

Constructions of National Space:
Tracing the Development of Upadhyay's
Nationalist Thought
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India's nationalist response to British colonialism cannot be brushed aside lightly. The colonial ideology had legitimized their continued existence through the claim that India was not a nation. Over and against this colonial claim, the anti-colonial nationalism required to forge a national identity. In the process of confronting British colonialism Indian nationalists like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay felt the need to create a national identity through the mediation of complex mechanisms. Out of several competing claims of what constituted such national identity, a common Hindu heritage, based on the classical Hindu ethos originally created by the Aryans, was projected as the core structure of nationhood. Indeed, there are several aspects of Upadhyay's nationalist thought which are open to criticism. Upadhyay's nationalism was a response to a situation in which the loss of Self was looming large in the political and cultural horizon.

Keywords; Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Swadeshi, national space, nationalism, identity.

Introduction

Historically, we can detect two interrelated phenomena in the Indian nationalism, namely, the awakening of a new political consciousness and the simultaneous emergence of the 'national space.' The emergence of the national space in the nationalist discourse marks out a distinctive narrative break in Indian history. Indian nationalists imagined and constructed this national space, as distinct from the existing colonial space. In the nationalist discourse, the national space was a complex ensemble which included the reinterpretation of India's past, diagnostic investigations into India's present degeneration, restructuring the present, contestations for the public sphere, and identity formation in terms of religion, race and caste. To put it differently, it is through the complex interpretation of India's past and present that the notion of a distinct national space began to crystallize in the nationalist discourse.

The term national space denotes the complex of interpretations and the hermeneutical horizon in the nationalist discourse regarding India and its past within a socio-cultural and political framework.

It seems reasonable to suggest that for many Bengali nationalists at the tail end of nineteenth century 'nation' was an obscure concept. Often 'nation' in the nationalist discourse coincided both with Bengal and with the territorial boundaries of British India. The early nationalists were more concerned about the contours of meaning and identity of the emerging national space than the territorial geographical dimensions of the national space. Carving out a national space out of colonial space meant providing it with a cultural identity and meaning. To put it differently, envisioning the nation as a pan-Indian entity is intimately tied to the production of meaning. During both pre-Swadeshi and Swadeshi periods, Bengali intellectuals like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907) played significant role in the articulation of identity formation as well as the production of meaning in the emergent national space.

How does Brahmabandhab Upadhyay envisage and interpret the national space? How does he interpret India and its past? How does he deal with the question of cultural and religious identity? Upadhyay wrote on a wide range of topics such as politics, religion, social issues, education, and culture. In spite of such diversity, at a deeper level we can detect a unifying thread in Upadhyay's thought and writing; and that thread is precisely the imagined national space. Seen as an overarching conceptual category, the notion of national space brings into unity what might otherwise appear as disparate fragments in Upadhyay's political thought. This article delineates the development as well as the complex nuances of Upadhyay's nationalist thought through various stages of its development.

There is one important factor to be noted in the development of Upadhyay's nationalism. And that factor has to do with Hindu identity. Upadhyay's nationalist thought is intrinsically related to the question of Hindu identity. More specifically, Hindu identity is intrinsically related to national identity in the nationalist perspective of Upadhyay. So overwhelming is his concern regarding the Hindu identity that it keeps appearing in most of his writings in one form or another. This identity formation process in the nationalist thought of Upadhyay can

be seen as a cluster of attitudes towards other competing groups such as non-Aryan groups, depressed classes, reformers, Muslims and Europeans. It needs to be noted right at the outset that for Upadhyay Hinduism is not a 'religion' like Christianity. Rather, Hinduism for him represents a cultural ethos, a philosophy and a way of life. There are four stages in the development of Upadhyay's nationalist thought.

First Stage: Upadhyay and 'Sanitized' Hindu Identity

The first stage in Upadhyay's nationalism is closely linked to his interpretation of Hindu identity. During this stage, Upadhyay sought to cleanse Hindu identity from what he thought were unacceptable and questionable elements. During this stage, Upadhyay's interpretation of Hindu identity may be termed as a 'sanitized' version of Hinduism which lasted from 1894 to 1897. During this period Upadhyay engages in a vigorous critique of traditional Hindu beliefs and practices which he thought were not consonant with true religion. At this point in his life, his Catholic faith serves as the guiding principle in his critique of Hinduism. It is important to note that at this point in time, for Upadhyay Hinduism represents both positive and negative elements. On the negative side, he is critical of Hindu pantheon¹ in general and of Krishna of Bhaagavat in particular.² Vedanta too comes under Upadhyay's critical scrutiny. He concludes that the Vedantic system is incompatible with Catholic doctrines, especially that of creation. On the positive side, he finds Vedic Theism as an antidote for the 'evils' of Hinduism such as polytheism, nature worship and idolatry. He insists that in spite of some negative tendencies, Hinduism does possess 'sublime' truths. A byproduct of Western education had been an enthusiasm for rational and critical enquiry among the Bengali intelligentsia and Upadhyay was not alone in questioning the cultural ethos of Hindu past. Bengal renaissance had brought several Hindu beliefs and practices under the scrutiny of rational and critical inquiry.

We find one of the earliest comprehensive interpretations of Upadhyay about India and its past, in an article titled "National Greatness," which was originally a public address given by him on 8 July 1896 in Karachi. In this article he focuses on 'the elementary qualifications that befit a nation to compete for the acquisition of greatness.' Dwelling 'upon the initial conditions that a nation must fulfil'

for greatness, Upadhyay considers the 'present state' of India. More to the point, he attempts to identify 'the fundamental defects which have arrested the march of the Indian people as a whole towards the goal of greatness.' For him, national greatness consists primarily in being gripped by 'the idea of the Infinite and Absolute.' In Upadhyay's reading, ancient India was 'great' precisely because the scriptures, rites and ceremonies, philosophy, cult and discipline- all tended to the elevation of the human mind towards the Infinite Being.³ He insists on the need for the people to become familiar with India's 'glorious' past. He points out the lack of appreciation of Indian history by juxtaposing several examples:

Our students, our historians, can accurately describe the battles of Marathon and Salamis and the exploits of the Greeks in their encounter with the Persians, but they have scarcely heard of the chivalrous deeds of Puru when he fought against the great Alexander. They know how the women of Carthage cut their hair for the purpose of supplying cordage for warships, but they do not know how Rajput women lighted up a funeral pyre and jumped into it, one by one, cheerfully and heroically, to save themselves from being violated by the Mlecchas. They will tell you how the Greeks died to a man in the pass of Thermopylae, but they are totally ignorant of a similar incident in the siege of Chitor.⁴

There is one thing that emerges clearly from Upadhyay's writings: the foundations of India need to be based on religion and religious values and such a basis is to be found in India's classical past. For Upadhyay as well as for other Indian nationalists the Indian classical past remained the ideal to which India must return, if it was to regain greatness.

Second Phase: Interface between Christian and Hindu Identity

The second phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hindu identity lasts from 1897 to 1900. During this phase we see some significant readjustments in Brahmabandhab's perspectives on Hindu identity. His major concern now is to present Catholicism to the Hindus of India in a meaningful way. During this period he was actively engaged in setting up a Catholic ashram on the banks of the Narmada River. His prime concern is to de-Europeanize Christianity in India. At this point in time Upadhyay was also in active search for theological-philosophical

categories to present Catholic truths which made sense in Hindu context. Perhaps the most important paradigmatic change in Upadhyay's approach to Hinduism during this period is the adoption of Vedanta, which he had denounced not long ago, now he would use it as the vehicle for conveying Catholic truths. He was convinced that just as Aristotelian philosophy nurtured Christian thinking in the West Hindu philosophy could serve Christian thinking in India.

During this phase Upadhyay articulated the 'Hindu-Catholic' synthesis. This is a new form of 'hyphenated identity' proposed by Upadhyay. He declared: "By birth we are Hindu and shall remain Hindu till death. But as dvija (twice-born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholic; we are members of an indefectible communion embracing all ages and climes." He added: 'We are Hindus so far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal souls we are Catholic. We are Hindu Catholic.'⁵ Interestingly, such paradoxical juxtaposition was most clearly reflected in his death. Upadhyay saw no contradiction between being a Christian and being a Hindu at the same time, a conviction which he seems to have carried till his death.

Let us note some of the important developments in Upadhyay's nationalist thought during this period. A significant aspect of Upadhyay's thought is his diagnostic quest for India's present state of decline. He devotes considerable time and energy in showing the causes of India's degeneration. In an article titled "Degeneracy of India," (1897) Upadhyay locates the decline of India specifically in the Hindu worldview. It is important to note the change in perspective in Brahmabandhab in locating the source of India's decline. He situates India's decadence not so much in the political realm, rather in the way Hinduism has interpreted reality. More specifically he locates India's degeneracy in the Hindu interpretation of karma. According to Upadhyay, the traditional interpretation of karma doctrine left no room for 'vicarious suffering' which is the 'noble privilege of feeling and suffering for another.' Because of such interpretation of karma 'man has been made an unfeeling machine.' Upadhyay points out that since the doctrine of karma does not foster self-transcendence, responsibility and the virtue of self-sacrifice have been absent in India. More importantly, for Upadhyay, there is another crucial implication

of the karma doctrine: “The cohesive power of moral relationship which binds human society into an organic whole, has been destroyed.” He goes on to compare the misapplied law of karma to ‘a vampire sucking the very life-blood of India.’⁶ It is clear that Upadhyay’s reading of Indian ‘decline’ is from a Catholic perspective. During this period Brahmabandhab sees the British rule as providential and beneficial to India.

For Upadhyay Hinduism and Hindu philosophy are the foundations of Indian cultural ethos. Indian cultural ethos, as he sees, is the legacy of the classical Hindu heritage. At this point we must note one of the important elements in Upadhyay’s interpretation of Hinduism. Hinduism, for him, is a living reality, and not a dead civilization of antiquity. Unlike the dead civilizations, the Hindu race has been persevered right up to the present time. Upadhyay asks:

Where are now those ancient nations whose deeds have been recorded in golden letters by historians? Where are the Egyptians and Phoenicians? Where are the Babylonians and Assyrians? Where are they? They are gone never to rise again. But the Hindu race has persevered. India has passed through fiery ordeals and tremendous crises; she has undergone most excruciating trials... Still the people of India have lingered on bound together with the tie of a common, ancient tradition. There must be some deep significance in her marvellous survival.⁷

For Brahmabandhab such capacity for ‘marvellous survival’ holds out the hope for the future of India. Though there are signs of degeneration and decay Upadhyay believes in India’s future glory: “We believe that India will rise again and be exalted in glory. We fondly cherish the hope that the day will come when she will bloom as a hundred-petalled lotus and madden the whole world with the fragrance of her virtue. Apart from this belief and hope in her future greatness we find it hard to explain the miraculous length of her life.”⁸

Upadhyay’s Hindu-Catholicism was not acceptable to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Papal delegate Zaleski was opposed to Upadhyay’s vision of Catholicism. Zaleski was not in favour of the Ashram project undertaken by Brahmabandhab. By March 1899 *Sophia* (monthly), a journal edited by Upadhyay, ceased to exist.

Third Phase: Upadhyay's Anxiety over Hindu Identity

The third phase in Upadhyay's articulation of Hindu identity lasts from 1900 to 1901. Despite opposition from the hierarchy, Upadhyay's concerns about Indian Catholicism have not yet waned completely. In the year 1900 we see a number of articles by Brahmabandhab which sought to create Hindu categories to articulate Catholic truths mainly through a new journal, named *Sophia*, which now appeared as a weekly. During this period he continues to explore themes such as Vedic Theism and Vedanta in this journal. From June 1900 onwards Upadhyay explored Sankara's Vedanta extensively. Upadhyay who had denounced Advaita not long ago, now becomes convinced that Vedanta 'will play as important a part in giving direction to modern Indian thought as did Greek philosophy in moulding different schools of European philosophy.'⁹ From this point onwards, for Upadhyay the foundation of India's cultural rejuvenation is Sankara's Vedanta.

However, there is a subtle change taking place in Upadhyay's thinking regarding Hinduism and Hindu identity at this point of time. And that change, on the one hand, has to do with Upadhyay's consistent opposition to European/Orientalist interpretation of Hinduism. During this period he is highly critical of Orientalists like Thibaut and Max Muller. He feels that Western Orientalists have not really understood the essence of Indian thought and philosophy.¹⁰ The larger question reflected in Upadhyay's writings during this period is: who is entitled to interpret India's cultural heritage?

On the other hand, the change in Upadhyay's thinking has to do with his own grappling with Hindu/Indian identity. He is increasingly concerned about the effects of excessive European influences on India which he felt were detrimental to the Hindu mode of thought. Upadhyay writes: "European philosophy is aggressive and by unceasing onslaughts is attempting to destroy Hindu thought. Our existence is at stake."¹¹ Upadhyay's effort at the educational front has to be seen within the context of Hindu identity. Most of his plans of education centred on strengthening Hindu cultural ethos which he felt were under the threat of westernizing influences. Upadhyay stressed the need to invigorate the Hindu mode of thought:

We shall never be able to think vigorously unless we are taught to think as Hindus. No doubt, our education cannot be complete if we do not assimilate European culture, but there must be first a healthy constitution to befit us for the process of assimilation. European science makes our herbs and trees grow most luxuriantly but only when they are planted in Indian soil. No science, no culture would be of any use to them if they were transplanted to a foreign land. Our universities are producing only bastard bantlings who can think neither like a European nor like a Hindu.¹²

We see another significant development in Upadhyay's nationalist thinking during this period. There is an increasing tendency of identifying Hindu thought with Indian thought in Upadhyay's writings. For Brahmabandhab the creators of Indian cultural ethos are the Aryans. By parity of reason there is an unmistakable projection of Aryan race or Hindu race as the rightful inheritors of the emerging national space in Upadhyay's writings. From the perspective of Upadhyay the decline of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the very decline of India; the progress of Hindu/Aryan race is equal to the progress of 'India.'

The territorial contours of the emerging national space in Upadhyay's writings are not very explicit: sometimes this national space is identified as India, sometimes as Bengal, sometimes as Bharat and sometimes as Hindustan. Often he shuttles between the 'national' and regional identities. For example, while writing about the significance of Durga Puja for Bengalis Upadhyay notes that the 'readers in the Western and Southern presidencies are, perhaps, not aware of what is Durga Puja.' He goes on to note the difference of signification attached to Durga Puja in various parts of British India: "The strange thing is that Bengal, effeminate Bengal, goes mad over this power-worship. The strong Hindustani, the stalwart Punjabi, the heroic Rajput and the sturdy Mahratta are not half as much stirred in the celebration of the worship of the Goddess of Power as the delicate Bengali."¹³

There is one aspect of the above quote which merits our attention in the context of the emerging national space. In the scale of comparison Upadhyay has included Bengali, Hindustani, Punjabi, Rajput and Mahratta which form the traditional Aryan 'heartland.' Nowhere does he mention or compare Dravidian south India with the Aryan territories. Upadhyay writes: "Durga Puja is believed to be the celebration of the anniversary of Rama's conquest of Ravana- the triumph of the Aryans

over the non-Aryans. Rama is said to have worshipped sakti (power) to conquer his monster-enemy.”¹⁴ For Upadhyay the triumph of the Aryans over the non-Aryans is a ‘national triumph’ and Durga puja is the celebration of that ‘national’ victory. Upadhyay laments the lack of ‘national’ spirit among Bengalis during Durga puja: “Not a spark of chivalry kindles the breast of the Bengali, not a thought of past glory and greatness crosses his mind, not even a teardrop moistens his eye at the sight of his misery and degradation, during this commemorative season of national triumph.”¹⁵

Upadhyay’s notion of cultural-national space reflects the assumptions of Aryan Race theory which is deeply embedded in Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Aryan race theory had generated considerable interest both in Europe and in India.¹⁶ The Aryan race theory had a significant impact on the Indian nationalist scene. The Indian nationalists were quick to incorporate Orientalist interpretation of ancient India into their political agenda.¹⁷ The Aryan race theory became a convenient political weapon for three different groups: Hindu nationalists, the Dalits and Dravidians.¹⁸ To many Hindu intellectuals, the Aryan notion served basically as a nationalist rallying point as well as a cohesive instrument. Indian intellectuals and nationalists of the nineteenth century, who were mainly from Hindu background, found in Aryan Race theory an ideological support to further their nationalist cause.

By the year 1900 we see a growing anxiety in Upadhyay’s writings regarding the integrity of Hindu society. For him the ancient India was united and one under Aryan supremacy; but now he sees the signs of decline and decay all around. He writes: “When any calamity overtook the father-land, when clannish jealousies tore the national heart, patriots and bards could appeal to the entire race by touching one common cord which bound together every Aryan child, notwithstanding the prevalence of stupendous differences.” Upadhyay points out that laxity and looseness in enforcing the salutary conditions of social life will bring into the fold heterogeneous elements which will endanger the very existence of the society. Against the potential disintegration of Hindu social order Upadhyay suggests that certain conditions must be laid down for every member of society under the pain of excommunication. These conditions do not pertain to the uniformity

of belief among the Hindus, rather to social practices.¹⁹ He suggests two 'tentative' conditions for every Hindu to be followed: (1) not to interdine and intermarry with non-Hindu races, such as Europeans, Mahommedans, etc and (2) not to eat beef. According to him, 'intermarriages with alien races will make hybrids of us and destroy our national integrity. It should be repressed with a high hand. Interdining often leads to social aberrations and hence it should also be prohibited as a rule.' He points out that beef eating shocks Hindu sentiments horribly and to violate that sentiment is to break up the entire Hindu edifice.'

Upadhyay is extremely critical of any efforts which he felt would threaten the integrity of the Hindu social fabric. It is against his anxiety of the Hindu social fabric that Upadhyay's pronouncements on the caste system need to be located.

The caste system is a natural evolution of the social instinct. Far-sighted, learned men formulated it in consonance with the genius of the people. The greatness of the Hindu race was achieved largely through the regulating influence of caste. It was caste that preserved the Hindus from being transformed into hybrids of the Semitic stock. It is this social polity which still checks mammon-worship on the European scale.²⁰

Upadhyay sees Hindu society as an organic whole: "Hindu society is an organism. It has its unity as well as its diversity, though the unity has been greatly disturbed by disintegrating influences consequent upon too much emphasis laid upon the principle of differentiation. The caste system which diversifies the principle of Hindu unity should be restored to its original salutary order of divisions."²¹ Upadhyay is highly critical of those social reformers who wanted to dismantle Hindu caste system. Upadhyay writes:

Some of our Bengal reformers are uncontrollable. They will not rest until they see all old landmarks which go to constitute social variety clean washed off. They are seized with a sickly, sentimental idea of brotherhood. They have been tutored by certain European freelances that not to have uniform fellowship with anybody and everybody is unjust, immoral. They are chips of socialists. Social differences and divisions there must be.²²

A close scrutiny of his writings between 1900 and 1901 would suggest that Upadhyay is disillusioned with the state of the church in India. In 1900 Sophia weekly came to an end; in March 1902 Catholic authorities banned Upadhyay's journal *The Twentieth Century*.²³ After the ecclesiastical censures he began writing in *Bangadarsan* on issues pertaining to Hindu society almost with a vengeance. Upadhyay's trip to England (1902-3) made him even more antagonistic toward the British.²⁴ Now on, anti-Europeanism becomes more and more explicit in his writings. He sees European domination detrimental both to national progress and to the progress of Hinduism. Now all his energies are focused in projecting Hindu identity as the basis of Indian national identity. One important aspect of his approach to Hinduism is the growing concern to strengthen the Hindu identity. Somehow Upadhyay is convinced that cultural regeneration is the condition for the possibility of national regeneration.

Fourth Phase: Hindu Nationalism as Cultural nationalism

In the fourth stage, Upadhyay moves towards Hindu nationalism or cultural nationalism and this period lasts from 1901 to 1907. The beginning of what might be called the Hindu nationalist phase of Brahmapandhab is marked by his writings in *Bangadarsan* from mid 1901. A major turning point in Upadhyay's Hindu nationalism is the starting of *Sandhya* in 1904 December. As Sumit Sarkar points out, radical politics and aggressive Hinduism often got inextricably combined in the pages of *Sandhya*.²⁵ His interest in Catholicism, for all practical purposes, becomes somewhat marginal. In spite of opposition from the Catholic hierarchy Upadhyay remains a Catholic; from now onwards he disengages himself from any theological controversies. The most pressing concern for him during the swadeshi agitation centres on strengthening Hindu identity. We can discern three interrelated aspects dominating Upadhyay thought: (i) His articulations of Hindu identity which become more and more resolute. (ii) His anxiety which becomes more acute over racial self-preservation. (iii) His anti-European stance which becomes more forceful. There are several articles and speeches of this period which reveal Upadhyay's new perspective on Hinduism.

Given his anguish over Hindu identity it is not entirely surprising to see in its inaugural number *Sandhya* Upadhyay declaring that the

‘Vedas, Brahmin leadership and caste were all indispensable for the Hindu.’²⁶ One of the clearest articulations of Upadhyay’s understanding of Hinduism can be found in an important essay titled “The One Centredness of the Hindu Race,” written in 1901. In this essay published in *Bangadarsan* he delineates the ‘Hinduness’ or the Bengali term used by him “Hindutva” of the Hindus. The significance of this article consists in his effort to synthesize his views on Hinduism written earlier and brings to focus the meaning of ‘Hinduness’ or Hindutva. So overwhelming is his concern for racial self-preservation that practically every article written by Brahmabandhab during this period reflects the theme of Hindu identity and ‘racial self-preservation.’ According to Sumit Sarkar, Rabindranath Tagore came under attack from Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh “for not being sufficiently enthusiastic over the amalgamation of politics with Hindu revivalism, and for his Universalist leanings which were felt to have a demoralizing effect.”²⁷

In July 1901 Upadhyay had expressed his anguish over the loss of Self and the loss of ‘spirit of manliness’ under colonialism.²⁸ In Brahmabandhab’s reading, the Western education and cultural adaptations by Indians are responsible for eroding the traditional social system. To make matters worse, Indian social reformers and liberal minded Indians are questioning the very basis and validity of Hindu caste system. As far as Upadhyay is concerned these two factors are causing a grave danger to the very existence of Hindu society.

Central to the creation of the national space within the nationalist discourse is the enunciation of India’s ‘difference’ with other nations and cultures. Articulations of dissimilarity entail a double dimension of forging both identity and difference: On the one hand, such differences mark out Indian national space from other national spaces as something unique. On the other hand, this differentiation strategy was central in forging a collective identity in most nationalist discourses.²⁹ Orientalists portrayed an image of India as ontologically different from the West and this image became crucial to the reconstruction of the national space in the Indian nationalist discourse. The writings of Max Muller in particular reflected an image of India as a land of lofty spirituality and as an embodiment of primordial community whose very existence symbolized an implicit critique of

the West, the cultural 'other' of Europe. The idea of a spiritually oriented India vis-à-vis a materialistically oriented West became part and parcel of the nationalist imagination. The materialist West was also seen as victorious, masculine and strong, whereas India, though spiritually superior to the West, was weak, passive and unorganized.³⁰

Upadhyay compared and contrasted the materialistic West with the 'spiritual' India.³¹ Upadhyay is highly critical of the British inclination for conquest and domination. "What's the point," Upadhyay writes from England, "of conquering Nature for one's use, of enslaving her, if without her one loses one's peace of mind? Such victory- hardly victory, but defeat-is really to acknowledge abject servitude." Upadhyay points out the futility of such conquest and victory: "...If, having shed blood through a rain of cannon balls, I amass gold from the very depth of the desert, and if I use that gold in terrible strife for my own ends, and if that gold then causes conflict, and I lose it, and suffer the gall of that loss, where is the difference between slavery and human prowess?"³² From Oxford he wrote: "To tell the truth, I don't like the vain display of English civilization one little bit. All this manhandling of Nature is getting on my nerves."³³ In contrast, Upadhyay writes about the Hindu vision of man's relation to nature: "He is the noblest of men for the Hindu who, having based himself on the most sublime, boundless, all-encompassing Unity, then wanders freely as a lord amidst the trifling manifestations of plurality. Nature serves such a one, no doubt, yet he himself is not caught up in Nature's ties."³⁴

Hidden behind these comparisons is the effort to sift through the distinctive elements of two contrasting worldviews of the rulers and the ruled. In Upadhyay's interpretation the Englishman, the ruler, is caught up in the web of attachment and worldly ties whereas the Hindu, the ruled, who is beyond such worldly ties, soars in freedom. By a clever inversion of preferences and values, on the one hand, Upadhyay shows that though ruled by the English, the Hindu is potentially free because of his approach to reality. On the other hand, the English, the rulers, are caught up in slavery. The English desire to conquer, govern and amass wealth is his bondage. In Upadhyay's view, the Hindu worldview is far superior to that of the English.

During the final months of his life Upadhyay's cultural nationalism became more and more vociferous. He became highly critical of the

moderate nationalists who wanted reforms within the framework of constitutional means. According to Brahmabandhab's friend and colleague Animananda, "Upadhyay's Swadeshi was altogether different. He was the first man in our political history to suggest complete independence for India."³⁵ The pages of *Sandhya* reflected Upadhyay's nationalism which had begun to advocate violence and extremism. Upadhyay wrote in *Sandhya* about his nationalist conviction: "Know that the Hindu never dies, neither of a bullet, nor of decease and pain. A few worms like you and me may indeed die, but the Hindu race will not die out and cannot die out..."³⁶ Perhaps the most striking expression of his cultural nationalism is reflected in his exhortation given to fellow Bengalis on the eve of Swadeshi agitation: "In all that you hear, in all that you learn, in all that you do, remain a Hindu, remain a Bengali."³⁷

Upadhyay was at the forefront of the Swadeshi movement which began in the context of the partition of Bengal. He was arrested on September 10, 1907 for the inflammatory articles published in *Sandhya* and prosecuted on charges of sedition. Brahmabandhab had claimed that no foreign court would be able to punish him. Interestingly enough, this proved to be only too true because he died before the conclusion of the sedition trial due to complications arising out of hernia operation on 27 October, 1907, at the age of forty seven.³⁸

Conclusion

Whether or not Upadhyay's advocacy of violence as a political means can be justified as a 'historical necessity' is an open question. However, Upadhyay's role in evolving the early nationalist response to British colonialism cannot be brushed aside lightly. The colonial ideology had legitimized their continued existence through the claim that India was not a nation. Over and against this colonial claim, the anti-colonial nationalism required to forge a national identity. In the process of confronting British colonialism Indian nationalists like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay felt the need to create a national identity through the mediation of complex mechanisms. Out of several competing claims of what constituted such national identity, a common Hindu heritage, based on the classical Hindu ethos originally created by the Aryans, was projected as the core structure of nationhood. Indeed, there are several aspects of Upadhyay's nationalist thought which are

open to criticism. Upadhyay's nationalism was a response to a situation in which the loss of Self was looming large in the political and cultural horizon. His nationalism was conditioned by what he perceived as the urgent need to consolidate those aspects of culture and identity which were at the verge of disintegration.

Notes

- 1 See, B. Upadhyay, "The Supreme Being Under Delusion," *Sophia-Monthly*, January, 1896.
- 2 He goes on to suggest that 'for the moral safety of India Krishna of Bhagavat should be denounced and abjured by all right minded patriots.' B. Upadhyay, "Krishna of Bhagavat," *Sophia-Monthly*, January, 1895.
- 3 B. Upadhyay, "National Greatness," *Sophia-Monthly*, August, 1896.
- 4 B. Upadhyay, "National Greatness," *Sophia-Monthly*, August, 1896.
- 5 B. Upadhyay, "Are We Hindus," *Sophia-Monthly*, July 1898.
- 6 B. Upadhyay, "Degeneracy of India," *Sophia-Monthly*, July, 1897.
- 7 B. Upadhyay, "Why we are Fallen," *Sophia-Monthly*, January, 1898.
- 8 B. Upadhyay, "Why we are Fallen," *Sophia-Monthly*, January, 1898.
- 9 B. Upadhyay, "Vedantism," *Sophia-Weekly*, 11 August, 1900.
- 10 B. Upadhyay, "Notes: Western Misperception of Hinduism," *Sophia-Weekly*, 24 November, 1900.
- 11 B. Upadhyay, "European Domination," *Sophia-Weekly*, 18 August, 1900.
- 12 B. Upadhyay, "Modern Education and Hindu Thought," *Sophia-Weekly*, 30 June, 1900.
- 13 B. Upadhyay, "Power-Worship," *Sophia-Weekly*, 29 September, 1900.
- 14 B. Upadhyay, "Power-Worship," *Sophia-Weekly*, 29 September, 1900.
- 15 B. Upadhyay, "Power-Worship," *Sophia-Weekly*, 29 September, 1900.
- 16 See, Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1977); Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic*

Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

- 17 Romila Thapar, "Some Appropriations of the Theory of Aryan Race Relating to the Beginnings of Indian History," *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (ed.) Daud Ali (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 15-35.
- 18 Romila Thapar describes the politics and dynamics behind the various appropriations of the Aryan race theory: "The debate over how it [Aryan race theory] was to be interpreted provides an insight into the political agendas of the groups who used it. These groups were involved in seeking identities from the past and in countering each other's claims to these identities as well as choosing a homeland and working out a national culture." Romila Thapar, "Some Appropriations of the Theory of Aryan Race Relating to the Beginnings of Indian History," pp. 17-18.
- 19 B. Upadhyay, "Integrity of Hindu Society," *Sophia-Weekly*, 10 November, 1900.
- 20 B. Upadhyay, "Question and Answers: Caste," in *Sophia-Weekly*, 15 September, 1900.
- 21 B. Upadhyay, "Notes: Caste," in *Sophia-Weekly*, 27 October, 1900.
- 22 B. Upadhyay, "Notes: Caste," in *Sophia-Weekly*, 27 October, 1900.
- 23 Julius Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, Vol. II, (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 2002) footnote no. 114, p. 135. Henceforth abbreviated as *TWBU*.
- 24 Upadhyay had left for Europe in September 1902 and came back to India by July 1903. C.f., Animananda, *The Blade*, pp. 119-120.
- 25 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (Madras: Macmillan, 1996) pp. 113-14.
- 26 Sumit Sarkar writes: "Strange words these, coming from a man who had been once a Brahmo and then for quite some time a Catholic." Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973. Reprint, 1994) p. 259.
- 27 B. Upadhyay, "Swadeshbhakti o biswaprem," *Swaraj*, 15 Baisakh 1314 (1904). Cf., Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, p. 61.
- 28 B. Upadhyay, "Our Poverty," *The Twentieth Century*, 31 July, 1901.
- 29 Manu Goswami, *Producing India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004) p. 15.

- 30 Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 1999. Reprint, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 68.
- 31 Several letters written during his stay in England reflect the theme of identity and difference. See for instance, B. Upadhyay, "Letter from a Sannyasi Staying in England," 16 January, 1903. These letters were originally published in *Bangabasi* between 1902 and 1903. Cf., Julius Lipner and George Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 2002) p. 510.
- 32 B. Upadhyay, "Letter From a Sannyasi Staying in England," 16 January, 1903. Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II, p. 511.
- 33 B. Upadhyay, "Letter from a Sannyasi Staying in England," letter No. 6, Oxford, 6 March, 1903. Lipner and Gispert-Sauch, Eds, *TWBU*, Vol. II, p. 513. .
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- 35 Italics in the original. B. Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 136.
- 36 B. Upadhyay, *Sandhya*, 11 January 1907. C.f Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 139.
- 37 B. Upadhyay, *Sandhya*, November, 1904. C.f Animananda, *The Blade*, p.131.
- 38 Animananda, *The Blade*, p. 176.

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