# The Myriad Voices of
# The Indian Renaissance
# Transmutation of the Regional
# to the Universal

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## I

Communitarian identities are creating fissures across continents today. Most nations are riven with deep internal dissensions; some even undergo bloodshed frequently, in attempts made towards ethnic cleansing. As identities are increasingly being assumed on the basis of race, religion, class, culture, etc., thinkers around the world are being compelled to think anew on the 'national question'. The term 'nation' is here used to denote a unit—one which is largely accepted to define a geographical/cultural/political unit. Stalin provided a comprehensive definition when he stated, 'A nation is a historically evolved stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up, manifested in a community of culture' (Stalin 1936: 8). We shall return to the question of nationalism and nationality later.

The world has lately seen the disintegration of numerous nations, which it had hitherto come to accept as historically established entities. Violence in Eastern Europe—massacres in Kosovo; large-scale killings in South Asia—Indonesia and Sri Lanka being prominent examples; the division of Pakistan, and the intractable issue of secessionism and insurgency in India are before us. Many nations in Africa continue to experience civil war with the attendant horrific attempts at eradicating entire tribes. Lest it may appear that internal disturbance is limited to some portions of the globe only, it may be relevant to mention the grievances of the Irish, Welsh and the Scots in the United Kingdom; the secessionist posture of the

province of Quebec in Canada; how Basque remains an ulcer for
the Spanish government, and the many divides that the United States
of America conceals beneath the veneer of a monolithic super power.

It ought to be understood that the idea of nationhood today has
evolved through a historical process that placed a pronounced
emphasis on the exclusionary element in cultures, culminating into
a militant discourse, which caused frequent wars before national
boundaries could be drawn on the maps. It was in the nineteenth
century that many European nations came into being. Walter Bagehot
has called it the century of 'nation building'.

Scholars deduce that the sense of national identity is predominantly
founded on the basis of *shared language and unique historical
traditions.*[1] *Language* was perceived by nation-builders as the
cementing force for a country and, in most cases, a specific language
was sought to be made the national language through a uniform
schooling; through the way it was used as the Church language (in
most cases, vernaculars other than Latin), and sundry other factors
such as governmental employment opportunities. Conversely, it has
also been perceived as an instrument of class/caste/gender dominance
and hegemony.

*Historical tradition* is constituted of the past, the ways in which
the people perceive it. The religious past is chief among the major
elements which help to categorize the collective past of a people
aspiring for national identity. Viewed by writers such as Toynbee as
the prime constituent of the consciousness of a civilization,[2] the
religious past is influential in shaping ideas and social mores. In the
Indian context, it acquires great significance.

The second element is the *territorial past*—geography determining
the contours of history. The third element is the *political past*: whether
the country was originally part of a large empire, compelled to adhere
to the norms of the dominating unit from which it later detached
itself or broke away to attain nationhood; whether it had as its nucleus,
a limited tribal pocket from which it expanded onto its present larger
state, incorporating diverse people in the process; whether the
predominant form of government was democratic or autocratic. The
elements of pluralism present in a political system depend on the
last factor.

Another important constituent of the past comprises *memories of
valour*—whether the people were traditionally vanquishers or
vanquished; whether they had traditional rivals. This factor can
assume explosive potential in public sentiment later as themes of

revenge and vindication gain primacy. (We are no strangers to this fact as we constantly witness allusions to past cowardice and exhortations to set past wrongs right, leading, of course, to intemperate words and cruel deeds.)

The *economic past*, its class structure largely determined by the dominant mode of production—aggression or industrial—contains seeds of future class conflict: shapes the political programmes sought to be implemented by governments and serves as the basis of the ideologies based on class conflict.

Finally, the *cultural past* of the nation determines its receptivity to other cultural influences—its literature, architecture, poetry, music and other arts, besides inducing a sense of pride in a people, influences its thought process in diverse ways. Cultural nationalism has assumed protean shapes with the passage of time and is a dynamic concept, contributing to the 'fluidity of nationalities'. This is succinctly expressed by Hayes (1960: 6)

> Nationality has always existed throughout human history, just as there has always been differentiated human culture with a variety of languages and customs and traditions. But specific nationalities have appeared and disappeared, risen and fallen. We know that in antiquity there were Hittite and Phoenician and Etruscan nationalities, Elamite and Edomite nationalities, but where are they now? They are gone, quite swallowed up long ago; only their names and some of their monuments remain. On the other hand, when they throve, where then were the French and English nationalities? These were non-existent; their distinctive languages were not formed in antiquity, but only in the Middle Ages.

However, a jealous faith in the quintessentially eternal character of one's culture has withstood its denial by history and borne with the ravages of time. At different periods of history, culture has become the focus of resistance to alien forces of change. In the present moment, the resistance to European/American attempts at hegemony can be discovered on this plane of regional identity versus a western market culture. Even what is known as 'counter culture' is a protest against the uniform, insensitive global commercial model from within a society. The communist movements foundered on the fear in the minds of the people, that the uniform culture sought to be imposed would erode and destroy their cherished traditional customs—their beloved cultural identity. During the evolution of nationhood in Europe, variegated experiments were conducted: diversification of cultures—Norway and Sweden, or Belgium and Holland; clubbing of cultures—diverse

groups in Russia or the Austrian Empire; and the socialist/communist model which assumed (mistakenly) that cultural differences would melt away if the people were guaranteed the basic economic needs of life.

In India, the post-Colonial discourse still engages with this unresolved tension between identity, self, and the 'other', personified in the dynamics of the traditional, the outside influence, and the expression of this dialectic in an 'alien' language as also in native languages influenced by the historical associations of the alien language. The interesting historical connotations of this dialectic, we will return to later, in greater detail.

While summing up the various ideas of nationhood, we may also distinguish between 'loyalty' and 'patriotism'—how a limited loyalty to individuals/ families/ community/ native place/ dialect/ cultural rituals, attains the larger dimension of patriotism for a geographical unit having diverse individuals, communities, topographical features and climates, through education and other emotional cultivators.

The orientation of the 'national' project acquired increasingly militaristic overtones. Europe, which largely determined the modern concept of nationhood, is replete with examples as to how decent thinking men degenerated into bigotry when confronted with questions of national identity and national glory. The rulers could be hardly expected to behave in a more sedate manner. They were more concerned with territorial aggrandizement than with the upliftment of the masses. Neither did the feudal structure change for the benefit of the majority, nor did the rulers grow any less sceptical of public sentiment, even when it was occasionally directed in their favour. Francis II famously commented on the guerilla uprising of his faithful Tyroleans: 'Today they are patriots for me, tomorrow they may be patriots against me'.

During this period, many nations came to be founded on the ruins of larger ones, as well as on the debris of the national pride of others. The Franco–Prussian War, prior to the unification of Germany, was an apt pointer to this trend. This feeling of one's nation being the sole repository of the 'good' and the 'grand', with an accompanying monolithic 'national culture' was subscribed to by many creative artists of the highest order. They thought that this character was the raison-d-etre of their nationhood. Such a belief in messianic nationalism did not spare even such a humane writer as Dostoevsky, undoubtedly, one of the greatest novelists of all time. We may see as a specimen, this passage from his celebrated novel, *The Possessed*:

If a great people does not believe that the truth is to be found in itself

alone...if it does not believe that it alone is fit and destined to raise up and save all the rest by its truth, it would at once sink into being ethnographic material, and not a great people...A nation which loses this belief ceases to be a nation. [Dostoevsky in Hobsbawm (1992: 103)].

Naturally, such a process of nation building could not be expected in the ultimate analysis to be sensitive to the finer nuances of human/ communitarian relationships. Nationhood did not satisfy the aspirations of most, and many felt cheated of their due. Even in developed countries, skewed development obstructed the benefits of mass production from flowing to the majority. Science and trade could not ensure sustainable development in human terms. The death of the historical sense among the elite aggravated the risk of misappropriation of the common heritage for sectarian ends. Historians occasionally misunderstood the temper of the times and misjudged the tenor of the past. This confusion was transferred to the intelligentsia. Amidst such confusion, where many philosophies accentuate hostility by formulating the theory that human identity is based on irreconcilable divisions based on class, race, religion, caste, etc. the conclusion that social remedy is to be found only in violent conflict seems inescapable.

Bewildered, people have embraced cynicism, rancour, and distrust in public affairs. Culture and religion are becoming battlegrounds and history is being contested across the globe. Violence arising out of this conflict takes its toll in particular among the weak and vulnerable. Women, children, the poor are reduced to pawns on a chessboard in the hands of rapacity and intrigue. Many people have interpreted this situation in a different light and, as a cure, prescribe methods of analysis, which may become part of the contagion.

Some questions arise in this context: Is it proper to read history in such simplistic shades of black and white? Can one overlook the danger inherent in the preoccupation of some schools of psychoanalysis with theories that rationalize and glamourize deviant behaviour as if gratification of appetencies is the sole aim of existence? Are economic studies which prescribe the consumer-oriented model—and inadvertently or otherwise, subscribe to amorality—evidence of cogent analysis?

In the present debates, culture is primarily seen in conflicting terms. Some hear in it the crushed voice of the subaltern; others see proof of an innate superiority of some over others.

Occasionally, in the past, some had stressed, like Vico (1744), that:

...there must in the nature of human institutions be a mental language common
to all nations, which uniformly grasps the substance of things feasible in
human social life and expresses it in as many diverse modifications as these
same things may have diverse aspects.

Such a sentiment can be perceived in the inclusionary voices largely
present in the discourse arising out of the interaction of the east and
the west in recent Indian history, often termed as the Indian
Renaissance. A study of its context and content can be fruitful in
deconditioning the mind from the present rancour and, imbibing
through the process, a receptivity to the eternal voice of
reconciliation, whispering to man over centuries, faintly yet clearly
audible over the din of the 'clash of civilizations'.

## II

Before proceeding to discuss the Indian Renaissance, the temptation
to refer to Vico becomes irresistible, particularly because in the
context of the Renaissance, the translation most in vogue is 'rebirth'.
To bring the context into sharper focus Vico's concept of history
could have been explored in greater detail (sadly beyond the scope
of this paper). We shall make a brief citation from Heer (1996: 309)
[with the prefix that the vision of the Indian Renaissance was
primarily religious, social and largely ressurective]:

He [Vico] saw history as an elaboration of providence. Providence was the first
principle of nations. Providence, as ideal eternal history, bore within it the
history of all nations, cultures, religions, poetry, legal forms, and intellectual
personalities. Every culture had to pass through three stages of development:
the state of the 'gods', the stage of 'heroes' and the stage of 'men'. Although he
accepted the platonic and spiritualistic concept of historical decline, he limited
it to the specific historical era within each given stage. This was principally
because he was more actively concerned with the *corsi-e-recorsi*, with the
possibility of a re-birth of nations, and cultures.

The problem (in the late Middle English sense) or more precisely,
'probleme' of the 'Indian Renaissance' is usually being depicted
under three themes, occasionally with a theme overlapping or
blending into the other.

### Pan Indian Renaissance

The very label of a Pan-Indian Renaissance is problematic for some

analysts. Many of them say that it was a phenomenon largely confined to Bengal, and while contesting the label Renaissance' itself, cite the overwhelming presence of reformers from Bengal in the avante garde of the social reform movement—to conclude that the term Bengal Renaissance would be more apt. Such an idea is indirectly endorsed by scholars like Partha Chatterjee. Chatterjee— a political scientist of the 'Subaltern school', confines his study to Bengal in the book like *The Nation And Its Fragments*. As expressed in Chatterjee (1999: xi):

> All my illustrations come from Colonial and post-Colonial India, and even more particularly from Bengal. But it must also be remembered that the very form of imagining nations is such that even as one talks about a particular historically formed nation, one is left free to implicate in one's discourse others that have not been so formed or whose forms remain suppressed, and perhaps even some whose forms have still not been imagined.

On a different plane, questions raised by Chatterjee, pose serious doubts as to the real and enduring contributions of the mainstream reformers from the point of view of the vast majority of the populace—termed as the subalterns. It flows from the Gramscian concept of hegemony and dominance—where a group, apparently initiating a reform movement, seeks through it, to preempt possibilities of real change and so preserves the hegemony of the dominant group. Marxists (who are themselves occasionally described by the subaltern school as ensign bearers of a system which enables a group to exercise dominance without traditional hegemony), concur to some extent with this view and some have seen even Tagore as 'immensely hegemonic', to use Aijaz Ahmed's precise phrase for Tagore.[3]

The notion of a 'Bengali Indian Renaissance' is rejected outright by Dr Ram Vilas Sharma, the 'eminence grise' of the Marxist school of Hindi literary criticism who has sought to establish the Renaissance of this period as a Hindi phenomenon—encompassing Urdu/Muslim and Hindu/Hindi communities—seeing in it strong anti-feudal, anti-imperialistic and ipso-facto secular overtones. In two germinal texts: *Attharah Sau Sattavan Ki Kranti Aur Marxvaad* and *Hindi Navjagaran, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi Aur Saraswati*, Sharma has endeavoured to prove that this movement—having Hindi Nationalism as its moving spirit—was active in the 'North Western Region', i.e. the Hindi belt comprising Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana'. In his view, this movement

commenced in 1857 and was a component of the revolt of that year, and extremely influential in Indian history—particularly in the political sphere—and would have remained so, even if the Bengal phenomenon by that name had never taken place.

Thus, the question regarding the Pan-Indian character of this interactive process is largely enmeshed with the question regarding the extent to which this process was representative of the ethos of the Indian 'nation'. It is alleged in many quarters, including the post-modernist school of analysis, that the construction of the past, and the formulation of the future civilization model, was done in the lexicon of an elite group, and the marginal sections—women; the impoverished; the disprivileged castes—did not find a voice in the discourse. To use a famous phrase often used in similar contexts, it was an attempt to legitimize the 'grand narrative of history'. This attempt at legitimization accrued from the need to classicize tradition. As in Chatterjee (1999: 73):

> A nation, or so at least the nationalist believes, must have a past. If nineteenth-century Englishmen could claim, with scant regard for the particularities of geography or anthropology, a cultural ancestry in classical Greece, there was no reason why nineteenth-century Bengalis could not claim one in the Vedic age. All that was necessary was a classicization of tradition. Orientalist scholarship had already done the groundwork for this. A classicization of modern Bengali high culture—its language, literature, aesthetics, religion, philosophy—preceded the birth of political nationalism and worked alongside it well into the present century.

This 'pseudo-invention' of a tradition is also thought to contain seeds of a later form of virulent communalism. In Ahmed (1996: 278-279): "The idea of uniform Hindu victimization over a thousand years is as old as Indian modernity itself, and we can find it there already in Rammohun [Roy]", although he concedes that these ideas, such as he can see in Roy, were "fleeting assertions, by no means a substantial part of his social or historical vision".

*Abject surrender?*

The second component of the formulation of the Indian Renaissance views the movement as an abject surrender to the dominant cultural positions of the west. This post-Colonialist vision—where the Left meets the Right in a bizarre fashion—concurs with some variations

with the renanchist allegation of similar character. It draws on sources like Fanon and Memmi.

The search and formulation of identity is heavily colonized and the act of modern revolt is a compromise in itself, due to which the Indian 'national' endeavour is foredoomed. Szasz (1974: 20) explains: "In the animal kingdom, the rule is eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined". This model is heavily influenced by the French Colonial model and its record in Algeria and other African countries. The system of schooling introduced by the British is projected as a prime example of this mission of colonizing the thought process of the Indian intelligentsia. It holds both the Anglicist and the Orientalist factions as collaborators in the exercise of preserving power. The 'role of Empire' in schooling renders redundant the foci of universalism, pluralism, secularism, etc. The progenitors of the demand for modern English education are generally depicted as swayed by a desire of official patronage and social status. Viswanathan (1998: 167) states:

> The nineteenth-century Anglicist curriculum of British India is not reducible simply to an expression of cultural power; rather, it served to confer power as well as to fortify British rule against real or imagined threats from a potentially rebellious subject population.

This model of criticism concludes, that co-option into the western, masculine prototype is the inevitable outcome of the reform movement—excluding persons like Gandhi who defy the Colonial discourse by forging their own ethnic language with indigenous symbols. Ashis Nandy is a prominent propounder of this school of analysis and we will briefly touch upon his concepts while concluding this section of the paper.

It remains to point to the perplexing complexities that these formulations sometimes appear to generate. The formulations occasionally betray a shift or intolerance of any possibility of a deviation from otherwise established models. The only mention that the educationist David Hare finds in Viswanathan (1998:43) is, 'the English watchmaker David Hare'. Whatever subterranean racist ambitions Hare could have carried, these were clearly not enough to endear him to the establishment of his time. Although many may find it difficult to regard him as a great devotee of the Indian cause, one aspect of his life is sufficient reason to accord him respect, for as stated in James (1917: 21):

He was not a Government official; neither was he a Christian missionary. Indeed, the independence of his religious views was the occasion for the denial of his dead body of the rites of Christian burial. Wherefore his remains lie to this day under the monument erected by a peoples' love to his memory, on the south side of the tank in College Square, and within sight of College Street.

## Said's 'Orientalism'

The third and highly influential model for the appraisal of the Indian Renaissance is the modern, dominant concept of 'Orientalism', propounded by Edward Said. Said, however, deals primarily with the interaction of the Islamic Middle East with the colonizing Christian nations, but his theory has culminated into an all-embracing model of evaluation now used by many post-Colonialists. References to India, in Said's well-known book *Orientalism* are sparse, but are put in place to prove the sustainability of his thesis. Said's theory accounts for the 'actual' perception of the colonizers of the Orient. He distinguishes between the image of India and the Middle East that existed in the collective Colonial psyche—a difference largely perceived by philologists on the basis of language. Semitic languages were considered 'agglutinative, unaesthetic, and mechanical, they were different, inferior, backward'. Said (1995:99) states: 'Language and race were inextricably tied, and the 'good' Orient was invariably a classical period somewhere in long gone India, whereas the 'bad' Orient lingered in present-day Asia, parts of North Africa, and Islam everywhere'. He agrees that the cultural expression of ancient India, particularly Sanskrit, merely replaced 'Hebrew and the Edenic fallacy'. Even painstaking endeavours undertaken by the linguist who valued language as expression of innate perfection—here Coleridge is cited in Said (1995:136): 'Language is the armory of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquest',—comes to the conclusion very often like William Jones in Ahmed (2001:258), who said, "...the Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either."

Should one conclude that for Said 'good' or 'bad' hardly alters the racist psyche of colonialism? The relationship between critics of the ilk of Viswanathan and Said, despite quite a few affinities, is hardly uncomplicated. Said—his 'friendship, kindness, generosity, and enthusiasm hold these pages together', according to Viswanathan (1998:x)—concentrates on the colonizing relationship of Europe and

Islam, to the extent of creating certain paradigms of behaviour, specific to the Middle East only. Viswanathan, among others, transplants some of his theories into the Indian/Hindu context which run counter to Said's basic presumptions regarding the relationship.

Nandy merits mention in some detail. However, it may be pertinent to add that many of the analysts mentioned above, including Nandy—while talking of the Indian Renaissance—concentrate on the sociological aspects of religion. For them, religion is mainly a construct, whereas for many of the subjects of their study, religion was an experience. This may partially serve to explain the communication gap between the theorizers and the persons whom they are theorizing about. They sometimes speak altogether different languages from altogether different experiential platforms. Moreover, Nandy may not have a sound epistemological basis when he expounds on the many theories of godhead, and risks the possibility of straying into a minefield of competitive and antagonistic religious theorizations done by different acrimonious sects.[4] The historical ambience on which he builds his thesis on the Renaissance is not altogether uncommon, or devoid of all validity.

The concept of India as a nation with largely demarcated geographical borders, with a clutch of distinct languages is to be found in earlier literature as well. But British rule generated a distinct idea of nationhood—with notions of uniformity—along its train, and it was also perhaps for the first time that the traditional concept of timeless wisdom, *philosophia perrenis*, ingrained as part of the Indian identity, was cast aspersions upon. Perhaps for the first time Indian culture felt seriously threatened. It is a pattern which can be perceived in other Oriental countries also, notably China, in its initial interaction with western imperialism.

Unlike earlier incursions into India by diverse races, the Europeans were never to be absorbed into the Indian mainstream. They remained superior social strata till the very end of English rule. This condescension was inbred in the psychology of colonialism and was the centrepiece of the edifice of racial superiority—useful in the political subjugation of different races by labeling them as cultural inferiors. Strides made by European technology in the recent past had created a gap between the east and the west, and it was helpful to maintain an all-encompassing veneer of mechanical/ material/ technological importance to render other civilizational models defunct. The psychological make-up of the macho-mechanistic Colonial mind set of Indian arts has been the subject of study by

many psychologists. The Anglican concept of ruling/civilizing the coloured Asians as divine destiny had been subscribed to by religious theodicy. Indian society in itself was beset with caste divisions, as texts like the Manusmriti expressly prescribed and detailed forms of caste hierarchy, with many social practices taking on unpleasant contours. A feudal set up had perpetuated economic inequality and oppression. This India, in a way, fearfully prostrated itself before an alien ethos—seemingly more efficient and more importantly, much more powerful than itself. Many Indians openly admired the western role model without any reservations, as the west had its own seductive charms of glamour and glitz. Many critics have denounced the perceived sedulousness of the east in the nineteenth century; they have contended that the west succeeded in co-opting the thought of the east and most of the so-called Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century stating, that its subsequent incarnation in the twentieth was in essence only a different form of racial surrender.

The paradigm has been found to have shifted significantly from the ethnic to the modern and freedom from colonization was but a continuation of a 'second colonization':

> ...which at least six generations of the Third World have learnt to view as a prerequisite for their liberation. This Colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all. In the process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The west is now everywhere, within the West and outside: in structures and in minds (Nandy 1999: xi).

The protestors are seen to have lost their innocence: they are dominated by subconscious colonial urges, and tend to use its symbols even in the act of dissent; political freedom does not liberate the mind and end the process of colonization. According to Nandy (1999: 3): 'As a state of mind, Colonialism is an indigenous process released by external forces. Its sources lie deep in the minds of the rulers and the ruled. Perhaps that which begins in the minds of men must also end in the minds of men'.

As mentioned earlier, some symbols of complete innovative dissent find prominence in their theses, but occasionally the categories of exclusion and inclusion tend to appear a trifle too arbitrary. This analysis of anti-Colonialism becomes but a mosaic/ tapestry of contesting post-Colonialisms.

## III

The British influence on India is the outcome of the impact of westernization and modernization. The phenomenon of a synthesis between the east and west has been mostly acknowledged as an amalgam of two distinct components—the 'impact' and the 'response'. The perception of Europe towards the colonized nations was expressed at two levels. One was at the level of the academic response of the intelligentsia of the European nations; and the other was at the level of the policies that the administrative set up instituted in the colonized nations.

It may be advisable, while assessing the nature of the impact, to desist from sweeping generalizations. French colonization was in many ways different from English colonization, although compared to the Dutch, Spanish or Portuguese the first two were more tolerant of the cultural traditions of the subject nations. Even then, shades of intolerance are more prominent in the French model. The French imperial design is unambiguously expressed by Leroy-Beaulieu in Murphy (1948:136):

> Colonization is the expansive force of a people; it is its power of reproduction; it is its enlargement and its multiplication through space; it is the subjection of the universe or a vast part of it to that peoples' language, customs, ideas, and laws.

This is not to argue that the British were inspired by philanthropic motives in their colonial endeavour—they were in fact as rapacious as any of them—but that once they succeeded in politically subjugating a substantial part of India, they began a serious study of its cultural heritage. It may be relevant to point to the difference between our age and those times, when a serious study involved an infinitely complex process in the absence of archives, data banks, etc.; a situation, which despite gradual improvements, most historians encountered even in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century.[5] This endeavour was not wholly chauvinistic; they did not attempt to prove that ancient Indian models were influenced by classical Europe, or that they contained nothing worthwhile. Exceptions like Macaulay can hardly be called serious, pedantic scholars of the Orient.

The intellectual reception to India in Europe was varied and it was by no means limited to England only. Alex Aronson's remarkable book, *Europe Looks At India*, analyses at length the variegated responses of the European mind to the Indian revelation[6]. The

dynamics of cultural exchange is lucidly illustrated in Aronson
(1946:1):

> The civilization of Europe, however, is not a homogeneous whole. And yet,
> scholars who have dealt with the problem of response, and in particular the
> response of Europeans to India, always started with the assumption that the
> civilization of a country or a continent, is something static, easily definable,
> and limited to the intellectual make up of a few writers, poets and
> philosophers. But civilization is always a process; not a being, but becoming.
> (Emphasis added).

Two contradictory strands exist in the relationship of the east and
the west: the former serves as a source of prosperity for the European
middle class; it also serves as an 'escape from their own spiritual
narrowness.' The west's appreciation of Indian philosophy and
spiritual values was voluntary, but the very fact that India had to
perforce acknowledge the existence of a superior technological power
and the intrusive presence of a dominant culture should not lead us
to deduce that the Indian interlocutors were supine. Nor is the
apparent reserve towards the Christian scriptures of most Indians an
indicator of a sullen insularity.

Aronson (1946:13) reminds us:

> But then, we must remember that neither the Upanishads nor Buddhism entered
> Europe in the wake of invading armies or Colonial subjection. Indeed, European
> scholars and poets were free to admire where admiration was due. The admiration
> of the Indian intellectual, whenever it was ungrudgingly given, was due to an
> inherent generosity of heart and a willingness to understand despite the loss of
> political or economic freedom. Such an intellectual freedom is, quite naturally,
> limited to the very few only, a Vivekananda, a Rabindranath, a Mahatama
> Gandhi. The psychology of cultural response in India was, therefore, determined
> by different forces than in the West.

At the level of policies pursued in the fields of education and culture,
the perception of the English towards India is not one of
unamalgamated cynicism and condescension. Although they
criticized the present degradation in India and many prescribed
solely western remedies for the malaise, they did not infer that a
cultural vacuum was responsible for the detritus. Even during the
celebrated debates over the education policy of the Colonial
government, scholars like H.H. Wilson and W.H. Macnaughten had
in the 1830s recorded strong rebuttals to the racial suppositions of
Macaulay and Mill.

In the relevant Minute to Bentinck, Macnaughten wrote as in Kopf (1969:250): 'I have heard gentlemen who confessing without any pretensions to Oriental erudition, are in the habit of declaring their belief that the cherished literature of one hundred millions of people is an unmixed mess of falsehood and absurdity'. He vehemently stated that the perpetrators of such an enterprise as was being followed would ultimately be compelled to acknowledge that it had been, Kopf (1969:251), '... useless, wasteful and cruel... to force a people to consume their valuable time in the acquisition of that which is not in itself knowledge and which provided but a few of them with the means of gaining substance'.

These comments have been cited to indicate how generalizations tend to be unhelpful in understanding complex and widely different phenomena. The British encountered a different civilization model in India and their interaction with it contained shades subtly different. Even the French experience in Indo-China—which had its own ethnic history fused with Indian influences—would be different from its experience in Africa which had its own distinct cultural models, and which is staple invocation for post-Colonialists. To point to the difference within the French models, Southeast Asia can be held up as an example of a palimpset of influences, being always, 'a part of some thing bigger than itself'. Harrison (1964: x) observes:

> The really vital theme of its [southeast Asia] history is the theme of 'culture-contact'—the story of the successive waves of cultural and commercial influence which have swept over it in a dual process of destruction and creation, and of the repeated challenge to the peoples of South-east Asia to relearn, to readapt and to reinterpret.

In the sphere of such diversified phenomena, to dub all models together in a blanket theory applicable to all may not be sustainable in the long run. Moreover, the interactions occurred over different periods of time, respectively, under different international situations.

The Indian Renaissance was indeed a Pan-Indian phenomenon. Factors such as the Suez Canal becoming operational in 1869, helped facilitate young men being exposed in progressively larger numbers to Europe, through easier and cheaper travel. Intensification of the national consciousness provided a further impetus. Because of the fact that Bengal had been exposed more completely to British rule much earlier, the effects of this interaction—with its different complexions—became visible chronologically earlier. But the various notes of the discourse affirm its countrywide influence and

the participation of different sections of the populace. One could delineate three stages in this interaction.

In the first stage, the individual character of social non-conformism—as reflected in the personality of Raja Rammohun Roy—can be located as the predominant trait.

It has been well documented how Roy took a firm stand against the shortcomings in the social practices of the Hindu community. Recently, some critics are recorded to have stated that the views of Rammohun Roy had a deleterious effect on the evolution of a nationalist vision as he was highly influenced by European language and thought. But it was hardly the case that Roy conceived of his views through an apprenticeship to western knowledge. He came from a family of renowned classical scholars, and spent a large part of his youth studying Sanskrit philosophical texts. He had his classical education in the Vedantasāṣtra and the Upaniṣads under such renowned scholars as Mritunjaya Vidyalankar, Rammohun Vidyavachaspati Gosvami Bhattacharya, Sivaprasad Sharma and Ramchandra Vidyavagis. He was a consummate scholar of Persian and Arabic. His earliest extant work, *Tufat-ul-Muwahiddin* is written in Persian, with a preface in Arabic. Home (1935: I7) states:

> Kshitimohon [Sen] Babu mentioned further that Rammohun Roy was the father, not only of Bengali Prose, but of Hindi Prose as well.... Rammohun Roy's Hindi prose was a marvel of lucid and dignified style, as his friend Karun Shanker Kuverji Bhatta, the next speaker, would explain more clearly to the audience.

Roy's proficiency in languages flowed from his concept of language as the 'archimedean fulcrum that moves worlds'. His in fact, was the first defense to the missionary onslaught on traditional Hindu culture, and though he empathized with some of the missionaries (particularly those of Serampore) on social reform issues, he initiated reform measures to stem the tide of racial abuse and to refurbish a moribund society.

Roy's observation in his letter to John Digby in Roy (1906:929), that he found the 'Hindus in general more superstitious and miserable, both in performance of their religious rites, and in their domestic concerns, than the rest of the known nations on the earth', is prefixed not with the supposition that they were racially inferior; but with the apprehension, that these practices have 'entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling'. He advocated social change 'at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort'. He studied the *Koran*

and the *Bible* in search for a universalistic faith. He could even handle the Latin Vulgate with ease. It may be worthwhile to explore how he began to graduate towards the Septuagint, finding monotheistic affinities in the Greek version of the *Bible*, as compared to the Trinitarian Hebrew version. He traced the essence of Hinduism in the Upaniṣadic vision and his mordant attacks on the galaxy of Hindu Gods (a foreshadow of Phule and subsequently Ambedkar) arose out of his concern for the Hindu spirit being sapped by polytheism. It was only later that Vivekananda—whilst attacking crude temple practices—was to explicitly defend polytheism as an expression not so much of obscurantism as of a kind of pantheism.

The aim of the Indian Renaissance was the exploration of the soul, and despite being highly communitarian in his socio-religious philosophy, Roy's, as Robertson (in Roy 1999: xxv) states:

> worldview, however, formed in the process of resolving the antinomy between reason and revelation. He came to the hard fought conclusion that the end, the goal of all human inquiry is atmavidya (knowledge of the Supreme Self).

On the socio-economic plane, Roy strongly raised the issue of the oppression of the peasantry and advocated the redressal of their grievances. It was in that tradition that Akshoy Kumar Dutta, a prominent Brahmo leader, wrote a series of articles in the *Tattvobodhini Patrika* on the 'Condition of the Village Folk', a scathing attack on the oppressive conduct of the landlords. The spirit of 'Renaissance Humanism' is also reflected in the concern for the peasantry voiced in the writings of Dakshinaranjan Mukerji, *Dinbandhu Mitra*, and Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Chatterji's *Bangadesher Krishak* and *Samya* are well known, prompting Kaviraj (1958: 524) to observe: 'The influence of St. Simon, Fourier, Proudhon and the International worked up in Bankim a sincere concern for the rights of the peasantry'.

During the second stage of the Indian Renaissance beginning in the 1880s, a shift from the earlier individual non-conformism towards the formation of a more communitarian/organized movement is discernible. The emphasis on social questions becomes more pronounced now even as this period witnesses the formation of the Indian National Congress; the initiation of Malabari's marriage reform movement; the establishment of the National Social Conference, etc.

The third stage is distinguished by a further shift towards a more energetic character, after the end of the First World War and the advent of Gandhi as a major influence. The traditional moorings

become central to the discourse; there is much harsher social criticism from within; the ideals and the failure to live up to those ideals find a prominent place in public dialogue; and the influence of the socialist revolution gradually makes its presence felt.

I shall concentrate on the later stages of the first phase of the Indian Renaissance along with the second phase: attempting to visualize them as mutually overlapping stages; and trace the non-sectarian and inclusionary elements in the discourse. There would be particular reference to Vivekananda—who personifies these diverse trends—that in his vision of India, an India which not only is but as it ought to be.

It would also be pertinent to point out in this context that there is a subtle difference between the western and the eastern models of dialogue. In the archetypal western model, the dialogue is with the other; in the east—India particularly—the archetypal form of dialogue is with the self; the public persona is merely a secondary aspect. It is also a dialogue across space and time. Divorced from its spirit, many critics have found this vision overly idealistic and disjointed. But it is not as if the protagonists of this dialogue had not perceived the duality between the past and present. On the contrary, whilst criticizing the present maladies and the repulsive elements visible in the past, they endeavoured to build a bridge of ideas with the eternal human values common to all humanity since the dawn of civilization, and sought a holistic vision accordingly. Along with this vision of India, they searched for their own metaphysical identity, asserting that the self is sought to be defined not with regard to the antagonistic 'other' as is mostly done nowadays but with the self infused in the act of exploration, the journey itself becomes a metaphor for the self.

Many creative writers have explored this sentiment, this land of the imagination. A modern western poet Kathleen Raine conceives of an India that is symbolic of an act of living. When she comes to India, for the first time, when she is already quite advanced in age, she still asks whether she has 'arrived' in India. Raine (1990:3) says:

...India of the imagination is another country; everywhere and nowhere it exists. It is universal, for is it not, finally, the place of every arrival, the term of every spiritual quest? And that being so, the frontier between this and other worlds. But that frontier too is everywhere, is in ourselves.

The figures of Dayananda Saraswati, Jotirao Phule and Pandita Ramabai broadly signify three divergent trends, but are in reality, parts of a composite whole.

Dayananda takes the Vedas as his sole authority, affirming irreconcilable differences between religions, writing once to Madame Blavatsky, 'As night and day are opposed to each other, so are all religions opposed to each other'. (Sarda 1946: 544) He aggressively championed an evangelical version of Hinduism and, in spite of interacting with the Bengal reformers, maintained his own brand of social reform. He was to even refer to the influence of Brahmo Samaj as denationalizing. Concerned with the material upliftment of a subject people so that they could become financially sound to take advantage of commerce and trade, he exhorted his countrymen (in Saraswati 1915:317):

> Can a country ever make any progress unless its people trade with or extend their rule over other countries? What can you expect but misery and poverty, when people of a country trade only among themselves, whilst the foreigners control their trade and rule over them.

But Saraswati's overall thrust was against orthodoxy, arcane religious rituals and the caste system. Calling Hindus the 'children of children', he advocated raising of the minimum marriageable age of girls to sixteen, widow remarriage, and a just, equal schooling system for girls. 'National' resurgence is a very powerful sentiment in Dayananda, as Heimesath (1964:121) observes: 'For Dayananda, India's degradation was a personal humiliation. He attributed it chiefly to the Hindus' preoccupation with superfluous rituals, sponsored by Brahmin priests.' He even tried to unify the reform groups into a single unified group and met with leaders such as Keshub Chandra Sen and Sayyid Ahmed Khan; but his increasingly condemnatory attitude towards Islam and strident insistence on accepting the Vedas as the only revelatory texts, probably came in the way of any such organization.

However Dayanand never claimed any mystic experience and though he longed for one, 'it was not forthcoming'. He concentrated on the doctrinaire aspects of religion, acknowledging some, while rejecting others, but the idea of an essential unity of religions never held any great attraction for him. His strenuous activity in the field of social reform and organization building compensated for a mystical understanding of religion, even as religion remained a way of life for him. Aurobindo (1940:49) assessed his contribution:

> Here was one who did not infuse himself informally into the indeterminate soul of things, but stamped his figure indelibly as in bronze on men and things. Here was one whose formal works are the very children of his spiritual body, children fair and robust and full of vitality, the image of the creator.

Here was one who knew definitely and clearly the work he was sent to do, chose his materials, determined his conditions with a sovereign clairvoyance of the spirit and executed his conception with the puissant mastery of the born worker.

Jotirao Phule converted many of his reformist ideas into practical schemes: starting schools for girls and untouchables; establishing a home to take care of foundlings; and writing regularly to disseminate his ideas. His single most important contribution to the reform movement was his untiring efforts for the emancipation of women. He was among the first to float the idea that women had been deprived of education due to a patriarchal set up, keen to preserve its dominance. It is possible to see in his concept a foreshadow of the Foucaultian equation—knowledge is power. His support for widow remarriage and opposition to polygamy and child marriage is part of his idea that weaker social groups are dominated through hierarchical practices invented solely for preserving the power of the elite.

Phule's engagement with religion is sociological, although his concept of a Nirmik (creator), independent of the weaving of metaphysical texts is evidence that his psyche operated on another plane too. Closely aligning his understanding of organized religion (Hinduism) with caste, Phule ferociously attacked Brahminism, and its concepts such as *avtarkalpana*, and *karmavipaka*. His attacks on the various godheads are reminiscent of Rammohun. However, his writings—they may even seem ahistorical—are not mere recounting of facts. In them, construction takes precedence over narration. Deshpande (2002: 7) explains likewise:

His [Phule] attempt was to subvert the brahamanical structure of ideas and beliefs so that a new, more equitable order can emerge. His is a shudratishudra rewriting of history. It is not scientific as much as it is subversive. That is its purpose: subversion and destruction. His writings on the brahmanical gods and on the history of the Aryan race have to be understood in terms of their purpose.

Phule's concern with land reform and rural oppression flows out from *Ghulamgiri* (slavery) and *Shetkaryacha Asud* (cultivators' whipcord). He was among those reformers who were the most well disposed towards Christianity, hailing Christ as 'The great sage' called 'Yashwant'. In Phule (2002:208), a shudra asks:

When your Arya ancestors became the rulers on earth and lords of the Shudras and ati-shudras taking support from the word Dharma and ruined the lives of people like kunbi, mali, agari, koli, bhil, ramoshi, mang and mahar, why

should we be angry with virtuous people like the Christians and Muslims
even if they became the rulers of your Aryan ancestors?

This disposition towards Christianity culminated in Pandita
Ramabai—a remarkable woman who converted to Christianity. She
was perhaps the first woman reformer espousing the cause of women,
a widow with extraordinary humane qualities with an urge for the
religious 'experience'. She was reviled when she converted to
Christianity and Phule was her stoutest defender. But Pandita
Ramabai is a blend of the 'feminine' and the 'woman'. Her efforts
were remarkable and it has been highly tempting for some to see her
as the archetypal marginal voice. Her orientation was completely
religious, and her quest for inner peace overrode all her other
concerns. Ramabai had strongly denounced the condition of Indian
women during her travels abroad and some of her writings are indeed
quite critical of mainstream Hindu concepts. Alternately, writings
like *Stree Dharma Niti* do not attempt to break the mould of the
typical cultivated lady of the household, which high caste patrician
families normally approved of. In Ramabai (2000: 71), she advises
women:

> ... your conduct should be in conformity with your husband's wishes. Never
> do anything contrary to his wishes. Do not ever raise your voice in his
> presence or treat him with contempt. Always do any task that he instructs
> you, as long as it is in conformity with religious precepts, although it may
> involve hard work. Whatever work he tells you to do at a certain time,
> should be done without fail at that particular time.... Serve him lovingly to
> the best of your ability.

Ramabai was accorded a warm welcome by many when she
returned to India after her conversion, when the immediate frenzy
had abated to a great extent. She was even supported in her
endeavour to open a school for widows and conducted a fruitful
dialogue with her contemporaries. She also did not align her
political sympathies with the Church. She was most emphatically-
not-an iconoclast. She had stepped outside Hinduism as she
believed that Hindu scriptures prohibited women from
undertaking the spiritual journey she had ardently wished to
embark upon. Bapat (1995:245) remarks:

> While it may not suit her modern, positivist admirers, Pandita Ramabai was
> at heart a religious personality always in search for salvation. As soon as she
> attained the true path for realizing it here and now on this earth, she felt the
> necessity which was laid upon her to step out in faith. While it may cause

annoyance to us, in Ramabai's eyes, the quest for the emancipation of women was at one and the same time the quest for their religious salvation.

Vivekananda had disapproved of Ramabai's critique in America of Indian society's discrimination against women, and in turn, had been heckled by her followers at some places in that country. But in spite of his denial of the contention that misery was the prime destiny of women in India, he had strongly supported the Age of Consent Bill and denounced the opponents of the Bill as hypocrites. This event is representative of Vivekananda's approach to matters of religion and social reform. Inspired by their thirst for religious experience and the sense of nationalism, both Vivekananda and Ramabai seem to be kindred souls. Feminist critics, however, highlight Vivekananda's glorification of Indian womanhood as typically patriarchal.[7]

Vivekananda can be seen to combine in him, the social iconoclasm of Phule; the ardour for organization of Dayananda; and the religiosity of Ramabai, but his outlook transcends any fixed ideology. Also, what perhaps distinguishes him from the others was the depth of mystical experience which he underwent and out of which he spoke and which gave existential authenticity to his writings and the clarity of direct perception to his understanding. This quality is absent in Dayananda or Phule or Ramabai, though its parallels can be found in other nineteenth and twentieth century figures like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Raman Maharishi and Krishnamurthy. A universality which was available to such people took them to an essential core beyond the forms of religion and made available to them a universality which others, for example Dayananda, sometimes did not perceive. His views are non linear and complex and demand detailed consideration in a separate paper.

Vivekananda revered Ramakrishna Paramhansa and established an organization in his name—claimed till the end of his life that he was inspired by his great teacher in whatever he did—but, as the orthodox felt that Vivekananda had stepped outside the scriptural limits of Hinduism, the temple authorities denied him entry into the Dakshineswar temple where Paramhansa had lived.[8] Widely read 'into every major area of the Indian religious and philosophical traditions,' European philosophers— Plato, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Locke, Mill, Hume and Spencer—were part of his staple intellectual diet. Professor Wright of Harvard called him, 'more learned than all our professors put together'. The spirit of enquiry drove him to

metaphysics in the early stages of his life. Raychaudhuri (1988: 229) observes:

> At college, he was primarily interested in philosophy, but his approach to the subject, then and later, was not that of an ambitious examinee. He evidently hoped to find answers to the basic problems of existence as he saw them in the writings of his favourite philosophers, Indian and Western.

However, Vivekananda's experience of the west was not through academic knowledge but by way of a direct encounter. He was among those social reformers of his time who had travelled extensively across India; meditated in the loneliest of places; and acquired a firsthand knowledge of how the diverse peoples of India lived. He interacted with the west on equal terms –without any anxiety to learn from it, unlike most of the Bengali intelligentsia of his time. As Raychaudhuri (1988: 315) puts it:

> Unlike Bhudev and Bankim, Vivekananda was not initially concerned with exploring what to learn and what to reject from Western civilization. He went out with total confidence in India's spiritual inheritance to seek help for the India's poor, and with somewhat vague hopes of assistance for the introduction of new technology.

Hardly a revivalist, Vivekananda urged for a 'rationalistic investigation into religion', to resolve the dispute between the holy books. In Vivekananda (1955: I. 367) this issue is raised:

> How is this to be decided? Certainly not by the books, because the books fighting between themselves cannot be the judges. Decidedly, then, we have to admit that there is something more universal than these books, something higher than all the ethical codes that are in the world...

Vedanta was a spirit and not a letter for Vivekananda. He rejected the Vedas as the last word of the Vedanta philosophy (Vivekananda 1951:VIII: 255).

The west also received Vivekananda quite warmly even when he ran down several of their racial presumptions. But, in doing this, he was commenting on social mores rather than making ethnographic statements. It is undeniable that many renowned personalities found reason to admire him. Many who had not met him, followed suit. Tolstoy, as in Aronson (1946:129), for instance, was 'greatly fascinated by the writings of Swami Vivekananda'. Vivekananda distrusted nationalism because of its destructive potential, as was evident in Europe. For him people, like religions, should complement

and not antagonize each other. There is no antipathy to any religion in his views. Admiration for Christ, the Prophet, the Buddha, is repeatedly expressed in his writings. Free of any prejudice against the so-called thousand-year Muslim tyranny over India, he warmly praised many Muslim emperors for their benevolence and statesmanship. He contrasted Christianity's record of tolerance with Islam, saying that the latter was much more tolerant and progressive than the former.

It may occasionally seem that Vivekananda was not consistent in his views. He was not a political philosopher, but a teacher who spoke to different pupils in different contexts, and addressed different affinities in different natures. When he was in the west, his utterances were slightly influenced by the west's notion of racial superiority and he defended a few dubious Indian practices; but in India, speaking to Indians, he was harsh in his criticism, unsparing in his reprimand for their unhealthy attitudes.

The shifts were not so much evasions or deliberate contradictions. These thinkers who were constantly evolving through their lives would perhaps reiterate in Whitmanesque fashion, 'Do I contradict myself? Well then I contradict myself, I am myriad.'

The brief outline of the various debates still continuing about an extremely significant period of Indian history, is personified by many individuals who can be seen as archetypal—developing, and acquiring new dimensions in succeeding generations.

The overall tenor of the Indian Renaissance was anti-Colonial, tolerant, sensitive to the needs of society. Nowhere in this discourse is there a preponderance of racism, intolerance and xenophobia. Nowhere in the thinkers is there a violent assertion that theirs' is the sole truth, even when some hail the uniqueness of their respective faiths. Notwithstanding the allegation that this movement never went far enough in an attempt to radically change society—within the confines of the spirit of the times and the age they lived in—the reformers tried to take their cause forward as far as they could. Their rejoinders to the attacks of racism were polite, restrained and, frequently, recourse was taken to the precepts of European thought to tell the colonizers that they were failing the tests that their own philosophies had set for them.

This paper has lamentably had to confine itself to a study of the Hindu reform movement. The Indian Renaissance was definitely much bigger than that. A study of the inner currents prevalent among other religious communities: Jains, Buddhists, Parsis—above all the reform movement in modern Indian Islam—would be a fascinating and intellectually enriching endeavour.

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NOTES

1.  Hayes and Kohn have done seminal work in this regard. Hayes (1960) says that man's distinguishing characteristic, his 'religious sense', can be applied to Communism and Nationalism also. Nationalism has become the new religion of many. Conversely, scholars of nationalism like Renan and Anderson have examined the concept of forgetting the 'past' and imagining 'communities'.

2.  The relationship of Church and Civilization is complex in the Toynbean vision. For Toynbee, Church implies a 'unified ecclesiastical government'

and is not the only face of true/higher religion. But all the same, he has discussed this interrelationship in great detail and depth, seeking to explore the concepts of 'higher religion' and spirituality. In Toynbee (1995:334): 'The tension, latent since our ancestors became human, between Man the social animal and Man the person now becomes manifest; and it is reflected socially in the fission of human history, from this point onwards, into the histories of civilizations and the histories of higher religions'. It may be said that Toynbee studies the rise and fall of civilizations along with the course of the main religious communities – higher religions as he calls them. In Toynbee (1995:335): 'Common features of all the higher religions are that each of them originated within the framework of some single civilization, that each of them disengaged itself in some degree from this social matrix, and that none of them has disengaged itself completely. They differ from each other considerably, however, in the degree to which their disengagement has been carried.'

3.  Aijaz Ahmed, among the foremost Marxist scholars in the country today, has viewed many prominent figures in this light. Tracing the rise of Hindu Right wing ideologies, he attributes part of their success to their 'ability to draw upon a large number of legacies which have been an enduring feature of diverse reform movements and nationalist articulations throughout the history of modern India' (Ahmed 1996: 278). Tagore, the novelist, may be taught in America as belonging to the Third World, 'hence from the margin (as the newly fashionable term would have it), hence inherently subversive; inside India, however, Tagore is an immensely hegemonic figure and can hardly be treated as subversive' (Ahmed 1996: 399).

4.  Nandy depicts God or incarnations as mixtures of good and bad, and contends that tragedy in its full sweep overwhelms even Gods like Kṛṣṇa who die 'lonely, aged, nostalgic, and partly forgotten'. One can say however, that 'good' and the 'bad' blend into each other finally—not in their personification by God, but in God's all-embracing love for his creatures—highlighting the redeeming qualities of love and forgiveness. But 'conduct' is very much a reality for creatures, governing their relationship. 'Right' conduct is hardly synonymous with constraint, or coercion. Pleasure also is quite distinct from 'possession', or what is expressed as *bhoga* (a Sanskrit term with more than one connotation).

5.  It is well known what difficulties scholars like Jadunath Sarkar and Rahul Sankrityayan came across while tracing the developments occurring in the fields they had chosen to study. Authors like them had opted to rely on primary sources and their work required mastery over quite a few languages and arduous research.

6.  Aronson (1946) has outlined the various themes in the European 'response' to India. Differences between a Dubois, a Hegel, a Nietzsche or a Tolstoy are explained in his book. It also depicts the fascinating relationship of the

European response to India, with, for instance, German nationalism. This interesting aspect needs exploration.

7.     Chakravarty (1998:349) mentions how, in America, Vivekananda 'considered it worth his while to invest some of the funds he collected for a scarlet dress and turban'. But the inference that he had purchased the dress to startle his audience is by no means clear. Burke clearly records how Vivekananda had to seek money from Alasingha in India, to buy a dress because he was suffering from extreme cold-weather conditions in his cotton dress. Burke (1992: I.21) describes how Vivekananda had written to Alasinga on November 2, 1893, seeking momentary help. As he had remarked earlier, he had almost no money left, and were he to, 'beg in the streets, the result would be my being sent to gaol'. Chakravarty (1998:349) recounts how Ramabai made a dramatic impact in her white sari. But it is obscured that in her white attire and short hair, Ramabai appeared as the archetypal Brahmo widow. Vivekananda adhered to the dress convention of a sanyasi. Ochre, according to him, was the colour worn by 'beggars', of whom he said he was one. Traditionally, it is also the colour of fire, worn by one who has 'burnt' his 'past'.

8.     According to Sen (2001:327-328): 'Surprising as it may seem, the truth in this regard is that very soon after his triumphant return from the West, Vivekananda did begin to realize that he was being increasingly isolated...some groups within the orthodox Hindu camp seemed more prepared for a confrontation.... It was this slow but palpable building up of orthodox opinion that climaxed in shocking (sic) incident of Vivekananda and his party being denied entry to the very temple (Dakshineswar) where the master and his favourite disciple had spent so many hours in ecstatic spiritual communion.' In his notes (p 357), he further elaborates: 'The party included the Maharaja of Khetri and an English Buddhist based in Ceylon, T.J. Harrison. They were allegedly debarred on the orders of Trailokya Nath Biswas, son of Mathura Nath Biswas, the great patron of Ramkrishna.'