities institutionalized by the colonial regime. In another context Amiya P. Sen aptly describes the paradox, in case of the “Short term perspective”<sup>2</sup> of anti-colonial resistance:

The idea of tutelage (Under Britain) furthermore, was neither unpatriotic nor detrimental to one’s cultural self-expression for India still awaited an intellectual and cultural regeneration which was the patriot’s first task. This regenerative movement could only

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<sup>2</sup> Sen refers to such a position with respect to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and his generation who are a few decades ahead (the seventies and the eighties of the nineteenth century) of Ghosh and Mitra. Sen analyses their anti-colonial stance as possessing two temporal perspectives—one for the short term, that is to prepare the Indians for the nationalist struggle and the long term, that is to actually fight the British out of the country and claim independence.

be indirectly political for a people had to rediscover and restate their glorious cultural identity before they could reasonably claim the right of political self-expression. (120)

In fact, both the novelists refer to political agitation with some amount of sympathy while expressing allegiance to the British throne by the end. In *Prince of Destiny*, a vibrant method of teaching and emulation was organised under the guidance of Vashista, before Barathpur could actually plan to overthrow British yoke. The similar pattern was thought to work out for the nation in the imagination of a vehemently nationalist author like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, as he prescribes a period of British domination for the cultural regeneration of India in his nationalist novel, *Anandamath*<sup>3</sup>. At the end of *Anandmath*, Satyananda's guru, the healer, implores him not to continue fighting the British, with an evocative praise of colonial domination:

Whatever happened was for the good. Until and unless the English become the ruler, there is no possibility of regeneration of Sanatan dharma...The English are very knowledgeable in the material world and very skilled in mass education. So let's make them our ruler. Our compatriots will become knowledgeable in the material world through English education and will gradually attain inner wisdom. Then there will be no obstacle towards the propagation of Sanatan dharma. Then true religion will be naturally rejuvenated. Before this is accomplished, before the Hindus become wise, virtuous and strong, the rule of the English will flourish. The subjects will be prosperous under English suzerainty... (B. Chatterjee, *Anandamath* 662)

When confronted with the prospect of a rebellion, by the end of *Prince of Destiny*, Barath also explicates the beneficial aspects of English rule as a defence against rebellion in a similar manner.

The idea of nation and the concept of nationalism was primarily conceptualised both in tune with the ideology of colonialism as well as in contrast to its ideology. Apparently, it may seem that nationalism which reaches its culmination by the

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<sup>3</sup> The last section of the novel, *Anandamath*, referred here, extolling the virtues of British rule, have been expunged from the only available translation of the novel, by Basanta Koomar Ray, published by Vision Books. The quoted passage here is a translation by me from the original Bengali edition of Bankim Rachanabali, Volume I, published by Patrojo Publication. This is a curious case of nationalist sanitization of the past. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has been appropriated by the right wing Hindutva Political outfits who label him as the arch-nationalist of late-nineteenth century. The presence of such controversial encomiums showered upon the British in his novels is contrary to the popular perception about him. This may have contributed to such sanitization during translation.

formation of a nation state free from the dominance of the colonial power should only be formulated in contradistinction to the colonial ideology. This is primarily because nationalism as an ideology seeks legitimacy as a counter discourse to colonialism. Yet the concept of nation state and the ideology of nationalism were western imports and primarily inculcated in the colonial classroom and by reading western, specially British and French philosophers. Despite the derivative origin of nationalist discourses, it would be a fallacy to consider that the colonized population had no agency. Their agency lay in sifting from the platter of ideologies and perceptions those elements which are conducive to sustain the vision of a nation. In the nascent stages, the concept of nationhood is formulated by the very presence of the alien colonizer who unifies the land and constitutes it as a political unit. Yet, the notion of nationhood is formulated in opposition of the subjecthood which colonialism confers on the colonised population. The occasional ovation paid to the colonial masters is not totally illogical in the context of the imagination of the putative nation. According to Benedict Anderson, nation has been defined as “an imagined political community” (6) and this research is preoccupied with the imagination of ‘nation’ in imaginative literature, to be more specific, in novels, a genre traditionally identified with the validation of the structure of ‘nation’.

### **The ‘Nation’ in Imagination**

The authors’ ideas of the nation which is to be carved out of the empire is vividly expressed through the portrayal of the princely kingdom of Barathpur in *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* and Hindupore in *Hindupore : A Peep Behind The Indian Unrest, An Anglo-Indian Romance*. Even the names themselves are suggestive of their representative character. Barathpur and Hindupore are allegorical spaces which are symbolic of India. This is vindicated by their non-descript location. At a critical juncture in *Prince Of Destiny* Vashista hails Barath as the ruler of Barathbarsha. “Vashista, Ramanand, and the priests combined did homage. “Hail, Ruler of Barath-barsha!”” (Ghosh 580). The Kingdom of Barathpur and the country of India are thus conflated in a moment of supreme climax as well as crisis. Barathpur is located somewhere in Rajasthan which can only be ascertained from the frequent use of the word Rajput and also references to people reading Todd’s *Annals of*

*Rajasthan* in the novel. Hindupore is located between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, somewhere near Allahabad. These novels invented the device of not locating the novel anywhere specifically and thereby locating it everywhere. Meenakshi Mukherjee, in her famous essay, “The Anxiety of Indianness.” suggests that,

in English texts of India there may be a greater pull towards homogenization of reality, an essentializing of India, a certain flattening out...these attenuation is artistically valid when the narrative aspires to the condition of allegory but for the Indian writer in English there may be other unarticulated compulsions—the uncertainty of his target audience... (172)

The anxiety that Mukherjee speaks is aggravated manifold by the absence of a concrete nation for these early authors. The use of princely state as the space where the drama of the nation is being played out is also very significant. It is very curious that both the authors, Bengalis by origin, born in the British territories, wrote about the Indian princely states when they extended their imagination for creating a national space. This can also be interpreted as the recognition of the princely states as the integral component of the incipient country struggling to attain nationhood. Besides, the portrayal of national glory can only be executed through the princely states because the British territories only symbolised defeat, oppression and ignominy at the hands of an alien force. At a particular juncture in *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh refers to his pre-occupation with the princely states and their political and cultural significance for Indians in general, “In British India we are very jealous of the rights and privileges of the Sovereign Princes, which we yearn to see preserved inviolate; for the Sovereign Princes are the only relics we have of our former independence” (Ghosh 465). Besides, the presence of an authoritarian colonial regime also acts as a limiting factor for the authors in terms of their setting, as Alex Tickell has rightly pointed out in the context of *Prince of Destiny*, “In striking contrast to the...later nationalist novelists, earlier romance writers also used the 'princely' kingdom as the setting of their fictions, the reasons for which are partly tactical (their critical focus is, ostensibly, not 'directly ruled' British India)...” (“Writing the Nation’s Destiny” 528).

Although the primary focus in the novels remains on the princely state yet British ruled India has been portrayed, especially during the journeys which the major characters undertake. In *Prince of Destiny* Barath travels from his kingdom to Bombay to embark on a ship to England and when he returns from England the reverse journey to

Barathpur. In *Hindupore* Raja Ram Singh's journeys from Bombay to Hindupore and then he travels from Hindupore to Puri and stays in Calcutta, the British capital for a few days. There are frequent travels to Allahabad, a city ruled by the British. The motif of travel is of crucial significance and assists in imagining the nation in its entirety. In fact one notices an impatient urge to travel throughout in both the novels. Barath undertakes a journey from Barathpur to Agra and back, to Chittor, then to Bombay while going abroad and from Bombay to Barathpur while returning. Raja Ram Singh undertakes a journey from Bombay to his kingdom and then to the holy shrine of Puri and back. As Benedict Anderson puts it, "Here again we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside" (30). The references to random places like Benaras, Tarakeshwar, Nadya, Nasik, Allahabad, Jhansi, Krishnanagar, Cuttack, Calcutta and Bombay give rise to a curious feeling that they are arbitrary but actually they belonged to a single political and administrative entity which is the British Empire and the princely states in India. The horizon is clearly bounded and it is that of colonial India. This is evident in the description of London and the Egyptian port of Alexandria in *Prince of Destiny* and The port Aden in *Hindupore* where a characteristic alien feeling is generated in the novel.

One of the striking resemblances in the representation of British India is that both the novels portray the hustle bustle of the big cities of India like Bombay and Calcutta. These cities become the symbol of the British prestige, although their incorporation seems to suggest them as part of the nation, yet they represent the mingling of East and the West, India transformed after the onslaught of modernity. Mitra describes Bombay:

The drive through the crowded thoroughfares of one of the most cosmopolitan places in the world, where the East and the West seem to meet, and where the red-canopied ox-waggons and other primitive vehicles run by the side of the modern tramways, smart English carriages and motor cars, was most interesting. (Mitra 35)

In contrast, the princely states are imagined as a bucolic setting and portray a certain degree of laid back aristocratic life-style of the medieval ages. In *Prince of Destiny* reference to Barath's maternal grandmother's hill fortress, Pertabpur, and Chittor which are all inaccessible by the railways symbolises the essential India which have been unsullied by the touch of modernity. In *Hindupore*, the states of Hindupore, Karimabad and Nabob Shamshere Khan's estate all exude a charming medieval flavour. The celebration of Persian culture in

Nabob Shamsere Khan's abode 'Rahut Manzil' exudes the charm of late Mughal period. The figure of Khusru Khan, an accomplished Persian poet shows the decay of a rich cultural heritage which is getting wiped out by the imperialistic British imposition of English language. These novels in conjunction with the British notions of the Victorian era conceptualises India as a medieval space where time stands still, which helped the British to visualise their own pre-industrial past in the present state of India. As Thomas Metcalf writes:

Much in the description of India as 'medieval' was simply an extension of the 'picturesque' vision, attracted by the colourful and the exotic, which found such comparisons to be the most satisfactory way of coming to terms with India's difference from Victorian England...the princely states of Rajputana (now Rajasthan) personify a 'medieval' India. In the princely state...time stood still. The Rajput states ...had changed so little in the preceding 800 years. In this way India's princes were shaped to fit the needs of the Raj, India's past was once again created anew... (72-73)

The motif of 'medieval' India is played to the utmost at the occasion of the Grand Durbar in 1877. The Raj not only conceptualised India as a 'medieval' space but also produced its own version of a medieval spectacle at the Durbar event when prince, potentates and vassals from all over the Indian empire were made to congregate and showcase their wealth, glamour and valour in the form of a procession. The rich descriptions of the wealth and glory of the Indian princes as well as that of the British make it a spectacle. In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh describes it in great detail, "A crystal throne stood beneath the canopy, inlaid with golden effigies. Reposing upon the velvet cushion was the Imperial Crown, a glittering mass of diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. A sceptre reclined by its side, scintillating sparks of fire from its diamond tip" (Ghosh 10). The symbols of British royalty exude a characteristic Oriental charm and synchronize well with the show presented by the Indian princes. The selection of Delhi as the site for the event was shaped by a desire to create for the Raj a Mughal past. The decoration of the Vice-regal pavilion was done with "A canopy of Dacca's loveliest brocade, embroidered with the Rose, the Thistle, the Shamrock, and the Lotus—fit symbol; of the union of Great Britain and India, of which the Durbar was the truest credential" (Ghosh 6), while the centrality accorded to the Crown jewels vindicated British supremacy. While vindicating the necessity of such a spectacle the novels also criticise the British for their incomplete adoption of Oriental manners. Ghosh critiques the revelry at

Dewan-i-Khas and Dewan-i-Aam, while Mitra lashes against the organisation of the Durbar during Ramzan when the Muslim princes were forced to practice while fasting whole day. In a curious way these novels validates the ‘medieval’ image of India ascribed by the British yet provides a critique of the medieval spectacle organised by them.

The idea of the nation as a storehouse of riches has been put forward by most of the Indian authors. Ghosh and Mitra are no exceptions. Ghosh describes Barathpur’s richness in minerals like iron ore and coal. On the contrary, Mitra depicts Hindupore as a prosperous agrarian state which has the wealth of ‘Mahwa flowers’ eagerly sought by the liquor manufacturers of Britain. Although their conception of the nation is idyllic and medieval yet both the authors realize the importance of modernization in the present context. Even the conservative spiritual leader, Vashista is described in *Prince of Destiny* thus: “Vashista had recognised that iron was the foundation of all modern industries, and its production the first consideration in building up of the resources of a state” (Ghosh 225). Barath also undertakes initiative for agrarian reform, especially for irrigation. Raja Ram Singh’s minister also talks about the construction irrigational canals. Yet the adoption of modernity is selective. While the arch critique of the British, Vashista and the politically conservative Vindara accept the modernization in the material domain by the introduction of agrarian reforms and industrialization they vehemently oppose the introduction of social reforms like abolition of Sati, legalisation of widow remarriage, abolition or modification of compulsory dowry and the joint family system. In fact the crisis in the novel arises out of this imposition of modernity from above on a society which is inherently feudal and traditional. There is a certain contradiction in the way Barathpur evolves as a national space within the novel. Economic changes were brought which would inevitably disrupt the traditional order as the novelist himself says; “After economic progress comes social advancement” (Ghosh 508). The resistance from the traditional social order is vindicated by the non allegiance of the nobles when Barath urged them to accept the new bureaucratic system of governance by wiping out the feudal order. Yet the traditional elements in the society thwart the social reform while accepting the economic reforms as well as benefiting from the economic reform like the thakur who married Kamona. This dichotomy, though portrayed within the context of a particular princely state is inherent in the way the British tried to come to terms with their Indian empire, while they “sought to maintain India as a feudal order” yet recommended and legalised changes “which would inevitably lead to a destruction of this feudal order” (Cohn

166). In *Hindupore*, where the kingdom is comparatively peaceful and ordered, no projects of reform are at hand except for the construction of irrigational infrastructure. In fact, Hindupore is the perfect specimen of a feudal state almost idyllic in its operation. Raja Ram Singh's popularity is evident as the subjects flock on both sides of the road to welcome their king. Even the paternalistic attitude of Raja Ram Singh is very evident in his rhetoric of the best interests of his subjects while indulging in a lavish life of comfort.

### **History of the Putative Nation**

The ideas of nation are intricately intertwined with and heavily dependent upon history. History is one of the most contentious domains of complex and ambiguous negotiation in both the novels. Both the contending parties—the British and the Indians tried to appropriate history in order to suit their own needs for legitimacy. The British idea of Indian history had a wide range of variation, from fascination and encomiums of Orientalists like William Jones to severe criticism of Utilitarians like James Mill. The British view of Indian history is erratic and contingent upon the ideology and personal predilections of the historian and the political need to establish a colony. Quite rightly, "...history becomes the great terrain of politics. Because history is a way of talking about the collective self, and bringing it into existence" (Kaviraj 108). During the initial days of colonialism, the British colonizer tried to repudiate the idea of a glorious historical past of India. This attitude is vividly expressed in James Mill's *History of British India* published in three volumes since 1818. In this book, Mill wipes away India's past by an uninformed authoritative statement characteristic of a new found imperialist pride, "Rude nations seem to derive a particular gratification from pretensions of a remote antiquity" (Mill 27). Or that the British people would commit a grave mistake "if they conceived the Hindus to be a people of high civilization, while they have in reality made but a few of the earliest steps in the progress to civilization" (Mill 226). Subsequently, when India's past was discovered by the assiduous efforts of the Orientalist scholars it was difficult to interpret India as a "rude" nation without a past. In this new situation, the British tried to,



order this past into a coherent narrative that extended upto the present. In so doing, the British could, or so they imagined, create a secure and usable past in India for themselves. They were to be at once invaders from outside, and rulers from within. (Metcalf 148)

For them, the narrative of Indian history should lead to a logical or providential conclusion in their advent and paramountcy; making them the natural rulers of the alien country. The British Orientalist historian took recourse to two mutually inconsistent devious logic in order to legitimize their oppressive rule, they:

postulated a clear disjunction between India's past and its present. The civilized India was in bygone past....The present India, the argument went, was only nominally related to its history...Secondly and paradoxically, the colonial culture postulated that India's later degradation was not due to colonial rule...but due to aspects of traditional Indian culture which in spite of some good points carried the seeds of India's later cultural downfall. (Nandy 17)

In spite of all the contradictions of colonist historiography effectively, or atleast seemingly created a legitimacy for the British rule thereby relegating India as a degraded country, the glorious past notwithstanding.

Embedded within the colonial framework, authors like Ghosh and Mitra, applied the colonial interpretation of Indian history to serve their own purpose. Their agency lies not only in sifting through these interpretations and using them for projecting a glorious past for India but also in creating an imaginary past which was never there. The subversive potential of an imaginary history has been utilised most effectively by eminent intellectuals and authors of the nineteenth century India like Bhudeb Mukherjee, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Kylas Chunder Dutt in his *A Journal of Forty Eight Hours of the year 1945*, Soshee Chunder Dutt in his *A Republic of Orissa*. In *Prince of Destiny*, Barath's dynasty is said to be ruling India for thousands of years to whom all the other big dynasties like the Chohan, the Rathore, the Sesodia and the Agnikool pays homage. In *Hindupore*, the description of the armoury which contains arms and armaments of more than thousand years old, is an instance of the creation of imaginary history as it is painted "with stirring scenes from the warlike exploits of the Rajput princes in defending Ajmere against Mahomedan invaders" (Mitra 71). While describing Rani Kamala's palace in the novel, Mitra writes, "Tradition said that the staircase was the work of the same hand that had designed the famous

Taj at Agra” (Mitra 75). Such hyperbolic claims of antiquity and excellence are a well wrought strategy adopted by the authors to create a glorious past in order to instill a sense of pride among the Indians in their own culture and achievements. In *Prince of Destiny*, Vashista says, “...the wrought iron pillar erected by thy noble ancestor sixteen centuries ago when northern Europe was still steeped in barbarism....We have lost that skill in the sixteen centuries, but shall now try to regain it” (Ghosh 387). This statement simultaneously vindicates the colonial logic of a degraded present condition of India as well as subverts it by reaffirming the faith of the nationalists that India will regenerate culturally, economically and scientifically thereby obviating the need for the ‘benevolent’ British rule.

Since history is the tale of the collective self, which in a way manifests the glory or the achievement of the group, then questions of control comes into play. The most radical pronouncement in *Prince of Destiny* comes from Vashista when he utters “that the Indian version of the Mutiny has yet to be written for the judgment of the world” (Ghosh 546). The question of writing one’s own history is extremely important in the context of Colonial India, when Orientalist and hegemonic narratives fabricated by the British became the authentic history of India. Vashista refers to this history, “Read their history books taught to every little boy or girl at school—and every passing reference to India from Cilve to the Mutiny is a falsehood or a misstatement” (Ghosh 548). He urges Barath to write the Indian version of Mutiny, thereby in a significant way urging the Indians to take control over and the onus of representing their country in the historical past as well as in the present era. He curiously sees through the power equation inherent in colonial historiography whereby India and the Indians are always the ready subject and already represented and written about without any input from themselves. He also sees through the unchanging pattern in British policy despite the Queen’s proclamation which provided many benefits to the Indians. The nature of the colonial governance is vividly exposed as he says that, “We can get the truth about India from English ministers—when they are in opposition” (Ghosh 547). The truth about India changes with the predicament of the British politicians since the Indians themselves has no hand in it. Thus, through this scathing critique of colonial historiography Ghosh tries to put forward the necessity and pertinence of a nationalist historiography, of salvaging the nation’s history from the hands of the colonizer before any effective political battle may be fought.

Not only do these novelists delegitimize the colonial historiography but within the scope of the novel they present a contrary version of India's history which primarily highlighted the glory of India, instead of the gradual decline. Although such a conception of glorious history is not totally in disjunction with the Orientalist historiography yet, in the context of early twentieth century India, their selective reference is antithetical to the colonial assumptions. Sometimes both the novelists put forward an alternative history, inherently Indian in perspective, in opposition to the colonial one. There is a curious preoccupation with both the authors to prove the antiquity of the achievements of ancient India as well as to claim an Indian precedence for many western inventions and traditions, thereby inverting the imperialist notion of European civilizational superiority. Mitra refers to the glorious achievement of the Indian physicians like Charaka who he writes, "...performed the most difficult operations...of improving deformed ears and noses and forming new ones" (Mitra 15). He even claims that, "European medicine down to the seventeenth century was practically based upon the Hindu, and the name of the Hindu physician Charaka repeatedly occurs in the Latin translations" (Mitra 14). Ghosh also indulges in a similar strain of politics; he valorizes Shah Jahan and compares him with the European rulers, "Shah Jahan, the autocrat that he was, with a jurisdiction equal to that of the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, and the Romanoffs combined, and the splendor transcending the glory of the kings of the earth combined...." (Ghosh 10). In the most radical chapter in the novel, "The Secret of Western Might", Ghosh bursts the colonial logic of civilizational superiority through Vashista's words:

An Asiatic people like the Japanese, Chinese, or Hindus may send all the works of their arts and philosophies to Europe, but they will still be called barbarians—till they succeed in killing a few thousand Europeans in a pitched battle: then indeed will they be deemed civilized. (391)

The naked truth of military superiority which the British never acknowledge as the true basis of their rule over India is expressed without any hesitancy. By expressing the true nature of the colonial rule Vashista urges Barath to strive for military superiority which alone will keep the English at bay. In a curious way Mitra even debunks the myth of invincibility of the English and complicates the contemporary history of British conquest by pointing out the use of diplomatic and political intrigues and use of Indian troops by the British in its conquest of India, "...the conquest of India was due rather to a combination of circumstances than to the

superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. In every battle won by England in India five-sixths of her troops were Hindu” (Mitra 112). These instances from both the novels invert the colonial logic of legitimizing the empire on the basis of civilisational superiority and are completely in disjunction to the colonial historiography.

Not only are these authors concerned about the hoary past distant from the present day, even in contemporary history they sought to place India within the realm of international politics. Specially, Ghosh seems to be particularly astute about contemporary international politics and tries to cull out political potential for India from these events. The chapter entitled ‘The Lesson of Adowah’ entirely deals with contemporary international politics. Quite interestingly, India occupies a central position in the analysis of contemporary history. This is a curious inversion of the ‘centre –periphery’ model of colonialism. While most histories during the colonial rule would primarily put Britain, the so called ‘mother country’ at the centre of the affairs, these authors place India, that is, the colony at the centre of the affairs. On his way to England, Barath meets the Italian soldiers on their way to Ethiopia, who later on were defeated by the Abyssinians, the first of the non European nations to have defeated a European power. Ghosh interprets such an event as a watershed in the history of the world which signals the imminent awakening of the East and the gradual decline of the west. Coupled with this event, is the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan which was celebrated with euphoria in India.

### **Anti-colonial Solidarity**

Japan emerges as a liberal force which implicitly assists the Indian freedom struggle. The Barathpur army is trained by the Japanese soldiers while their industries are set up with the assistance of Japanese engineers. The comparison of Barathpur’s progress with that of Japan’s is extremely subversive in potential and shows nascent anti-colonial sentiment in the novel. Even nationalists from British India are assisted by the Japanese. Ghosh also refers to the spectacular rise of Germany and United States of America as industrial powers and appreciates their efficiency. There is also a reference to the threat of Russian invasion of India. In the early decades of the twentieth century, there was a rivalry between the British

and the Russian empire over the supremacy of Central Asia. The Indian empire was under serious threat from Russian menace. Rudyard Kipling, recognized as the bard of The Raj, also wrote about the Great Game in *Kim*. The presence of the inimical forces surrounding all around Britain and India has been suggested as the reason why Britain should try to reconcile with the Indians in order to strengthen its position in the global scenario.

In *Hindupore*, Lord Tara says that a friend of his has deduced that the “present unrest in India is due to the rise of Japan” (Mitra 222). Even the Japanese pilgrim uses politically aggressive statements like:

Our folklore says: ‘China, Japan and the Sacred Land makes a fan. China is the paper, India (the birthplace of Buddha) the radiating sticks, and Japan the handle. Folklore represents the national mind more than all foreign opinion. A day will yet come when this fan will cool the aggressive ardour of the West. (Mitra 289)

Elements of expansionism is immanent within the rhetoric of unity between these countries but in the first decade of twentieth century when these novels were written, Japan is yet to evolve as an aggressive force. It was primarily viewed by the Asians as a hope for the regeneration of the Orient. The subversive anti-colonial potential in the affinity with Japan is evident with statements of the pilgrim like, “It is a sense of nationality as well as religion that brings me here” or “Rise of Asia at any cost” which are blatantly anti-British in sentiment (Mitra 287, 295). In both the novels, “Japan constitutes a crucial inspiration for the imagination of a free India” (Moore-Gilbert 40). These links with Japan, in a curious way, highlight the possibility of thinking beyond Britain as the model for emulation.

The anti-colonial solidarity is also expressed in the context of the Irish connection in these novels. It should be remembered that during the first decade of twentieth century the Irish freedom struggle was at its peak. While Ireland and India are separated from each other by thousands of miles a connection seems to have been created by the oppressive presence of British colonialism in both the countries. Thereby, the similarity in the anti-colonial struggles stated in the novels is politically subversive and suggests a horizontal solidarity among the colonized countries against English colonization. Harvey notices a close similarity of the Hindu Swaraj movement with that of the Fenian Brotherhood movement<sup>4</sup> in

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<sup>4</sup> The Fenian Britherood is an Irish Republican Organization founded in the United States in 1858 by John O’ Mahony and Michael Doheny. The Members were commonly known as ‘Fenians’.

Ireland. Even the Bandemataram song is compared with that of an Irish song of Hibernian society<sup>5</sup>; which Lord Tara calls more seditious than its Indian counterpart. Both of these organizations were strong supporters of Irish nationalism. The similarity pointed out in the traditions and customs of these Irish political organizations and with that of Hindu religion is overtly politicized. Mitra portrays Hindu religion almost as a political organization which it definitely was not at any stages in the era of British colonialism although some of the resistance movements came from the religious order. But the affinity with Ireland is not only expressed in terms of the anti-colonial nationalist struggles but also in the operation of colonialism as well. Lord Tara, an Irish colonist himself, points out the success of Irish gentlemen in India like Lord Wellesley and Lord Roberts. He himself says, “There is perhaps something sympathetic in the temperament of Irishmen that appeals to the Hindu nature. I certainly feel as if I had found a new home here. I shall be only too delighted to stay at lovely Hindupore as long as I can” (Mitra 111). This similarity of Ireland with India both in terms of colonial mentality and the resistance towards English colonialism is due to the unique political position of Ireland within the realm of British politics. Ireland is simultaneously a beneficiary as well as a victim of British colonialism. Being a part of Great Britain it is also engaged in the task of colonialism yet at home it is placed under the suzerainty of the English ruler. The bonds of kinship expressed with far flung countries like Japan and Ireland is fraught with subversive potential along nationalist lines.

### **Ambivalent Nationalism**

There is a great degree of ambivalence in the anti-colonial rhetoric in these novels. At times they seem to be scathing critique of British colonialism and argue for a new order beyond the colonial paradigm yet after a while they support British interests. The anti-colonial sentiment manifested by these authors is not necessarily directed towards a complete dissolution of British power in India but for a much more inclusive colonial government where, “India would be bound to Great Britain not only by ties of loyalty but by the greater

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<sup>5</sup> The Hibernian society was an Irish Catholic organization founded in New York City, United States, in 1836. Its membership was restricted Irish Catholics and the organization strove to protect Catholics from discrimination and assist them in all walks of life.

bonds of affection and patriotism; for India would be made to feel that she has a stake in the British Empire” (Ghosh 138). To quote Alex Tickell, on the ambiguous and superficial political solution put forward by both the novels:

Central to the ‘informative’ politics of Ghosh’s and Mitra’s text is a call for greater understanding between colonizer and colonized, often articulated in the familiar colonial idiom of guardianship, but also encompassing more unlikely bonds of friendship. If only Britain took a more sympathetic interest in India, both authors suggest, colonial coercion, and the possibility of insurgent counter-violence, might be replaced by mutual respect between colonizer and colonized. (*Terrorism* 174)

Almost all the characters apart from Vashista in the novel *Prince of Destiny* are in favour of India remaining a part of the British Empire albeit with more self-respect and honour. Political conservatives like Vindara who have serious reasons to be dissatisfied with British rule warn the British resident Melnor about discontent in the Empire and the potential economic loss to Britain if it were to lose the Indian empire in the ensuing dissent. Barath himself is motivated by a genuine desire to help Britain in times of her danger as he argues with Nora for their union in terms of assisting Britain militarily in times of need:

Aye the day may be at hand when Britain will have to look eastward from her shore—near for the peril afar for the rescue. Build what *Dreadnoughts* she will, her future enemies will build more—because they already have more men, and soon will have more money. (Ghosh 539)

There is almost an inherent desire in the novelist to present India as the most prized possession in the British Empire, duly regarded and accorded an honorable position within the colonial scheme of things. His position has been clearly stated at the end of the novel when he states his perspective on Vashista, referring to his potential English reader he says, “You may hate him, with good cause. But do him justice: unwittingly he has revealed your greatest weaknesses in India. In that he has done you a service...” (Ghosh 624).

The revolutionary rhetoric is primarily used to make the British understand the importance of India in the British scheme of things. In fact there is no serious attempt to dismantle the fabric of colonialism and to aspire for complete independence. The reference to the rise of other industrial and colonial power like Germany, United States of America and Japan is to make Britain aware of the steep competition in the international arena and suggest

its growing dependence on the Indian colony. Perhaps, they are mentioned in a bit to make the colonizers humble to secure an honourable treatment. In spite of his allegiance to Britain, Ghosh vehemently opposes the condescension and supercilious attitude of the British. Gobind Prasad Sarma has rightly pointed out that, “The novel thus expresses very distinctly the two moods of the people of India of that time—the mood to accept the British rule as ‘divine dispensation’ and the mood to struggle for ‘self government’ within that ‘dispensation’ ” (Sarma 172).

There is a greater degree of ambivalence in these authors when they deal with the nationalist movement. While political independence was not really a demand when these novels were written, yet opposition to British economic and administrative policies were omnipresent among the Indians. Both Ghosh and Mitra shows a very ambiguous position with respect to nationalist agitation. While their writing is inherently political yet they seem to be against nationalist politics at times. In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh depoliticizes the urge of nationalist liberation:

There are several hundred young Indian students in London: guideless, friendless, knowing no Englishman in his home. Falling back upon their own resources in a strange country, they gather together in lodging-houses—and talk politics: for where two or more Indians are gathered together there is nothing else to talk about outside their studies save politics; and from politics comes discontent, and from discontent comes sedition. (158)

Such statements may give rise to the opinion that Ghosh is an outright supporter of British rule. Yet in other places, he frequently uses subversive slogans, like “Barath ke jai” or “Bande Mataram” which may be interpreted as an outright nationalist stance. He depicts staunch nationalists like Naren and Vashista in a very good light and states that their reasons for the struggle are justified. Yet the just reason is not the very presence of British colonizer in the soil of India but an unwanted religious conversion in case of Naren and interference of the British in the religious customs of Barathpur. In *Hindupore*, Mitra also refers to the “Bande Mataram” agitations of the Bengali Babus which is a reference to the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Although the idea of Bharatvarsha or India as a nation is very much present in these novels yet the idea of India as a national space distinctly different from and to be liberated from the British Empire is not very clearly stated. These novels depict the transitional phase of India’s freedom struggle. They clearly show the conflict between the Moderates and the militant nationalists. Militant nationalism or terrorism, which was a



characteristic of the era, finds expression through the characters of Naren and Vashista in *Prince of Destiny*, and through the conversation of Harvey and Lord Tara in *Hindpore*. It is quite evident that the novelists' sympathy is with the Moderate ideology. Barath's undying faith in the English sense of justice and fair play, echoes the words of Dadabhai Naoroji, "Deep and unshakable as my faith is in the English character of fairness and desire to do good to India...." (Naoroji 68). Besides, these novels seem to propagate the Moderate ideology that India should be loyal to the British if she is treated with justice and sincerity and Ghosh is definitely against the physical revolution since he thwarts the attempt of Vashista and the Indian nationalist from Calcutta. He writes about militant nationalists in somewhat dismissive manner:

Misguided men. Sincere enough, fervent enough, they had sought a revolution in human thought—which was legitimate enough, for the West needed a correction of its conception of the East. But carried off their feet by their fervor, also sought a physical revolution, not realizing that as yet it could only end in failure.... (Ghosh 599)

Yet the efficacy of military prowess has been stated by him in the politically most subversive as well as astute chapter, "The Secret of Western Might". In *Hindupore*, Bargad Bairagi also states the same:

Don't let the fighting spirit die out in India. A hundred gold pieces will pay the railway fare for two hundred Hindu soldiers of the Indian army to Jagannath-Ji. Take them with you; that will make them loyal to the ancient Hindu houses throughout India. You will get the blessings of future generations... (Mitra 90)

While they are extremely cynical about the nationalist movement organized by the urban middle class yet both the authors are blatant about the militarization of the princely states which alone guarantees the awe of the British and may be utilized in the future to oust them.. In the early twentieth century, Indian writers and intellectuals were pretty much aware that rapid politicization will not yield any quick results yet the idea of keeping the fighting spirit alive is extremely important since it will keep the Indians better prepared for the impending struggle in future. Amiya P. Sen analyses a similar situation very astutely in the context of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novels, "The idea of tutelage under the British was thus by its very logic, temporary but absolutely essential for it was only this that could prepare a subject race suitably for the political confrontation that one knew was in the offing" (A. Sen 120).

Ambivalence still clouds the politics of these novels since the last political statement given by Vishwamitra is of utmost significance and recommends peace, “There is no room for rage, but for love. Conquer all things by love. Conquer even England by love. Believe me; you will obtain more from England this very day by love than by rage. Be gentle, my children, be gentle” (Ghosh 627). Yet, it would be simplistic to consider these novels without any political foresight although they lack coherence. This statement anticipates Mahatma Gandhi’s methods in the freedom struggle which ultimately helped India to attain freedom. In his book, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi recommended Passive Resistance as a strategy for achieving independence, “the force of love and pity is infinitely greater than the force of arms. There is harm in the exercise of brute force, never in that of pity....The force of arms is powerless when matched against the force of love or of the soul” (Gandhi 84). Quite, incidentally, *Hind Swaraj* was published in 1909, the same year, as that of, both these novels.

### **Cultural Nationalism**

Nationalists, intent on celebrating or commemorating the nation, are drawn to the dramatic and creative possibilities of artistic media and genres in painting, sculpture, architecture, music, opera, ballet and film, as well in the arts and crafts. Through these genres nationalist artistes may, directly or evocatively, ‘reconstruct’ the sights, sounds and images of the nation in all its concrete specificity and with ‘archeological’ verisimilitude....who, more than poets, musicians, painters and sculptors, could bring the national ideal to life and disseminate it among the people? (Smith 92)

Curiously, Smith does not mention the novelists in their contribution towards the realization of an aesthetic validation of nation, which was duly done by Anderson, yet, Smith’s proposition, more clearly stated than Anderson, holds true for them, if we incorporate them within the broader rubric of ‘artists’. Although neither Ghosh nor Mitra can be straightforwardly labeled as nationalists, yet they do betray a characteristic preoccupation with the national symbols—like culture, literature and religion of the putative nation. There is a curious predilection among all the early writers from India to explain and express pride in their own cultural and religious tradition as well as to lash out against the British

misrepresentation of India. In certain ways it expresses the national consciousness of a people albeit in an oppositional stand to that of the colonizer while simultaneously engaged in an act of eliciting approbation from them. Yet the idea of a nation is intricately linked with the way it is portrayed. In fact, the idea of representing one's own nation in a rightful manner can be interpreted as a nationalist stance. Especially, in case of writers who wrote in English, this anxiety to represent their culture is all the more vivid. Mitra and Ghosh are also engaged in the curious task of glorifying Indian religious and other traditions as well as in giving a fit reply to British representation. In *Hindupore*, there is a preoccupation with the authentic representation of the Jagannath Temple at Puri. Raja Ram Singh arranges for the missionaries' trip to Puri because he wants the Church dignitaries to see with their own eyes that there was no concept of human sacrifice involved in the famous Ratha yatra there. Mr. Long himself refutes in the course of the novel the occurrence of any human sacrifices. Through his words, Mitra tries to purge the religious festival from the slur inflicted by the British. In a way, it reflects the servility of these authors to sanctify their religion in the eyes of the British yet in certain ways the tactic is tantamount to glorification and proper representation of India's religious tradition.

In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh is engaged in a similar task albeit in a different manner. He lashes out against the mis-representation of India at the hands of British authors, specially Rudyard Kipling. The anxiety of mis-representation is all the more acute because of Kipling's spectacular fame and his receipt of Nobel Prize in 1907. Ghosh variously refers to Kipling as "banjo poet", "an English writer arose, a mere youth", "false prophets", "chest thumping jingo". At the outset it should be made clear that Ghosh never refers to Kipling directly in the novel, but keeping in mind the time of publication (1909) and some of the details given in the text it is evident that he criticizes Kipling. Sarath Kumar Ghosh indirectly refers to the misrepresentation of India by Kipling thrice in the novel; the central protagonist, Barath says, "Too long has the political journalist fostered this misconception to gain his own sordid ends; too long has the London leader writer hurt the deepest of Indian feelings in sheer ignorance every time he rushed into print..." (Ghosh 296). Now, the robe of political journalist and the leader writer of London both fit properly on Rudyard Kipling as he worked as a correspondent of a newspaper and got the Nobel prize. Kipling shot into fame in the eighteen nineties after the publication of *Barrack Room Ballads*, *The Jungle Book*, *Kim* and *Just So Stories*. He was primarily regarded as the bard of British Raj in India and an apologist

of British imperialism. Ghosh primarily attacks Kipling's depiction of "the Hindu as mysterious" (169) and vindicates his point saying that, "the Hindu is the exact antithesis of what he is supposed to be by such European writers—as indeed they unconsciously admit by contradictory statements in other works of theirs" (Ghosh 169).

He even implores Francis Thompson<sup>6</sup>, the minor English poet, a character in his novel, to translate *Shakuntala* in poetic verses from Sanskrit to English in order to counteract the influence of Kipling on the British reading public. In order to create an alternative paradigm of representation Ghosh plays the game of the British writers with respect to England. Most British authors mention the stark poverty of the Indian masses, in this novel Ghosh writes at great length about the abject poverty and the squalor of the poorer quarters of London. Barath's visit to the slums of London and his subsequent show of munificence, in the company of Francis Thompson and Wintgate inverts the colonial hierarchy in a crucial way. While colonialism primarily created the illusion of a rich, civilised and cultured mother country as opposed to a poor, underdeveloped and at times a barbaric colony; here, Ghosh rips apart such an illusion. The description of the squalor and poverty in London was not a novel phenomenon in literature by Indians, it has been duly mentioned by most of the nineteenth century Indian travellers to London. Among the few who mentioned about this trait of London were Behramji Malabari in *The Indian Eye on English Life* and Bhagvat Sinh Gee's *Journal of a Visit to England in 1883*.<sup>7</sup>

The engagement with literature is not limited to Kipling in *Prince of Destiny*. Literature becomes a tool of projecting national glory. Literature from the antiquity becomes the mainstay of their cultural pride. Ghosh and Mitra both provide their perspective on Indian literature and the ancient Sanskrit literature is valorised in both the novels. In *Prince of Destiny*, Barath deplors the neglect of Indian literature by the British which he interprets is a symbol of the British superciliousness. Referring to the French and the Germans who duly regard Indian literature, Ghosh writes, "We read and appreciate your

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<sup>6</sup> Francis Thompson (1859-1907) is the opium addict, destitute poet who wrote *The Hound of Heaven*, *The Kingdom of God* and many more poems. *The Hound of Heaven* is his most famous poem. He was a personal friend of Sarath Kumar Ghosh. Ghosh lived in a boarding house in Paddington with Thompson in the early 1900s- This information has been procured from Thompson's biography by John Walsh 'Strange Harp, Strange Symphony' (London: WH Allen 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Antoinette Burton mentions these Indian travelogues in her essay, "Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in Fin-de-siecle London"

history and literature: then why don't you read our? Perhaps you will—when you have lost India” (Ghosh 297). Both the novels put forward Ramayana and Mahabharata as the key texts of Indian civilization. A high degree of praise has been accorded to these epics from antiquity. On the surface the accolades may appear as hyperbolic yet that is precisely the cultural politics played by the authors. Like most things about India, the British were condescending to the Sanskrit literature of antiquity including the epics. A specimen of their opinion may be found in James Mill's *History of British India*, where he writes:

These fictions are not only more extravagant, and unnatural, less correspondent with the physical and moral laws of the universe, but are less ingenious, more monstrous, and have less than anything that can engage the affection, awaken sympathy, or, excite admiration, reverence, or terror, than the poems of any other, even the rudest people...They are excessively prolix and insipid...Inflation; metaphors perpetual, and these the most violent and strained, often the most unnatural and ridiculous; obscurity; tautology; repetition; verbosity; confusion; incoherence; distinguish the Mahabharat and Ramayan. (Mill 192-193)

This assessment is a curious example of observing a literature which was produced in a different context through Eurocentric lens. But what is most explicit is the disregard for the Indian aesthetics and world view and is symptomatic of general British opinion about Indian literature. Even Kalidas' masterpiece, *Shakuntala*, faced insensitive criticism at the hands of the supercilious British historian who labels it as a product of an uncultivated mind. In order to contradict such an assumption Ghosh refers to Goethe's positive opinion about *Shakuntala* and explains that *Shakuntala* contained “the essence of domestic ideals in India, and was cherished alike by prince and peasants...” (Ghosh 295) and will assist in removing the misconception between India and Great Britain. As a response to such scathing critique, Indian authors and intellectuals started projecting ancient Sanskrit literature as the basis of Indian civilization and showering their praises. Mitra goes one step forward by labelling ancient Sanskrit literature as the “national literature” of India. After narrating the story of Nala and Damayanti from Aranya Parva of Mahabharata, Raja Ram Singh says, “There is generally a good moral at the root of our national literature although not always apparent on the surface” (Mitra 23). This statement not only celebrates the glory of the ancient Indian literature but also refutes the general British opinion that Indian, especially Hindu religious literature is immoral and unchaste. Mitra also privileges ancient Sanskrit literature to novels, a genre imported from Europe. While praising Rani Kamala's habits he writes, “Novel

reading and idle gossip formed no part of Kamal's daily routine... She was fond of history and poetry, but loved best the classical literature of her native land" (Mitra 62).

All the Indian works of literature as well as cultural achievements mentioned in both the novels belonged to the antiquity. Ghosh refers to Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagwat Gita apart from Shakuntala. While Mitra refers to the Hindu mythical story of Nala and Damayanti from the Mahabharata, Ramayana and the old Persian romance Prince Farrukh Fal. On the contrary, the English texts mentioned in these novels primarily belonged to nineteenth century England and the Empire. In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh refers to Jules Verne's *Mysterious Islands*, Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* and indirectly refers to Kipling's novels. Mitra refers to Tennyson's poetry and Kipling's novels. There is no mention of the contemporary literature of India whether in Indian languages or in English. In spite of the unmistakable influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novels in Bengali on both Mitra and Ghosh, there is no reference to him. Though Bankim Chandra had already earned nationwide fame by then and the great poet Rabindranath Tagore had already started writing his poems which was to receive the Nobel Prize within four years of their publication, these novels are silent about their achievements. Apart from the impeccable scholarship of Mr. Radhanath Sircar, Barath and Raja Ram Singh and the Bengali woman Saroj who is a master singer and Rani Kamala's amateurish Hindustani music, contemporary India almost languishes in cultural underachievement, especially in belles-lettres. Thus, there is an implicit belief in the presence of a glorious past and a degraded present which in an underhand way legitimize the colonial assumption of British superiority in the contemporary period thereby legitimizing their rule.

Both the novelists shower encomiums and are fiercely engaged in valourising ancient Sanskrit literature reflecting the true ideal of India, yet such a stance is intriguingly accompanied with their admiration of English literature. Their fierce pride in the indigenous Sanskrit literature went hand in hand with their genuine admiration or abject servility, whichever way we may choose to call it, towards English culture and literature. As Meenakshi Mukherjee writes:

Indian English novelists displayed their acquaintance with the classics of western literature more readily than did Indian-language novelists, parading this knowledge as validation, as it were, of their status in the eyes of the putative reader. They... took care to align themselves only with the best in ingenious ways. Using epigraphs from Byron,

Scott, Cowper, Moore, Shakespeare or Coleridge at the beginning of Chapters was a common practice; quotations and references were generously woven...veiled allusions were left. (18)

These English language novelists belonged to the most Anglicized section of the society and looked towards England for their cultural attainment. In spite of the urge to produce an authentically Indian discourse as opposed to the British colonial one, their Anglicized intellectual make-up diluted their effort. In fact in the context of the early twentieth century there was no dichotomy between the admiration for Anglicized culture and nationalistic aspiration since nationalist discourse in India primarily developed under the aegis of the Anglicized elite.

The idea and perception of the nation in both of these novels are in a preliminary stage. Although the concept of a nation is very much inherent in the novels, the authors are confused about the extent of its autonomy from the British Empire. The idea of the nation is derived both in conjunction and in opposition to that of colonial rule. National glory has been delineated by means of the antiquity of its culture, tradition and literature. In the words of Homi Bhabha (written in a very different context), these novels investigate:

the nation-space in the process of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are in medias res; and history may be half made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image. (Bhabha 3)

## Chapter Two

### Formulating Identity

The proposition is that those who share an interest share an identity; the interest of each requires the collaboration of all.

Mackenzie. (124)

Nationalism provides perhaps the most compelling identity myth in the modern world, but it comes in various forms. Myths of national identity typically refers to territory or ancestry (or both) as the basis of the political community...

--Anthony D. Smith. (Viii)

Mackenzie's proposition reveals that a pragmatic cause is essential for the formation of a particular identity at a particular juncture in a specific social milieu. In the context of colonial India, especially, in the early decades of the twentieth century, when ideas of nation, that is, India, has already taken shape, the construction of a national Indian identity assumed such a pragmatic endeavour in order to redeem the putative nation from the oppressive British rule and to unite diverse people under a singular category. The project was a crucial endeavour since unity among diverse people ruled by the British in the sub-continent has to be created in order to organize them against the colonizer. It was crucial to unify and invent a singular identity, since all the several existing identities like that of caste, region, and religion seem to divide them instead of unifying them. Therefore, like the nation, a national identity has to be invented. Yet the invention has to be credible enough for the masses to identify, so it became imperative that the nationalist's borrow some of the aspects of the new identity from the pre-existing ones, which in certain ways guarantees a past and secures a future for the constructed identity.



## **Forging National Identity: The Indian Context**

Anti-colonial nationalism, though primarily guided by the political motive of chasing away the colonizer, has a cultural dimension to itself. In fact the cultural dimension leads to the formation of an ideological atmosphere whereby nationalism generates consensus among its members as a legitimate form of struggle against the colonizer. Nationalism seeks to produce a culture which in turn rejects the erstwhile power structures and hierarchies instituted by the colonizer and produces new equations of power, whereby the new political structure, that is, the nation, could not only exist but also simultaneously become a source of strength for the newly emerging political community, the nation, as well as, draw strength from the community. The political community in turn is identified by/with the nation. In this complex process of power struggle and legitimation, a new dimension of identity is generated for the emerging political community which has been termed as national identity.

In a bid to make it appear authentic, the nationalists draw on various common or shared components from the life of the community like homeland territory, religion, myth, history, region, class or race/ethnicity, yet the primary allegiance remain with the national territory over which the nationalist movement wishes to establish its power and the premium ideology of over throwing the colonizer from the so called national territory, which itself is a product of nationalist imagination. The identity generated by the nationalists has many facets and is produced through a complex process of exclusion and inclusion, which is primarily determined by the various strands of the nationalist movement, especially, the dominant community under whose aegis the movement is instituted and constituted:

National identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element, even by particular factions of nationalists, nor can it be easily or swiftly induced in a population by artificial means... it is this very multidimensionality that has made national identity such a flexible and persistent force in modern life and politics....  
(Smith 14-15)

Although national identity is primarily forged to be pitted against the colonial regime and its strategies of identifying the subjects of the Empire yet it is curiously determined by the colonial regime. In the context of anti-colonial nationalism in general and India in particular, the consolidation of the colonial regime over a vast stretch of contiguous territory united

under a single political and administrative government greatly fuelled the concept of a singular homeland. The possibility of interaction and subsequent solidarity among the indigenous population of this vast territory was initiated by the hostile yet unifying presence of the colonial regime and its imperialist educational policies which consequently yielded the nationalist imperative of a homeland over this vast geographical space. The concept of producing a national identity was greatly facilitated by the Orientalist discovery of the glorious ancient past of that geographical space and the vast British Indian territories, which in turn, was obviously structured by the presence of an emasculated yet universally acknowledged suzerainty of the Mughal sultanate over the Indian subcontinent which the British gradually conquered and subsequently controlled. In fact, due to the presence of religious, racial, and religious diversity latent with fragmentary potential, the nationalists found territoriality as a unifying basis for identity. In the words of Sudipta Kaviraj:

Despite all the confusion and second thoughts about the people who might constitute this magical ‘we’, there is a constant—the symbolic and literal territoriality, the great sign of the land, the country as ground... the people may be problematic, but the land is certain, unquestionable, ever present. (Kaviraj 131-132)

The great number of books produced and disseminated by the British under the title of History of India/British India (like James Mill, Elphinstone) in a sense provided the nationalists from the various regions of the sub-continent, a sense of shared history which in turn was rendered with nationalist idiom in their own version for example the history written by Romesh Chunder Dutt.

The process of creation of the Indian Identity is therefore a complex negotiation of the pre-colonial heritage with that of the colonial one and a significant contribution from the nationalist movement. It is all the more tenuous in the context of early twentieth century colonial India, since the nation state has not been politically formed, nor, is there a consensus about the nationalist strategies to achieve that. Besides, the newly emergent affiliation to territorial space is not altogether devoid of its colonial baggage since allegiance to India in a way came to symbolise allegiance to the British colony of India, and not necessarily to the proto-nationalist tendencies of the times. Both the authors betray a certain amount of ambiguity and contradictions in their conception of Indian identity.

The notion of a singular India was a colonial invention and the consolidation of the British power within the territory has contributed to it in a big way. Both the British and the Indian authors, who engaged themselves with the sub continent referred to the territories as India, which in the hands of the Indian nationalists became Bharathvarsha, the territory ruled by the mythical king Bharat. In the context of these novels, the idea of an Indian identity is encountered by the reader in the preface itself which were primarily written by the publisher in imperial London. The Publisher's Preface to *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna*, claims that:

This romance is a presentment of India by an Indian. It draws a picture of Indian life from the inside, with its social customs and moral ideals, its eternal patience...The book also reveals the Indian view of the causes of the present unrest, and Britain's unseen peril in India. (Preface)

He also labels the book as “a storehouse of Indian information”. S.M. Mitra's book, *Hindupore*, has been presented to the public with an introduction by the Indian art specialist of Victorian Britain, Sir George Birdwood. He says:

‘*Hindupore*’ reveals many of the deep most things of India, hidden from the Englishmen, even those who may have passed away half their lives in that country—a country in which historical (pagan Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome) as distinguished from prehistorical antiquity still survives. (vii)

On the surface, the paternalistic attitude of the colonizer is exposed even in the creative venture. It was customary to have an introduction or a preface by an English administrator or scholar. This was an authentication mark which vouched for its quality. The aesthetics of alterity created a literary fervour in the metropolitan world of belles-letters, when books by Indians were noticed. Yet, in a back handed way, the interest in difference is latent with subversive potential. While introducing these books as exotic commodities produced by an Indian subject, hailing from the far flung Indian empire, it validates the notion of India as a geographical/political space distinctly different from any other territorial space and consequently accords the authors with a national identity, anachronistically.

## Hinduism and Indian Identity

The homogenous notion of an Indian identity thus constituted, has various dimensions, both political as well as cultural. In the context of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the primary aspect of the national identity which got highlighted was religious, primarily Hindu in character. Since Hinduism was the religion of the majority, it was upheld as the core religion of the putative nation, at least in representation, since in reality, it was the homeland of various religions, as Susan Bayly rightly points out that they:

assumed that the Indian nation was in effect a Hindu nation, or at least that matters which were of spiritual and moral concern to people who classed themselves as Hindus were the chief concern of the modern nation-builder. (Bayly 155)

Hinduism remained the terrain from which nationalists primarily tried to unite themselves. It was in the domain of religion that some sort of unity could be produced in the vast territorial space identified with India. Although, Hinduism in the present form is very much a product of the nationalist reform yet religion remained a ground for the putative unification of the people. The massive propaganda of the missionaries against Hinduism also contributed to considering religion as a site of contestation with the colonizer and a site of unification among Indians. The ontological nature of religion as a signifier of identity is conducive for its application in the formation of national identity. Since religious identities:

...are based on alignments of culture and its elements—values, symbols, myths and traditions, often codified in custom and ritual. They have therefore tended to join in a single community of the faithful all those who feel they share certain symbolic codes, value systems and traditions of belief and ritual, including references to a supra-empirical reality, however impersonal, and imprints of specialized organizations, however tenuous. (Smith 6)

It is somewhat akin to national identity which then was under the strain of producing new symbols that the new political community could easily identify with. In this context, Hinduism provided a common resource pool which provided the nascent nationalists some of their codes and symbols. Hinduism was supposed to provide an authentic character to the nationalist movement and gave them the cherished past as well as cultural link which most nationalists sought. In fact the project of securing a glorious past to inspire people made the

appropriation of the ancient past, which was conveniently interpreted as predominantly Hindu, at this juncture to serve the aim of unifying the people as a nationality. While keeping in mind the hegemonic nature of such an appropriation and re-interpretation of the past, which will be broadly dealt in the next chapter, we should consider that this was the only possible route for unifying a whole group of disparate population residing in the landmass identified as the putative nation and consequently adopted by Indians of all political hues, even of the comparatively secular as well as the loyalist variety, like the novelists, Ghosh and Mitra, of course according to the standards of that era. As Sumit Sarkar pointed out:

It has often seemed important for even the most secular of Indian nationalists to derive sustenance and authenticity from images of subcontinental unity (or at least unity-in-diversity) extending back into a supposedly glorious past. As, except for brief periods of 'imperial unity' (often excessively valorized), this is difficult to substantiate at the political level, the tendency has remained strong to assume some kind of cultural or civilizational integration as the ultimate foundation of nationalism. And then it becomes difficult...to resist the further slide towards assuming that that unity, after all, has been primarily Hindu (and upper-caste, often north-Indian Hindu at that). The slide was made easier by the undeniable fact that the bulk of the leading cadres of the nationalist...have come from Hindu upper-caste backgrounds. (*Writing Social History* 363)

In India, nationalist and religious discourses proliferated hand in hand in the nineteenth century drawing sustenance from each other especially, during what has been arguably termed as Bengal Renaissance. In fact, Hinduism became the spiritual code of the Indian nationalist movement. Both the novels, *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore* are the products of this era and engage with the Hindu identity and its alignment with nationalist discourses and consequently valorise a very Hindu idea of the nation. As Alex Tickell has rightly pointed out that these novels showcase, "the most revealing point of this national-communal historiography is the way Hinduism is accorded an exclusive historical monopoly on Indian identity..." ("Writing the Nation's Destiny" 535).

In *Hindupore*, Mitra describes Hinduism as a 'political force'. In the novel, nationalist agitation has been thoroughly identified with Hindu religion. This was a recurrent literary/representational motif of the era, a famous example is *Anandmath*. The concept of Pan Hinduism, in the novel, is almost a reference to the political/national community or the putative nation itself, which is united in spite of the differences that existed in the sub-

continent. The progress of national movement has been described as the progress of Pan-Hinduism. The author describes the political potential of religion in the context of Mr. Harvey's bureaucratic acumen, "He wanted to gather up all threads of Pan-Hinduism to be able to understand the present "Swaraj" (home rule) agitation of the Hindus" (Mitra 143). The congregation of Hindu pilgrims in the Kumbh fair at Prayag and the shrine of Jagannath at Puri are provided with political connotation beyond historical truths. Religious pilgrimages have been accorded with political/national significance. "The Church of Jagannath is a national force we cannot afford to ignore" (Mitra 291). This programmatic politicization of the religious life of the community was constructed to suit the formation of a national cultural identity. The differentiation from the traditional religion was primarily due to the nationalist imperative of refashioning the ancient culture/religion to suit the modern era.

Another significant device which both Mitra and Ghosh employ is the figure of the ascetic or Guru who not only remains the most virulent protector of the national culture and tradition but also the primary spokesperson of anti-colonialism in both the novels. In *Hindupore*, the figure of Bargad Bairagi and Vashista in *Prince of Destiny* are similar figures who act as the avant-guard of anti-colonial nationalist sentiment. Bargad Bairagi is a traditional ascetic, healer and has been portrayed as an upholder of military culture and Hindu traditions. Ghosh develops Vashista, referred to as the High priest of Vishnu, as a full fledged character whose life long mission is to guide the protagonist Barath to his destiny, that is, to make him an independent ruler of his kingdom without British tutelage. He is well versed in the Oriental systems of knowledge and has a political bent of mind. He is thoroughly sceptical of the English and their civilising mission and remains the most vocal upholder of national/religious tradition throughout the novel. As an antidote to Anglicization, Vashista taught Barath:

stories from the ancient classics; and as the Sanskrit classics of India are permeated throughout with the religious and moral principles of the Hindu faith the High Priest was indirectly imparting to the child the first lessons of his religion. (Ghosh 40)

The figure of the ascetic/Guru was also a recurrent literary motif of the era used for culturally connecting the nationalist politics with Hinduism. This device was used both in Bengali as well as English novels of the era. The figure of the ascetic in Chatterjee's *Anandmath* and Babaji Bissonath in Soshee Chunder Dutt's *The Young Zeminder* (1885) are a few examples. With this kind of religious association, Mitra and Ghosh provide an account of the nationalist

discourses in the era of Hindu nationalism when national identity was inextricably linked with a Hindu identity. Both the novels portray Hindu culture as a projection of an authentic national culture and identity which is not only constructed in opposition to European modernity and Anglicization of the colonizer but also erases or by passes the minority cultures, especially that of the Muslims and Buddhists. The strategy of hegemonic incorporation, appropriation and rejection of the various religions present in the Indian sub-continent will be elaborately dealt with in next chapter.

The consequence of the alignment of religion and nationalism was not only a Hinduization of the nation but also nationalization of Hinduism to suit the imperatives of the nationalist movement; which in a bid to fight the colonizer, inaugurated an era of reformation and restructuring of cultural signifiers like religion. In fact, the Hinduism endorsed in the novels is significantly different from the traditional religion itself. The clash with the traditional and the nationalist conception of Hinduism is portrayed in *Prince of Destiny* through the clash between Vashista and Barath. The novelist with an incipient and ambiguous nationalist as well as modernist agenda privileges Barath's version. In fact since the early nineteenth century there is a general tendency in India to reform and modernize Hindu religion. The nineteenth century reformers "tried to improve the Hindus and modernize their faith. They sought a sense of community as Hindus and a sense of history as a community" (Nandy 103). The sense of community was generated by projecting Hinduism as a homogenous entity, somewhat ahistorical in its conception.

This hegemonic Hindu identity emerges as a primary feature of the newly emerging national identity and was primarily forged to suit the purpose of the nationalist. National identity emerged as a requisite of the times when an identity crisis evolved among the residents of the sub-continent due to the challenges posed to the traditional religion and society by the scientific, rationalist and materialist culture of colonialism. When the old world certainties were fast depleting it was a necessity to celebrate some aspects of the traditional society with an invigorated passion in order to assert their very existence. The all round valorisation of Hinduism and its subsequent identification with the nascent project of nationalism is perhaps a natural outcome of the intrusion of colonialism. The projection of the valorised Hindu identity was perhaps a deft reply to the subjecthood of the Empire which the colonisers tried to inculcate among the hapless population of the sub-continent. The concept of a national identity as a secular construct is yet to develop. Even the veteran

scholar of Nationalism, Anthony D. Smith, has said that there is nothing unusual about religious nationalism. In fact the curious situation has been critically analysed by Tagore in *The Home and the World*, where Sandip, the ultra-nationalist character<sup>1</sup> ruminates:

This is why such bizarre things are happening side by side in our country. We are riding on the crest of patriotism and religion with equal passion. I am fully carrying on the fad of the nation, and simultaneously using religion as a pretext to do so. We want both Bande Mataram and the Bhagwad Gita. Consequently, neither of them is comprehensible to us, and we do not realize that the brass band and the shehnai are playing simultaneously. (Tagore 115)

### **The Representative Indian: Figure of the central Protagonist**

In these novels, national identity is not presented as an abstract entity but through the protagonists. In a curious way, both the authors link the glorious history of their country with the present; through the figure of the Chosen One, usually through the character of the Prince or the Raja, who not only claims a Divine descent but is present in the significant historical events of his age, performing a significant role. They seem to be “hand cuffed to history”, a phrase which gained much currency with respect to *Midnight's Children* (1981). Barath, the chosen one in *Prince of Destiny*, is born with forty two birth marks meant to symbolize divinity. He was born on the occasion of the Grand Durbar of 1877, in Delhi. He also attends the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria's coronation in London as his father's representative, meets Italian soldiers who are going to fight in Abyssinia, in 1896 and the turmoil in his own kingdom corresponds with the turmoil in international arena. Similarly in *Hindupore*, Raja Ram Singh is also born on the same date as Queen Victoria, describes his experience of the Grand Durbar of 1877, the Golden Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria, and his visit to the Pope in Rome. Both these protagonists belong to dynasties which reigned over their kingdoms for thousands of years. The central protagonist not only acts as the connecting link between the glorious past and the present of the nation, but also provides a concrete example to the abstract entity of the nation and the projected identity. It is through

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<sup>1</sup> Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1916) has two different male characters—Sandip and Nikhilesh. While both of them have nationalist tendencies but Sandip is not only radical in his political ideology but draws sustenance from nationalism and epitomizes the euphoria of Swadeshi movement in Bengal.



these figures that both the novelists project their imaginary version of India and Indian identity. As Timothy Brennan writes:

The 'nation', it is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers to both the nation state and to something more ancient and nebulous- the nation- a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging. The distinction is often obscured by the nationalists who seek to place their own country in an 'immemorial past' where its arbitrariness cannot be questioned. (2)

The portrayal of these extra-ordinary individuals as leaders and representatives of the putative Indian nation, who not only claim Divine or Royal descent but are also well versed in the Oriental and Occidental systems of knowledge and possess exemplary personal character showcases the epitome of Indian/Hindu masculinity. The conception of Indian Hindu masculinity assumed crucial significance in the context of the colonial notion of an effeminate Hindu. The representative Indian, as the upholder of quintessential national values was required to possess personal courage and valour. One of the major trends in the literature of the era, and followed by both Ghosh and Mitra, was to project the Rajput prince as the central protagonist of the novel engaged in a courageous endeavour to retrieve national glory. The Rajputs were projected as the epitome of martial courage and valour and hence the worthy representatives of Indian masculinity<sup>2</sup>. Both Barath in *Prince of Destiny* and Raja Ram Singh in *Hindupore* are Rajputs princes. In *Prince of Destiny*, the importance of physical exercise is repeatedly projected as a desired quality among Indians for the struggle with the colonizer. During his college days in Agra, Barath is mocked at because of his lack of interest in physical culture and excessive reading habits. His friend, Udai refers to other companions' opinion, "They say that someday thy father will put a sari on thee, and make a woman of thee!" (Ghosh 103) The equation between reading habits and feminine gender is ironical in the context of early twentieth century since very few women had the opportunity to get formal education in that era. The more significant fact is that physical strength is privileged over bookish knowledge for the future leader of the nation and henceforth Barath engages in violent sports in the novel. In the conception of the more cosmopolitan and scholarly authors like Ghosh and Mitra, knowledge is also an essential quality of the

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<sup>2</sup> This pattern was followed by the almost all the novelist of the era who wrote Historical Romance in most of the Indian languages as well as English. It was inaugurated in Bengal by Bhudev Mukherjee and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

representative of the country along with courage and both the protagonists are well educated in these novels.

They are projected in stark contrast not only to the imperious British colonial officers like Colonel Ironside or Charles Hunt in *Hindupore* and the Viceroy in *Prince of Destiny* but also to the remnants of the decadent traditional patriarchy symbolized by Prem Singh in *Prince of Destiny* and Raja Ranbir Singh in *Hindupore*. This newly constructed Indian male identity has political dimensions. The subversive contrast with the British colonial officers is significant in the context of a colonial frame of Knowledge and representation whereby the colonized is primarily regarded as a degraded human being and the colonizer is represented as engaged in the altruistic task of ameliorating the degraded races on earth by their civilizing mission. The contrast with the traditional patriarchy is essential for the nationalist imperative of constructing an identity which will be simultaneously modern as well as Indian. The central protagonist not only becomes the representatives of the nation but also wields the future of the nation; therefore, certain principles of modernity have been incorporated along with the traditional components. The cultural changes wrought by nationalism generate a new cultural identity which incorporates the novel aspect of nation under its aegis. In the words of Stuart Hall, Identity, as a signifier of culture:

is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture...Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (112)

National identity is constructed by the nationalists for themselves in order to deal with the past as well as the future. After a certain period of time, the constructedness of this identity is denied and gradually erased, by claiming that national identity has been there since time immemorial. In the context of Indian history in general and the two novels, the typical Indian identity has been given a hoary past on the basis of civilizational uniformity since antiquity.

## Indian Identity vis-a-vis the West

The construction of identity on the part of Indian authors in the early part of twentieth century was a task primarily undertaken to create an oppositional discourse to commonplace nineteenth century European ideas of race and representation of non European people. All modes of representation of non European people were primarily guided by the epistemology of racial discourse which was believed to possess scientific validity. This invariably produced an essentialized portrayal of non Europeans, whether in literary or historical discourses. In case of literary representation, Rudyard Kipling ruled the roost about all things, Indian; while James Mill was paramount in historical ones. Their method of misrepresentation has been elaborately discussed in chapter I. Kipling's novels are imbued with a sense of the religious segregation and racial hierarchy that was assiduously maintained and pampered by the British Raj. Specially, *Kim* is infested with phrases like, "after the Oriental fashion", "Kim could lie like an Oriental," and "Once a Sahib is always a Sahib." Kipling's construction of racial identity seems to relegate them a stability and rigidity which was a staple of nineteenth century anthropology in order to legitimise the imperial mission of the West European powers in the Orient and Africa. On the other hand Mill had no doubt about the inferiority of the Indians. Their Orientalism is also evident in a way that the European is evidently portrayed as the superior and therefore conveniently the master. As Edward Said has rightly expressed:

Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. (25)

In contradistinction to the monolithic, stable and ahistorical identity produced and disseminated by British authors, the Indian authors strived to create historically and socially determined and culturally constructed identities for their Indian protagonists yet produced a positive stereo-type, though not monolithic and stable like their British counterparts, in their representation of Indian characters. They created virtuous, erudite and modern Indians like Barath, Madhava, Vindara and Vishwamitra in *Prince of Destiny* and Raja Ram Singh, Mohanlal, Sircar in *Hindupore*. All of these characters are in stark contrast to some of the memorable creation by Kipling like wily Hurre Chunder Mookherjee, the courageous

Mahbub Ali, or the upright Colonel Creighton. Simultaneously, Indian authors portrayed power-hungry and inept and petulant colonial rulers like the Viceroy in *The Prince of Destiny* and Colonel Ironside in *Hindupore*, whose name itself, is symbolic. Sometimes, deviating from the stability accorded by the racial epistemology, both Ghosh and Mitra shows a certain amount of flexibility and flux in the development of chief characters like Barath and Lord Tara in the course of the novel. The changes in the character are effected through education, humane sensibility or due to acquaintance with other cultures and people. It changes a great deal in the span of the novel. Like Ghosh writes in the context of Barath's character:

in the next twelve months he added the capacity to be an Eastern or a Western at will, as required for the moment. He had indeed possessed the early beginning of such a capacity when he had commenced his studies under the English masters at the Ajmere college; now the faculty was developed so deeply as to enable him to adopt by sheer instinct the eastern or Western attitude... (Ghosh 217-218)

Similarly Francis Thompson also possessed a sensibility which was characteristic of both oriental and occidental traits. In *Hindupore*, Mitra portrays the change of attitude in Lord Tara due to his proximity with Hindu Indian culture. The concept of identity formation and representation has been dealt with elaborately in the domain of post-colonial studies and most recent theories have problematised a stable, monolithic construct of identity, instead they put forward the gradual and ongoing transformation of identity over a period of time, as Stuart Hall writes,

instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (110)

Yet these Indian authors were not fully free from the malaise of stereotyping, although their primary objective was to break the stereotype produced by the British authors like Kipling, yet, undoubtedly, the stereotyping is in a more nuanced fashion. In the context of colonial India, the concept of national identity was constructed in opposition to that of the West/modernity propagated by the colonial state machinery. There was a tremendous "pressure to be the obverse of the West" among the Indians in their bid to create their own identity (Nandy 73). In fact, a whole array of discourses were generated which devoted themselves in the construction of the oppositional and monolithic East and West. The

construction of these two cultural wholes which was essentially different, determined the nature of the identity for the putative nation. G. Aloysius aptly comments regarding the situation:

a painstaking construction of real and supposed differences between a monolithic East and an equally monolithic West, and the creation of two irreconcilable and antagonistic cultural wholes...And this East-West polarity became another value orientation. (141)

In fact such a divide was equally followed and represented by authors on both sides of the colonial divide. Even English authors like Rudyard Kipling projected the essential difference between the East and the West. The East/ West polarity is beautifully portrayed in *Prince of Destiny* by Barath's dilemma to choose between Nora and Suvona as his bride. In fact this dilemma is symbolic representation of colonial Indian society which was torn between the pull towards westernization as well as nativism, an essential component of nationalism. Although primarily constructed as a fantasy of harmony between the East and the West, at a particular juncture in *Hindupore*, Mitra mentions the unbridgeable hiatus between the East and the West and chastises any attempt at fusion, which he labels as a major reason of discord, "Ram Singh often thought this deficiency of sympathy meant both not yielding to Oriental ways of thinking and making Western experiments upon Eastern minds" (Mitra 283). Yet an outright oppositional stance, inextricably bound them to the West because such a stance forced them "to stress only those parts of his culture which are recessive in the west" and Indian identity became what is not Western. Simplistically, the Indian self was created in opposition to the West yet when observed from a more nuanced perspective that was exactly the western—whether colonist or Orientalist conception of being Indian. In a curious way the Indian self image remained a western construction. Ashis Nandy has captured the dichotomy and the unselfconscious complicity within the discourse of creating identity within the context of colonialism:

colonialism tried to supplant the Indian consciousness to erect an Indian self-image which, in its opposition to the west, would remain in essence a western construction. If colonial experience made the mainstream western consciousness definitionally non-Oriental and redefined the west's self image as the antithesis or negation of the East, it sought to do the reverse with the self-image of the Orient and with the culture of India. (Nandy 72)

In curious ways Orientalist discourse defined the Indian self-perception since Indians tried to construct themselves either in opposition or in conjunction to Orientalist/colonist perception whichever strategy suits them in order to present a glorified image. The result of this selective appropriation and abrogation of discourses engendered by colonialism is the production of a stereotypical identity which played with the ones ascribed by colonial discourses. In a simplistic manner, while the colonial discourses ascribed Indians to be superstitious and religious, Indians defined themselves as spiritual. The project of identity formation may thus be defined by the sanitization or ‘positivization’ of all the negative qualities attributed by the colonist discourse. Although, both Mitra and Ghosh undertake genuine efforts to break the cycle of stereotypes at particular instances, when considered on a holistic basis, they fall in a similar trap, taking recourse to stereotyping, albeit differently, in their projection of the essence of Indian identity.

### **Indian as well as English: Contradictions in Identity**

Even within this whirlpool of the nationalist imperative to construct a national identity for the putative nation in opposition to that of the colonizer, both the novels betray a curious sense of identification with the colonizer’s nation. There is a great degree of ambivalence in their attitude towards the England. While both the novels are crystal clear that an Indian identity has to be constructed in opposition to the accorded identity of British subjects which the contemporary political scenario bestowed upon them, there is an inherent desire to be ‘English’. The desire to be ‘English’ is valued on both ends of the colonial divide. While the Indians cherish the prospect, the English characters (it is crucial that most of the so called English characters in the novel are Irish) definitely desire that prospect. In *Prince of Destiny*, immediately after his arrival in England, Lord Melnor, a thorough colonialist, desires such a prospect for Barath. He asks Ellen, the mistress of the household, “See that you make a thorough Englishman of him, and a true blue!” (Ghosh 162) While Ghosh is pretty effusive about Lord Melnor throughout the novel yet observing from the Indian perspective it is easy to see the vicious motives in such a statement. Such a project of imperial subject fashioning is imperative for the maintenance of imperial domination and hegemony over far flung areas. If the identity of Englishness can be accorded to colonized population then a certain degree of

legitimacy can be claimed for the English occupation of India. Yet the ramification of such a statement has to be analysed specially in the context of Melnor's later statement where declares Barath to be a "true born Englishman." Such a statement is definitely idealistic, even on the part of colonialist like Melnor.<sup>3</sup> If we take a critical glance at the context, historically, then this move of identifying colonised Indians as 'English' may be interpreted as a political move. In another context<sup>4</sup>Ian Baucom writes:

For only in viewing the Indian as a citizen rather than as a conquered subject may England impress upon him or her, the obligations of loyalty rather than the narrower need to submit to an occupying power. The act of re-visioning could have marked a crucial moment in the discourse of empire, a moment that imbues the colonial subject with the cultural and juridical rights attaching to English identity and which demands that the pursuit of empire incorporate a renegotiation of the subjective boundaries of Englishness. This is indeed what the demand for Indian "loyalty" implies. But of course this is not what happened... Instead, it secured the inscription of a narrative of empire that identified the Indian as a person of whom England demanded the obligations of citizenship, but from whom the nation withheld the rights of an English subject. (105-106)

In the context of both the novels we see that the Indian characters are primarily concerned with English interests while the British colonist's are careless about their arrogance and brutal display of racism, hierarchy and strength which exposes the imbalance of power distribution in an inherently unequal system like colonialism. The interpellation of Indian subjects as Englishmen generates a curious situation where the onus of loyalty is burdened on them without the corresponding benefit of the rights to protect their interest.

Melnor's statement is apt for presenting the ideal operation of colonialism which Ghosh and Mitra try to project in the course of their novels. Yet what Ghosh suggests is almost contradictory, or ambiguous to say the least. "The best way for a man of keen perception to know England objectively—that is, truthfully—is to be born outside, and then

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<sup>3</sup> In the context of early twentieth century colonial India, the idea of being both an Englishman and Indian was not unheard of. In his book, *The Intimate Enemy*, Ashis Nandy refers to the fact that Mahatma Gandhi referred to C.F. Andrews as "an Indian at heart and a true Englishman" (Nandy 48).

<sup>4</sup> Baucom deals with the anxiety of the colonist's regarding the loyalty of the colonial population in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857. He basically explores the nuances by which colonialism tried to fashion/discipline colonized population without providing them proper rights. In fact, Melnor, the well-intentioned colonist also thinks in a similar paradigm of loyalty and subjectivization. I have used the idea in order to analyze the confusion regarding national identity which is definitely at jeopardy at the wake of such a statement.

to come in and become an Englishman” (Ghosh 252). What Ghosh is trying to say is that Barath has become an Englishman not by being born in England (since nativity remains one of the primary criteria of ascertaining identity); but by virtue of his contact with England as a territorial space, its tradition as well through English system of education. Apart from raising serious issues about the determining factors for the acquisition of English identity; which definitely is not the object of this study; this statement raises a significant question not only on the project of constructing the Indian national identity which the novel undoubtedly engages with but also destabilises the category of national identity itself. While Barath is definitely projected as a quintessential Indian; he is also simultaneously projected as an Englishman; thereby, belonging to two nations. He not only belongs to both the nations but remains loyal to both of them, simultaneously. Protection of English interests remains one of his primary concerns as a ruler. In fact he is more English than the English, even when concerned about the India and its people as the author writes, “He was more jealous of the honour of England than the average Englishman who confounds power with honour. He would rather see England just than England great, but above all he would see her great by being just” (Ghosh 482).

There is a curious instance of playing a Hindustani version of the English national anthem, “God save the King” during the celebration of Raja Ram Singh’s birthday in *Hindupore*. As a sort of explanation the Raja says, “It happens that I was born on the same day as the Queen Empress Victoria, so the National Anthem has a placed in our celebration of the day” (Mitra 100). The anthem that Raja Ram Singh so proudly proclaims as national anthem is the national anthem of England. His identification with the anthem curiously exposes the confusion regarding the issues of national identity and nation. In a bid to generate national symbols of India and a corresponding Indian identity, these authors project a peculiar reverence towards the national symbols of Great Britain. Within the fictional world of *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*, which strive to project a harmonious co-existence of both the English and the Indians within the parameters set by the system of colonialism; there seems to be no contradiction in their allegiance/identification both to England and India. While dealing with the concept of Hindu Nationalism in the context of nineteenth and early twentieth century, Chetan Bhatt quite rightly says:



These ideas of nationalism were not uniformly received by the divergent elites in colonial India, nor could they easily or always be separated from patriotic loyalties to Empire among large sections of those elites... (8)

In fact to unproblematically categorise these as nationalistic or anti-national is very difficult when the ideology of Indian nationalism was somewhat derived from European nationalistic discourses and patriotism, which in the context of early twentieth century meant allegiance to the Empire along with a nationalist angst to rectify the loopholes in the organization of the colonial enterprise.

Yet the willing acceptance of the Indians to such imperial subject fashioning remains a curious phenomenon. The process of vigorous Anglicization since mid-nineteenth century is perhaps responsible for such colonized psyche. In fact, the whole project of Anglicized education is an imperial mechanism of disciplining the colonial mind whereby the institutions of colonial domination was accorded a certain degree of legitimacy among the colonized population. Benedict Anderson, the veteran scholar of nationalism, labels Anglicization as a process of official nationalism. The Anglicization of education and consequently of psyche was primarily undertaken to create “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay 375). Ghosh astutely analyses such a motive when he discusses the change in the British policy, as he writes, “First the education of the heir-apparent was to be more thoroughly English, so that the influence obtained in most impressionable period of his life should bear fruit in later years” (Ghosh 141). Yet, as an Anglicized Indian of the colonial period he could not resist the charm of being ‘English’; in spite of his own points of departure from the colonial ideology. In both the novels, most of the protagonists are greatly praised for their ability to speak good English which in the context of the time was a signifier of civilization. In the realm of colonial discourse such a thorough Anglicization perhaps provides a strong base for the colonial foundation and was the locus of English identity, outside the territorial space of England. In the hey-day of imperialism, knowledge of English was a marker of civilization and a necessary tool to climb the social ladder within the hierarchies institutionalized by colonialism for both the colonizer as well as the colonized. Yet, the irony lies in the willingness of the Indians to be ‘English’, especially among intellectuals even when they were engaged in the creating a national identity for their motherland—India.

## Hybrid and Pure Identities

Colonialism created a condition conducive to the formation of a hybridized identity. Within the crucible of forging identity in the early twentieth century, both Ghosh and Mitra showcase a simultaneous valorization of hybridity/multiple identity as well as sanctify purity/authenticity in the construction of identity. On the one hand, there is a constant “gerrymandering of historical identity”—to use a phrase by Sudipto Kaviraj, whereby the these authors incorporate the achievements of Asian countries like Japan, and Central Asian war heroes like Genghis Khan and Timur on the one hand and yet feel a certain affinity towards the West, especially for the competitors of England like Germany, Russia and the United States of America, or the Irish, and quite ironically, sometimes towards England, itself. This device of gerrymandering of identity was utilized by the earlier generation of Bengali authors (Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Bhudev Mukherjee) to create a pan Indian identity by incorporating/identifying with the history of diverse people like the Rajputs, Marathas etc. In the context of *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*, this gerrymandering is more cosmopolitan and does not restrict itself to the borders of British ruled territories of the sub-continent. The erstwhile device to create a broad national base by yoking together of heterogeneous people is also utilized here. In *Prince of Destiny*, various individuals from different parts of the country congregate. Vindara, a Bengali, Nishi Kashe, a Marathi and Madhava, a resident of Jhansi, central India are employed in the princely state of Barathpur, in Rajasthan. The impulse to represent different regions of the putative nation is vividly expressed. In *Hindupore*, the spectacular career of Sircar, a Bengali Hindu in a north Indian Muslim state, explicitly states the unificatory impulse of the novel along religious and regional lines.

Yet, the project of forging the national identity is not forsaken in the wake of this Universalist tendency. Besides, there is a characteristic stress on purity/authenticity which dominates the discourse on identity in both the novels. Barath, the epitome of Indian masculinity in *Prince of Destiny*, is already the chosen one, since he is born with the marks of Divinity, yet in order to fulfill his destiny, he has to undergo a mantric initiation; meant to purify and cleanse him of all the western influence. Besides, the possibility of creating a truly hybrid identity in future is thwarted by the ultimate rejection of Nora as Barath’s bride. The

union between the east and the west, in spite of the reiterative assertion of Ghosh, is not actually materialized in the novel. As Gobind Prasad Sarma writes, “Of course any idea of creating a completely new nation by blending the two races of the rulers and the ruled would also not be realistic like the marriage of Barath and Nora” (Sarma 167).

In *Hindupore*, where the marriage between Lord Tara and Rani Kamala actually happens, a superficial future possibility of a hybrid Indian identity; symbolizing the true union of the East and the West, is generated. Yet the site of such intermingling shifts to Britain since the newly married couple decides to settle in Ireland and London. The marriage itself is justified on grounds of its political potential rather than any kind of new possibility of inter-mingling of the races. Mohanlal, an ardent supporter of the union says, “...a marriage like this would do more than fifty treaties to bring the two races into closer touch with each other. It would be truly patriotic and diplomatic alliance on both sides” (Mitra 171). However in *Hindupore* itself, the alliance between Dukhia and Hunt is chastised and Charles Hunt, the product of such a liaison is derogatorily referred to as a ‘half-caste’ throughout the novel. Hasmat Khan, a minor character in the novel, says, “As the crow is the worst among birds and the ass worst among quadrupeds, so is the half-caste worst among human beings” (Mitra 262). The depiction of Charles Hunt as the villain in the novel exposes the prejudice of the contemporary era, against intermingling of races. The author clearly states that Charles Hunt is a social anomaly and has no place in the putative nation.

According to these authors, the putative nation belongs only to the racially pure, therefore notions of purity are greatly privileged in the construction of Indian identity. These notions of purity are inextricably bound with the discourses of caste, which will be elaborately dealt with in the next chapter. This simultaneous valorisation of purity/authenticity as well as identification with diverse races and nations is almost schizoid in nature. This situation has arisen due to simultaneous operation of the mechanism of imperial subject fashioning which tutors the colonized population to identify with the self image of the colonizer and also the political imperative of the authors to produce a counter discourse to such imperial projects. The construction of a putative national identity got enmeshed in the complex politico-social scenario both in the international and the Indian context of the early twentieth century. The result is the inherent ambiguity and confusion about whom all and what to identify in the absence of any concrete nation or any precedence.

The identity forged by the complex mingling of elements from diverse sources and contexts found expression in the day to day lifestyle of the characters. The next section will deal with the various signifiers of identity and the process of appropriation and abrogation associated with them.

### **Signifiers of essential Indian identity**

In his astute study of Nationalism, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee writes:

anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within the colonial society well before it begins its political battle before the imperial power. It does by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of outside... The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. (*The Nation* 6)

Both Ghosh and Mitra delineate Indian tradition at great length with respect to the private lives of the protagonists in their novels. Tradition and the personal lifestyle within the domestic realm, that is, the so called “inner domain” was considered as essential markers of cultural/national identity. The domestic realm was regarded as a microcosmic representation of the putative nation. In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh critiques the rampant Westernization of the domestic realm of elite Indians and labels the inner domain of the household as the womb of national regeneration. He writes,

in these fallen days an Indian Prince is persuaded by English friends or Anglicised-Indian friends to adopt the path of European progress and of modernism; and forthwith the poor harassed Prince, anxious to show his enlightenment, acquires a collection of motor-cars and Maple’s furniture. But the majority of them still adhere to the ways of their forefathers, at least in their domestic customs—wherein lies the last hope of India’s mental, moral, and aesthetic regeneration. (Ghosh 4)

While it was impossible, in the context of early twentieth century to negate the western influence in the sphere of material activity, the representation of the domestic realm, the sanctum sanctorum of the nation, was replete with ‘authentic’ signifier of cultural/national identity. The two different spheres of influence that nationalism creates, in order to demarcate an authoritative space of its own finds metonymic expression in Raja Ram Singh’s guesthouse. The description symbolizes the dichotomy of the inner and outer domain:

The bungalow—a long, low building, with balconies and verandas of trellis-work, covered in profusion with roses and jasmine—was fitted somewhat in English fashion, though the carpets and furniture were all Swadeshi—made in India and Oriental in style. (Mitra 57)

While the house looks like an English bungalow from the outside, it has been furnished by Indian furniture from inside. Both these novels were written after the Swadeshi agitation of 1905, and the influence of Swadeshi movement permeated the aesthetics of the living space, at least in their literary representation,<sup>5</sup> even in the circles that collaborated with the Colonizer, like that of Raja Ram Singh. The Rani also,

chooses to have no English gimcrack furniture or gaudy carpets and curtains in her palace. Everything about her is Indian, as it should be, and she loves to encourage the exquisite native taste for harmony in colour and beauty of design...She likes me, too, best in Hindu costume, which, she says, is most becoming, as it certainly is the best suited to our climate. (Mitra 36)

The interior of the house was a marker of cultural identity and was deliberately made to look Indian. Although “the material manifestations of the home underwent a transformation in India with the colonial contact” yet with the development of a national consciousness there was a characteristic trend to create a distinct space with a national flavour. During the early decades of the twentieth century, “the drawing room transformed itself into its current hybridized form, attaining, in some circles, an aesthetic style and a cultural ambience that was created as a deliberate attempt at Indianization” (Chaudhuri 222).

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<sup>5</sup> Similar instances of Swadeshi interior decoration and the nuanced politics regarding that has been portrayed in Tagore’s *The Home and The World*. There is a reference to a brass pot which was used to keep flowers instead of the normative glass flower vase. Rosinka Chaudhuri very aptly captures the subtle politics of interior decoration in her essay, “Modernity at Home: The Nationalization of the Indian Drawing Room, 1830-1930.

Besides, the living space, dress is also another symbol of representing one's identity. The negotiation that the Indians undertook to conform as well as to resist colonialism finds metonymic expression in the form of their dress code. Clothes possess a unique potential for symbolic elaboration because of their proximity with the self. Clothes emerged as a crucial signifier of national identity. Sartorial identity, in a crucial way, represents the cultural core of the nation since it reflects personal predilections and allegiance when critically observed. In the context of both the novels, there is a constant reference to changing clothes which has various political implications. Emma Tarlo puts forward the significance of clothes:

clothes are not merely defining but they are also self-consciously used to define, to present, to deceive, to enjoy, to communicate, to reveal and conceal...clothes are central to person's identity, but not in any rigid and deterministic way... (8)

In the early twentieth century, when the Indian men underwent the grinding influence of modernity in the material sphere, inside their home, they were to assume the Indian self. This act of self transformation was symbolized by the change of costume. In fact the change to Indian dress at home symbolized an allegiance to one's own people, thus crucial to the question of identity. In *Hindupore*, when the ship reaches the harbor of Bombay, Raja Ram Singh changes into a traditional Indian dress along with his turban, while throughout his journey he wore an English suit. The change to national costume on reaching the shore of his country symbolizes his allegiance to the nation. Even in *Prince of Destiny*, Barath dons the traditional dress as a representative of Barathpur, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee celebration in London. While Barath was perfectly at home with English dresses, the crossover to Indian traditional dress on a political occasion like the Diamond jubilee is of political significance. Similarly the Mitra's engages with dress in a very intelligent fashion:

Charlie picked up some English, and, as he grew up, discarded the turban for the Solatopee, the Anglo-Indian sun-hat, which like charity, covers a multitude of sins...If the man has a fair complexion and is brazen enough to ape the ruling class, there is no limit to his possible success in life...It was, therefore, a red letter day in the life of Charles Hunt when he adopted English dress. (49-50)

In the context of colonialism which institutionalised various forms of inequities, the adoption of western dress was a self conscious choice, thus identifying oneself with the ruling race. It

involved questions of material aggrandisement as well as political allegiance. In the context of early twentieth century, Western dress symbolised the power and authority associated with the ruling race. In fact, Emma Tarlo, has correctly pointed out the pragmatic aspect of switching over to western dress in the context of late nineteenth century, “The fascination with European garments was related more to what they represented than to either their practicality or their aesthetic appeal” (Tarlo 44). The question of allegiance and political affiliation and identity associated with the dress also finds vivid expression when Sircar suggests Lord Tara to don a Rajput dress in order to evade the wrath of the Indian masses at the pilgrimage of Puri, “put on your Rajput dress at once, before you appear in public. India is not at all in a loyal state of mind towards the ruling powers at this particular moment...” (Mitra 243). This incident shows how clothes may be appropriated simultaneously, to conceal identity as well as to express political allegiance. The crucial switching over to the Indian dress in a way symbolises Lord Tara’s identification with the colonized Indian population which finally culminates in his marriage with Rani Kamala and his genuine urge to improve the condition of India, later on.

Since Indian identity was partially constructed in opposition to the discourses generated by modernity propagated by the colonial state, religious tradition and rituals of the pre-modern era became the repository of national identity. In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh describes the traditional rituals associated with the life of a Hindu at different stages in Barath’s life. The initiation ceremony which Ghosh curiously termed as “Barath’s Mantra” is of great significance. The chant of Sanskrit mantra is of crucial significance and accords a peculiar aura of somberness and religiosity and hearkens back to a pre-colonial indigenous tradition. Sanskrit bore the badge of authenticity since it was regarded as an Indian language. The significance of the ceremony is elaborated through the changes that have come across in the personality of Barath after the Mantra ceremony. In fact the Mantra ceremony is supposed to transform Barath into an authentic Indian devoid of the impure western influence. In another context<sup>6</sup>, Sudipto Kaviraj explicates the ramifications of using Sanskrit:

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<sup>6</sup> Sudipto Kaviraj analyses the context of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s use of Sanskrit in the song *Bande Mataram*, in the novel *Anandmath*. In *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh uses Sanskrit mantra in the initiation ceremony of Barath. Though there is a great difference in the context and the formal aspect of the usage, they serve similar purpose in their respective context.

Sanskrit provides the initial moves creating an atmosphere of somberness and grandeur...Use of Sanskrit is obligatory, because it is mandatory vehicle of classicization. (134)

Even heinous and cruel traditions like the Sati and the caste system are glorified throughout the novel. In fact the seeds of discontent are sown when there is a proposition to change some of the religious traditions in Barathpur. While economic and administrative reforms were easily implemented in the state, social reforms were thwarted by the people at large along with the aristocracy. In *Hindupore*, Mitra also describes Hindu traditions on the occasion of Raja Ram Singh's birthday. The daily routine of Rani Kamala is reminiscent of an ideal life usually associated with the idyllic Vedic age. Mitra repeatedly stresses the importance of rituals in the Indian Hindu way of life. Once in a discussion with Lord Tara, Mohanlal, says, "It is difficult for an Englishman to understand the hold that religion—call it superstition, if you like has upon the people of India..." (Mitra 54). The representation and glorification of Indian traditions in general and Hindu traditions in particular as the essence of identity, was a particular way of expressing national pride in the early nationalist phase and has been a distinct trait of most of the early Indian English novels, for example, *Govinda Samanta* by Lal Behari Day or *The young Zaminder* by Soshee Chunder Dutt and many others.

A distinct identity for the future nation was primarily constructed and symbolized with various signifiers within domestic and spiritual realm, appropriated from the pre-colonial era. When an outright political battle was impossible, resistance towards the colonial machinery and autonomy from its fangs were formulated and represented through the construction of a distinct sphere where, the all-pervasive intrusion of the colonial machinery may be challenged. The politics of subtle resistance through the cleansing of English colonial influence from the inner domain of home is crucial as Partha Chatterjee's writes:

nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. (*The Nation* 6)

In both the novels the identity of the putative nation is primarily represented as Brahminical Hinduism. In the context of early twentieth century, the "cultural core of the nation" was



variously represented and named as Aryan, Hindu, Sanskritic or Sanatan or Indian, and were identified with the elite, upper caste, primarily Brahminical culture. The dynamics of representing the essential cultural identity of the putative nation with that of a particular, traditionally elite caste is of crucial significance since identification with the putative nation becomes problematic for the other communities. While keeping in mind the emancipatory potential of constructing an essentialized Hindu Brahminical identity to posit against the colonial construction of a debased native, the power hierarchy operating within the indigenous society should not be neglected. Although both the novels primarily identify the nation with Hindu Brahminical culture/community, they nevertheless accord some narrative space to the marginal communities providing us the elite perspective on the construction of marginal identities and marginalisation of those communities. The politics of cultural exclusivism in the construction of identities, the margins of the putative nation, with respect to gender, caste and class as represented in both the novels will be dealt with in the next chapter.



## Chapter Three

### Constructing Marginal Identities

...the story of nationalist emancipation is necessarily a story of betrayal. Because it could confer freedom only by imposing at the same time a whole set of new controls, it could define a cultural identity for the nation only by excluding many from its fold; and it could grant the dignity of citizenship to some only because the others always needed to be represented and could not be allowed to speak for themselves.

--Partha Chatterjee (*The Nation* 154)

None of the novels, dealt in this study, can be straight-forwardly interpreted as nationalist texts, yet they were produced in the ideological atmosphere created by the national movement and sustained the same. Both the novels are significantly influenced by the ideological milieu from which they were produced and significantly reflect the major developments in the society, in general and the national movement, in particular, though with ambiguous sympathies. While the previous two chapters dealt with the dominant ideological strain and representational mode with respect to the idea of 'nation' and 'identity', this chapter will primarily deal with the construction and representation of the marginal identities, alienated from the mainstream, mostly within the context of these novels, yet, reflecting the modes of social evolution in India in the context of early twentieth century. The dynamics of representation of the social process of marginalisation is infinitely more complicated by the caste/class/religious affiliation of these authors which significantly influenced their modes of representation of the marginal entities in society. This chapter will primarily focus on the representation of marginal identities and the narrative strategies of marginalisation with respect to religion, caste, class and gender and thereby, dissect the totalising and hegemonic claims of the mainstream ideology of the upper caste, upper class, patriarchal, Hindus which in the context of early twentieth century was generally regarded as Hindu nationalist ideology, though there is a significant amount of duality in their political sympathies.

Religion, caste, class and gender are the four major determinants of identity in the Indian society. In the context of early twentieth century, religious and gender discourses

were of primary significance and were inextricably intertwined with the Hindu nationalist ideologies. Though caste never came to the forefront as a determining factor in the nationalist movement before the nineteen thirties, it was always significant as one of the primary determining factor in the construction of Indian identity. In fact the enforced silence about caste system reflects its importance in Indian society. At the outset, the construction of marginality with respect to religion will be dealt with, followed by caste/class and gender.

### **Religion:**

Vishwa-mitra saw the beef and the ham, and with the bowed head passed on into the night.

“How long, O Brahma, how long?” It was scarce a whisper that escaped his lips.

No, my brother; you do him wrong. Perhaps he was not thinking of the beef and the ham, but of his call that was long in coming. The beef and the ham would have to be eaten ultimately, and had to lie somewhere before finding salvation in human stomachs. But he wished they had lain anywhere but in Taj Mahal’s boudoir. Where every inch of space was hallowed. (Ghosh 12)

The ambiguity inherent in the religious discourse is apparent from above quotation, taken from *Prince of Destiny*. While the glory of the Islamic past is projected as the part and parcel of the nation, it is imagined with a characteristic Hindu idiom. Both beef and pork are forbidden food items for Hindus; while only pork is a forbidden in Islam. The whole idea that the sanctity of the space is destroyed by the presence of beef and pork curiously makes it a Hindu space, which Dewan-i-Khas is evidently not. The reference to beef as polluting, therefore excludes the Muslims, yet, the reference to pork keeps in consideration their religious sentiments. Both Ghosh and Mitra, exploits the narrative strategy of valorisation and projection of Hinduism as the spiritual core and the dominant religious strain of the putative nation as discussed in the previous chapter; here I will undertake the study of their strategy of marginalisation of the other religions which happens simultaneously in both the novels. Ghosh is concerned with the Buddhists and Parsis and primarily remains

silent about the Muslims; in *Hindupore*, Mitra engages with the relationship of Hindus and Muslims at great length.

The political strategy of religious marginalisation is twofold. While the Muslims are sometimes portrayed as the enemies of the sacred Hindu nation or accorded a secondary status within the nation under the benign guidance of the Hindus, religions like Buddhism has been incorporated within the fold of Hindu religion through various political and religious mediation. In *Prince of Destiny*, Naren, the nationalist from Calcutta maligns the Muslims as the enemies of the nation. Quite curiously, in a speech directed against the British and the colonial slur of cowardice against the Hindus, he uses anti-Muslim rhetoric. This anti-Muslim rhetoric is out of context and the only instance in *Prince of Destiny* where Ghosh exposes rabid anti-Muslim sentiment. It is also very crucial that the anti-Muslim rhetoric is coming from the mouth of nationalist in his public speech. This sort of political blunders alienated the Muslims from the mainstream Indian nationalist movement. Naren says:

Well, sometimes, a Mohammedan turns Ghazi, sees sudden visions of the houris of paradise who can be gained by the slaying of an unbeliever...So, comrades, we understand the present preferential treatment of Mohammedans in India: they have been won over to loyalty by praise and promises of concessions. (Ghosh 561)

In a similar vein, while criticising the colonial government's move to ban Sati in Barathpur, Vashista suddenly begins criticising the Parsi custom of leaving their dead bodies in the open for natural decay and as food for scavenging animals. He says:

...in the last few years four millions of lives have been lost in India from plague alone. The Hindus burn their dead, the Mohammedans bury them: but the two hundred thousand Parsis in India, your special friends and protégés, expose their dead—and afterwards the vultures dip their beak in the pools of the Indian Empire. Thus you allow an infinitesimal minority of two hundred thousand to contaminate the rest of the three hundred millions. (Ghosh 440)

Undoubtedly, the major thrust of criticism is against the colonial government's appeasement of the Parsis and their extreme fidelity to the empire, yet the repeated mention of their negligible numerical strength; blatantly exposes majoritarian arrogance on Vashista's part. What is more crucial is the incorporation of the Muslims in the conception of India, since the

three hundred millions obviously include the numerical strength of the Muslims. Though, Barathpur, the microcosmic representation of India, is conceptualised as a Hindu space, yet Ghosh's conception of India, at least, statistically incorporates the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> Although the Parsis are criticised for their kowtowing to the colonial government, they are also considered as Indians. Later on Vashista says, "So the Parsis are Indians after all!" (Ghosh 440)

*Hindupore* engages with religious questions at greater length. The presence of Muslim and Buddhist characters portrays the religious scenario in a more holistic fashion. As already discussed, the mere presence of characters from different religions does not usurp the centrality accorded to Hinduism. The novel is interspersed with anti-Muslim rhetoric. Throughout the novel, Mitra portrays the Muslims as alien aggressors who invaded the sacred Hindu territory of India. At a particular juncture, Mohanlal, the prime minister says, "Her foreign rulers have included some iconoclasts from Central Asia. They did everything to break the faith of Hindu in his creed, but failed—miserably failed." (Mitra 54). Similar kind of rhetoric has also been used in the context of the Bhairon Temple episode. Yet, in tune with the ambiguity with which both the novel deals with most of the issues, Mitra portrays the cordial relation of Raja Ram Singh and Nabob Shamshere Khan. The Nabob is portrayed in a brighter light, as a peaceful man and a great patron of Persian art and culture. Their amity and the spectacular ascendancy of Sircar in the Muslim state of Karimabad are the two instances where Mitra shows amicable coexistence and the composite culture of India with the intermingling of the two major religions of the putative nation. In every other instance, the two religions are portrayed as combatants, and Islam is invariably represented as the one to de-sacralise the sacred land of the Hindus. Apart from the two instances mentioned above, both the authors seem to subscribe to the colonial historical sense which projected India as a battle ground of the Hindus and Muslims.

In case of other religions, especially Buddhism, both the novels showcase a peculiar kind of hegemonic incorporation into the fold of Hinduism as Alex Tickell rightly points out, "In Ghosh's novel, as in Mitra's for slightly different reasons, the cultural proximity of Buddhism and Hinduism is given significant emphasis" (*Terrorism* 183). At one instance in *Hindupore*, Mr. Sircar says, "What is Buddhism but reformed Hinduism? What is

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<sup>1</sup> Sudipto Kaviraj uses a similar argument in the context of the song *Bande Mataram*, where Bankim Chandra Chatterjee refers to the numerical strength of the Indians which includes both the Hindus and Muslims. This idea is derived from the essay, "Imaginary History", in his book, *The unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*, p., 132.

the church of Jagannath but assimilation of Hinduism and Buddhism? Hindu imperialism wanted a church to suit all sects and all castes” (Mitra 277). Ghosh denies the divinity of Buddha in the course of his novel and explains that the signs of Divinity attributed to Buddha were inspired by the biographies of Krishna. “Krishna’s boyhood had been full of wondrous signs of his future destiny, so much indeed that the biographer of Buddha attributed some of them to Buddha” (Ghosh 45). Even in his discussion with Wintgate, Barath denies Buddha’s claim to divinity while he meticulously proves Krishna’s divinity through some obscure and abstruse arguments. Even the Buddhist pilgrim from Japan says that Buddhism is “only another name for the vast synthesis which in India is called Hinduism. The Brahmin monk has Hinduised the Buddhism of Japan...” (Mitra 287). The narrative strategy of making people from other religions to accept the hegemonic nature of Hinduism is very apparent in such statements. As Partha Chatterjee clearly states:

In fact, the notion of ‘Hinduness’ in the historical conception cannot be, and need not be, defined by any religious criteria at all. There are no specific beliefs or practices which characterize this ‘Hindu’ and the many doctrinal or sectarian differences among Hindus are irrelevant to this concept. Indeed, even such anti-vedic and anti-brahminical religions as Buddhism and Jainism count here as ‘Hindu’. Similarly, people outside the brahminical religion and outside caste society are also claimed as part of the Hindu jati. Clearly excluded from this jati are religions like Christianity and Islam. (“History” 126)

Moreover, any simplistic assumption about the marginalisation of Buddhism as a part of the narrative strategy is infinitely complicated, especially in the context of *Prince of Destiny*, since, at the end of the novel, Barath, the projected leader of the nation, is identified with Buddha—the propagator of non-violence.

This process of hegemonic incorporation has been applied even to Islam in *Hindupore* by Mohanlal. He says:

For instance, the Mahomedan of India, tempered by Hindu associations, is quite a different being from his co-religionists in Central Asia. His fiery iconoclastic practice is so much softened that not seldom he himself reverences the Hindu Gods. Hindu associations have taught him the superiority of spiritual to natural man. (Mitra 55)

The superiority of Hinduism has been established and repeatedly enunciated in both the novels. Although the Islamic past has not been obliterated since both the novels referred to

the Islamic invasion, the glory of Shah Jahan and the efflorescence of Persian culture, yet in the context of contemporary times both the novels seem to suggest a hegemony of the Hindu religion, especially a particular brand of Vedic Brahmanism, which helped them to project a glorious ancient past, whereby, all the other religions are either absorbed in its fold or relegated to a secondary status, though not totally discarded from the precincts of the putative nation. In fact, G. Aloysius brings out the crux of the matter while dealing with cultural nationalism:

Despite the use of socio-politically integrative categories both foreign as well as native, such as nationalism, civilisation, culture, heritage, legacy, Indian, Hinduism etc., cultural nationalism of the dominant groups was perceived with remarkable consistency throughout in the subcontinent as Brahminic, with communal exclusivism rationalized through territorial inclusivism. (144)

The opportunism of the main stream nationalist agenda was apparent; through the dubious method of communal exclusivism they made it apparent that they privilege Hinduism within the precincts of the nation, yet through the devious logic of territorial inclusivism, adherents of other religions were prevented from abdicating the nation, thereby according them a secondary status, either within the fold of Hinduism, as a sect or community within the putative nation. This idea of a Hindu India, as projected by Ghosh and Mitra was evidently the most prevalent ideology but definitely not the only one about the religious character of the nation. The secular nature of nation finds expression in Tagore's conception of India in *Gora*. Tagore's idea of national identity was beyond all religious sectarianism, thereby, encompassing the Hindus, Muslims as well as Christians. Gora, the protagonist when acquainted with the facts of his Irish parentage, therefore, an outcaste according to the traditional ideas of caste, states by the end of the novel:

Today I am a Bharatiya. Within me there is no conflict between communities, whether Hindu or Muslim or Khristan. Today all the castes of Bharat are my caste. (Tagore, *Gora* 475)



## Caste and Class

Caste was regarded as one of the crucial signifiers of identity and a building block of the Indian society during the colonial times. Due to the massive ethnographical enterprises undertaken by both the colonial state and individual Orientalist scholars and the decennial census regularly undertaken by the colonial government; caste was always at the forefront of discourses—both colonialist and nationalist. Coupled with the enumeration of a vast population as distinct and separate castes by the bureaucratic colonial state, the diatribes against caste system inflicted by the Orientalist scholars as well as the Christian missionaries shaped the nationalist discourses on caste. Due to the limitations imposed on the access to systems of knowledge and modes of economic production by caste system in the Indian social set-up, there is congruence in the operation of the class and caste categories in most cases. Therefore, in this section, I have simultaneously analysed marginalisation of indigenous people along both the categories. Yet it should be remembered that, while class is primarily determined by the position of the caste in the traditional hierarchy, it is by no means exclusive and is guided by various other factors, which have been dealt with in this section. In the case of Ghosh and Mitra, writing in English for primarily Anglophone readers situated outside the precincts of the country, the enormous pressure of presenting the country in a suitable hue to earn the applause of the metropolitan readers, both for themselves and for their motherland, shaped the discourses of caste in their novels.

While nationalist discourses accorded caste discourses a certain degree of primacy, that did not necessarily entail a reformist agenda for the upliftment of the people lower down in the traditional caste hierarchy or incorporation of the nitty-gritties of their deplorable existence within the agenda of nationalist liberation, essentially a movement dominated and constituted by the *crème de la crème* of Indian society before the mass movements inaugurated by Gandhi in the early twenties. They continued to be regarded as marginal within the nationalist imagination. Unlike, in the contemporary era when caste discourses primarily focus on the lower castes, in the context of early twentieth century colonial India, caste discourses primarily focussed on the defence of the Caste system from the scathing critique of European scholars and Colonial officials. While there were great admirers of caste system among Orientalist scholars but on the whole, Europeans generally

subscribed to the opinion put forward by James Mill that caste system was a deplorable social stratification:

We have seen likewise, that by the division of people into castes, and the prejudices which the detestable views of the Brahmens raised to separate them, a degrading and pernicious system of subordination was established among the Hindus, and that the vices of such a system were there carried to a more destructive height than among any other people. (Mill 236)

In response to such criticism, Indians in the colonial era, of diverse political hues—from traditional Hindu nationalists to loyalist citizens of the Empire, both westernised and traditional—projected the Caste system as a unique, beneficial, virtuous and moral system of social stratification which kept the Indian society intact, maintaining the purity of the so-called Aryan race. The projection of caste system as a unique and distinguishing feature of Indian society has been repeatedly stressed in *Hindupore* by statements such as “In India caste is everything”, “Caste is regarded in India as the ‘Angel of Light’”. The sanitization of the caste system almost became a prestige issue on the part of these authors. The essence of their argument has been captured by G. Aloysius:

Indeed this hierarchical Varna-based ordering of groups with presumed natural tendencies and aptitudes was hailed as the great national-social synthesis effected by the so-called Aryan genius that contained the core of the continuity from the past, though the present, to the future of the cultural nation. (134)

In the vortex of this debate between the colonizer and the upper caste/class sections of the colonized Indian population, the reformist agenda and the upliftment of the lower castes were given negligible consideration.

In *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*, both the authors engage in a defence of the caste system, which was quite symptomatic of the times; by their strategy of projecting the ‘ideality’ of the system as opposed to the ‘empirical-historical reality of caste’ (P. Chatterjee *The Nation* 174). One of the primary strategies adopted by Ghosh and Mitra to cover up the heinous operation of the caste system is to make the British characters praise the system in its ideal conception. In *Hindupore*, Reverend Long, a Christian missionary, opines that caste system is “A vast hierarchical system is firmly rooted throughout the length and breadth of the land, perfect in its organization notwithstanding all the changes that passing

ages have brought upon religious and social institutions" (Mitra 25). Even the Japanese pilgrim praises caste system at great length. He says, "Hinduism humanizes labour. Caste makes the proudest Raja share the joys and sorrows of the poorest peasant. Hinduism brings harmony between the capitalist and the labourer, the essence of honest Socialism" (Mitra 292). Even Lord Tara constantly praises the system of caste discrimination. In the present context, these statements seem banal and devoid of common sense yet the intellectual climate of early twentieth century regarded Caste as a naturally given social order which had the sanction of tradition, providing a social cohesion and harmony to Indian society. In his book, *Nationalism*, based on the lectures delivered in Japan and the United States, even Tagore, the arch liberal humanist, considers caste as part and parcel of Indian tradition and having a somewhat beneficent aspect for the society, "...in her caste system India in all seriousness accepted her responsibility to solve the race problem in such a manner as to avoid all friction, and yet to afford each race freedom within its boundaries" (Tagore, *Nationalism* 78). In fact to defend caste system, was the order of the day and consideration of the existential malaise of the lower castes was never a factor to be considered, although thinkers like Vivekananda and Tagore himself, as in the same piece quoted above, refer to the rigidity of the system.

The celebration of caste system, through selective appropriation goes a long way in the marginalisation of the lower castes in the context of Indian society. This was primarily possible by the devious logic of "Adhikari-Bheda (literally, differential rights, claims, or powers) conveyed the notion of each jati and sampraday (caste and sect) having its own rituals and beliefs in an unified but hierarchically differentiated structure within which each knew its appropriate place" (Sarkar, *Writing Social History* 368). While Mitra's mouthpiece, Reverend Long refers to the hierarchical system and Tagore refers to the boundaries, they never mention any thing regarding the consequences of the presence of a rigid hierarchy on the people from the lower castes and the society as a whole. Early twentieth century was myopic regarding this aspect of caste system, except for a few intellectuals like Jyotirao Phule and Periyar. Partha Chatterjee brings out the crux of the matter:

In the Indian context, the system of castes seems to represent an obvious paradigmatic form for signifying identity and difference. On the one hand castes are mutually separate as though they were distinct species of natural beings, and on the other, they are mutually bound together as parts, arranged hierarchically, within a social whole...the dominant

view has been that it provides a framework for harmonizing the mutual interdependence of separate groups through the inculcation of the shared values about the unity of the system as a whole. What is not recognised is the equally systematic nature of the rejection of the supposedly “shared” values by groups that are inferior in caste ranking. (*The Nation* 165-66)

In fact to speak about the ills of caste system was to represent India as a divisive society, an anathema for the project of unification for nationalist solidarity. When caste system was critiqued by the British, to defend it became the sacred duty of every Indian, not only of the nationalists but also for Indians with loyalist or ambiguous sympathies, like that of Mitra and Ghosh.

Even within the fictional world of both these novels the characters belonging to the lower castes remain marginal and are situated within a milieu of dominance of the upper castes/class. In consonance with the dominant mode of nationalist imagination, where lower caste people were accorded secondary status, in *Prince of Destiny*, Ghosh also engages with the issue of caste in the sub-plot concerning the courtship and marriage of Madhava and Kamona. There is a general tendency in both the novels to elide the representation of the lower castes/class. All the important characters belong to the aristocratic upper caste/class. The erasure is crucial, when we take into consideration the tendency to sanitize the portrayal of India. By this crucial strategy, both the authors elide the representation of the deplorable living conditions of the have-nots of Indian society. The few lower caste characters like Dukhia in *Hindupore* and Kamona and Girbar Gulab’s companions in *Prince of Destiny* are voiceless, have a marginal presence and are portrayed in a seamier hue. The marginal status accorded to these characters in the fictional world is symptomatic of their marginal social status within the putative nation.

Another crucial strategy adopted by these authors, especially Mitra, to marginalise the lower castes is by the repeated assertion of the importance of Brahmins in the Hindu Indian society and consequently their political importance in the colonial set-up. Their importance arising from the moral hold they have over the people of all other castes. It is curious that the Brahmin population was and continues to be negligible in the country but neither Ghosh nor Mitra ever speak about the political importance of the multitude that does not belong to the hallowed twice born caste. It is all the more intriguing that the novelists themselves are not Brahmins, which in a significant way reflects the ideological consensus

about the supremacy of Brahminical authority even among the educated elite belonging to other castes. Mitra devotes huge sections of the novel extolling virtues of the Brahmans in general and priests of the Bhairon Temple and Bargad Bairagi, in particular. While Ghosh does not express anything directly, yet the significance, almost indispensable status of Vashista, the high priest of Vishnu, in the political affairs of Barathpur state, seems to point the significance of Brahmans in the society. Both Mitra and Ghosh celebrate the asceticism of the Brahmans and their dedication to the national as well as to the colonial cause, which is inherently contradictory. Their primary aim is definitely not freedom from British suzerainty, but some kind of autonomous operation of the Indian society in harmony with colonial dominance. The celebration of Brahminical authority—whether spiritual or political—in a way sanctifies the Brahminical rituals and the notions of purity which is the basis of caste system and thereby marginalises the lower castes. Regretting the fact that Brahmans are not given their due by the colonial administration, Mitra writes, “They refuse to recognise what a political factor the Brahman is in India” (Mitra 140). In fact the caste-class nexus in the social domination of the masses becomes apparent in both the novels. While Mitra is more explicit in his valorisation of the caste-class nexus and the imbalance in the power relations between the aristocrats and Brahmans on the one hand and the lower castes and peasants on the other hand; Ghosh, while subscribing to the ideology, is more implicit. Mitra writes:

Anglo-Indians almost ignore the immense influence of Princes and Brahmans over the countless masses of people. Caste is regarded in India as the ‘Angel of Light’... Hinduism is a great religious society, as well as political organization. We must work with it, or be destroyed by it. (Mitra 219-220)

The appeasement of this caste-class nexus has been put forward in both the novels as the only way to assuage the simmering political discontent in the India against the colonial government, which, of course is an indirect reference to the Swadeshi Movement of 1905. Even Ghosh writes:

...there are in India many families of highest caste—descended from feudal thakurs, princes, even kings—whose present impoverishment must soon demand the attention of those responsible for the administration of India, or else the forces making for discontent will increase. (Ghosh 89)

In fact the political stance of appeasement of the upper echelons of the Indian society; whether in terms of caste or class, renders the masses of Indian populace

devoid of any voice or agency and makes them the passive agents of their own subordination. Like the women, the lower castes and classes are depicted as willingly submitting to the paternalistic control of the upper caste/class Hindu patriarchy with no political or social aspirations for themselves. In fact their aspirations and the ensuing conflict of interest has been relegated as secondary to the political movement of national liberation spear-headed by the elite. As Sumit Sarkar rightly comments, "...Yet caste, along with gender oppression, all too often became relegated as issues of 'social' reform less immediately relevant than 'basic' questions of political independence or class struggle" (*Writing Social History* 367). In spite of their fierce contestation in the political arena both the British colonizer and the upper caste colonized were in unison in their conception of the masses as inert, gullible and respectful of authority whether in political terms, in the case of aristocrats and spiritual, in the case of theocracy. Speaking about Lord Lytton's notion about the Indian peasantry, Charles Metcalf writes:

In his view the Indian peasantry were an 'inert mass' capable of being moved only by their native chiefs and princes, and these princes in turn responded most effectively to symbol and 'sentiment'. (Metcalf 77)

A view of similar nature is also expressed by Raja Ram Singh:

The British government fails to comprehend that the hereditary devotion and reverence of the two hundred millions of Hindus under its rule have been for hundreds of years centred upon their ineradicable faith in their native rulers and priests, and that...its influence over the masses of the people depends upon the support and loyalty of the Rajas and high-caste gentlemen whom it is the best policy of a wise and enlightened government to conciliate. (Mitra 283)

The similarity in their conception about the hapless multitudes of India, apart from exposing the identical class affiliation along both sides of the colonial divide, also provided the newly valorised discourse of a shared Aryan Brotherhood, which both the novelists along with the Hindu nationalists mention repeatedly in the course of the novels.

The marginalisation of the lower caste/class is not only undertaken by the apotheosization of Brahminical authority but also by their demonisation. At a particular instance, Mitra blames the lower caste for the Sepoy mutiny of 1857. He writes:

Lord Roberts, in his recent book about India, finally established the fact that it was the low-caste Hindus employed at the Government manufactory of cartridges for the native troops before the Mutiny who made known the secret use of the materials that offended the caste sentiment of the Sepoy army. (Mitra 232)

By depicting the lower-castes as detrimental to the British colonial interests, Mitra demonises them in the eyes of the British readers, especially considering the British paranoia about the mutiny of 1857. Yet, it has an unintended effect, because, through this crucial act, the lower castes are accorded an agency which they are otherwise denied in the course of the novel. The strategy of demonisation is applied even in the depiction of Charles Hunt, a Eurasian intelligence official. Mitra furnishes his character with all sorts of villainies. In fact the presence of the Eurasian was an anathema to the proponents of pure Hindu nation dominated by the Aryan stock which primarily meant upper castes in the early twentieth century Indian parlance. In fact, part of the prejudice transpires from the fact that Charles Hunt is the son of lower caste maid servant, Dukhia. Mitra is highly critical of his ascent into the corridors of power and his subversion of the traditional hierarchy of power distribution along the lines of race/caste/class. In the language of Mitra:

If the man has a fair complexion and is brazen enough to ape the ruling class, there is no limit to his possible success in life. He may be the son of a Dukhia, but if in the Government service, he may bully the greatest Indian Prince. (Mitra 49)

Taking cue from Victorian English society's penchant for racial purity which went well with Indians having traditional faith in Caste, the reason for such disgust was race, class as well as caste. In fact, here Mitra echoes the British government's discomfiture and anathema of the Eurasian people, the product of mixed marriages between British men and Indian women. As Indrani Sen writes, "Irrespective of the fairness of skin, Anglo-Indian discourse continued to perceive people of mixed races with a combination of racial contempt and moral suspicion" (I. Sen 49). Ironically, in *Hindupore* itself, Mitra advocates the marriage between Lord Tara and Rani Kamala on grounds of the political potential of such an aristocratic union.

Quite interestingly, in their representation of the peasants, neither of the novelists ever mentions discontent among the peasants or the string of peasant revolts organised predominantly by the tribals and men of lower castes, which interspersed the colonial rule since the later part of the eighteenth century. This significant erasure of peasant insubordination is a crucial strategy not only to take away any agency or voice of the peasants

who primarily belonged to lower caste/class but also to obliterate their history which at critical junctures was autonomous/distinctive from the official history of the of the national liberation movement guided by the dominant upper-caste/class. In fact, Raja Ram Singh gives a bucolic picture of the masses:

They are an honest, simple-hearted race, content to toil for their daily bread, and bless God for it. The poorest man works for his wife and children, and shares all he has with them. (Mitra 99)

The representation of upper caste poor people has been undertaken along similar lines. The upper caste servants like Poltu and Bhima in *Hindupore* and Moolraj in *Prince of Destiny* are virtuous and disciplined. While all of them are depicted as ideal servants yet the class factor remains the determining factor in their life. They have no individual wishes and their life is guided by the wishes and whims of the upper class/caste aristocrats. In both the novels the class equation is masked by the enlightened paternalism of the aristocrats and the willing submission of the lower class servant. The dynamics of power involved in the existence has been aptly dealt with by Tanika Sarkar:

As *adhinata* was the crucial term on gender as well as political relations, so *dasatya* (slavery or servitude) became a key concept to explicate, or rather to deny, a third dimension of power—that of class and caste. Within this household bound discourse a lower-class, lower-caste person could only assume the figure of the domestic servant whose servitude was constructed as willed surrender to enlightened paternalism, and thus provided another justification for Hindu patriarchy. (43)

The primary aim behind this type of idealist portrayal of master and servant relationship is to project a unified Hindu society on the surface, under the guidance of the benign upper caste/class patriarchy, while keeping the tensions of class and caste under carpet thereby maintaining the traditional hierarchy.



## Gender

Barath answered him. His heart was vibrating with emotion. “Father, something bids me labour my uttermost to bring England and India together, and unite them in ties of affection stronger far than triple steel—aye, almost as man and woman.”

Vashista stared at the comparison. A vague apprehension smote him. “And which country wouldst thou make the man, and which country the woman?”

Barath paused. They were now standing by the pool nearest the inner palace. Gazing in the water and resting his hand on the hilt of his sword, Barath answered musingly, “India the man. Because it is the older.” (Ghosh 367)

Among the various ideologies through which colonialism tried to secure its legitimacy, the idea of the territorial space of the India as feminine, which the masculine British colonizer impregnates with force to control and ‘civilize’ was very much in currency.<sup>2</sup> The ascribed femininity was also applied to the colonized men leading to various tensions in the gender relations within the Indian community as well as their relation with the British colonizer. The ramifications of such a gendered notion of the colonial situation are immediately palpable from the dialogue between Barath and Vashista in *Prince of Destiny*, which inverts the colonial notion, though the discourse remains foregrounded on gender. Barath ascribes the masculine role to India on grounds of its antiquity. While such a formulation privileging antiquity is not without problem, yet it is certain that Ghosh is acting in opposition to the prevalent colonial notion of a feminine India.

The unequal relation of power between the colonized and the colonizer, in the political arena produced by colonialism, was symbolised by the dominance of men and masculinity over female and femininity (Nandy 4). The imbalance in the distribution of power and its symbolic representation along the lines of gender was crucial in the formulation of gender relations within the domestic space of the colonized society and the construction of the Indian female subjectivity under the auspices of nationalism. The specific version of female subjectivity duly projected by the Indians of diverse political hue, whether explicitly or implicitly nationalist or loyalist towards the empire was in response to colonial

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<sup>2</sup> This idea has been expressed by many commentators. I have primarily taken it from Indrani Sen’s book, *Woman and Empire: Representations in the Writings of British India, 1858-1900*.

ideologies as well as to the traditional notions of femininity. These constructions of the Indian female identity and notions of femininity were imperative in the context of contemporary socio-political atmosphere of colonial dominance and political struggle against the colonial authority. The construction of the essential Indian femininity was produced at the interface of various ideologies—both at conflict as well as concord with each other, working simultaneously. They were both in conjunction as well as in disjunction to the ideologies subscribed by colonialism and its interface with nationalism.

Going by Partha Chatterjee's formulations of the inner and outer domain of nationalism and nationalism's bid to declare independence and self-sufficiency in the inner domain; gender relations within the context of the domestic arena became a question of primary importance. This question found direct expression in the agenda of reform of the traditional religion and custom with respect to women especially in the context of mid-nineteenth century. Burning issues of the era like Sati and widow remarriage all surface in the context of the novels, albeit anachronistically. But what is intriguing is that the reformist ideology of nationalism of mid-nineteenth century has been discarded and both the novels showcase a peculiar variety of conservatism. Such conservatism was characteristic of the nationalist politics in the context of the early twentieth century. Even Tagore expresses this conservative stance through the ultra nationalist character of Gora who unequivocally states the position of women within the realm of hearth. He says in an argument with Binoy:

As time has two divisions, day and night, so do man and woman form two parts of society. In the natural state of society, woman is veiled; like night—all her functions are private and unseen...If we were to drag women out into the overt world of work, then the whole covert set-up of their functioning would get destroyed. That would harm the peace and the health of society because a kind of madness will prevail. (Tagore, *Gora* 107)

In the context of early twentieth century, there was a general tendency to revert to the old tradition in order to construct the nationalist spirit, and revivalist nationalism in India has always been associated with the conception of an ideal Hindu womanhood which simultaneously exalted women to great spiritual heights while conveniently keeping them in a subordinate social position. Partha Chatterjee while engaging with the liberal critique of this phenomenon writes:

The new politics of nationalism “glorified India’s past and tended to defend everything traditional”; all attempts to change customs and life-style began to be seen as the aping of western manners and were thereby regarded with suspicion. Consequently nationalism fostered a distinctly conservative attitude toward social beliefs and practices. (*The Nation* 116)

Yet deviating from the straightforward critique of nationalism’s conservative stance with regard to gender issues, Chatterjee interprets this as nationalism’s refusal to negotiate with the colonial state in the matters related to the inner domain of culture where it has already declared sovereignty. Chatterjee labels this as the success of nationalism “in situating the women’s question in an inner domain of sovereignty” (P. Chatterjee, *The Nation* 117). In whichever way, we may interpret this, there was a gradual marginalization of the gender issues by the turn of the century while enormous priority was accorded to the political struggle of nationalism to seize the reins of power from the colonial state. In the context of these novels, the marginalization has been vividly portrayed through the characters of Delini, Kamona, (victims of the custom of Sati) and Suvona in *Prince of Destiny* and Raja Ram Singh’s wife and Jumna Bai’s daughter-in-law in *Hindupore*.

Yet it would be a fallacy to consider that Indian society in the mid-nineteenth century was more liberal than that of the early twentieth century. The basic premise of strengthening conservatism was primarily ideological and was palpable in symbolic representation of women in various cultural discourses such as literature. The overarching patterns of femininity and women’s position in society underwent significant changes albeit among a miniscule portion of the society. The ambivalence of the situation has been beautifully captured by Susie Tharu:

This nationalist colour to what is really a common trend –glorifying women who fulfil their wife and mother roles with exceptional ardour—placed an enormous burden on the women who came within its defining scope. It was the women, their commitment, their purity, their sacrifice, who were to ensure the moral, even spiritual power of the nation and hold it together. But even as we point this out, we must not forget that this phase also made for a positive evaluation of femininity that did allow for a limited growth... Individual women, especially those who came from families that had risen economically and socially during the colonial regime, were able to develop, to move close to and sometimes even achieve leadership and power... (263)

Even if we neglect the class/caste aspect of the changes brought about, which will be dealt later, primarily taking place among the urban, elite, upper caste families, the path-breaking changes that were allowed, produced no significant alteration in the over arching patterns of gender relations and status of women in the Indian society. The nationalist patriarchy, while providing some concessions in terms of female education or marriageable age, basically tried to legitimise its subordination of women. By making women, the repository of essential culture and nation, they confined women within the domestic arena, the quintessential national space in the age of colonial domination. The discourse of ‘adhikar-bheda’ was applied to legitimise the disabling consequences of apparently enabling reforms like education. The primary assumption of ‘adhikar-bheda’ was that every being has specific rights but they were differentiated. (S. Sarkar, *Beyond* 130). And the lot of the women were given rights within the home. It is curious to note that nationalist gender ideologies of early twentieth century was curiously parallel to the Victorian doctrine of ‘separate spheres’ which allotted women the space at home. In fact it is interesting how both the contesting patriarchies in conflict used similar ideologies to legitimise their marginalisation of women. This is aptly demonstrated by the poem “The Rights of Women” that Mr. Long recites to Celitia about women’s rights in *Hindupore*:

The Rights of Women, what are they?  
 The Right to labour, love, and pray;  
 The Right to weep with those that weep,  
 The Right to wake when others sleep  
 .....

The Right to live for those we love,  
 The Right to die, that love to prove;  
 The Right to brighten earthly homes  
 With pleasant smiles and gentle tones. (Mitra 235)

The poem is a paradox since it glorifies subjugation and self-annihilation of women in the service of patriarchy and labels them as women’s rights. This Victorian model of ‘Angel in the House’ was co-opted to formulate the gender ideologies of the era.

The portrayal of British women in the novels demonstrates the similarity in the discourse. In *Prince of Destiny*, while Ellen is portrayed as the epitome of suffering womanhood and as a quintessential mother, very similar to the model of exemplary Indian motherhood; Nora is depicted as the potential model wife according to Indian terms. The astrologer in Barathpur states that she is capable of committing Sati, “which is the last word on womanhood” (Ghosh 535). Both these characters are curiously parallel to the traditional Indian models of exemplary womanhood like Sita, Savitri and Shakuntala, each one of whom goes on to great lengths of suffering and annihilation for the benefit of her household and husband. In *Hindupore*, Mr. Long praises Celitia for not asserting her rights, in spite of her education and economic independence, while Mabel Robson always earns the displeasure of the author as well as the male characters like Lord Tara, Mohan Lal and Mr. Ochterlony for her independence of spirit and opinion. Yet, it should be taken into consideration that Nora, Barath’s English beloved, Mabel Robson and Celitia Scott, a female doctor, has greater degree of mobility and independence, both economic and otherwise; than any of the Indian female characters in the novels. In spite of the broad convergence of gender ideologies with Victorian Britain, there were significant points of divergence in the nationalist gender ideologies in order to suit Indian society. These points of divergence are very significant in the context of the times because nationalist gender ideologies of colonial India was primarily shaped by the criticism of the colonizer. Thus, the points of divergence are crucial in order to create a legitimate as well as separate space for nationalist gender ideologies.

One of the primary colonial criticisms, in opposition to which Indian, including Ghosh and Mitra, operated, was the idea of the complete subjugation of Indian women and their deplorable existence inside the purdah under the domination of the indigenous patriarchy as well as theocracy. The purdah system came under severe attack from both the Anglo-Indian and the British press which goaded Indians to glorify the female existence behind the purdah (I. Sen 52-53). There is a characteristic anxiety in both the novels to rectify the notion of an oppressed Indian womanhood and to portray them as independent, though willingly accepting the cloistered existence behind the purdah and the leadership of the male in all spheres of life, apart from the domestic arena. In *Prince of Destiny*, the reference to Rajput warrior women like Barath’s maternal grandmother, the courageous woman of his family who fought to protect her husband and the prevalence of Swayamvara

ceremony for marriage all refer to a certain degree of female emancipation and empowerment in ancient and medieval India. Ghosh, in consonance with British Orientalist scholars valorised the “Virangana figure with her martial prowess and fierce spirit” (I. Sen 51), yet the present age is depicted to be devoid of such courageous or emancipated women, perhaps, in order to converge with the Victorian gender ideology. In spite of being aware of the custom of Swayamvara in her family, Rani Delini willingly accepts the fact that her husband will be wisely selected by her parents. Thus, the contradiction and ambiguity of the nationalist gender ideology is apparent. In *Hindupore*, Mitra takes recourse to a slightly different strategy in order to portray the condition of women in India. Here, the Indian characters constantly refute the British notion that Indian women live under constant subjugation. Raja Ram Singh refers to his wife as a ‘despot’ in the matters relating to the domestic arena while his mother, at least seemingly possesses some powers in matters beyond the hearth. Mohan Lal, representative of the new patriarchy in the novel, rectifies Mrs. Ochterlony’s notion of the mute, oppressed and subjugated Indian women, and says, “Ah, that is how poor India has been vilified by travellers who never met a Hindu lady to speak to” (Mitra 157). On a similar vein, Ghosh writes at the fag end of the novel that Melnor “realized the enormous power exercised by the women of the upper class in India” (Ghosh 480). Yet the presence of any real power has not been depicted in the female characters of the novel. Primarily belonging to upper caste and upper class elite families they have no mobility and basically practice purdah. Yet both the authors refer to the symbolic feminine power over their husbands and label these women as powerful which is primarily dependent upon the socio-economic position of their husbands within a feudal set-up.

In *Prince of Destiny*, Vashista visualises the image of Barath’s future wife as Sita, the epitome of exalted womanhood. He says, “The image will be like unto Sita, Rama’s wife. I shall see to its making” (Ghosh 381). Victorian discourses on femininity curiously shaped nationalist discourses on femininity and can be seen in the fact that the nationalist urge was to create the image of a ‘new woman’ who will be modern yet not western. As Partha Chatterjee has rightly described:

The “new woman” was to be modern, but she would also have to display the signs of national tradition and therefore would be essentially different from the western woman.  
(*The Nation* 9)

In context of early twentieth century, women had two models to emulate—the liberated English memsahib who was increasingly visible in the cities and were in direct frequent contact with the upper echelons of Indian society and the traditional Indian model (whether Hindu or Muslim). The presence of Nora and Celitia performs a crucial function in the context of early twentieth century construction of Indian femininity, “The English woman was incorporated into the process of cultural imperialism by being inscribed in colonial discourse as a female paradigm to be emulated by the Indian woman, who was emerging from the veil” (I. Sen 34). The nationalist construct of woman was like a balancing act between the two overarching models without doing much damage to the traditional gender hierarchy. Both Ghosh and Mitra follow the pattern of nationalist ideology. The enabling changes were brought about by the means of education, either formal or informal, primarily in vernacular but sometimes in English. While education brought about significant changes in the construct of ideal women along with a considerable change in the ways women perceive themselves, it never posed any threat to the supremacy of patriarchy. Nationalist politics while acknowledging the importance of education for women yet restricted their mobility. The precincts of home were considered the rightful domain of the women and education was primarily:

meant to inculcate in women the virtues—the typically bourgeois virtues characteristics of the new social forms of “disciplining”—of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, and a personal sense of responsibility, the practical skills of literacy, accounting, hygiene, and the ability to run the household according to the new physical and economic conditions set by the outside world. (P. Chatterjee, *The Nation* 129)

In *Prince of Destiny*, there is no reference to the education, whether formal or informal, of the important female characters but in a single episode Ghosh refers to the upper caste, elite women’s knowledge of English which definitely hints to the availability of some sort of formal or informal education (480). In *Hindupore*, all the significant female characters like Raja Ram Singh’s wife, Rani Kamala and the Bengali woman Saroj have knowledge of English. Quite curiously, Rani Kamala also knows Sanskrit. In the context of colonial India, education of women were primarily conducted in Indian languages like Bengali, Hindi and others, though knowledge of English was not uncommon, yet Sanskrit was traditionally forbidden to women. Yet the crux of the matter lies in the fact that none of these women leave the precincts of ‘home’ and most of them are in purdah. However, although mobility

was restricted yet it was perhaps not totally unknown. There is the single instance of Saroj, the Bengali lady who seems to have considerable mobility since she visits the Raja's family in Calcutta all alone. Yet none of these women who constitute the upper echelons of Indian society in terms of their class affiliation think of ever using their education for professional purposes. In fact they never question their confinement or any other norms of patriarchy. The only professional women in the novel are Celitia, a British lady doctor and Dukhia, a lower caste Hindu maid servant. There is not a single professional woman in *The Prince of Destiny*. The household is regarded as the rightful place for women and none of them have substantial control of their life apart from the widow, Jumna Bai, in *Hindupore*, and Kamona, Madhava's fiancée who inherited her father's fortune, in *Prince of Destiny*.

Nationalist consciousness of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century considered the "Hindu home" as an autonomous space, symbolically free, at least in its representation, from the fangs of the colonial state despite the fact that this so called autonomous space was imbued with the tapestries of colonial modernity. The nationalist patriarchy therefore produced a construct of women which was suitable to the discourse of indigenous patriarchal domination. Women were considered as the symbol of inviolate, pure and essential core of the nation. As Tanika Sarkar explicates:

If the household was the embryonic nation, then the woman was the true patriotic subject. The male body having passed through the grind of Western education, office, routine, and forced urbanisation...was supposedly remade in an attenuated, emasculated form by colonialism. The female body, on the other hand, was still pure and unmarked, loyal to the Shastras. (T. Sarkar 43)

The anxiety of portraying women as the willing subjects of their subjugation and confinement is apparent. According to the norms of that era, this was essential in order to keep the society intact from the onslaught of changes it was subjected to by the agency of colonial state. Emancipation of women was necessarily considered to be a western phenomenon against which nationalist patriarchy heaped its sneering comments. Thus, in spite of their education, which was a necessary change, the women are represented as being happily confined in their homes under the guidance and surveillance of the Shastras and indigenous patriarchy. Yet both the authors, in tune with the nationalist patriarchy applied a peculiar strategy to



legitimise the disenfranchisement of women in spite of giving them a significant concession in the form of education. They resorted to glorification and showering encomiums on subjugated womanhood labelling their subjugation as a symbol of emancipation and great privilege. The rhetoric of exaltation was precisely the sugar coated pill which hid the bitter reality of the oppression of women. In *Prince of Destiny*, Vashista, the arch traditionalist-cum-acrimonious nationalist frequently uses the rhetorical device of a woman's putative power over her husband:

Verily the wife of the Hindu has power over his soul, and her position is higher than that of any other wife on earth. (Ghosh 364)

Yet the women themselves make repeated protestations of their weakness, in the manner of Suvona, Barath's future wife, when she says:

I am only a woman, fragile and weak. I seek no glory; I would rather cling to my beloved, and just love him, love him, love him each moment of my life. That would be my heaven. (Ghosh 356)

Such statements on the part of women themselves; make them altogether more vulnerable to the enchainment of patriarchy while the rhetorical empowerment of women by patriarchy leads to an ideological consensus for their subjugation. Both Mitra and Ghosh, in tune with the nationalist ideology follow the pattern. Ghosh's portrayal of Koikai, Barath's mother, and Suvona, his future wife makes this evident. While Koikai hardly figures in the narrative apart from being the mother of the chosen one, Suvona is almost relegated as a non-entity. She becomes the silent victim of the complex web of clashes instituted by the hyper-masculine colonialism, the masculinist nationalism as well as the traditional patriarchy. When Barath chooses renunciation over his royal glory she is left to languish silently. The norms of patriarchy will not allow a second marriage in the presence of a living husband, although absent. She definitely does not possess the power and authority to transform Barath's decision. And the author moves beside the point by a sentimental description, "'She was sad, yet not sad: it was enough that she was spiritually his wife. Would she be more?'" (Ghosh 629) Similarly, in *Hindupore*, Raja Ram Singh's wife is devoid of individuality, name and is referred to as Rani only. Despite Ram Singh's reference that the Rani is quite a despot in her

own way yet nothing of the sort is visible. She seems to live a secluded but comfortable life in purdah without any individuality and personal wish. Contrary to the claims of Vashista, these women have very little control over their own lives, and almost no power over their husbands.

The rhetorical exaltation of women reaches its pinnacle with respect to Sati, the custom of burning the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. The nineteenth century debate on Sati and its subsequent repercussions are portrayed vividly in *Prince of Destiny* albeit anachronistically. Debates on Sati surface in the context of Kamona's and Delini's widowhood. Vashista once again voices the rhetoric of Hindu nationalists. He says:

The essence of Sati is the Hindu wife's superior position spiritually as compared to her husband. Her status is intrinsically higher than that of any wife in the world... (Ghosh 437)

The apotheosization of Sati in a crucial way reflects the marginalization of women within the discourse of nationalism. There is a reference to a park with altars dedicated to individual satis within the precincts of the city of Barathpur. Yet in his justification for the continuation of the custom, Vashista says that Sati was not practiced in Barathpur, though it was not abolished. The complete self-annihilation of the woman on her husband's pyre was regarded as the greatest virtue within the nationalist discourse. In fact Sati was projected as the right of the Hindu widowhood which the alien and intrusive colonial state has infringed. Tanika Sarkar aptly captures the nationalist ideology regarding the custom:

The final and the highest test of the supremacy of Hindu conjugality was the proven past capacity for self-immolation by widows. The sati was an adored nationalist symbol, her figure representing the moment of climax in expositions of Hindu nationalism. (T. Sarkar 42)

Apparantly, so much stress has been given on the volition of Delini, in tune with the historical debate on sati about the willingness of the widow to commit sati, yet the primary subject of the debate is not women but the centrality of tradition and custom and their inviolate nature. Women, regarded as the emblem of national culture and tradition were

supposed to abide by the diktats of tradition and Brahminical scriptures. Therefore, contrary to what appears, the issue at stake was not women but the centrality of the Brahminical scriptures as the locus of authentic Indian tradition.<sup>3</sup>

## Gender and Caste

The issues regarding gender also had its bearing along caste and class lines. In spite of their marginalisation in the social sphere, the upper caste, elite women led a comfortable life, had a little bit of education and possessed considerable power in the household, at least in domestic matters and over their servants. Both *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore* repeatedly refer to the voiceless presence of the maid servants who primarily belong to the lower class, but definitely upper caste, since the touch of a lower caste will defile the household. Mostly, the authors are silent about the lower caste women. It is only in the character of Kamona in *Prince of Destiny* and Dukhia in *Hindupore* that they find a representation.

Ghosh's representation of Kamona is biased. She is projected as a husband catcher. While Ghosh seems to overlook Madhava's father's scheme of procuring a heavy dowry from his bride on the pretext of tradition, he is ever aware of Kamona's "sense of satisfaction at the prospect of fulfilling the most fortunate traditions of her caste by obtaining a husband of higher rank" (Ghosh 95). In this context, Ghosh refers to the Sonar caste as somewhat inferior to the highest caste by remarks such as, "Sonar women, who have not quite the innate delicacy of the highest born", "Sonar's mercenary taste" which definitely vindicates the traditional attributes accorded by caste system and in a way exposes the gendered side of caste prejudice which afflicted women belonging to the castes, lower down in the traditional hierarchy.

In fact, one of the primary differences between the representation of upper caste/class women and their lower caste sister is in terms of their sexuality. Both

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<sup>3</sup> Lata Mani discusses the ideological position of the colonial state, the abolitionist and the traditionalist on Sati in her article "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India" and concludes that the centrality of the Brahminical scripture as the basic premise of the discourse.

Kamona in *Prince of Destiny* and Dukhia in *Hindupore* are depicted as overtly sexual, using their uncontrollable sexuality to achieve their ends in contrast to the moral and sexually chaste upper caste/class woman who remain under the ‘benign’ domination of patriarchy. The portrayal of Kamona’s lustful dance of unfulfilled desire and the reference to Dukhia’s frequent change of lovers are crucial and predominantly reflects their difference from the virtuous, submissive and purdah maintaining upper caste/class women in both the novels. Dukhia, belonging to the untouchable caste, is depicted as having liaison with Colonel Hunt and then a Muslim horse dealer, named Ahmad Ali. The selection of lovers—one British, therefore a Christian and another Muslim, is crucial and exposes the anxiety of the upper caste/class Hindus. The lower castes were always thought to be in liaison with the British coloniser and the Muslims, the arch enemies of nascent Hindu nationalism, thereby, making them a divisive force engaged in sabotage of the nationalist project.

Both *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore* abstain from symbolic gesture of identifying the nation as a blessing mother—in the figure of Bharat Mata.<sup>4</sup> Yet both the novels follow the over-arching gender ideology which resulted as a consequence of such an identification of the nation as a mother. It should be kept in mind that the identification of the nation with women did not necessarily lead to a corresponding amelioration of the condition of real women in society. While their symbolic value was heightened they were thoroughly marginalised, almost obliterated from the public sphere, by the usage of the same symbolic status. Besides, caste prejudice, a bulwark of the Indian society, also worked hand in glove with gender ideologies making the lower caste women doubly marginalised both in terms of their gender and caste. While their lower class status made physical exploitation easily possible, the caste dimension added sexual exploitation on top of that. In *Gora*, Tagore critiques the marginalisation of women, through the mouthpiece character, Binoy:

It seems to me that there is a serious shortcoming in our love for the country. We see only one half of Bharatvarsha... We see Bharat only as a country of men. We don’t see the women at all. (Tagore, *Gora* 106)

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<sup>4</sup> Bankim is a principal proponent of this ideology of representing the nation as Mother Goddess. *Anandmath* is the most canonical novel which represents the nation as mother. This trend was popularized and is still very much in currency. In the context of early twentieth century when both *Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore* were published, this was the prime mode of representing the mother as the embodiment of the nation. But curiously neither of the novels takes recourse to such a strategy, although the prevalent ideology about the construction of female subjectivity which ensued from such a political ideology finds expression in both the novels.

The representation of marginalisation of the various groups with respect to religion, caste, class and gender reflects the power equation within the indigenous society. It also reflects the marginalisation of the conflicts within the colonised societies, by giving primary significance to the conflict between the colonizer and the elite section of the colonised which in general parlance is termed as the national freedom struggle. The hegemonic nature of the emancipatory claim of the nationalist struggle is crystal clear since the political sovereignty of the indigenous elite is not necessarily accompanied by the emancipation of the marginalised groups within the indigenous society. In fact the emancipation and upliftment of the marginal groups of the indigenous society is not even part of the hegemonic nationalist agenda. On the contrary, in order to sanitise and project unity and solidarity of the putative nation, the elite concocts the fiction of the willing submission of the marginalised groups under its hegemonic leadership (celebrated in both the novels), thereby maintaining status quo, which in turn stabilises its authority over the whole of the indigenous society.

## Conclusion

It is perhaps poetic justice that we look at the conclusion of the novels, chosen as primary texts, while writing the conclusion of this research. The novels analysed at great lengths in this research conclude in diametrically opposite ways. While S.M. Mitra's *Hindupore: A Peep Behind The Indian Unrest, An Anglo-Indian Romance* ends on a happy note with the inter-racial, aristocratic and politically significant marriage of Lord Tara and Rani Kamala, Sarath Kumar Ghosh's *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* closes on a melancholic note with Barath's abdication and renunciation of the material world. One novel, that is *Hindupore*, hints at the possibility of harmonious mingling of both the races with greater possibilities of filial and fraternal ties within the scheme of colonialism, on the other hand, *Prince of Destiny* definitely expresses the other radical stance of holistic negation of the very existence of colonialism itself; thereby refuting any possibility of interaction between the two races—both colonizer and the colonized, either combative mode or fraternal. Thus, both the endings represent the two extreme possibilities imagined in the peculiar socio-historical context of the first decade of twentieth century as the blue print of future. They also point to the fact that both the novels capture a particular point in history while everything was undergoing a phase of transition. In retrospect, we know that none of the above possibilities were realized in the future. The development of national movement made the possibility of greater filial and fraternal bonds between the colonizer and colonized negligible yet, it remained a curiously derivative discourse as projected through the analysis of the novels themselves.

The conceptualisation of the putative nation is of crucial significance in the domain of literary representation and remains one of the primary concerns in both the novels. The imagination of the national space in these novels written by Indian authors is not devoid of colonial stains. They too project the nation as a medieval and feudal space like their colonial masters. The nationalist intervention is evident through the glorification of national tradition and culture which imagine the nation as a scared Hindu space. There is a characteristic angst in both the novels to project a sanitised version of the country showcasing an ideal society hiding the squalor, poverty and the social ills of the society. This mode of sanitization obscures the imbalance in the distribution of power within the various communities of indigenous society and contributes to the marginalization of the concerns of

people belonging to the underprivileged groups like the lower caste/class, women as well as minority religion. In fact, rewriting the history and glorifying the culture becomes the prime site of contestation with colonial discourses in these novels. There is also a characteristic inconclusiveness about their idea of nation and nationalism as projected in the novels. This phenomenon is symptomatic of early twentieth century when the ideas about nation and nationalist sentiments were in its formative stages.

Even regarding the construction of identities there is a characteristic inconclusiveness as well as contradiction. Both the novels valorise an upper caste Hindu identity projecting that as the quintessential national identity through the figure of the elite aristocrat who is portrayed as the representative Indian. They are adorned with all the signifiers of essential Indianness, in terms of their dress, home and attitude. The formation of identity occurs both in conjunction as well as disjunction with colonial discourse. Although both Mitra and Ghosh are influenced by the Orientalist construction of an Indian—who is exactly the antithesis of the Western man, yet both of them disagree with the Orientalist discourse in a significant way. There is an impulse to identify with other Asian countries like Japan, or other colonised countries like Ireland produced by the imperatives of anti-imperialist sentiments, nascent in both the novels. The pinnacle of contradiction is attained when both the novelists, in some way or the other identify their central protagonist with the English, their culture and national symbols.

As cultural texts of early twentieth century both the novels reflect the major trends and developments in the national movement. While the elite are represented as the vanguard of the nation, their conflict with the colonizer—primarily cultural in nature—decides the aesthetics and politics of the novels. The agenda of glorifying Hindu Indian tradition depicted in the novels—a necessary corollary of Indian nationalism—betrays the hegemonic nature of nationalist discourses. It puts a grave question on the emancipatory potential of nationalism and exposes the totalising tendencies of nationalist discourses. Nationalism did not necessarily entail the emancipation of underprivileged groups like women, lower castes/class and the minority religious followers. The narrative space provided to these groups and the dynamics of their representation in these novels vividly shows their secondary status within the liberatory project of nationalism.

The genre of Indian English novels—a hybrid of English language and Indian imagination was in its early stages when these novels were written. There is an unmistakable influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in both the novels—in the ways they represent the nation, culture and historical situation. Since the last half of the nineteenth century the genre of historical romance was very popular in all the Indian languages, including Bengali.<sup>1</sup>The genre of these novels as well as their thematic engagement with the ideas of nation and nationalism (a staple theme of literature in Indian languages during the colonial period) shows that there was parallel development in literature produced in Indian languages and English during early twentieth century. With the progress of the twentieth century this connection and close interaction between them have ceased to operate which in the present era, after a span of hundred years, have become separate zones of cultural expression, almost to the point of being hostile to each other.

Coming back to where we began—the novels, it is interesting that despite their failure to anticipate the future, these novels, quite successfully depict the current events, important with respect to nationalism, capturing the dominant ideological strain of the times and, hence, are quite significant as cultural texts of that era.

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<sup>1</sup> Bengali is important in the context of this research since both the novelist are Bengali by origin.



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