

CHAPTER 2

Cultural and Political Nationalism in India

Origin of modern nationalism in India:

One of the most important factors which led to the emergence of modern Nationalism in India is the outcome of various social and religious reform movements in 19th-century India. Deeply influenced by western ideas, it challenged traditional practices and sought to reform society. These movements, such as the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Arya Samaj, played a significant role in fostering a sense of Indian identity and unity beyond regional and religious divisions. These social reform movement in India created a rich multifaceted intellectual reflection of the social and cultural changes which happened under the impact of the British rule (Heimsath 3). Raja Ram Mohun Roy and his groups of enlightened Indians were the forerunners of Indian nationalism during the Bengal Renaissance. Ram Mohun Roy embraced Western reformist ideas, notably the elimination of Sati, but also criticising Western missionaries' proselytising activities. He staunchly defended Hinduism against Christian expansionism, although in a reformist manner (Jaffrelot 7). Later Roy in 1828 founded the Brahmo Samaj in the notion of a Vedic “golden age” (Sebastian 120). Another key factor for growth of Nationalism in India is the emergence of Indian press and the publication of newspapers and journals which allowed for the dissemination of nationalist ideas and political grievances. The press became a platform for expressing nationalist sentiments and advocating for political reform. Newspapers gave an all-India venue for educated Indians to debate important issues and frequently come to a consensus, moreover the breaking down of regional barriers was greatly aided by this (Dube 196). Formation of Nationalist Organization such as the Indian National Congress (1885) and the All India Muslim League (1906) also provided a political platform for Indians to voice their demands and seek political representation. A.C.Majumdar, who was himself a President of INC stated, “The Indian National Congress marks an important epoch in the history of British Rule in India. ... it is engaged in a much wider and nobler task for which it has already laid a fairly solid foundation -the task of Nation-building in India after the model of modern Europe” (Majumdar 3). Moreover, the emergence of influential nationalist leaders, such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Aurobinda Ghose and later Mahatma Gandhi, played a pivotal role in galvanizing nationalist movements. Gandhi did not merely direct a political

battle; he enforced a distinct moral code and method of action, which was nonviolence (Masselos 148). These leaders mobilized the masses and articulated the aspirations of Indians for self-rule and independence. Dinyar Patel in introductory to his *Dadabhai Naoroji: the Pioneer of Indian Nationalism* states that, “Naoroji was arguably the most significant leader before Gandhi...who directed almost all aspect of the emerging nationalist movement and authored some of the most hard-hitting arguments against the British Imperial Rule” (Patel). Indian participation and contributions in World War I and World War II exposed the contradiction of Indians fighting for British interests while demanding freedom and equal rights. These experiences further fuelled nationalist sentiments. The convergence of these factors, along with growing discontent with British colonial policies and a desire for self-determination, laid the groundwork for the rise of Indian nationalism. Indian nationalism culminated in a powerful mass movement that eventually led to India's independence in 1947. The struggle for independence was characterized by various methods of protest, including nonviolent civil disobedience, which played a significant role in the success of the Indian independence movement.

The early seeds of Indian nationalism were sown during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Indians began to articulate their grievances against British colonial rule. Influenced by Western ideas of liberty, equality, and self-determination, Indian intellectuals, political leaders, and reformers started advocating for greater political representation and autonomy. The Indian National Congress (INC) became the most prominent political organization advocating for Indian rights and independence. Initially, the INC represented mainly educated elite and moderate demands. However, under leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, the INC embraced more radical demands and mass mobilization. Further, the Partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon, caused great uproar and protest throughout Bengal. “Protest meeting were held in more than 300 cities, towns and villages”. (Dube 226) It led to the Swadeshi movement, and it marked as a turning point in the Indian independence movement. Swadeshi movement was a call for Indians to boycott British goods and support indigenous industries as a means of economic resistance against colonial exploitation. Newspaper report of Chinese Boycott of American goods against immigration laws, inspired the boycott of English goods in Bengal (Dube 227). The movement connected economic nationalism with the political struggle for independence. Emergence of Mahatma Gandhi and his active participation in the Indian National Movement fostered the growth of Nationalism. Under the leadership of Mahatma

Gandhi, the Non Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) emerged as a mass-based, nonviolent campaign against British colonial rule. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience united people across religious and regional lines, providing a powerful platform for nationalist activism. The unity of Mahatma Gandhi and the leaders of the Khilafat was the most effective attempt at Hindu-Muslim unity in the course of the national struggle (Chandra 259). The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934) was another significant phase of the Indian independence movement. Gandhi's Salt March in 1930 and the widespread nonviolent protests against British salt taxes demonstrated the power of civil disobedience as a tool of resistance. Gandhi penned, "Complete Civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion—a refusal to obey every single State-made law" (Gandhi M.K. 173). The Quit India Movement, launched in 1942, was a mass call for the British to leave India immediately. The Quit India Movement of 1942 surged across the country like a giant tidal wave, sweeping people from all walks of life into its fold, evoking tremendous patriotic fervour and an irresistible impulse to act (Mehta 131). The movement witnessed widespread protests and strikes, leading to mass arrests of nationalist leaders. It further consolidated the demand for full independence. Initially Nationalism in the Indian independence movement transcended religious, linguistic, and regional divisions. It fostered a sense of unity and solidarity among Indians of different backgrounds, creating a shared vision for a free and independent India. Nationalism evolved during the independence movement, with different leaders advocating various approaches. While Gandhi's emphasis was on nonviolence and moral principles, leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose pursued a more militant approach to achieve independence. However, the nationalist movement in India was not without challenges, including internal divisions, disagreements on methods, and repression by British authorities.

Impact of British and French nationalism in India:

The impact of British and French nationalism in India was significant and shaped the course of Indian history during the colonial period and beyond. Both colonial powers, in their pursuit of imperial expansion and control, had different approaches to nationalism and governance, which left lasting effects on the Indian subcontinent. British Nationalism in India resulted into long term cultural suppression. British nationalism, which emphasized the superiority of British culture and institutions, led to the imposition of British colonial rule in India. The British East India Company which describes themselves merely a trade company, gradually extended its control over different parts of India, but

which eventually led to the direct rule of the British Crown in the mid-19th century. During this period, Indian cultural practices, languages like Sanskrit and Persian, and traditions faced suppression, oppression and attempts were made to impose Western values and education. Macaulay's Minute is a powerful document which transformed the setup of Indian education system having an everlasting impact on the suppression of Indian culture and languages. Although British colonial rule also brought about significant modernization and infrastructure development in India, it was done only to entertain their own economic interest. Railways, telecommunication networks, and educational institutions were established, which contributed to India's economic development, but were often geared toward serving British interests.

The rise of British domination in India prompted a response in the form of Indian nationalism. Indian leaders, intellectuals, and reformers began to question British rule and advocate for self-rule and independence. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, became a prominent platform for demanding political reforms and greater representation for Indians in governance. Seeing a threat to British design of Nationalism and Colonial supremacy, the British employed a "divide and rule" policy, exploiting religious and ethnic differences to maintain control over India. The partition of Bengal in 1905 was a notable example of this policy, which stoked communal tensions and ultimately fuelled the Indian independence movement.

Unlike the British, the French presence in India was concentrated in certain regions, primarily in the southern coastal areas, such as Pondicherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahé, and Chandernagore under the leadership of Dupleix. These territories collectively formed French India. French nationalism, similar to British nationalism, brought with it the promotion of French language, culture, and institutions in the French-controlled regions. French education and administrative practices were introduced in these territories, leaving a lasting impact on their cultural fabric. The impact of French nationalism on India was relatively limited compared to British nationalism. However, resistance movements and demands for self-rule emerged in French India as well. The struggle for independence in the French-controlled regions paralleled the larger Indian independence movement. After India gained independence in 1947, the French-controlled territories were gradually integrated into India. Through diplomatic negotiations and referendums, most of the French enclaves in India became part of the Indian Union in the 1950s and 1960s. If British nationalism led to the imposition of colonial rule, the suppression of Indian culture, and the rise of Indian nationalism and the independence movement, then French nationalism

influenced certain regions in southern India and contributed to the struggle for independence in those territories. The legacy of both British and French colonialism is still evident in India's cultural, political, and economic landscape today.

Polycoloniality in India:

Polycoloniality refers to a situation where a region or country is subject to the colonial rule or influence of multiple colonial powers simultaneously. In the context of India, polycoloniality can be observed during certain periods of history when different regions or territories within India came under the rule of various colonial powers simultaneously (Bhaduri 2). During the 16th to 19th centuries, India experienced the presence of multiple European colonial powers in different regions. The Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French had established trading posts and settlements along various parts of the Indian coastline. For example, the Portuguese had a strong presence in Goa and Daman, the Dutch in Surat and Nagapattinam, the British in Calcutta and Madras, and the French in Pondicherry and Chandernagore. These European colonial powers competed for dominance in trade and influence over Indian territories. In the southern regions of India, the French and the British were both active colonial powers during the 17th to 19th centuries. The French had control over territories such as Pondicherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahé, and Chandernagore, while the British East India Company controlled regions like Madras, Bengal, and Bombay. This overlapping of French and British colonial territories led to a polycolonial situation in southern India. It is essential to note that while India experienced polycoloniality during certain historical periods, eventually, British colonial rule became the dominant and most influential colonial power in India. The British East India Company's consolidation of power, political manoeuvring, and military prowess led to the eventual establishment of British Crown Rule over India, which lasted until India gained independence in 1947.

Polycoloniality in India had significant implications for the diverse regions and peoples of the subcontinent. It shaped political alliances, cultural interactions, and economic exchanges between various colonial powers and local communities. The legacy of polycoloniality can still be observed in India's cultural diversity, historical narratives, and contemporary sociopolitical dynamics.

Nationalism and Indian Thinkers:

Rabindranath Tagore, the renowned Indian poet, writer, philosopher, and Nobel laureate, had complex and nuanced views on Indian nationalism. Throughout his life, Tagore engaged with the ideas of nationalism and patriotism, but his perspectives evolved over time. Here are some key aspects of Tagore's thoughts on Nationalism. In the early 20th century, Tagore expressed support for the Indian nationalist movement and believed that Indian culture and spirituality had a unique contribution to offer to the world. By Nation and Society, he view it as, "A Nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose Society as such has no ulterior purpose" (Tagore 7). Despite the extreme cultural diversity, throughout the years, certain strands of a shared heritage had emerged, binding the people of the country together and giving them a sense of unity while also fostering tolerance for difference and disagreement and in this regard he shared that the unity of India is the 'unity of spirit' (Chandra et al. 100). As Tagore's ideas matured, he became critical of narrow and aggressive nationalism that sought to exclude or dominate others. He warned against blind allegiance to the nation-state, which could lead to cultural isolation and create divisions between communities. Tagore was a proponent of universal humanism and believed in the interconnectedness of all humanity. He emphasized the need for mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation between different cultures and nations. His vision went beyond narrow nationalism and sought a broader humanistic perspective. Tagore was deeply opposed to violence and jingoistic displays of patriotism. He criticized the glorification of war and the militaristic aspects of certain nationalist movements, urging for a more peaceful and compassionate approach to national and international affairs. In 1917, Tagore delivered a series of lectures titled "Nationalism in the West" while in Japan. In these lectures, he critiqued Western nationalism, particularly European nationalism, and its potential negative impact on the world. He argued that it could lead to conflicts and undermine human solidarity. In 1919, Tagore's composition "Jana Gana Mana" was adopted as the Indian national anthem. However, in 1919, "he broke the spell of stunned silence by his noble gesture of resigning his knighthood by means of a letter to the Viceroy" (Dube 282). Tagore believed in the power of cultural exchange and sought to foster understanding between different cultures. He established Shantiniketan, a school that encouraged creative interaction between Indian and Western ideas, promoting a more cosmopolitan outlook. Rabindranath Tagore's views on Indian nationalism were complex and evolving. He supported the idea of cultural revival and pride in Indian heritage but was

critical of aggressive and narrow nationalism. Tagore's vision went beyond national boundaries, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of universal humanism. His insights continue to be relevant in discussions on nationalism and identity in India and beyond.

Mahatma Gandhi on Indian Nationalism:

Mahatma Gandhi, the iconic leader of India's independence movement, had profound and influential views on Indian nationalism. His ideas on nationalism were rooted in his philosophy of nonviolence, truth, and the pursuit of social justice. Gandhi's perspectives on Indian nationalism is that, he believed in the power of nonviolent resistance as a means to achieve political goals, including Indian independence. He advocated for non-cooperation with British authorities through civil disobedience, boycotts, and peaceful protests. Gandhi's approach to nationalism was firmly based on the principles of ahimsa (nonviolence) and practice of satyagraha (truth-force). Gandhi's nationalism was inclusive and emphasized the unity of all Indians, regardless of caste, religion, or region. He sought to bridge the divides between Hindus and Muslims and promote communal harmony. In his *Hind Swaraj* though direct discussion on Indian Nationalism is not there, but his version of Nationalism comes in his discourse on civilization. According to Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, Indian civilization is superior to western civilization since it is spiritual as opposed to the latter's materialistic nature. Based on this, he recommends that India adopt a superior nationalism strategy based on spiritual force and reject other nationalist ideologies that are imitations of Western nationalism, which is the result of its materialistic civilization (Mishra and Mishra 74). Gandhi believed in the idea of a composite Indian identity that accommodated the diverse cultures and traditions of the country. He emphasized the importance of self-reliance and self-sufficiency for India's economic and political freedom. The national elite must complete national tasks. The most significant implication of this Gandhian thesis is that the morality of India's professional classes, including its wealthy, lawyers, and doctors, determines the country's fate. He laments the fact that the professional classes, who have a significant impact on the general populace, are hypnotised by greed and fall prey to caste, creed, and position, which has a negative impact on the unity and integration of the country (Mishra and Mishra 91). He promoted the Swadeshi movement, which encouraged Indians to use locally produced goods and boycott British products as a form of economic resistance against colonial rule. Gandhi envisioned an India with a decentralized and village-based economic system. He believed that self-sustaining

rural communities were essential for the well-being and empowerment of the Indian masses. His idea of Gram Swaraj (village self-rule) aimed to create a model of inclusive governance.

Gandhi's nationalism was not limited to achieving political independence but also focused on social empowerment. He advocated for the upliftment of marginalized sections of society, including untouchables (Dalits), women, and peasants, and worked towards dismantling the caste system. Gandhi's nationalism was deeply influenced by his spiritual beliefs and devotion to truth. He saw the struggle for independence as a moral and spiritual endeavour, driven by a commitment to justice and righteousness. Moreover, he vehemently opposed violence, and during the Indian independence movement, he consistently advocated for nonviolent means to achieve political objectives. He also strongly opposed the idea of partition, advocating for Hindu-Muslim unity and the prevention of communal violence. In his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth* we find his own philosophy and also his quest for truth. Gandhi's approach to Indian nationalism played a pivotal role in mobilizing the masses and shaping the direction of the freedom struggle. His philosophy of nonviolence and his commitment to inclusivity and social justice continue to be revered and celebrated in India and around the world.

Jawaharlal Nehru on Indian Nationalism:

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister and a key leader of the Indian independence movement, had significant and far-reaching views on Indian nationalism. As a prominent figure in India's struggle for freedom and nation-building, Nehru's perspectives on nationalism helped shape the country's political and social landscape. Nehru envisioned a secular and inclusive nationalism that encompassed the diversity of India's population, transcending religious, linguistic, and regional divisions. He emphasized the need for a united and cohesive nation that respected and protected the rights of all its citizens. Nehru believed that Indian nationalism should be grounded in a “modernist notion of progress and development” and establishing higher learning institute in science and technology (Dube 459). He advocated for the promotion of education, scientific temper, and technological progress to propel India forward as a progressive and advanced nation. He was a staunch advocate of democratic values and institutions. He believed in the importance of a representative and participatory democracy that allowed the voice of the people to be heard in shaping the nation's policies and direction. As a leader in the post-independence era, Nehru pursued a policy of nonalignment in international affairs. He

sought to keep India free from the Cold War alliances and focus on promoting peace, cooperation, and decolonization on the global stage (Mehta 217). As of his vision of Indian nationalism was intertwined with the idea of a modern and progressive India so he was instrumental in promoting scientific research, establishing educational institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and advancing the country's space and nuclear programs. Nehru was highly influenced by socialist ideas and believed in the importance of economic equality and social justice. He introduced land reforms, labor laws, and state-led industrialization to foster a more equitable society. Nehru's approach to Indian nationalism shaped the early years of independent India and laid the foundation for its democratic institutions and policy frameworks. Nehru was successful in preserving and building national unity. He was successful in putting a stop to disruptive forces, uniting the country and the independent state, and advancing the Indian people's psychological integration. Nehru visualized that, "India was not yet a structured nation but a nation-in-the making" (Chandra et al, 221-222).

Bhimrao Ambedkar on Indian Nationalism:

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, commonly known as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, was a prominent Indian jurist, social reformer, and architect of India's Constitution. As a key figure in the fight against caste-based discrimination and a staunch advocate of social justice, his views on Indian nationalism were influenced by his experiences as a member of the Dalit community (formerly known as untouchables). Ambedkar was critical of Hindu nationalism and its association with caste-based discrimination. He saw the caste system as a deeply entrenched social evil that perpetuated inequality and denied social justice to millions of marginalized people, particularly Dalits. For Ambedkar, true nationalism required the eradication of caste-based oppression, and the establishment of a just and egalitarian society and moreover no burning yearning exists for fusion or for togetherness. There is no desire to wear a common dress. There is no ambition for a universal tongue. There is no desire to trade in something local and unique for something common and national (Ambedkar 16). Ambedkar believed that any form of nationalism in India should prioritize social justice and the upliftment of oppressed communities. He viewed nationalism as an opportunity to address the historic injustices faced by Dalits and other marginalized groups and creates a society where every citizen had equal rights and opportunities. Ambedkar's seminal work, *Annihilation of Caste*, is a powerful critique of

the caste system and its impact on Indian society. He argued that unless caste-based discrimination was completely abolished, any talk of Indian nationalism would be hollow and hypocritical. He further added that there is no societal structure that is more demeaning than the caste system. The system is what makes humans lifeless, unable to move, and otherwise disabled. In Indian history, there has only been one era that can be considered to be one of independence, greatness, and glory, which was the Mourya Empire's reign as the Caste System was totally abolished and Shudras gained power and took control of the nation. Every other time, the nation experienced defeat and gloom, the Caste System flourished during the time of defeat and gloom, much to the regret of the vast majority of the nation's citizens (Ambedkar 17). The Caste System prevented members of the lower caste from receiving an education. They were unable to comprehend or know the path to their redemption. They were destined to be lowly, and since they lacked the resources and the knowledge to do so, they resolved themselves to their inevitable fate of servitude for all eternity. (Ambedkar 17)

During the debates on India's Constitution, Ambedkar championed the cause of separate electorates for Dalits to ensure their adequate representation in the political sphere. He believed that reservation and political representation were essential to counter the historical marginalization of Dalits and enable them to participate actively in the nation's affairs. In his later years, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, seeing it as a way to escape the shackles of caste and embrace a religion that advocated for equality and social justice. His conversion was also seen as a critique of Hinduism's failure to address the issue of caste based discrimination. Ambedkar's views on Indian nationalism were deeply rooted in his commitment to social justice and his fight against caste-based discrimination. He saw nationalism as an opportunity to create a society free from the oppressive caste system and provide equal rights and opportunities to all citizens. His contributions to Indian nationalism and the framing of the Constitution have left a lasting impact on India's pursuit of a more just and equitable society. Despite his criticism of certain aspects of Indian society, Ambedkar held a vision of a democratic and inclusive India. He played a pivotal role in drafting the Indian Constitution, which enshrines the principles of social justice, equality, and democratic governance. Ambedkar remains an enduring symbol of hope and inspiration for millions of marginalized Indians who continue to strive for a more inclusive and equal India.

Nationalism in Indian Literature:

Indian nationalism in literature before 1947 was deeply influenced by the country's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. During this period, Indian writers expressed patriotic sentiments, critiqued colonialism, and advocated for the country's cultural and political identity through various forms of literature. Indian poets played a significant role in fostering nationalist sentiments through their verses. Poems like "Vande Mataram" by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and "Bharat Bhagya Vidhata" by Rabindranath Tagore became anthems of the freedom movement, inspiring a sense of national pride and unity.

Many Indian writers penned historical novels that celebrated the country's rich past and cultural heritage. Novels like *Anandamath* by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and *Rangbhoomi* by Munshi Premchand depicted historical events and characters as symbols of national resistance against colonial oppression. Indian literature also used satire and criticism to expose the exploitative nature of British colonial rule. Writers like Raja Rammohan Roy and Dinabandhu Mitra used satire to critique colonial policies and advocate for social reform. Essays by Indian intellectuals and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subramania Bharati articulated the ideals of Indian nationalism. These essays discussed the importance of self-rule, cultural identity, and the need for unity among Indians. Indian playwrights like Harindranath Chattopadhyay and Swadesh Deepak used drama as a medium to depict the struggles of the Indian people and to advocate for national liberation. Folklore and folk songs also played a crucial role in nurturing a sense of national identity and unity among the masses. These traditional narratives often celebrated heroic figures and resistance against foreign rule. Indian nationalists emphasized the importance of preserving and promoting Indian languages and literature. Efforts were made to revive regional languages and literature, which became important symbols of cultural identity and resistance against colonial cultural domination.

Indian nationalism in literature before 1947 reflected the collective aspirations and struggles of the Indian people against colonial rule. The literary works of this period played a pivotal role in galvanizing the masses, fostering a sense of national pride, and contributing to the eventual achievement of India's independence in 1947. These literary expressions continue to be celebrated and cherished as integral parts of India's national literary heritage.

Nationalism has been a prominent theme in Indian poetry throughout its history, reflecting the country's struggle for independence, cultural identity, and the desire for social and political change. Indian poets have used their verses to express patriotic sentiments,

critique colonial rule, and celebrate the rich diversity of the Indian nation. During the British colonial rule, Indian poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Subramania Bharati played crucial roles in inspiring nationalist sentiments through their poetry. Tagore's "Bharat Bhagya Vidhata" and "Where the Mind is Without Fear" celebrated India's rich heritage and called for freedom from oppression. Chattopadhyay's "Vande Mataram" became a rallying cry for the independence movement, and Bharati's fiery verses encouraged Indians to rise against colonial subjugation. Indian poets continued to contribute to the nationalist movement during the struggle for independence. Poets like Sarojini Naidu, Maithili Sharan Gupt, and Josh Malihabadi celebrated the Indian spirit, portrayed India's glorious past, and highlighted the injustices of colonial rule in their poetry. They often celebrated the diverse cultural fabric of the country, expressing pride in the multitude of languages, religions, and traditions that constitute India's national identity. Poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Suryakant Tripathi Nirala celebrated the spirit of unity in diversity and called for a society where all communities could coexist peacefully.

After independence, Indian poets continued to explore themes of nationalism and nation-building. Poets like Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Gulzar, and Nissim Ezekiel reflected on the challenges and aspirations of the newly independent India, advocating for social justice and progress. Indian poets have also used their verses to critique the social and political issues faced by the nation, addressing problems such as poverty, inequality, communalism, and corruption. Their poetry often urges people to work collectively towards building a more just and inclusive society. Indian poetry continues to evolve, reflecting contemporary issues and challenges while upholding the spirit of nationalism and cultural pride. Poets today use their verses to address themes such as environmental conservation, gender equality, and social justice, reaffirming their commitment to India's progress and development. Through their poetry, Indian poets have played a crucial role in shaping the nation's collective consciousness and identity.

Nationalism is a prevalent theme in Indian fiction, and many novels have explored the complexities of the country's struggle for independence, the challenges of nation-building, and the diversity of its cultural identity. Indian authors have used fiction as a medium to celebrate national pride, critique colonialism, reflect on historical events, and delve into the nuances of social and political issues. Indian fiction has produced numerous novels that capture the spirit of the independence movement. Writers like Raja Rao *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand *Untouchable*, and Khushwant Singh *Train to Pakistan*

depicted the impact of colonial rule on Indian society and the collective struggle for freedom. Indian historical fiction often delves into events that shaped the nation's history and national identity. Novels like Amitav Ghosh's *The Sea of Poppies* and *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh explore historical events, such as the Opium Wars and the Partition of India, and their implications for the nation. Many Indian authors use fiction to celebrate the country's cultural diversity and explore the challenges of forging a national identity amidst regional, linguistic, and religious differences. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* are notable examples. Postcolonial Indian fiction often engages with the legacies of colonialism and the impact of imperialism on the nation. Writers like Aravind Adiga *The White Tiger* and Kiran Desai *The Inheritance of Loss* explore the social and psychological aftermath of colonial rule. Indian fiction also reflects regional nationalist sentiments, with authors capturing the essence of various states and their unique cultural identities. Regional writers like Premchand (Hindi), Bama (Tamil), and Mahasweta Devi (Bengali) have contributed significantly to regional nationalist literature. Fiction by Indian diaspora writers often grapples with issues of identity and belonging, reflecting on the experiences of Indians living abroad while maintaining a connection to their homeland. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* are examples of such works. Some Indian novels celebrate national heroes and iconic figures, paying tribute to their contributions to the nation. Novels like *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor reimagine India's journey through the lens of its mythological heroes. Through these themes and narratives, Indian fiction reflects the nation's history, challenges, and aspirations, providing readers with insights into the complex tapestry of Indian nationalism. Indian authors continue to explore diverse perspectives, enriching the literary landscape and contributing to the ongoing discourse on nationalism and identity in India.

Growth of Linguistic Nationalism in India:

The Hindi-Urdu conflict in colonial India was a significant linguistic and political issue that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was rooted in the contestation over the status and script of the Hindustani language, which comprises elements of both Hindi and Urdu. This conflict played a pivotal role in shaping linguistic nationalism in the Indian subcontinent. Hindustani, as a spoken language, had been used

across much of North India for centuries. Over time, it evolved into two distinct written forms: Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, and Urdu, written in the Perso-Arabic script (Mehta 207). While the spoken language remained largely similar, the written forms and scripts diverged, leading to different literary traditions and cultural associations. Arun Mehta making a simplified example states that in Urdu language, a ruler is titled as Shah, Nawab or Nizam, whereas it is called as Raja or Maharaja in Hindi. Urdu became the language of the Muslims among the North Indian Hindustani speakers, while Hindi became the language of the others (208).

During British colonial rule, English became the dominant language of administration, education, and governance. This policy had a significant impact on regional languages, including Hindustani, which saw a decline in literary patronage and recognition. As the Indian independence movement gained momentum, there was a growing push to promote Hindi as a national language to unify the diverse linguistic communities in India. Proponents of Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, argued that it could serve as the lingua franca of India. The Nagari Pracharini Sabha, established in 1893, was one of the organizations at the forefront of promoting Hindi written in the Devanagari script (P Mishra 472). Its efforts were seen as part of a broader movement to assert Hindu cultural dominance. Urdu, written in the Perso-Arabic script, was closely associated with Muslim culture and identity. It had a rich literary tradition and was the language of many famous poets and writers. As a result, Urdu-speaking Muslims perceived the promotion of Hindi as an attempt to marginalize their language and culture. The Hindi-Urdu controversy escalated in the early 20th century when the question of the official language for the Indian administration arose. Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, and Urdu, written in the Perso-Arabic script, were both considered for official status. Mahatma Gandhi, who was heading the National Movement, advocated in favour of “Hindustani” language as a common language for the people of the country (Sarma D 80).

The Hindi-Urdu conflict highlighted the complexities of linguistic identity and nationalism in colonial India. It underlined the significance of language as an essential marker of cultural and regional identity, and it influenced the post-independence language policies in India. While the linguistic divide between Hindi and Urdu persisted, linguistic nationalism eventually contributed to a more inclusive approach towards the recognition and promotion of multiple Indian languages, acknowledging the nation's rich linguistic diversity. However, the controversy over the recognition of Hindi and Urdu as separate languages continued, with debates over script, vocabulary, and grammar. The Hindi-Urdu

conflict contributed to the rise of linguistic nationalism in India. Linguistic communities began to assert their languages' significance, seeking recognition, promotion, and the right to use their languages in administration, education, and cultural expression. The resistance to Hindi and tendency to incite strife between Hindi-speaking and non-Hindi-speaking sections of the nation made the language debate especially divisive. (Chandra et al. 113)

Linguistic nationalism in India refers to the political and cultural movement that advocates for the recognition and promotion of regional languages as an essential aspect of national identity. It emerged as a response to the British colonial policies that promoted English as the dominant language of administration and education, leading to the marginalization of indigenous languages. After India's independence in 1947, linguistic nationalism gained momentum as various linguistic communities sought to assert their cultural and linguistic rights within the diverse fabric of the Indian nation. The Language issue in India gained significant momentum in the 1950s and 1960s when several states demanded the recognition of their respective regional languages as the medium of instruction in schools, administration, and official communication. One of the most significant outcomes of linguistic nationalism was the reorganization of states based on linguistic lines. The States Reorganization Act of 1956 was passed by the parliament, which led to the creation of fourteen states and six union territories that were demarcated primarily along linguistic boundaries, recognizing the importance of language as a defining factor of regional identity (Chandra et al. 128). The linguistic states reorganization in 1956, based on the recommendations of the States Reorganization Commission, aimed to create states along linguistic lines. This was a major step towards recognizing linguistic diversity and preserving regional languages. The Indian Constitution recognizes Hindi as the official language of the central government, with English as an associate official language. However, it also provides for the use of regional languages as the official language in states where they are widely spoken. Each state and union territory can decide its own official language(s) based on linguistic considerations. Linguistic nationalism led to the establishment of educational institutions that promoted regional languages as the medium of instruction. Many states developed a strong emphasis on regional language education to preserve linguistic heritage and encourage cultural pride. But various states witnessed language movements advocating for the recognition and promotion of regional languages. For example, Marathi speakers of Bombay Presidency began movement for separate state of Maharashtra, Sikhs demanding a Punjabi-speaking state dividing Haryana and Himachal

Pradesh from it (Dubey 457) and the “Son of Soil” movements in Assam and Telangana (Chandra et al. 164).

While linguistic nationalism has led to the recognition and preservation of regional languages, it has also occasionally sparked tensions and conflicts between linguistic communities. Debates over the status of languages, particularly in multi-lingual states, have sometimes resulted in social and political controversies. There are still disagreements about state borders, the rights of linguistic minorities, and economic issues like the pooling of resources like power and surplus food. Additionally, linguistic chauvinism occasionally manifests itself. But a significant component affecting the country's cohesion has been eliminated because of state rearrangement (Chandra et al. 131). Linguistic nationalism in India has played a crucial role in preserving and promoting linguistic diversity, allowing different linguistic communities to assert their identities while contributing to the broader concept of Indian nationalism. It reflects India's commitment to its linguistic and cultural pluralism and acknowledges the importance of language in shaping regional and national identities. It facilitated cultural expression through regional literature, poetry, music, theatre, and cinema. It has enabled the growth of regional media and fostered a sense of pride in regional cultural heritage.

Cultural Nationalism in India:

Cultural nationalism in India before 1947 played a crucial role in shaping the country's identity and fostering a sense of unity and resistance against British colonial rule. It emerged as a response to the cultural and social impact of colonialism, seeking to revive and celebrate India's ancient heritage and traditions. Cultural nationalists in India sought to rediscover and highlight the country's rich cultural and historical heritage. They emphasized the importance of ancient texts, philosophical ideas, classical arts, and architecture, considering them essential components of India's national identity. Language was a significant aspect of cultural nationalism. Advocates of cultural nationalism promoted regional languages, classical languages like Sanskrit, and vernacular literature as symbols of India's linguistic diversity and cultural richness. It also encouraged the revival and promotion of traditional Indian arts, crafts, and handicrafts. This effort aimed to preserve indigenous artistic expressions and provide economic opportunities to local artisans. Most importantly, cultural nationalists stressed the significance of traditional Indian values such as nonviolence, tolerance, spirituality, and respect for nature. They believed that these values formed the foundation of Indian culture and should be upheld

and propagated which also encouraged the celebration of Indian festivals and rituals as a means to strengthen a shared cultural experience and assert the distinctiveness of Indian customs and traditions. Cultural nationalists promoted practices like yoga and meditation, emphasizing their spiritual and health benefits. These practices were seen as quintessentially Indian and a reflection of the country's ancient wisdom. Cultural nationalists resisted the imposition of Western values and norms, asserting that India should forge its own path of development and modernity while preserving its unique cultural identity. Cultural nationalists sought to reinterpret Indian history from an indigenous perspective, challenging colonial narratives that depicted Indian civilization as inferior and backward. They emphasized India's glorious past and its contributions to world civilization. It led to the establishment of cultural institutions and organizations dedicated to the promotion of Indian art, literature, music, and dance. These institutions played a vital role in nurturing artistic talent and preserving cultural heritage and reviving the greatness of iconic figures from Indian history, literature, and philosophy, such as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and Kabir, as symbols of India's cultural continuity and spiritual heritage. Prominent cultural nationalists before 1947 included figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Aurobindo Ghose. Their ideas and contributions helped foster a sense of cultural pride and unity among Indians, laying the foundation for the broader nationalist movement for independence from British rule. Cultural nationalism remained an influential force in India even after independence, continuing to shape the nation's cultural policies and its understanding of its historical and cultural roots. It remains an integral part of India's self-perception and identity as a diverse yet united nation. However, during the course of this research it has been observed that in cultural nationalism hybrid identities are not accommodated by ethnic groups. While the ethnic groups reclaim cultural roots from an ancient past, which itself have evolved over time, they seek to exclude the mixing of communities and races as the otherised group. North east India in general and Assam in particular provides a classic example of this crisis. While northeast Indian tribes had a fluid identity that allowed them cultural mobility and spatial fluidity, with the coming of colonisers and later with the creation of boundaries, their movements has been stopped. Similarly, the Assamese identity which was composite and was made up of various racial groups and communities underwent a change with the coming of colonial modernity and print capitalism. Arupa Patangia Kalita's novel *The Story of Felanee* shows that ethnic resurgence dismisses the possibility of cultural evolution and hybrid identity. Ethno-nationalist agencies create a cultural stereotype by foregrounding

strict cultural values epitomised by dress habits, food, language and ethnicity. They try to obliterate the mixed or hybrid identities to the fringes (Biswas & Das, 2023). Under these circumstances, one can see that modern form of nationalism poses a threat to social cohesion.

Religious Nationalism India:

Religious nationalism in India before 1947 played a significant role in shaping the country's political and social landscape, particularly in the context of the movement for independence and the subsequent partition of the subcontinent. Religious nationalism is the belief that one's religious identity should form the basis of one's national identity, often leading to the demand for a separate nation-state based on religious lines. Hindu nationalism emerged as a response to British colonial rule and the perceived marginalization of Hindus in various aspects of social and political life. Advocates of Hindu nationalism sought to assert the primacy of Hindu culture, traditions, and values, often advocating for a Hindu-majority state. On the other hand, Muslim nationalism in India was closely associated with the demand for the protection of Muslim rights and interests. The All India Muslim League, led by figures like Muhammad Ali Jinnah, championed the idea of a separate Muslim-majority state, which culminated in the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Then, on August 14, 1939, there came the Aligarh proposal, which sought to split the nation into Hindu India and Muslim India using the notion of two nation theory. (Mujtaba 51). The two-nation theory, formulated by Jinnah's Muslim League (Ghosh 1), asserted that Hindus and Muslims were distinct nations with separate identities, cultures, and interests. This theory formed the basis for the demand for a separate Muslim state, leading to the partition of India into India and Pakistan in 1947. Religious Nationalism contributed to communal tensions and violence between Hindus and Muslims, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. Communal riots and conflicts heightened as political demands for separate states intensified. In 1940, the Muslim League adopted the Lahore Resolution, which demanded the creation of an independent Muslim state in regions of British India where Muslims were in a significant majority. But prior to that, the Khilafat Movement which emerged in the early 1920s saw Muslims and Hindus united in a protest against the disempowerment of the Ottoman Caliphate by the British after World War I (Mishra and Mishra 34). However, the movement also had a strong religious dimension and marked the beginning of an assertive Muslim identity in the political sphere. It is essential to note that religious nationalism was not the sole factor contributing to the partition of India. Other

factors, such as political aspirations, regional identities, and the complex dynamics of the British colonial policy, also played significant roles. The partition of India in 1947 was a seminal event in the nation's history, with far-reaching consequences that continue to shape the political and social fabric of both India and Pakistan. It marked the beginning of separate nation-states based on religious lines and left a lasting impact on communal relations in the subcontinent. Religious nationalism in India after 1947 continued to be a prominent force in the country's political and social landscape. The partition of India in 1947 led to the creation of India as a secular nation with a diverse religious makeup, where Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and other religious communities coexist. However, religious nationalism has at times influenced political discourse, communal relations, and even policy decisions.

Various political parties in India have aligned with religious nationalism to garner support from particular religious communities. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), founded in 1980, has embraced Hindu nationalism and advocated for Hindutva, which seeks to promote and protect Hindu culture, traditions, and interests. The Ayodhya dispute, centered around the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, has been a focal point of religious nationalism. The BJP and several Hindu nationalist organizations called for the construction of a Ram temple at the site, leading to communal tensions and eventually the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Instances of communal tensions and riots have occurred in various parts of India over the years, often fuelled by religious nationalist sentiments and communal rhetoric. These events have resulted in tragic loss of lives and property. Religious sentiments surrounding cows, considered sacred in Hinduism, have influenced political decisions in some states, leading to beef bans and controversies over cow protection. The demand for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which would provide a common set of personal laws for all citizens regardless of their religious affiliations, has been a topic of debate. Some proponents of religious nationalism argue for the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code to promote cultural homogeneity. Concerns about religious conversions have led to debates and controversies, with some states enacting anti-conversion laws to regulate religious conversions. The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir has religious and nationalistic dimensions. The region's political status is contested between India and Pakistan, with both countries claiming it on religious and historical grounds.

Despite challenges posed by religious nationalism, there have also been numerous efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and foster religious harmony in India. It is essential

to recognize that religious nationalism does not represent the views of all Indians. India's constitution enshrines the principles of secularism, equality, and religious freedom, ensuring that individuals have the right to practice and profess their religion freely. India's diversity and pluralism have been the bedrock of its cultural and social fabric, and many Indians emphasize the importance of unity in diversity. As a result, various civil society groups, activists, and religious leaders continue to work towards promoting religious tolerance, inclusivity, and understanding in the country. After gaining independence in 1947, nationalism continued to play a crucial role in shaping India's political, social, and cultural landscape. While Indian nationalism has been a unifying force, it has also led to both positive and negative consequences. Here are some of the key consequences of nationalism in India after independence:

Nationalism played a vital role in nation-building, fostering a sense of unity and shared identity among diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious communities. It helped forge a common Indian identity that transcended regional and communal differences. It emphasized the preservation and promotion of the country's rich cultural heritage. It led to the revival of traditional art forms, languages, and customs, which helped maintain India's unique cultural identity. Indian nationalism was rooted in the struggle for self-rule and democracy. After independence, India adopted a democratic form of government, based on the principles of equality and popular sovereignty. India's commitment to secularism is a direct result of nationalist aspirations. The Indian Constitution enshrined secularism as a guiding principle, ensuring that the state remains neutral in matters of religion and treats all citizens equally, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Nationalism in India was also associated with various social reform movements. Leaders like Nehru and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar advocated for social justice, equality, and the eradication of caste-based discrimination. They believed that "education and employment would eventually do away with the hierarchy represented by caste" (Dube 450). Nationalism spurred India to focus on economic development and technological advancements. The country made strides in various sectors, including agriculture, industry, space research, and information technology.

As like positive aspects of Nationalism, there lies some of the negative aspects of it which are discussed here. Despite India's commitment to secularism, communal tensions have persisted, leading to sporadic incidents of violence and conflict between different religious communities. While nationalism aimed to unify the country, it also contributed to regionalism, with some states demanding greater autonomy and resources. It did not

completely eradicate caste-based discrimination. Caste identities continue to play a role in Indian politics, leading to identity-based politics in some regions. Nationalism has also faced challenges from separatist movements in certain regions, where groups have sought independence or greater autonomy from the Indian state. In some cases, nationalist aspirations have prioritized economic development over environmental concerns, leading to ecological challenges. Nationalism has sometimes exacerbated tensions with neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan and China, leading to border disputes and conflicts. India's experience with nationalism after independence has been a complex interplay of successes and challenges. While nationalism has been instrumental in fostering unity and national pride, addressing its negative consequences remains a constant endeavour for India's diverse and vibrant democracy. Balancing the aspirations of diverse communities, promoting social justice, and ensuring inclusivity continue to be essential goals in India's ongoing journey as a nation.

Problems of Nationalism in India:

Nationalism in India has been both a unifying and divisive force, and it has faced various challenges that can be detrimental to the country's social fabric and governance. Nationalism in India, particularly when linked with religious identities, has led to communal tensions and conflicts between different religious communities. Instances of communal violence have occurred, resulting in loss of lives and property. Nationalism in India has sometimes led to identity-based politics, where political parties and leaders mobilize support based on religious, caste, or regional identities. This form of identity politics can undermine national unity and social cohesion. Nationalism has at times led to regional aspirations for greater autonomy and resources, which can create tensions between the central government and state governments. Regionalism may challenge the sense of a unified national identity. Though Nationalism has not entirely eradicated caste-based discrimination in India. Caste identities continue to influence political and social dynamics, leading to exclusion and marginalization of certain communities. India's linguistic diversity can sometimes lead to tensions between different language-speaking communities, with demands for recognition and promotion of regional languages. Extreme forms of nationalism can fuel intolerance and violence against those who do not align with the dominant national narrative. This can lead to the suppression of dissent and criticism. India's secular fabric can face challenges from religious nationalism, which may seek to

prioritize the interests of one religious' community over others, undermining the principles of equality and religious freedom.

While nationalism can foster a sense of national pride, it may not always translate into inclusive development for all segments of society. Ensuring equitable development across diverse communities remains a challenge. Moreover, Nationalistic rhetoric in India can sometimes strain diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries and affect regional stability. Addressing the problems of nationalism in India requires a delicate balance between fostering a sense of national identity and pride while promoting inclusivity, secularism, and social harmony. Emphasizing civic nationalism, which values democratic principles, diversity, and equal rights for all citizens, can help mitigate some of the negative consequences of extreme nationalism. Furthermore, efforts to promote interfaith harmony, social justice, and equitable development can contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive national identity.

Problems of Ethno-nationalism in India:

Ethno-nationalism in India has posed several challenges to the country's social fabric, governance, and national unity. It can lead to conflicts and tension. Ethno-nationalist movements based on religious, linguistic, or regional identities have led to communal tensions and conflicts between different communities. This has resulted in instances of violence, riots, and social disharmony. One of the most vital problems of Ethno-nationalist is that these movements are advocating for separate states or regions based on specific ethnic or cultural identities which can threaten the unity and territorial integrity of the nation. These demands sometimes lead to secessionist movements and separatist tendencies. It can marginalize and exclude minority communities who do not share the dominant ethno-cultural identity. This exclusionary approach can lead to discrimination, lack of representation, and denial of rights for minority groups. As often, Ethno-nationalism has fuelled regionalism in India, with demands for greater autonomy and resources for specific states or regions based on ethnic or cultural identities. This can create tensions between the central government and state governments. In addition to religious and linguistic divisions, ethno-nationalism in India can also take a caste-based form. Caste-based identities and aspirations can exacerbate social divisions and inequalities. India's secular fabric faces challenges from ethno-nationalist movements that seek to prioritize the interests of one religious or ethnic community over others. This can undermine the principles of equality and religious freedom enshrined in the constitution. Ethno-nationalist

movements can often overlook the rights and interests of indigenous and tribal communities, leading to their further marginalization and displacement. Addressing the problems of ethno-nationalism in India requires promoting inclusive nationalism that respects diversity and protects the rights of all citizens, regardless of their ethno-cultural backgrounds. Emphasizing the principles of secularism, equality, and social justice can help mitigate the negative consequences of ethnonationalism and foster a more cohesive and inclusive society.

Solution to ethno-nationalism in India:

Addressing ethno-national movements requires a multi-faceted and inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of grievances and aims to foster harmony, understanding, and equitable development. While there cannot be a universal framework to address the problems created by ethno-nationalism, there may be some strategies that can contribute to resolving ethno-national movements in north-east India. Firstly, engaging in meaningful and inclusive dialogue with representatives of ethno-national movements to understand their concerns and demands can help resolve some of the issues. Negotiation can lead to mutually acceptable solutions and build trust between different communities and the government. While, devolving power and granting a certain level of autonomy to regions or communities can address concerns related to representation and cultural preservation. Local self-governance can empower communities and reduce feelings of marginalization. Focused efforts on socioeconomic development can uplift marginalized communities and reduce the factors that fuel ethno-nationalism. Investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and employment opportunities can promote social cohesion. By ensuring the protection of minority rights, cultural heritage, and language to address concerns of discrimination and assimilation, the problems can be addressed politically. Laws and policies should guarantee the rights of all citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity or cultural background. Promoting responsible and unbiased media coverage to avoid spreading misinformation and stereotypes that can exacerbate tensions. Encourage media outlets to highlight shared values and narratives that foster unity. Addressing historical grievances through truth and reconciliation processes, acknowledging past injustices, and providing reparations where appropriate can help. Healing the wounds of the past can pave the way for a more inclusive future. Also by promoting cultural exchange programs and educational initiatives that celebrate diversity and foster intercultural understanding. Encouraging empathy and respect among different communities can build bridges and

reduce tensions. There should be a serious attempt to establish conflict resolution mechanisms to address grievances and disputes peacefully. Mediation, arbitration, and ombudsman offices can provide platforms for resolving issues without resorting to violence. By ensuring equitable political representation and participation of different communities in decision-making processes. Inclusive governance can promote a sense of ownership and belonging among all citizens. Encouraging regional cooperation and collaboration to address shared challenges and opportunities. Building strong regional ties can help in fostering understanding and peaceful coexistence. It is important to recognize that each ethno-national movement is unique, and the solutions must be tailored to the specific context and demands of the concerned communities. Any resolution should uphold the principles of democracy, human rights, and inclusivity, while aiming to create a society where diversity is celebrated, and all citizens have a sense of belonging and equal opportunities. Besides, this research work focuses a cultural approach in resolving the crisis posed by ethno-nationalism and nationalism. As stated in the hypothesis of this research, shall argue that unlike modern Nationalism which fragments the society, the *Satra* Culture practised by Harekrishna Mahanta can help in the integration and sustenance of socio-cultural fabric. Therefore, in the next few chapters I will delve into those areas to highlight how this crisis may be handled. Further on, Harekrishna Mahanta's contribution is to be understood within the foundational thought of Sankardev, who was in turn inspired by the Bhakti Movement in India.

The Bhakti Movement, which emerged in medieval India from the 12th to the 17th centuries, was a significant social and religious reform movement that promoted the idea of an egalitarian society. The movement was characterized by devotion (bhakti) to a personal form of the divine, transcending caste, creed, and gender barriers. It sought to break down the rigid social hierarchies prevalent in society and fostered a sense of equality, inclusivity, and universal love. The Bhakti saints and poets advocated for a society that rejected the caste system. They believed that devotion to God transcended caste distinctions, and everyone, regardless of their social background, could attain spiritual liberation. The Bhakti Movement emphasized the personal and direct experience of the divine, rather than relying on rituals, social status, or priestly intermediaries. This emphasis on direct spiritual experience promoted a sense of equality among all devotees. Bhakti saints preached the message of universal love and inclusivity. They taught that God's love is available to all, irrespective of their social, economic, or religious backgrounds. This message promoted unity and harmony among people from different walks of life. The

Bhakti saints composed their devotional poetry and hymns in regional languages accessible to the masses. This democratization of language and literature helped in spreading the egalitarian message to a wider audience. The Bhakti Movement provided space for women to participate actively in religious and spiritual practices. Female Bhakti saints like Mirabai, Andal, and Akka Mahadevi challenged gender norms and advocated for equality and devotion to God. Bhakti saints often engaged in social service and philanthropy, promoting a compassionate outlook toward all living beings. This emphasis on service to others furthered the idea of an egalitarian society that cares for the welfare of all.

The Bhakti Movement brought people from different social backgrounds together through congregational singing, communal prayers, and spiritual gatherings. These events promoted social integration and blurred social boundaries. The Bhakti Movement's emphasis on personal devotion, love, and equality significantly impacted Indian society, fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity. While the movement did not entirely eliminate social inequalities, it laid the groundwork for future social reform movements in India. The principles of egalitarianism and inclusivity propagated by the Bhakti saints continue to inspire movements for social justice and equality in the country today.

The growth of national consciousness in Assam is a very complex phenomenon and should be historically and objectively analysed by investing into the events that took place in Assam before and after 1826. Therefore, Srimanta Sankardev's contribution to the great rich literary and cultural effluence in Assam is an important factor that needs to be investigated in order to understand how the idea of a pre-modern nation can help in social cohesion. His cultural and artistic works are unparalleled in the history of India at that time. His efforts can be cited as the first step towards planting the seed of Assamese nation as he brought various tribes and communities under one umbrella by installing neo-vaishnavism and later the *Satra* culture in Assam. Sankardev's neo-vaishnavism has given birth to a new cultural Nationalism. This was brought forward to the indigenous people with the help of *Satras* and *Namghar* which has a major role to play in the preservation and development of culture and language, evolution of Assamese identity and also in the creation of nation building. After Sankardev most of his disciples and people in general carried out his philosophy, culture and traditions. Of late a little lesser known devotee of Sankardev from the backward region of Dimakuchi, in Udalguri district, Harekrishna Mahanta can be attributed as progeny of Sankardev. By establishing Barangajuli *Satra* in Dimakuchi, he created an atmosphere of cultural nationalism as like Sankardev in the region. Presently Harekrishna Mahanta has established thirty-three *Satras* that promote culture, literature

and social integrity. He enlightened the backward region where people from various tribes and communities are a part of those *Satras*. So, it can be said that a new era of socio-cultural sustenance and integration through the *Satra* culture of Harekrishna Mahanta is reached which are discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.