Chapter II

Nation, Nationalism and the Rise of the National Subject in India

2.1 Introduction

The nineteenth century in Indian history can be marked as the period of intense churning in the political and social life of the country. A definite reason for this churning can be linked to the fate of the declining Mughal rule and the rapid ascendency of the East India Company. The Mughal rule was effectively reduced to a titular rule and even that convention was done away with in 1857 when the last ruler of the Mughal Empire, Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled to Burma and the dynasty came to the end.[1] But 1857 is also important for some other reasons. With the end of the Mughal rule, the year should have established the unchallenged supremacy of the East India Company after an intense political campaign it ran for over a century. But as it happened, 1857 also marked the end of the East India Company. The British government effectively put an end to it and assumed the direct rule of India. The deputy of British monarch (viceroy) came to assume the highest executive position in India. India became a subject colony of the British Empire and Indians became the subject population of the British colonial rule. It implied that the British parliament which used to discuss and debate the working of the East India Company in India till 1857 came to occupy the position of a supreme decision making body for India. Thus one reading of 1857 points to the subjection of Indian population by another nation. It is beginning of the colonialism in the proper sense. But another reading

[1]The decisive death of the Mughal Empire was brought about by the Revolution of 1857 which is variously described as the First War of Indian Independence Movement or simply The Revolt or 1857 Mutiny or more derisively as Sepoy Mutiny. One can choose any of these labels depending on one's own politics. Colonialist historians or those who were loyalists to the colonial rule preferred to downplay the incident as the Sepoy Mutiny or 1857 Mutiny whereas the nationalist historians choose to read the event as the First War of Indian Independence. Kaviraj, while discussing the contested terrain of history and representation, writes, "Events of 1857-59 have in fact undergone … narrative transformations: from the last desperate kick of the effete Mughal empire it has slowly become the first war of independence" (Kaviraj 1995: 118).

of the same event marks 1857 as the point where India came into existence as a nation. For the first time, in this second reading, Indians realized the desire to liberate their country from the chains of a foreign yoke. In this reading, Indians awoke to the acute condition of the bondage of their nation and made efforts to get rid of this bondage. This second reading has retained its consistency in the nationalist historiography of India.

This chapter traces the contours of the 'awakening' of Indians to their condition of subjugation and their efforts to frame a response to their condition. But my focus will not be to read this response with respect to the 1857 Revolt. The 1857 Revolt can only be taken as a point of departure for my discussion. My endeavour is to understand how the Indian nation was constituted by different people and how their conception or imagination of the nation in turn constituted them as the 'national subject' fit to inhabit the space of the nation. It is only as a 'national subject' that they could have thought of launching their anti-colonial struggle to get rid the nation of the British colonialism. The chapter will argue that there was no one or single 'national subject' which came into being but rather there was a multiplicity of 'national subjects' which emerged in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century India. The chapter will also look at the points of convergences and departures of these varied 'national subjects'.

2.2 Nationalism in India in the Context of British rule

One may consider nineteenth century to be the period of the rise of nationalism in India. Moreover, it is widely accepted among historians that the concept in its modern avatar is the direct result of British colonial rule in India.[2] It is a popular academic perception that nationalism emerged out of a response to colonial rule in the nineteenth

[2] Nandy writes that the idea of modern nation-state came to India after 1850s "riding piggy-back on the western ideology of nationalism" (Nandy 1994: ix).

century and in resistance to colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century.[3] It must be noted that there is a difference between 'response' to colonial rule and 'resistance' to colonial rule. 'Response' needs to be understood as coming to terms with the colonial rule in the country. How did native Indian society adjust itself to the fact that it is governed by a set of rulers who do not owe their allegiance to the geographical area called India? They were outsiders and remained outsiders. They were accountable to the parliament of a foreign country instead of the people of India. Coming to accept all these hitherto inexperienced facts can be said to constitute the 'response' to the colonial rule. This does not entail any opposition to colonial rule. 'Resistance' to colonial rule refers more to actively opposing foreign rule and using all tactics to throw it out of the country. But this distinction is not as straight-forward as it seems. The 'response' to colonial rule was not just coming to terms with an alien rule. This implies passivity. The 'response' to the colonial rule in India took diverse forms such as negotiating with the colonial rule in social, political, religious and culture domains of life. It also entailed a fierce resistance to the colonial rule as is evident in the 1857 Revolt and many other agrarian and tribal revolts in the country in the nineteenth century. Similarly, the 'resistance' to the colonial rule did not merely mean simply opposing the foreign rule. It took the form of protracted negotiation and give-and-take in different domains of life. To understand nationalism in India, one needs to examine how different people and groups looked at the idea of nation and what they did with that idea.

The term 'nationalism' brought into play an entire gamut of related concepts in India. The terms 'nation', 'nationalism', 'national subject' and 'nation-state' came to occupy centre stage in the political life of the country from the beginning of the

[3]There is much more at stake here than simply the colonial rule in India. Almost all major public figures who engaged with the colonial rule also grappled with a far more complicated ideology which enveloped the colonial rule in India. The ideology was that of 'modernity'. From Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar to Syed Ahmad Khan to Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay to Gandhi to Ambedkar, everyone grappled with the idea of 'modernity' or more specifically 'colonial modernity'.

nineteenth century. These terms have no easy biography in India and even a cursory survey of the debates around it is enough to demonstrate their contested nature. These are some of the most hotly contested terms in modern Indian political and social life.

The only concept in this family which can be given a fixed date in India is that of the nation-state. It can be said with a certain amount of confidence that India became a nation on 15 August 1947 for the reason that Indians came to be their own rulers (in a democratic sense) on this date. Till that date, they were a subject colony of the British Empire. But more problematic is the concepts around and about the nation, nationalism and national subject. It is neither easy nor imperative to fix the precise date from which nation and nationalism, in the modern sense, came in India. Broadly speaking, latter half of the nineteenth century can be taken as the period when the signs or broad contours of the consciousness of India as a nation can be seen in the country or more specifically among its elite.[4]

2.3 Defining Nation, Nationalism, National Subject

A discussion on 'nation', 'nationalism' and 'national subject' can take multiple forms. It can take a historical form where one can begin with the first definition attempted at a particular historical point and subsequent modifications by different theorists and philosophers. I prefer to take another route by accepting a general working definition and then using it as a site of contestation and debate where other kinds of theories can be invoked. G. Aloysius in his book, *Nationalism without a Nation in India*, defines nation as:

> an entity forming part of the compound concept nation-state, or to a linguistic-ethnic community struggling for its own statehood … It may refer to a relationship that exist or presumed to exist

[4]Again this is a generalization as people can show the evidence of the concept of nation being present in sections of Indian population even before 1850s. But here the concept is marked for its wide currency in at least the elite circles of India.

> between individuals and groups with either equality or common cultural bond as the basis of common political consciousness. (10)

This definition brings in, among others, three important points. One, nation as a linguistic-ethnic community; two, relationship among individuals and groups based on equality or common cultural bond; and three, nation as a basis of common political consciousness. This definition does not talk of geographical boundary as a pre-requisite for the idea of a nation. There is only a brief hint of it in nation as in nation-state but the overarching idea is that of a common cultural bond which exists in the individuals and groups who inhabit that idea of nation. Nation as a cultural phenomenon is a widely accepted notion among political and social scientists. When a group of people believe themselves to be bonded by a cultural commonality, they can be said to constitute a nation. Such people may either belong to an ethnic community or to a linguistic community.

According to Aloysius, the common cultural bond acts as a basis for a common political consciousness. It is here that the political enters into the idea of nation. The political consciousness is understood as awareness among people of the power relations which governs a group or a society and this awareness leads to the assertion of a stake in that power relation. Aloysius sees political consciousness as:

> the perception of power relations within society and of one's own (individual or group) position in that frame. It also refers to an urgency to take collective action to strengthen or alter that position. (53)

Reading political consciousness along with the idea of nation ruptures the common cultural bonding underlying the nation which also gives it homogeneity. The inherent political consciousness in the nation leads to a power-play between its various constituent groups. This effectively means that however common the cultural bond may be in a

nation, there is a more profound unevenness which requires political consciousness (and action) to establish some kind of equilibrium.

Gyanendra Pandey says that "nations are established by constructing a core or mainstream – the essential, natural soul of the nation, as it is claimed" (1999: 608). This definition is somewhat different from that of Aloysius. Where Aloysius emphasizes the pre-existence of equality or a common cultural bond, Pandey underlines an 'essence' to be the core of the nation and this 'essential core' is to be constructed. It is at this level of construction that both Aloysius and Pandey share a common ground. Now the question to be asked is this: what is the core or essential or natural soul of the nation? Who decides what constitutes the core?[5] Later sections of this chapter will take up this question in detail. Benedict Anderson has attempted a more elaborate definition of the nation and his is one of the most influential definitions of nation which is widely used in the social sciences now. In his 1983 book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Anderson defines nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991: 6). Anderson explains each of the important words of this definition. Nation is imagined because all the people who inhabit it do not know each other and even in the smallest of the nations all the people do not have face to face interaction. Still they treat each person inhabiting within the boundaries of the nation as a fellow national being (1991: 6). Anderson marks his difference from Ernest Gellner's idea of nationalism as an entity that "invents nation where they do not exist" (quoted in Anderson 1991: 6). Anderson finds a problem with the verb "invents" in Gellner and says that this verb assimilates with other verbs such as "fabrication" and "falsity." So, the positive impact of the term which could mean "imagining" and "creation" is lost. Further, Anderson says that nation is a limited concept

[5] Pandey attempts this question of core or essential soul of the nation through the construction of minorities along with the nation. For the discussion, see Pandey 1999: 608-629.

in geographical sense as each nation has a certain definite boundary and no nation can be coterminous with entire humanity. Nation is a sovereign concept and a modern concept that does away with the divinely-ordained kingship in the light of Enlightenment and Revolutions (1991: 7). Finally, nation is a community because regardless of inequalities, all people within the nation are linked with each other in "deep, horizontal comradeship" (1991: 7). All three, Aloysius, Anderson and Pandey (and also Gellner) work with the idea that a nation is a constructed category. They underline the fact that the nation is not a natural or a priori category, rather it has to be brought into existence.

As a word, nationalism traces itself to nation and it is defined in context of a nation. That context is most often taken to be the presence of a nation, that is, the nation precedes nationalism. But there is a problem with this assumption. As various scholars and theorists of nation and nationalism have shown, in many instances, it is nationalism which produces the concept of nation; that is to say, there is nothing inherent about the concept of nation. It has to be brought into being and nationalism becomes the tool which achieves this task of bringing the nation into existence. In this line of argument, the nation becomes an invented category. Most of the theorists of nation and nationalism believe in this thesis. But a very strong critique of the antecedence of nation to nationalism or that nationalism invents or brings into existence the category of nation, in the case of India, comes from Aloysius who argues that in India nationalism existed and continues to exist without a nation. He argues that:

> Nationalism may refer to the doctrine or ideology of an aspiring class, or to the policy orientation of a state or to a praiseworthy sentiment of attachment to one's own nation or state. Nationalism may also refer to a socio-political movement for state-formation or any anti-imperialist movement or to the nation-building activities or mobilization of a government or class. (Aloysius 10)

Thus, nationalism can be considered as the external manifestation of the political consciousness inherent in people and groups within the nation. It is also clear from the

above definition that nationalism is also a movement for nation-building. The nation is not always already a category which is out there waiting to be inhabited. In fact, it is invented and brought into being and has to be laboriously nurtured. It is an aspirational category as people aspire for it and act to fulfill the aspiration.[6] A deeper reading of the above definition leads us to understand that nationalism can be considered as an ideology of "an aspiring class." There are different classes but only one class or some classes "aspire" for nationalism and the building of the nation. It is this aspiring class or classes which initiate or lead the movement towards the aspiration of the formation of the nation. It can also be read as that all classes do not aspire towards bringing into existence the category of nation. All classes of people may not exhibit the doctrine of nationalism. Only some show attributes of aspiring for a nation. Further reading of the above-mentioned definition suggests that nationalism not only brings nation into existence but also aspires to have a nation-state. There is a difference between nation and nation-state. The nation is the feeling of a common bond between people that they share a common cultural past and present. The state, on the other hand, means the ruling power structure in any given society or land or region. This power structure administers the area under its control. The state works with the notion of a fixed boundary, that is, it administers a fixed geographical area. When the area is not fixed or when it is porous or fluid, the administration comes across as not efficient enough. On the contrary, a nation can afford to have a fuzzy boundary. Pandey argues that both nation and nationalism are established by "defining boundaries" (1999: 628) but these boundaries are never sharply defined. He writes:

> Nationalisms have … commonly moved along the path of identifying the core or mainstream of the nation. Alongside this emerge notions of minorities, marginal communities, or elements, the

[6]The act, I argue, could be either physical or intellectual or both. Conceptualizing the idea of nation or creating/inventing a history for it can be taken as the intellectual act whereas to galvanize people to defend the nation or make them ready for sacrifice is a physical act.

> fuzzy edges and grey areas around which the question of boundaries – geographical, social and cultural – will be negotiated or fought over. (1999: 628)

In Pandey's definition, the onus of finding the core of the nation has been passed on to 'nationalism'. As against Anderson's horizontal camaraderie imagining the nation, in Pandey, it is nationalism which constitutes the nation. Pandey differs significantly from Anderson. Not only nationalism has to find the core of the nation but it also has to be done by defining the periphery of the nation, that which is not the core. It has to define what and who will be the marginal communities or minorities of the nation. It is against these minorities and marginal communities that the core of the nation will be defined. Pandey's boundaries of the nation are not as fixed as Anderson's. Boundaries in Pandey's definition of nation, whether geographical or social or cultural, are fuzzy. Moreover, in Anderson there is smoothness to the process of nation brought into existence whereas both in Aloysius and Pandey, nation is a category to be fought over and negotiated.

As the discussion above shows, both nation and nationalism have remained sites of contestations. Inherent in all conceptualizations of nation is the people who inhabit the nation. It is imperative that as a nation is imagined or theorized as a special category than any geographical territory; people residing in such a nation must also be imagined or theorized as they are different from any other kind of people. The nation demands its people to feel and behave in a certain way. Alternatively, one can say that people, when they imagine or constitute a nation, feel or behave in certain way with respect to their idea of nation. I wish to argue that constitution of the nation entails the constitution of the 'national subject'. People residing in the nation adopt or are forced to adopt a new subjectivity vis-à-vis the nation, that is, each of them becomes a 'national subject'. My idea of 'national subject' is borrowed from Michel Foucault's conceptualization of 'subject' and 'subjectivity' over his entire body of work from *Madness and Civilization*

(1961) to *History of Sexuality* (1976-79). In the text *Understanding Foucault*, Danaher *et al* suggest that Foucaultian 'subjectivity' is:

> derived from psychoanalytic theory to describe and explain identity, or the self. It replaces the commonsense notion that our identity is the product of our conscious, self-governing self and, instead, presents individual identity as the product of discourse, ideologies and institutional practices. (xiv-xv)

This understanding of 'subjectivity' or 'subject formation' shifts the idea of 'self' from an imagined personal realm to a more political realm of society, state, ideology, institutions and discursive apparatuses of institutions (of all kinds: social, political, religious, cultural, educational). Subject formation, according to Foucault, has nothing natural about it. It is contingent upon the political and social structures of a given historical time. For instance, in *History of Sexuality* Foucault discusses the emergence of 'man' as the subject, in history and in discourse (Danaher *et al* 118). It is not as if the label of 'man' was not available before but 'man' as a subject of history and discourse came to be constituted at a particular point of history. From the point of time when 'man' became a subject his ideas and actions were guided by the discursive practices of the time and a certain kind of normativity of thinking and behaviour came to be associated with the category of 'man'. Any deviation from that normativity put the label of 'man' in jeopardy and it required corrective measures to bring it back into the fold of normativity. Family, community, educational institutions, hospitals, mental asylums, and prisons were, Foucault argued, some of those institutions responsible for making a person a proper 'subject'. Making a person a subject involves 'subjection' and 'subjugation'. These institutions also marked who is not a 'proper subject'. For instance, the mental asylum constituted the subjectivity of 'madness' (undesirable subjectivity), hospitals came to be seen as the place for the 'sick' subjects, and educational institutions became the place for 'incomplete' subjects.

These institutions served a double purpose: one, labeling and classifying normal and abnormal subjects; and two, becoming a place where 'normal' subjects are produced.

Foucault's idea of the 'subject' is helpful in understanding the idea of 'national subject'. A national subject does not come into being by itself, but has to be constituted. Effectively, the 'national subject' comes into existence when the idea of nation takes its shape among the people. The nation defines who could be a national subject and what would be its defining contours, that is, the nation produces the normative national subject. Anyone who does not fit into the defining contours is not considered to be fit to reside into the territory of the nation. In India, when the nation started taking shape in the middle of the nineteenth century and people started writing and debating the idea of India vis-à-vis the colonial rule, they were also, consciously or unconsciously, stipulating the rules of a normative national subject. Who is fit to be called an 'Indian' remained a matter of fierce debate and it continues to be so today. The response to the colonial rule was an exercise in fashioning a proper 'national subject' as the discussion in rest of this chapter will illustrate.

2.4 The Logic of Colonial Rule in India

As social scientists of all disciplines have shown, colonialism cannot sustain itself merely on the military might of the colonizers. Every colonial power in the modern age has used cultural warfare to maintain its supremacy in the colonial arrangement. This is to say that any colonial power needs to prove superiority of its culture vis-à-vis the colonized culture to sustain its rule. Once this is done, the colonized culture is disciplined into following the dictates of the superior colonial culture. The cultural warfare begins right from the beginning of the colonial rule and its very first task is 'to know' the colonized society. A data gathering enterprise of tremendous magnitude is unleashed on the colonized society.

This data is later on converted into 'knowledge' about the colonized society and this knowledge is used to rule or govern the colonized. We owe our understanding of the complex political, social and cultural use of the 'seemingly innocent knowledge production about the colony' to Edward Said. In his influential book *Orientalism*, Said shows how Western colonial powers have produced 'knowledge' about their colonies, mostly Middle East and Asia, how that knowledge was produced and how it was used to represent the orient. The power of this representation is testified by its longevity and its continuity even to the contemporary times. Said asserts that the Orient is controlled not by beating back but rather by knowing more and more about the Orient. Said's thesis becomes crucial to our understanding of why and how colonialism brought in a huge apparatus for information gathering and knowledge producing enterprise in India.[7] Looking at the cultural aspect of colonialism, Kaviraj writes:

> The colonial state gradually instituted an enormous discursive project–an attempt to grasp cognitively this alien society and bring it under intellectual control. This knowledge was crucial in making use of the vast potentialities of this country in the economic and military fields. (2000: 144)

Kaviraj's understanding is in line with Said's thesis of Orientalism. The colonial state rules less by direct military force and more by 'knowing' the colonized. Only through the knowledge, the colony can be effectively brought under control and this knowledge is further helpful in devising economic and military strategies in the colony. But Kaviraj distances his own analysis from that of Said's. According to Kaviraj, "Said's suggestion that it [Orientalism] tended to show the Orient systematically as an object, passive and tractable, be molded by Western initiatives is certainly partial and misleading" (Kaviraj 2000: 144). Kaviraj's critique of Said is based on the assumption that Said's thesis does

[7] C. A. Bayly (2007) gives a brilliant account of the information gathering exercise of colonial powers in India in his book *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India 1780-1870*.

not give any agency to the colonized. Said's colonized societies are reduced to "intellectual submission" (Kaviraj 2000: 147). But it can be argued that Kaviraj's critique of Said is a mid-reading of Said's thesis. Said's thesis is to account for how Europeans colonial powers created representations of the Orient or the colonial society and how that representations accumulated truth-value over a period of time. It is not Said's stated aim to account for the response of the colonized to their subjugation. In fact, Said is aware of what Orientalism leaves out. In his text *Culture and Imperialism*, Said writes:

> What I left out of *Orientalism* was … response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movement of resistance all across the Third World…. Never was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there was *always* some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out. (Said 1994: ix)

By its very structure and theme, *Orientalism* is not concerned with the native response. Said is just looking at the representation of the East by Western writers over a long historical sweep of time. In the process Said opens up many different frameworks which other scholars have used to examine and account for the resistance offered by colonized people to their colonial masters. Kaviraj also is attempting to account for such a response by the colonized to the colonial discursive power. Both Said and Kaviraj are on the common ground regarding the power-knowledge nexus which formed the foundations of the colonial rule.[8]

Kaviraj, in his essay "Politics and Modernity in India," brings in the concept of 'self' in nationalism. For him, nationalism is "about fashioning self-representations" (Kaviraj 2000: 151). Working with this idea of self-representation, a question can be posed: whose self-representation? Where Aloysius links nationalism with a class or

[8] Also see Dirks 2003: 3-18 for a discussion on how the colonial rule in India unleashed a discursive apparatus through the institutions of surveys, census, anthropological and ethnographic exercises from the middle of the nineteenth century. Dirks goes to the extent of saying "knowledge was what colonialism was all about" (2003: 9).

classes, Kaviraj takes up the case of religious communities. Proposing to look at the evolution of self-representation, Kaviraj divides it into three stages: in the first stage, people identify themselves as Hindus or Mohammedans; in the second stage, realizations sets in that these religious collectivities does not answer the universality of the institution of the nation-state; and in the third stage, a nationalist ideology is consciously created which defines itself against the particularity of the religious communities (2000: 151). So, in order to be a nation, one has to rise beyond one's ascriptive category of religion. The binary of nationalism and communalism does not allow a person to possess national and communal identity at the same time. Communal identity forces a person to define her or himself against another community (here religious). So, a Hindu is a Hindu only when the category of Muslim or Christian or Sikh is invoked. But as soon as category of Indian is invoked other identities are required to be suspended.[9]

The question whose self-representation or subjectivity is fashioned by nationalism requires a much more detailed account for there is no single 'self' which can be defined here. The 'self' here is not an autonomous being free from all context, rather the 'self' in question is enmeshed in the categories of class, caste, religion, gender, and language and each category leads to different kinds of subjectivity. Reading Aloysius and Kaviraj together, there is a need to account for the history of this "self-representation" or assertion of a class of people. This history has to begin with the period of colonialism in India because the very idea of emergence of nationalism in India is coeval with the colonial period.

Ashis Nandy points towards the explicit form which the colonial power-knowledge nexus took in the colonies. He says:

[9]We often hear personals of defense services to identify themselves as "Indians," that is, no other ascriptive identity is valid as they represent the nation and they are responsible for the defense and security of the entire nation. But this narrative does not account for having regiments in Indian Army which are named on caste or regional or religious lines such as Sikh Regiment, Gurkha Regiment, Maratha Regiment, Rajput Regiment, etc.

> Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through its military and technological prowess as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order. (2005: ix)

The secular hierarchies pointed out here are set against the traditional hierarchies of caste. But the creation of secular hierarchies was preceded by many decades of gathering information and creating 'knowledge' about India and Indian society. Again Said's Orientalism thesis is helpful in understanding what eighteenth century colonial officials such as William Jones were doing when they mastered Indian classical languages and started translating Sanskrit texts into English and other European languages. Jones is an example of what Said calls an Oriental scholar. It was his translation of Indian classical texts such as *AbhigyanShakuntala* that familiarized European audience to the rich literary and cultural traditions of India. Yet, Jones' body of work cannot be considered as the product of disinterested scholarship. It is easy to see how Jones' scholarship dovetailed into his role as the officer of the East India Company. The first translation done by Jones was that of *Dharmashastra*—the treatise of jurisprudence in India. It can easily be seen that Jones endeavour in this translation was to understand the structure of jurisprudence of India so that he or the East India Company could have a better understanding of the customs of the country and could thus carry out their functions with ease.[10]

Nandy refers to the secular hierarchies which colonial rule brought into place. These secular hierarchies were created when colonial rule made alliances with those groups within the colonized societies who were already marginalized. These marginalized groups were lower castes or depressed classes or certain groups of erstwhile untouchable classes. These groups had nothing to lose from the establishment of the colonial rule. In the process of colonization, the colonial powers were to replace the elite classes in the

[10] Dirks mentions colonial officials in India such as Charles Cornwallis, Philips Francis, Thomas Munro, Charles Metcalf and Mountstuart Elphinstone who apart from their official duties were also instrumental in producing knowledge about of India, its tradition, society and culture (2003: 15).

society who were the former rulers. In this scenario, the colonial rule offered a chance to the marginalized groups to get out of their depressed position (which was more or less based on their ascriptive identities) and looked towards social and economic freedom as well as upward mobility.[11]

Analyzing the discursive tools of colonialism, Nandy focuses on the category of age and sex to argue how the colonial logic invented and thrust upon the colonized such binaries as adult/infant, adult/old, masculine/feminine where colonized occupied all 'negative' spaces of infant, old, and feminine. By occupying these spaces, the colonized lost the moral authority of being the proper subject of civilization. In fact, the colonized lacked even the sense of history and by extension they were not fit subjects to constitute the nation. By using this logic, the colonial powers gave themselves the duty to civilize the colonized. An inadvertent byproduct of this entire process was the construction of a 'subjectivity' fit for a sovereign state.

In view of the above discussion, it can be said that the logic of colonial rule in India depended chiefly on its multiple discursive strategies. One, apart from military prowess, the colonial rule displayed its superiority over the colonized Indians by producing a huge body of knowledge about India and used that knowledge in order to plan strategies to govern the Indians.[12] Two, colonial power in India tried to do away with the traditional hierarchies and replaced them with secular hierarchies which allowed them to build an alliance with the marginalized sections of the society. These alliances allowed the colonizers to keep a tight hold on the rule of country and these alliances also worked as informants for the colonial rule. Three, the colonial power brought in binaries which

[11]See Nandy 2005: ix and Aloysius 52, 216.

[12] This is not to say that all the knowledge which was produced was done so for the sake of governing the colony better or more efficiently. Knowledge production in any scenario is a much more complicated process. There is no denying the proposition that knowledge production in a political act but all political acts may not aim to colonize a country or govern a country. But this theses deals with the kind of knowledge production undertaken by the colonial masters which helped them to rule of colony better by knowing more about it in terms of its history, society, politics, economics and culture.

relegated the colonized society forever in the position of disadvantage. More than that, the binaries denied any agency to the colonized people.

But colonization is a double-edged process. It will collapse very soon if only the colonizer acts as an agent of all actions and changes and the colonized is reduced to the state of meek submissiveness devoid of any agency. Without agency, any society is a dead society. So, colonialism is not possible without the living and acting colonized. The theatre of colonialism demands action from both the colonizer as well as the colonized. Postcolonial theorists such as Ania Loomba, Ashis Nandy, Homi Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee and Sudipta Kaviraj among others have looked at the inter-dependence of the colonized and the colonizer on each other.[13] Following Said, they underline the discursive nature of colonialism but unlike Said they choose to focus on colonial responses in the process of understanding the colonial discourse. There is no simple narrative to the colonial discourse. It is mired in contradictions or as Homi Bhabha says there is a "doubleness" of colonial discourse which is not to be understood as the simple narrative "of one powerful nation writing out the history of another" (136). It becomes rather a "mode of contradictory utterance that ambivalently reinscribes, across differential power relations, both colonizer and colonized" (136).

Indeed, there was a response to colonialism from the colonized people especially the colonized elite who can alternatively be called the nationalist elite. Kaviraj notes that instead of rendering the nationalist elite totally numb, inactive and submissive, colonial modernity rather produced a totally unexpected result:

> The impact of Western civilization – not its power structures, but its immense intellectual presence – was tackled with a surprising degree of intellectual sophistication and confidence. Within thirty years of the introduction of this utterly new civilization, Bengali society produced an intellectual

[13] Before postcolonialism came into existence, Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon have written extensively on the interconnected nature of colonialism in the sense that both colonizers and colonized societies are equally implicated in the colonial relationship.

> class that had acquired sufficient mastery not merely of the foreign language, but also of the entirely unprecedented conceptual language of rationalism, to engage in an uproarious discussion about what to take and what to reject of the proposals of Western modernity. (2000: 146)

Kaviraj underlines the active agency exercised by the nationalist elites in their relationship to the colonial rule as well as the colonial modernity. The following section looks at how the colonized made sense of themselves and their society in the wake of colonization and what responses they proposed to the colonial powers.

In his critique of Gellner's idea of nationalism Anderson points out that in Gellner, the positive impact of the term which could mean "imagining" and "creation" is lost. Further, Anderson says that nation is a limited concept in geographical sense as each nation has a certain definite boundary and no nation can be coterminous with entire humanity. Nation is a sovereign concept as it is a modern concept doing away with the divinely-ordained kingship in the light of Enlightenment and Revolutions (Anderson 1991: 7). Finally, nation is a community because regardless of all inequalities all people within the nation are linked with each other in "deep, horizontal comradeship" (1991: 7). It is here that the impact of Anderson lies for nationalism in Indian context. The "deep, horizontal comradeship" becomes the testing ground to see how nation has emerged in India. It forces one to pose the question whether India has/can[14] become a nation where people are associated with each other in a deep, horizontal comradeship. But this is not the only test for India. It can equally be argued whether Anderson's thesis would withstand the hierarchical relationships based on ascriptive identities of people which continue to exist in India. It is here that Anderson's thesis encounters its limitation.

The limitation of Anderson's thesis is not restricted to his assertion of "deep, horizontal comradeship". Partha Chatterjee provides a critique of Anderson's definition in

[14]The use of can/has is consciously done. India has become a nation is taken to be a fact by most of the theorists of nationalism but there are others who believe that in India nation has failed to emerge. G. Aloysius is the most prominent theorist who proclaims that nation has not emerged in India (Aloysius 217).

his text *Nation and its Fragments*. Chatterjee rejects Anderson's assertion that nationalism, as it developed in Western Europe, America, and Russia has supplied the modular forms for nationalist elites in Asian and African countries to choose from. Chatterjee reads this assertion vis-à-vis Anderson's primary definition of nation as an "imagined community" and finds that both these contradict each other. Chatterjee writes:

> If nationalism in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. (1993: 5)

This is a powerful critique in many ways. Chatterjee shows the inherent contradiction between "imagining a nation" which is really a creative process vis-à-vis the choosing from the already given "modular" forms of nationalism which is devoid of all kinds of creativity. For instance, if India is to choose from the form of its "nation-hood" from the available European or American or Russian forms then what is left for Indians to imagine? One can either imagine bringing a nation into being or one can just copy an already available form. Anderson is blind to this contradiction in his own thesis.

Chatterjee offers another critique of Anderson's thesis of already existing "modular forms." Chatterjee reads this thesis as heavily influenced by the historical logic of colonial modernity. Colonialism maintained that only European colonial powers were fit subjects of history and only they create history. In fact, history was taken to be the pre-condition to nation-hood which found its expression into 'no history no nation'. In the process of colonization, the colonial rulers discarded the past of the colonized as devoid of any history and they set upon writing the history of the colonized in their own fashion

and in the process set in motion the discursive process of colonialism. Bhabha too points to this discursive power exercised by the colonial rulers:

> Western nationalist discourse which normalizes its own history of colonial expansion and exploitation by inscribing the history of the other in a fixed hierarchy of civil progress. (136)

So, it was not the history of the colonized societies. They were not the subjects of their own histories. They became an object objectified in their own history which was nothing but the narrative of the colonial conquest and colonial intervention in the colonized societies for a civilizing mission.

But even after Chatterjee's powerful critique, a question can still be asked: whether Anderson's thesis has anything to offer to us to understand Indian nationalism. I wish to argue in the affirmative. If we leave aside the European, American or Russian modular forms, Anderson's definition of nation as an "imagined community" is still helpful as an entry point into the history of nationalism in India. In fact Chatterjee, too, credits Anderson for describing how the structure of "print-capitalism" played an important role in bringing about the imagination of the nation among the readers of mass-produced newspapers, magazines and books. It is easy to see the validity of the "print-capitalism" argument. Even in India, national elites were involved in running newspapers or weeklies. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Syed Ahmad Khan, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Kesub Chandra Sen, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, M. K. Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar were involved in either running newspapers or magazines or journals. Indeed, the history of nationalism in India can be said to be coterminous with the history of print-capitalism in the country. After critiquing Anderson, Chatterjee, in fact, makes an important claim:

> The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of the

> national society propagated by the modern West. How can we ignore this without reducing the experience of anticolonial nationalism to a caricature of itself? (1993: 5; emphasis in the original)

Clearly, nation is being imagined in Asia and Africa too but it is not being done on the pre-given form. Rather, pre-given forms mark the points of departure in the imagining of the nation. Chatterjee emphasizes that the problem in accepting this thesis is that nation is being defined strictly in the political sense. Anderson's conception of nation, Chatterjee argues in *The Politics of the Governed*, is located in the "empty homogeneous time-space of modernity" (2004: 6). Anderson's privileging of unbound serialities of modernity (as exemplified in nations, citizens, revolutionaries, bureaucrats, workers, intellectuals etc.) over bound serialities of governmentality is, Chatterjee argues, predicated on his location in the "tradition of … progressive historicist thinking in the twentieth century" (2004: 6). This location allows Anderson, in his book *The Spectre of Comparisons*, to argue the inevitability of the universalism which is the hallmark of modernity and whose roots lie in the capitalism of industrial revolution. In this universality of modernity, bound serialities must be phased out as they rupture the onward march of nation and nationalism. Bound serialities of caste, class, gender, language, religion and community are categories of ethnic politics which is the antithesis of nation and national politics (which is cherished by Anderson). Chatterjee disagrees with Anderson's homogeneous time of modernity and capital because it "looks at only one dimension of time-space of modern life" (2004: 6).

Chatterjee argues that Anderson's empty homogenous time exist only as a utopian imagination. This time is not inhabited by people, it is only imagined. Moreover, this time is the utopian time of capital. Chatterjee offers a different concept of time as against Anderson. Chatterjee writes:

> The real space of modern life consists of heterotopia…. Time here is heterogeneous, unevenly dense. Here, even industrial workers do not all internalize the work-discipline of capitalism, and more curiously, even when they do, they do not do so in the same way. Politics here does not mean

> the same thing to all people. To ignore this is, I believe, to discard the real for the utopian. (2004: 7)

As against Anderson's nation located in homogeneous empty time, Chatterjee's nation is located in the heterogeneous time. This heterogeneous time does conform to the logic of capitalism or that of Enlightenment modernity of universal categories of nation, citizen, rationality etc. People occupying this heterogeneous time do not conform to the pre-given forms of politics. Their politics is much more varied and complicated. This politics neither totally approves nor totally rejects the industrial-capitalist logic of time and space and the discursive practices coming out it. Constant negotiation marks the politics of the people in heterogeneous time. Ascriptive identities are invoked and used to negotiate the time and space of modernity exemplified by capitalism. Chatterjee offers some examples of the politics and behaviour of people residing in the heterogeneous time:

> In those places, one could show industrial capitalists delaying the closing of a business deal because they hadn't yet heard from their respective astrologers, or industrial workers who would not touch a new machine until it had been consecrated with the appropriate religious rites, or voters who would set fire to themselves to mourn the defeat of their favorite leader, or ministers who openly boasts of having secured more jobs for people from their own clan or having kept the other out. (2004: 7)

This politics and behaviour thoroughly rejects the universalism of Anderson's politics in homogeneous time. Chatterjee's argument is not to be read as an evidence of co-existence of pre-modern and modern times. This will be a reductive reading which rather affirms the utopianism of Western modernity (2004: 7). He cautions that the so-called "other" times are not just continuation from the pre-modern past; rather they are result of their encounter with modernity. For this very reason, Chatterjee prefers to call it "the heterogeneous time of modernity" (2004: 7-8).

Chatterjee's "heterogeneous time of modernity" not only rejects the homogeneity of Anderson but refuses to accept its telos. The ethnic identities (or bound serialities)

refuse to give themselves away to acquire the universal, national ideal of national citizenship (or unbound serialities). In heterogeneous time, people are engaged in more complex forms of negotiation with modernity and institutions of modernity such as state, law, education, citizenship, etc.

The above discussion shows that nation and nationalism has no easy trajectory in India. It follows no pre-given "modular" form of Europe and/or North America. Nation and nationalism in India existed and continues to exist in the heterogeneous time of modernity and for this reason one has to offer another account of its emergence and growth in India. In order to attempt this, the definition of nation and nationalism has to be shifted from the political realm to another realm. The following section shifts the discourse of nationalism and national subjects towards such realms which are not considered political in the broad sense of the term.

2.5 Altered Social Structures and the Rise of Nationalism in India

Partha Chatterjee traces the rise of nationalism in India in the nineteenth century when national elites altered the social structure of their life and by implication the life of the entire society. He dismisses the received common sense that anti-colonial nationalism fought political battles against the colonialism and attained sovereignty. For him, this is just a very partial and truncated story of nationalism. Rather, he claims that sovereignty did not follow a political battle. It happened the other way round. According to Chatterjee,

> anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains–the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the "outside," of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved it superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then,

> Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. The formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalism in India and Africa. (1993: 6)

Chatterjee is providing a new reading of the social life of anti-colonialism in India. Instead of saying that colonialism brought a complete rupture in the life of colonized people, Chatterjee seems to say that this reading is too reductive and is counter-productive in a way that it does not allow anti-colonialism to take off at all. Rather, the nationalist elites took up the challenge of colonial modernity in the most creative way by restructuring their social life. Instead of a fluid life where family and outside world gelled into each other, the nationalist elites did away with the fluidity and brought in a strict separation of the two spheres of life. One sphere was the sphere of politics and statecraft which was the "outer" or "material" sphere of life. The other sphere was that of family and culture which was the "inner" or "spiritual" sphere of life. The strict division between these two spheres was premised on the ground that the colonial rule has authority and complete sovereignty over the "outer" or "material" sphere of life because of its apparent military and material prowess. But this colonial rule had no sovereign control over the "inner" or "spiritual" domain of the national life. Rather the "inner" domain was the place where the nationalist elite had complete sovereignty. It was they who had the right to decide how the "inner" domain is to function.

This formulation of Chatterjee is used by Sudipta Kaviraj to account for the narrative of modernity and politics in India. But Kaviraj shifts the agency of this distinction. In Chatterjee's analysis, it was the nationalist elite who took up the agency to differentiate between political and social domain and exerted their sovereignty over the social domain whereas in Kaviraj's analysis, it was the colonial state which made the

distinction between the political and social activity and decided not to interfere in the social domain (which includes religious and social reforms too) of the colonized society.[15] Kaviraj argues that nationalist elite accepted this distinction too gladly and it allowed them to create a "sphere of subsidiary quasi-sovereignty over society in colonial order where the political sovereignty was still firmly lodged in the British empire" (2000: 148).

Chatterjee's innovation is not restricted to the conceptualization of "inner" and "outer" domain of social life of the anti-colonial elite. He explores the concept of anti-colonial sovereignty in "inner" domain further and explains the tremendous amount of action which took place in the "inner" domain. Chatterjee says that it is in the "inner" or the "spiritual" domain that the nationalism intervened and launched its "most powerful, creative, historically significant project" (1993: 6). This project was to fashion the "modern" national culture. It is only by fashioning this modern national culture that nationalist elite could claim and perpetuate their sovereignty over the inner or spiritual domain. It is in this domain that the nation was imagined and brought into being. What is more interesting about this modern national culture was that it was different from the West, that is, it marked its *difference* from the "modular" West (1993: 6; emphasis added).

Chatterjee elaborates this modern national culture by giving three fields in the inner or spiritual domain where nationalist elite made far-reaching interventions. The three fields are: language, schools, and family. Speaking of language, Chatterjee points to the growing network of printing presses, publishing houses, ever-increasing numbers of

[15] This non-interference of colonial rule in social and personal domain of the colonial society has been much commented upon. Generally, it is accepted that the Revolt of 1857 provoked the colonial rulers to pursue the policy of non-interference. But again, this was no easy policy to invoke and follow. Throughout the colonial rule, different sections of the national elite did petition the colonial government to interfere in the social and personal life of the colonial society to right the traditional wrongs being suffered by different sections of the population. The controversy surrounding the 'Age of Consent Bill' is only one such example where the colonial rulers were forced to rethink their policy of non-interference.

newspapers, magazines, and journals which were being developed outside the pale of the state and the Christian missionaries. The single greatest achievement of this wide network of printing and publishing was the fashioning of a new modern and standardized language.[16] Chatterjee is talking of Bengali language here. But it is easy to extend the same logic to other regions and languages. For instance, rise of publishing in Gujarati language by the early decades of twentieth century created a unique problem. There were wide variations in Gujarati language ranging from spelling to sentence construction and grammatical categories. It was M. K. Gandhi who formed a committee under Maganbhai Desai to "look into the question of Gujarati spellings" (Sebastian 98). Gujarat Vidyapith, the university founded by Gandhi constituted a committee to prepare a Gujarati dictionary which was published in 1929[17] and thus a standardized Gujarati language was brought into being which continues to be the official language of the state of Gujarat even today. Gandhi was also instrumental in publishing a series of magazines in his life: *Indian Opinion, Young India* and *Harijan*.

In Maharashtra, B. R. Ambedkar established a series of magazines from 1920 till his death in 1956. His first magazine was a fortnightly called *Mooknayak* in 1920 with the express motive of thinking towards future development of the Depressed Classes (Rodrigues 2014: 9). In 1927, he began another fortnightly called *Bahishkrit Bharat* (Rodrigues 2014: 10) and in 1930 yet another fortnightly called *Janata* was launched which became a weekly after a year. Later on, this came to be published as *Prabudd Bharat* from 1956. Each of the magazines made an effort to develop a consciousness among the Depressed Classes towards their status in society and strove to prepare them to fight for their own future and dignity.

[16]It is easy to see Anderson's thesis that print-capitalism helped in imagining the nation. Here, readers of modern Bengali could imagine themselves to be one community, at least in linguistic terms.
[17] For a detailed discussion on the standardization of Gujarati language, see Sebastian (2009).

Establishing a new network of secondary schools was the second important intervention of the anti-colonial elites. Chatterjee mentions that after the second half of the nineteenth century, the elites in Bengal took a lead in starting schools in every part of the state and also in producing a suitable literature (1993: 9). Again, this practice can be seen in other parts of the country too. In the United Provinces, Syed Ahmad Khan held the strong opinion that school and education is a matter of community and it is a shame to demand that the government should provide education. In Gujarat, Gandhi established a university named Gujarat Vidyapith in 1920. This was established as a national institution of higher education and it attracted those students who left colonial government's schools and colleges to participate in the national independence movement. Gandhi was also the inspiration behind many schools and colleges which were founded by his followers in Gujarat and rest of the country. All these institutions were supposed to provide an education to prepare the students for participating in the independence movement. The guiding principle was that education was not a matter which should be left to the alien rulers. Similarly, in Maharashtra, Ambedkar too intervened in the education system. He established two education societies: Depressed Classes Education Society in 1928 and People's Education Society in 1945. He was the guiding force behind establishment of various colleges and schools: Siddharth College of Arts and Science (1946), Siddharth Night School (1947), Milind Mahavidyalaya (1950), Siddharth College of Commerce and Economics (1953), Milind Multipurpose High School (1955), and Siddharth College of Law in 1956 (Rodrigues 2014: 16).

Third and perhaps the most contentious field of intervention was that of family and particularly, women. Chatterjee notes that a new notion of woman was fashioned in the Bengali middle class houses. This new woman was different from the traditional Bengali woman. She was modern but not Western (1993: 9). From late nineteenth

century, education among women spread rapidly in Bengal but the elite (including women) took care to differentiate the educated Bengali women from educated British women. Bengali woman was educated but she was not a *memsahib*.[18] Elsewhere, Chatterjee has argued how nationalist elites guarded the family and women most tenaciously against any intervention by the colonial state.[19]

It was after proclaiming its sovereignty over the inner domain of social life that the nationalist elite went out to stake its claim in the outer domain of politics. Chatterjee notes the paradox involved in this act. The nationalist elite who effectively created a *difference* from the colonial state in the inner domain of social life was arguing against any *difference* in the outer domain, that is the domain of the state (1993: 10).

Chatterjee's formulation of inner/outer or spiritual/material domains of life holds tremendous potential for the argument this chapter is trying to make, that is, the colonial modernity brought about institutions and ideologies which triggered different kinds of responses in different sections of the society. These responses were made by fashioning a new subjectivity vis-à-vis the colonial rule and colonial modernity. This is not to say that the fashioning of this new 'national subjectivity' was always antagonistic to colonial rule. Rather a more complex process of negotiation was involved in the act of this 'subject-fashioning' and Chatterjee's formulation is helpful in understanding these negotiations. The following section uses Chatterjee's formulation to revisit the four sets of responses which has been proposed earlier in this chapter. But the discussion will not limit itself only to Chatterjee's formulation. Other theorists such as Anderson, Kaviraj and Nandy will inform the discussion.

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[18] *Memsahib* was used to refer to British women in colonial India but the term had another currency, that of women of loose morals. The nationalist elites took care to ensure that their women folk do not turn into a *memsahib* after receiving modern education.

[19] See Chatterjee's essay "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" where he discusses why women disappeared from the public discourses of the nationalism. He explains this disappearance by saying that for national elites woman constituted the inner domain and that's where her problem is to be addressed (Chatterjee 2010).

2.6 Construction of the National Subject

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, nineteenth century was the period when nationalism emerged in India. This nationalism took different forms in different sets of people or classes.[20] The first manifestation of nationalism was, as Kaviraj notes, the assertion of "self-representation." Colonial rule made different kinds of people fashion different kinds of self-representation. This fashioning of self-representation was to come to terms with colonial rule in the country and for this very reason it was not a simple linear exercise of choosing one kind of 'self' over the other. This process was deeply implicated in the colonial discursive process of 'subject' formation in which both colonizers and colonized tried to constitute the desired 'subject'. The discursive formation of colonialism has received much attention from postcolonial scholars. Most of the studies focus on the construction of binaries which are based on the prototype of positive and negative. This kind of stereotype put in place by the colonial discursive process has its own uses but, as Bhabha suggests, there is a need to shift the gaze from the binaries to "an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse" (Bhabha 95; emphasis in the original). Bhabha says that the 'colonial subject' is constituted with the colonial discourse whose objective "is to construe the colonized as population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (101). Bhabha says that this description of the colonized is dependent on the concept of 'fixity' (101). Further, he writes:

> colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative whereby the productivity and

[20]The contested field of historiography of Indian nationalism gives us different accounts of nationalism. So we have colonial historians, nationalist historians, Marxist historians, Cambridge historians, and subaltern historians. All these schools of history offer a different account of the history of the national movement in India depending on where it locate the agency, that is, who is the proper subject of the national movement.

> circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth that is structurally similar to realism. (101)

This assertion of production of social reality is similar to what Said calls the process of orientalism. The discursive power of colonialism is an exercise of orientalism, that is, to fix the subjectivity of the colonized society or population. In colonialism it adds an extra dimension of governmentality. The regime of truth produced by colonial discursive process is directly linked to the everyday process of governance and administration which is also an exercise of power.

Keeping Bhabha's account of subject formation in colonialism, I now look into the subject formation exercises undertaken by Indians from the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. This is not to say that there are two water-tight categories of subject formation: one, colonial and two, the nationalist. I would argue that the process of subject formation is the process of constant negotiation between the colonial rulers and the subject population. It is by focusing at this negotiation that a more complex understanding of national subject will emerge. What follows is a discussion on how Indians responded to colonial rule and what shape those responses took in the process of subject formation. Broadly speaking, I have divided the responses in four sets. The four sets of responses have been classified so for the sake of convenience in understanding different ways in which the 'self-formation' took place. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that these sets of responses are not water-tight categories. There is considerable spilling over from one category to another. This shows that 'self-formation' is not a simple or straight-forward process; rather it is marked by a lot of tensions. It involves negotiation with diverse forces of traditional ascriptive identities and modern institutions unleashed by colonial modernity in India. It will be useful to look at how social and political scientists have looked at this 'self-formation' in the framework of nation.

The first set of responses was that of what Nandy calls "aggressive criticism" of Indian tradition (2005: 22). This set of responses disowned everything which was central to Indian culture and idolized every aspect of Western culture. Nandy finds Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873) as the person who embodied this set of response (2005: 22). Another figure from late nineteenth century could be Krishnadhan Ghose, father of Sri Aurobindo. Nandy describes as "aggressively Anglicized" who "forbade his children to learn or speak Bengali." Krishnadhan Ghose made sure that "nothing Indian should touch" his favorite son, Aurobindo (2005: 87). I propose to discuss the case of Michael Madhusudan Dutt in detail.

The "aggressive criticism" which Nandy points to is directed towards one's own tradition. In fact, it does not rest at mere criticism, it moves to a more radical position of total rejection of the core values of one's own tradition and everything cherished in that tradition. Using Michael Madhusudan Dutt as an example, Nandy examines how this set of response to colonial modernity actually internalizes the ideology, power structure and institutions of colonial modernity in its entirety. One of the most powerful ideological assaults which colonial modernity unleashed was the binary of masculinity/femininity. This binary asserted that colonial rule is justified for the simple reason that it is more powerful or masculine whereas Indian civilization is powerless or feminine.

Madhusudan Dutt's response to colonial charges of Indian civilization being weak and effeminate was radical in every sense of the word. His attempt was to rewrite the cultural texts of Hindus in order to fit them to the ideals of colonial modernity and masculinity. He wrote a work of epic proportion, *Meghnadvadh Kavya*, in Bengali. In this work, he does a role reversal of the traditional mythology. In his work, it is Ravana and Meghnad who are the heroes because they are "majestic, masculine, modern hero" (Nandy 2005: 19) whereas Rama and Laksmana are "weak-kneed, passive-aggressive,

feminine villains" (2005: 19). The larger implication of this work was its political tone of the battle between Rama and Ravana. Ravana does lose in the end which makes it a tragedy for Madhusudan Dutt. He used this work as a direct response to the colonial rule. Nandy writes that Madhusudan Dutt,

> admired Ravana for his masculine vigour, accomplished warriorhood, and his sense of *realpolitik* and history; he accepted Ravana's 'adult' and 'normal' commitments to secular, possessive this worldiness and his consumer's lust for life. On the other hand, he despised 'Rama and his rabble'… because they were effeminate, ineffective pseudo-ascetics, who were austere not by choice but because they were weak. (2005: 20)

It is obvious that Madhusudan Dutt has created an allegory in his epic. It is also obvious that he admires everything colonialism claims to possess and stand for masculinity, energy, politics, and sense of history. Madhusudan Dutt's response must be read as reclaiming from the Indian tradition those qualities which were endorsed by the colonial modernity. Another way of putting it would be so say that Madhusudan Dutt was able to show that all the qualities of colonial modernity were present in the tradition of India but they were at the margins of the moral universe of the traditional India. It was to be his lot to find and bring those qualities to the centre-stage of contemporary politics. This reworking of the cultural tradition can be considered, in Chatterjee's formulation, to be the exercise of sovereignty over the inner/spiritual domain of the social life. It is only by working upon the inner domain can the national elite claim to demand equality in the political life.

As the above discussion shows the first set of responses fashions a national subjectivity which was totally in conformity with the colonial ideals of 'subject'. This 'subject' aspired to fashion itself on the ideals propounded by the colonial rule, to the extent that it wished to reflect the colonial masters in every way. The inherent limitation with this set of responses was its uncritical view on colonial modernity. There was no

critical engagement with colonial modernity to examine whether the colonialism really operated on the logic of masculinity. History of colonial rule in India tells us that this rule was established more by cunning of reason than by brute masculine force. But this insight was not available to those who proposed this first set of responses.

The **s**econd set of responses to colonialism accepts the fact that colonial rulers represent superior civilization and superior knowledge so they have the natural right to rule over the country. This response argued that the only way left for Indians is to embrace European knowledge. This knowledge will allow us to become like colonial masters and then one day we can be rulers of our land. They understood that colonial rule derives its strength from the complex grid of secular institutional structures it created for itself. So, the obvious answer was to replicate those institutions in India and train Indians in those institutions. Indians trained in such institutions were deemed to be fit to sit with the colonial masters. In the process, they created 'subjectivities' which aspired to mirror the colonial masters.

The most prominent example of this set of responses can be Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). Syed Ahmad looms large on the geography of north India in the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that his family on both sides has deep connections with the Mughal empire in India, Syed Ahmad was astute enough to understand the power and prospect of emerging colonial rule in India. So instead of working for the Mughal rule, he opted to work for the East India Company and the British colonial rule later on. Throughout his life, his single mission was to create an alliance between the Muslims and the colonial rule. After the 1857 Revolt, he made every possible effort to dispel the distrust which the colonial rulers harboured towards the Muslims. Very early on, he realized the importance of scientific rationality and education and was instrumental in setting up a scientific society and a chain of schools across the cities of United Provinces.

His most important contribution to the life of the nation was establishment of Mohammadan-Anglo Oriental College[21] in 1875 at Aligarh. The prototype of the college was Oxford and Cambridge universities of England. Syed Ahmad visited England during 1869-1870 and was most impressed the both these universities. He took them to be the source of British civilization and accordingly set upon creating a template based on these in India. Again, Syed Ahmad's endeavour can be looked through Chatterjee's formulation of exercise of radical sovereignty over the inner domain. Here it is education. As Chatterjee mentions, the nationalist elites did not allow any governmental intervention in the inner domain, Syed Ahmad publicly took the position that the government has no business of providing education to the people. It is the task of the community to open schools for its own children.

There is a serious limitation to this set of responses. Like the first set of responses, here too there is no critical engagement with the colonial modernity. It was taken to be better and superior so it should be followed. There is a more serious limitation than this. This set of responses believed in the colonial logic of rule and thought that they will be able to make an alliance with that rule by imitating the institutional structures of the colonial modernity. In the process, they did not take into account what colonial rule had done to those groups in its own country who were outside the pale of the logic of modernity. They refused to see that the practices and ideals of colonial modernity they admire had been put under severe scrutiny in the mother country. It is astonishing to note that when Syed Ahmad was in England, the great debate for public schooling was under process but he chose not to note it or comment on it. He tenaciously stuck to his position of education being the matter of private sphere. Another tragedy is this set of responses was their search for equality with the colonial masters. They never saw that colonial rule

[21]This college acquired the status of a university in 1920 and is known as Aligarh Muslim University.

could never offer them equality because it was based on the rule of *difference* and preservation of the alienness of the ruling group (Chatterjee 1993: 10). They bought the theory of the inferiority of the colonized propagated by the colonizer and even indirectly approved of the civilizing mission.

The third set of responses to colonialism was more complex. It agreed that the West is superior in some aspects of life, mostly material. At the same time, it made a powerful assertion that India is still supreme in other aspects of life, mostly spiritual. The argument was that India is superior to the West in the cultural and spiritual realm. This realm can be used to produce enough resources to defeat the colonial powers and attain sovereignty. Most of the reformers in the nineteenth century India adhered to this belief. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay[22] (1838-1894) can be considered the most prominent figure of this set of responses. Nandy calls this set of responses "cultural criticism" (2005: 22). Apart from Bankim, I contend, Raja Rammohan Roy and Vivekananda also belong to this category of responses.

This set of responses was embodied in people who launched the most powerful nationalist campaign in the inner/spiritual domain. This group can be said to embody Chatterjee's nationalist elites who divide the social life into inner and outer domain and exercise complete sovereignty over the inner sphere. This set of responses accepts the supremacy of the colonial rule in the material or outer domain of social life. Its radical edge lies in its complete and bold assertion that in the cultural sphere, Indian society is far ahead of the colonial civilization and culture. At the same time, they also undertook a massive campaign to revolutionize their cultural sphere so as to conform to the norms set by the colonial modernity. As said earlier, this is a complex exercise. The assertion of superiority is being made; but at same time every effort is underway to shape that cultural

[22] Bankimchandra Chatterjee or Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay is commonly referred in academic writings as Bankim so I will use Bankim in the rest of this thesis.

sphere in the form made normative by the colonial modernity. Some of the important figures who can be located within this set of responses are Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim and Vivekananda. But there is a near consensus among the historians and theorists that it is Bankim who is the most important intellectual anti-colonial elite in the late nineteenth century.

Bankim's work provides the most fascinating reading of negotiating the colonial modernity. Nandy characterizes the entire corpus of Bankim's work as an attempt:

> to marginalize earlier models of critical Hinduism and suggest a new framework of political culture which projected into the Hindu past, into a lost golden age of Hinduism, the qualities of Christianity which seemingly gave Christians their strength. (2005: 23)

Bankim undertook a massive project of reorganization of Hindu religion and tradition. He sought to mould Hindu religion on the lines of Christian (or Islamic) religion, that is, to make Hinduism an organized religion out of its chaotic form. But even more important for him was to create a history of the nation. Of all the offshoots of colonial modernity, it was history which appealed to him most. So he sets out to write a history of the nation. Bankim's history of the nation was heavily dependent on the tradition and mythology of India (more specifically Hindu). In the process of this exercise he altered the tradition so that it conforms to the western form of history of the nation. His novel *Anandmath* is considered to be the history of the nation whose prototype is western Christianity. But as Nandy suggests, it is his "Krsnacarita" which shows his anxiety and complicated relationship as well as response to colonial modernity.

Nandy writes that Bankim, in his effort to fashion a new kind of Krishna, rejected every available popular form of Krishna which did not fit with the colonial ideals. Thus, Bankim's Krishna could not be soft, childlike and playful. His sexuality has to be curtailed. In place of all these, Bankim created or fashioned "a respectable, righteous, didactic, 'hard' god, protecting the glories of Hinduism as a proper religion and

preserving it as an internally consistent moral and cultural system" (Nandy 2005: 24). It is not difficult to see that Bankim, here, attempts a two-fold self-fashioning simultaneously: one, he outlines his scheme of an ideal masculine national subject (which derives its legitimacy from being the copy of the colonial modernity); and two, he rescues Krishna from mythology and fashions him as a historical being. Thus, not only the modern national subject is being created but history gets created in the process too. It is another matter that this is a masculine history and it is brought into being by crushing all popular histories.

The ideal of masculinity finds its greatest proponent in Vivekananda (1863-1902). It is a man-making enterprise which holds attraction for Vivekananda. It is only when Indians become real and proper men that the nation can find its proper place in the community of nations. What stops India to do so is the poverty of the country and lethargy of the Hindu race. Like a 'true' man, Vivekananda refuses to hold the colonial rule responsible for the misery of the population. It is 'we' Indians ourselves who are responsible for such a state of things:

> I … ask myself: Who is responsible? And the answer comes every time: Not the English; no, they are not responsible; it is we who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation, and we alone are responsible. Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses our country underfoot, till they become helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forget that they were human beings… they are made to believe that they are born as slaves. (vol. III 2009: 192)

Clearly, the material salvation of the country lies only in the hands of Indians. It will be foolhardy to expect the colonial rulers to set our society right. It is 'we' Indians who are responsible for the poverty and for the continuity of the barbaric structure of caste. Once this condition is identified, it is easy to look for the solution. In order to overcome our material backwardness, we need to learn from the material civilization of the West. As

this material civilization rests on the foundations of arts and sciences, so the only option is to learn from the West:

> If we want to rise, we must also remember that we have many things to learn from the West. We should learn from the West her arts and her sciences. From the West we have to learn the sciences of physical nature, while on the other hand West has to come to us to learn and assimilate religion and spiritual knowledge. (vol. III 2009: 443)

Vivekananda's engagement with the West is a two-way traffic. He does not stop at the binary of material and spiritual and taking sovereignty over the latter. He is striking a negotiation with the colonial modernity by expressing the willingness to learn its outward manifestations such as science and arts. He not only claims sovereignty over the spiritual domain but also makes the bold assertion that this spiritual domain must assert itself and teach the West and bring it under its own influence. In this process of exchange, education becomes the site of man-making process. Deepa Sreenivas interprets this anxiety concerning education in Vivekananda:

> This call for man-making religion and education of course is propelled by a nationalist politics that needs to respond to colonial critiques of Hinduism as debased and infested with 'social evils' like the caste system, child marriage, maltreatment of widows, and so on. In Vivekananda, as in Bankim, there is a stress on uniting the desirable aspects of western masculinity with a Hindu cultural identity. (Sreenivas 105)

Sreenivas notes that both Bankim and Vivekananda are anxious about removing the social evils but there is an inherent elitism to this enterprise. Though Vivekananda is worried about caste system, he is equally wary of anti-Brahminical movement of the lower castes which, for him, threatens the Hindu unity. Here, the nation effortlessly collapses into the religion. His ingenious solution to the caste problem is by proposing an alternative Brahiminism which is not based on birth or caste but on knowledge which is available to everyone (Sreenivas 105). This is the modernising enterprise of the Indian elite. This is also the telos of modern nation and nation-state as envisaged in Anderson (1998). All

ethnic identities and ascriptive identities melt in Vivekananda's scheme of alternative Brahminism to turn the nation into the empty homogeneous time.

A serious critique of this set of responses can be attempted. The major problem with this set of responses is that it denies the idea of plurality or diversity in cultural life of people. What is more, it takes plurality or diversity to be chaotic and the sign of decay and disintegration. It rejects the living, throbbing vitality of culture and seeks to contain that vitality into a pre-given form which is so alien that the traditional content in that new form produces a grotesque effect. Bankim's effort to mould Krishna along the lines of an Islamic or a Christian god wipes out the different forms which Krishna enjoys in different parts of the country. The extension of this act can be read as Bankim's rejection of all those communities and cultures of India who do not conform to his 'single national universal' vision. This 'national subject' as imagined by Bankim and Vivekananda has no place for any other kind of 'national subject'. Moreover, this kind of 'subjectivity' is forever linked to the colonial modernity because it is a byproduct of the negotiation between premodern and modern. If colonial modernity changes the paradigm, this 'subject' will lose its subjectivity completely and has to refashion itself again, so it is never free. If we accept this, then it can be said that this 'national subject' has little or no potential for offering an escape from the logic of colonial modernity.

The Fourth set of responses to colonialism was totally different from the above-mentioned three sets. The first three sets of responses mentioned above accepted the logic of colonial superiority either partially or fully.[23] But the fourth set of response rejected the colonial logic of superiority whole-heartedly. It refused to accept the fact that the West has anything to teach India or that the West is superior to India in any way. It argued that the East, that is India, is superior to West, that is Europe, in all walks of life and the entire

[23] First two sets of responses fully and the third one partially accepted the superiority of the colonial culture.

logic of colonialism is based on the false premise of Western superiority over the East. This argument rejected the industrial or material development of the West as flimsy and inconsequential. More devastatingly it likened the industrialization of Europe as Satanic and argued that not only the colonized but the colonial masters themselves need to be rescued from the evil effects of industrialization and western modernity. This set of responses refused to accept the given binaries of masculinity/femininity; modern/primitive; adult/child; adult/decrepit; rational/irrational; secular/superstitious; etc. This resulted into the rejection of the entire paradigm of the colonial modernity. In its place, these responses came up with a paradigm of their own and answered the critiques launched by colonial modernity at the colonized society. Moreover, they also came up with a scathing counter-critique. This counter-critique was not at any one aspect but was directed at the entire modern western civilization without any qualification. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) can be considered to be the most important exponent of this response.[24]

Gandhi's critique of modern western civilization forms the text of his 1909 book *Hind Swaraj*. In the book, Gandhi launches a scathing critique of the very foundation of colonial modernity and in the process he also rejects all the manifestation of that colonial modernity and Enlightenment rationality. So, be it industrialization, modern medicine, legal practices, railways, education system, or even parliamentary democracy, everything comes under attack. The underlying theme of this critique is that colonial modernity has made human beings irreligious. The civilization itself is satanic. It has alienated man from his environment as well as society. This is surely no civilization and it is recipe for disaster. This argument allows Gandhi to demolish the overarching paradigm of colonial

[24] Rabindranath Tagore can also be placed in this category of responses. This critique of western notion of nationalism can be seen in his 1918 book *Nationalism*. A more detailed study of Tagore's critique of nationalism can be found in Ashis Nandy's *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of the Self* (1994).

modernity and he poses ancient Indian civilization, based on its village communities, as a better alternative for the world.

Nandy reads Gandhi's responses to colonial modernity in Gandhi's idiosyncratic moulding of concepts and categories which defies the colonial normativity. So, in place of a colonial celebration of the order that "masculinity is better than femininity is better than effeminate man" Gandhi proposes an alternative model of "androgyny is better than masculinity is equal to femininity" (Nandy 2005: 52-53). This formulation is doing two things: first, it is denying any power to masculinity over femininity by making them equal to each other and second, it proposes the androgynous self to be greater than either a masculine self or a feminine self. By proposing and bringing to the centre this androgynous self, Gandhi also brings to the table a cultural strand which lived on the margins of the mainstream Indian society. Similarly, Gandhi's proposes a different kind of response of the idea of history and teleological history. Instead of considering past as primitive, Gandhi took past as a special case of present. Present for him was a fractured present which competes with the past. For Gandhi, remaking of the present will include the past and this only could lead to a new future.

This set of responses as embodied in Gandhi held an enormous potential for engaging with the colonial modernity. The peculiar strength of this response was that it refused to play by the rules designed by the colonial modernity. It changes the rules as well as the game itself. This set of responses is also unique in the way that they divide the West into two parts: official West which embodies modern civilization based on Enlightenment rationality and the 'other' West which rejects the modern civilization itself. Gandhi was able to make alliance with that other West and posit it to be the true West. So, this response not only undoes the colonial logic in the colony but it also assumes the agency to restructure the civilization of the colonizer and set it right. So, this

kind of ‘national subject’ held a radical promise towards freedom from colonization both physical as well as psychic.

As with other sets of responses, one can find limitations with this set of responses too. For all its critique of modern western civilization, this response refuses to see that modernity it is rejecting thoroughly has been an immensely powerful tool for some marginalized sections of Indian society to come out of their marginality and suppression. Also, for all its celebration of the Indian traditional civilization, this refuses to see how the traditional civilization created a social, economic and political hierarchy based on ascriptive identities. It will be hard for a Dalit or any other member of the marginalized section of Indian society to identify with the ‘national subject’ fashioned Gandhi. His ‘national subject’ may have the potential to liberate even the colonizers from the evil snares of modern western civilization, but this ‘national subject’ has nothing to offer to Dalits in India in terms of their emancipation.

2.7 National Subject in Heterogeneous Time: B. R. Ambedkar

The above-mentioned four sets of responses leave out B. R. Ambedkar. He does not fit in any of the four set of responses to the colonial rule. He is, in his own words in a different context, “a part apart” and not just a mere part of the whole. Ambedkar was simultaneously the most influential leader of the Dalits in entire history of India and also the chairperson of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India. In Anderson’s distinction of unbound and bound serialities, Ambedkar will find a place in both: unbound serialities of nation, governmentality, citizenship as well as bound serialities of caste and religion. Chatterjee characterizes him as the most dramatic manifestation of the tension between utopian homogeneity and real heterogeneity (Chatterjee 2004: 8). No received

narration of nation can account for Ambedkar's subjectivity. It requires a narrative of its own.

Ambedkar grappled with the colonial modernity in its entirety and he accepted both reason and history. Using these two categories of reason and history, he sets out to write a new history of Dalit community. Just as other sets of responses visualized a golden past and came up with the utopian status of equality or progress in antiquity, Ambedkar too located the origin of Untouchability in the defeat of Buddhists at the hands of Brahmins. This historical origin of caste gave a base to the present struggle for removal of caste to right a historical wrong and to acquire the utopian homogeneity (Chatterjee 2004: 9).

Ambedkar waged a double battle. He worked for emancipation of Dalits from caste Hindus on the one hand and opposed the colonial rule on other hand. It may look two different and sometimes opposite sites of struggle, but for Ambedkar, it was possible to execute both the struggles at the same time. He was clear about the fact that the colonial rule, for all its claims of secularization, cannot be a vehicle for Dalit emancipation and Dalits have to support a democratic self-government in India and fight for their emancipation under Swaraj (Omvedt 2013: 168-169). Ambedkar's demand for separate electorate during the second Round Table Conference in London ruptures the notion of national homogeneity. He did not reject the national homogeneity but rather demanded a special provision, a "minority citizenship" for Dalits. Chatterjee reads this as an affirmation of Bhabha's assertion of ambivalence in the narratives of nation. There is a continuous slippage and bound categories such as caste, people, cultural minorities, etc overlap each other in the process of becoming a homogeneous nation (Chatterjee 2004: 16).

Summing up the contradictions inherent in the location occupied by Ambedkar in the national imaginary, Chatterjee writes:

> He [Ambedkar] is fully aware of the value of universal and equal citizenship and wholly endorses the ethical significance of unbound serialities. On the other hand, he realizes that the slogan of universality is often a mask to cover the perpetuation of real inequalities. The politics of democratic nationhood offers a means for achieving a more substantive equality, but only by ensuring adequate representation for the underprivileged groups within the body politic. (2004: 22)

Ambedkar leaves neither the homogeneity of the nation nor its heterogeneity. Both were used as strategies for writing Dalits into a national subject: as citizens but who require extra support to achieve the universality of citizenship, free from ascriptive identities. But till such a time arrives, heterogeneity of the everyday politics remains an effective tool to fashion a national subjectivity which is different from elite subjectivities discussed above. This subjectivity demands a different kind of narrative which any elite historiography (be it imperialist or nationalist or Marxist) never paid attention to. It was to address this lack that new approach to historiography came up in India in early years of 1980s which, now, is known as Subaltern Historiography. The following section locates the emergence of this school in the politics of its times and also how it came to formulate a major critique of the dominant idea of national subject.

2.8 Subaltern Anti-Colonialism: Critiquing the National Subject

In this chapter I have argued how various sets of responses were proposed to colonial rule in order to fashion a national subjectivity and also have pointed out the limitations of each of the four chief acts of subject formation. I wish to argue that all four sets of responses suffer from this common limitation. All of them account for the 'national self' fashioned by elite classes of the society. So, it is the national elite who is fashioning the 'national self' and setting the agenda for others to follow. Effectively

speaking, this sort of self-fashioning was limited to the middle classes of Indian society. It never percolated to the bottom rungs of the society. It seems as if these bottom rungs were doubly colonized: colonized by the alien colonial powers and colonized by the native elites. Thus, they seemed to be devoid of any agency. But again, this non-availability of agency is not the full story. Away from the glare of mainstream historiography of nationalism, these marginalized sections[25] of the society waged their own battles of decolonization.

In the early 1980s, a new school of historiography developed in India which came to be known as 'Subaltern Studies'. This school of historiography claimed to write the historiography of the subaltern classes which were never given space in the mainstream historiography of either imperial variety or the nationalist variety. Setting the agenda for this school, Ranajit Guha–founder of the 'Subaltern Studies' group–asserted that the subaltern politics is an autonomous domain as it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter (R. Guha 1996: 4). Guha charges Indian bourgeoisie for its failure to speak for the nation, that is, to say that nationalist elite never cared for integrating the subaltern classes into the mainstream of the political life of the nation and for this very reason they failed in their duty to bring the nation into existence (R. Guha 1996: 5). It can be said that Guha is showing the fallacy of India as a nation and seems to be saying that at best it is only a partial nation. A complete nation will account for its population. In this response, India is not a nation still. Similar charges have been leveled by Aloysius too which have been discussed earlier in the chapter.

The Subaltern Studies group took up as its task to recover the histories of subaltern classes across the country. It is to their credit that they did not try to fit the peasant revolts and struggles against colonial rulers or native zamindars into the form of

[25]These sections are known by various labels. Ambedkar called them Dalits (former Depressed Classes including Untouchables), subaltern historiography labels them as 'subalterns' (includes Dalits, tribals, small peasants, labourers and even women), Partha Chatterjee calls them political society.

elite nationalism. The subaltern historians told the story of such struggles in all its richness and complexities and asserted that this too is the history of the national movement of India as it was led towards assertion of the masses. The aspiration of the masses for freedom from economic or socio-religious exploitation creates its own history and mythology. The most famous complete book of such a historiography could be considered to be Shahid Amin's *Event, Memory, Metaphor: 1922-1992* which examines the history of 1922 Chauri Chaura violence. Shahid Amin revisits the event and using archival documents and oral testimonies of the people who were either direct witness to the event or had heard of the event from people who were directly engaged directly in it, creates a narrative which is complex and riveting. Amin's book problematizes the mainstream history which has no place for events of Chauri Chaura or its actors except as a footnote. It is Amin's project to focus on this footnote and make its narrative mainstream. In so doing, Amin shows how subaltern classes at Chauri Chaura looked at the national movement through their own local lens. Their response to the national movement was contingent upon the local realities. It did listen to the elite leadership but ran its own course away from the dictates of the elite leadership. This puts the entire mainstream nationalism project into quandary. By taking agency into its own hands, it made a serious critique of 'nationalist self-fashioning'. It fashions its own 'self' which will be considered as a 'local self' by the mainstream historiography; but I have tried to argue that this too constitutes the 'national self'. If not, then this 'self-fashioning' stands in a critical engagement with the 'national self' and does not allow the 'national self' the hegemony it seeks to attain.

The discussion of national subject in this chapter was an attempt to show its contested nature vis-à-vis colonial modernity. This contested nature of national subject will inform how three key figures in modern Indian history–Syed Ahmad Khan,

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar–negotiated the terrain of colonial modernity to fashion a national subject for themselves as well as for the constituency they claimed to represent. The thesis examines how their negotiation with colonial modernity made these figures fashion a national subjectivity radically different from each other.