Social Change Philosophies in the Indigenous Context: A Historical Review

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Abstract

Change and social transformation have been examined in multifaceted ways since historicity. Several ideologues and philosophers have proposed ideas ranging from positivistic conceptions to postmodern visions. In the Indian context, the history of the freedom struggle and the colonial rule propelled the formation of philosophical positions that served to be vanguards of change. Three prominent ones are the social reform agenda, Gandhian thought and nationalism – ideals and philosophical positions which spanned the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century in terms of origin and which perpetuated in differential formulations, sometimes hegemonic, later. What this paper attempts is putting together a historical reading of the three interrelated domains: of social reform normative-ideational repertoire, Gandhian philosophy and nationalism with embedded discourses and praxis leanings. Simultaneously the ingrained problematics in the thought trends have also been highlighted to only re-affirm the dialectics within.

Keywords: social reform, Gandhian thought, nationalism, social change philosophies

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This paper examines the interrelated domains of social reform, Gandhian thought and nationalism. In terms of history this spans the period from the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century in the Indian context, leading simultaneously to several normative and ideational developments – acculturative, assimilative and transformational. What is attempted here is a mapping of the trajectory of the much celebrated social reform endeavours in the Indian context, the emergence of Gandhian thought and ideals and the juxtapositions, polarities and polemics with the subaltern visions and the grand narrative of the nation state. Cumulatively they assert a basket
of philosophies that reveal the indigenous flavours in terms of episteme, praxis and positionalities. Counter arguments to the prominent understandings have also been highlighted to reveal the dialectics in thought.

**Social Reform: Genesis, Facets and Legacies**

Social reform, also known as socio-religious reform in the Indian context, advocated modification in social behaviour and justified such advocacy by one or another form of religious authority and built an organisational structure that it maintained over time. Two broad types of reform movements prevail: transitional, that had their origins in pre-colonial world and arose from an indigenous form of socio-religious dissent; and acculturative, that had their origins within the colonial milieu and was led by individuals who were a product of cultural interaction. With beginnings in the 19th century, social reform signified the coming together of the occidental ideas with the oriental with two prominent forces at work – the indigenous (comprising of the English educated elite) and foreign (comprising of the utilitarians and the evangelicals). According to Andre Beteille, social reform attempted to establish a harmony between morphological or existential order and normative order through threefold ways: complete rejection of extant normative order and establishment of the new one; slight modifications; and, retaining of the extant normative order. The overarching key tenets that prevailed in terms of social reform were: synthesis and syncretism in religion, religion of praxis for the extant moral order, values such as rationalism, individualism and humanism, liberal ideas of democracy, reason and rationality. The three core regions for the renaissance of social reform in the Indian context were Bengal, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

In Bengal, Rammohan Roy’s Brahma Samaj (1828) advocated a monotheistic tradition along the lines of Vedanta and a utilitarian approach that believed in education and science for prosperity. His ideas were influenced by Henry Derozio who advocated the liberalist and rationalist ideas of the West. In 1866, there was a split in the Brahma Samaj with Debendranath Tagore formulating the Adi Brahmo Samaj and Keshabchandra Sen forming the Brahmo Samaj of India that incorporated Catholic ideals. Hence Roy has been labeled as the theistic reformer. Under Debendranath Tagore, the Samaj abandons the Vedas and falls back upon intuition and reason. Keshub Chandra Sen however adopts a conservative stance lending credence to Vedas and further schism developed post Sen’s personal proceedings which led to the development of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj [27]. Vidyasagar’s ideas of social reform were another arena of deliberation. Other key proponents of social reform in Bengal that retained the extant normative order of the Vedas with slight modifications were Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. Further Sri Aurobindo Ghosh advocated a mystical approach to Yoga and re-interpreted Vedantism. In Punjab, Swami Dayanand Saraswati’s Arya Samaj (1875) abiding largely by Vedic tenets, advocated equity within that fold. In Maharashtra, commencing with the Prarthana Samaj that advocated a rationalistic outlook, the other institution was that of the Theosophical Society (1825) set up by Helena Blavatsky who advocated the Vedas and tenets of mysticism and spirituality embedded therein.
Other reformers in Maharashtra were as follows: Balashastrī Jambhekar (1812 – 1846) who was regarded as the pioneer of renaissance in Maharashtra; Bhau Mahajan and Gopal Hari Deshmukh who started social reform journals called Prabhakar and Lokahitavada; Vishnubua Brahmachari who promoted a thought trend of revivalism inspired by the Arya Samaj; Justice Ranade who proposed a holistic social reform combining all dimensions of the social fabric; Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1850 – 1895), a radical nationalist influenced by Mills’ Utilitarianism, Spencer’s Individualism and Comte’s positivism proposed an agnostic view to the social world and progress through a dialectical procedure; Maharshi Karve who advocated ideals of equity and social justice with education as one of the medium; and, Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhedkar who proposed Dharmavivechan, a thought trend parallel to the deistic humanism of Ram Mohan Roy. He proposed a rational face of theistic humanism advocating devotion to God based on love and moral conduct, reason and rationality in praxis. These ideals were realized through the establishing of the Manav Dharma Sabha and the Paramhansa Mandali. In Karnataka, commencing with Veerasaivism in the 12th century, Christian missionaries like the Basel Mission, Wesleyan Mission and the Laden Mission brought in reform through education. The other developments were the setting up of the Brahma Samaj in Mangalore in 187- and the Theosophical Society in Mysore in 1886.

British rule established and introduced a capitalist economy, a new administrative system and English education in the early nineteenth century. Consequently an educated class emerged in urban areas comprising of the upper caste Hindus, who advocated alterations in the social fabric advocating a gradualist approach. Herein social reform meant infusing the existing social structure with new ways – the society being preserved while its members are transformed. The reformers either revolted individually or formed associations which were generally of three types: general or voluntary associations, caste reform associations and religious reform bodies (generally called samaj). The main thrust remained in terms of rejuvenating Hindu religion and society to counter the impact of western culture and the efforts of proselytisation by Christian missionaries [20, 32]. The other viewpoint on this aspect proposed that the innovative potentiality of Hinduism was more responsible for its rejuvenation rather than the impact of other religions and cultures. Further as the traditional social structure and religion were not able to cope with the new economic structure which was based on individualism, the reformers strove to extend the principle of individual liberty to the sphere of religion. Social reform among the Muslims began with the Aligarh movement led by Syed Ahmed Khan, the main thrust being to persuade the Muslim landed gentry to take an English education and an urge to generate a separate and independent status for the Muslims [32]. The social reform movements among Hindus and Muslims contributed to the development of nationalism along regional and religious lines. The study of social reform is akin to the study of social histories – along the lines of Hobsbawm, the social being an adjunct to the economic and studies mapping political protest [29]. Further the discursive field of social reform is inhabited by fundamentalisms, ascendant Dalit movements and movements within Islam such as the Tabligi Jamaat. The Tabligi Jamaat movement encourages its practitioners to go out in pilgrimages to other houses.
and places, focuses on face-to-face or heart to heart communications and taking Islamic teachings out from the Madrasas to the common people. The focus is on striving to realise a realm beyond power and impotence, domination and submission and allow beings to ‘be’. There is a certain sense of Habermasian practical discourse wherein actors are engaged in moral argumentations about the foundations of life thereby leading to a democratic transformation of modes of power and authority [16].

Regional manifestations and flavours of social reform can be discussed through the transitional and acculturative movements in Bengal and North-Eastern India, the Gangetic core, Punjab and the North West, Maharashtra and the South. Social reform in Bengal and North Eastern India followed two main channels, one rural and Islamic and the other Hindu and urban. Among Bengali Muslims, the Faraizis and allied movements were transitional in nature, owing nothing in their leadership or membership to the colonial milieu. Speaking from their traditional role of ulama, Islamic leaders addressed primarily a peasant audience. They drew on Islamic schools of philosophy and theology outside South Asia. The essentially acculturative, Hindu socio-religious movements, the Brahmos, Ramakrishnas and the followers of the neo-Vaisnavas drew symbols, concepts and scriptural legitimisation for the long history of protest within their religious heritage as well as elements of western civilisation. Roy adopted some concepts of ethics, theism and rationalism from the West and Sen conscripted Christian symbols. Led by members of a rising educated elite, the Hindu movements of return adopted an imported organisational structure. In terms of the reaction to Christianity, the Brahmo Samaj sought equivalence, while the followers of Vivekananda and Sen proposed Hindu superiority. Ramakrishna Mission integrated the Hindu faith ideational elements with the secular motives of social service delivery. Both sets of movements strengthened religious consciousness as well as defined and redefined boundaries that took communal formulations [24].

In the region of the Gangetic core (comprising of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh) the Muslims at the end of the nineteenth century had produced socio-religious movements through which four ideological approaches and concomitant patterns of action were clearly discernible. The Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah attempted to re-establish Islamic supremacy through war and adopted an egalitarian approach. The Deobandis, Ahl-i-Hadith and founders of the Nadwah Dar al-‘Ulm focused on the role of the Ulama as the natural leaders of the community. This was primarily due to the fact that after the defeat of the Muhammadi Jihad and British suppression of the mutiny, Muslim movements were primarily concerned with the loss of status and power of the elites. The loss of political power was dealt with by creating an Islamic community that would retain its cohesion through an appeal to the individual’s conscience rather than state authority – under the guidance of the ulama. On the other hand, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan envisioned the re-emergence of bureaucratic and administrative elite who would co-operate with the British Indian government using the backdrop of western education. Lastly the Barelwis defended orthodoxy in an alliance with the hereditary pirs of the countryside. The Hindus of the Gangetic plain on the other hand created two types of socio-religious movements – both acculturative and one defensively orthodox. Influenced by the Brahmo Samaj, the first turn was towards traditional institutions, with the Radhasoamis refurbishing the authority of the guru. Appealing to
a rising vernacular and literate group, the endeavour was towards spiritual enlightenment and creation of a new psychosocial order. The Bharat Dharma Mahamandala aligned to the traditional varnasrama dharma and defended religion based on pre-British elite of aristocrats, priests, landlords and merchants [24].

Punjab has unveiled a differential flavour in the genus of social reform – the chief Arya Samaj movement paralleled with the Singh Sabha Movement and sectarian developments of influences of Christianity and the Ahmadiyah movements. Social reform as an agenda has however dominated the Arya Samaj context – re-instating equality within an essentially Hindu repertoire based on Vedic tenets [30]. Further the diversity of the religious communities in Punjab led to a greater number of socio-religious movement apart from divisions within and among the religious communities that appeared repeatedly. The two Sikh transitional movements grew from the crisis within the community and by the British conquest of the Sikh kingdom. The major Sikh acculturative movement, the Singh Sabha, was bifurcated between pre-British elite centred in Amritsar and a new rising group at Lahore. Punjabi Hindus, to preserve the Hindu sentiments, founded the Lahore Arya Samaj in 1877. This aspect was in conflict with the Brahma Samaj, orthodox Hindus and the Dev Samaj. Punjabi Muslims were influenced by movements of return from the Gangetic basin and orthodox Muslim leadership of Mirza Ghulam and the sole truth claims of the Ahmadis. Socio-religious reform movements in Punjab adopted western organizational techniques through which they created a wide variety of institutions – missionaries, tract societies, parochial schools, centres of worship and associations. Religious identity and transboundaryed communal consciousness was developed on the basis of a combination of symbols based on language, script and religion [24, 32].

Maharashtra’s social reform was also deeply intertwined with academic and journalistic writings through which the radical and revolutionary tempers were unearthed. Further a historiographical and historic-literary analysis reveals several facets of social reform in the state. There were aspects of change oriented agendas of reformers; transformations of political philosophies and practices; the transformative writings in Marathi periodicals and English newspapers; and, influence of Western medicine, science, history and literature on Maharashtrian intellectuals [37]. Transformative writings refer to the articles written by Bhau Mahajan offering stinging criticism to the British policies in India in Prabhakar and publishing articulated by Lokahitavadi and others which were radical reformist in nature. The daily Bombay Chronicle articulated the complexities of the Indian nationalist viewpoints from 1920-30. Western influences include the academic renaissance of R.G. Bhandarkar in introducing the study of Indology and history of India on a late nineteenth century European model. Nineteenth century Marathi poetry was heavily influenced by classical Sanskrit tradition. Visnu Moreshwar Mahajan’s lyric poems which laid the foundation of original modern poetry in Marathi were adaptations of English sonnets (Wagle, 1999).

The main agendas of the social reformers of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries of Maharashtra were: women’s education, women’s welfare, widow remarriage, eradications of the shortcomings of the jati institution and general reform of Hindu law and customs. These include ideas of Agarkar, Hari Narayan Apte
and Lokahitavadi who leveled criticism against Hindu customs and institutional mores. For Baba Padmanji and Pundita Ramabai, the reform of Hindu society necessitated conversion to Christianity. Govind Babaji Joshi pursued his reformist convictions by marrying his daughter outside the caste thereby revealing the struggles of the Maharashtrian intellectuals wanting to change the jati institution.

Four aspects relevant to political philosophies predominated in Maharashtra: the non-Brahman Movement, the political concept of Maharashtraha Dharma, untouchable liberation movement in the Vidarbha region and nationalist philosophies of Savarkar and N.C. Kelkar. The non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra grew from the effective control of the Brahman Peshwas to the emergence of Congress as the ruling party in Maharashtra dominated by the Maratha elite. The anti-Brahmanism of the Maratha leaders prevented radical movements from taking roots among the dispossessed Maratha Kunbi labourers, artisans and Dalit workers. Maharashtrha Dharma as a political concept although originated in the seventeenth century was appropriated by leaders like Tilak, Vinoba Bhave and Shahu Maharaj. The untouchable liberation movement is traced to efforts of leaders like Walunkar, Kamble and Moon whom Dr. Ambedkar drew upon. The nationalist ideology of Hindutva or Hindupadpadshahi can be traced to influences of the Italian nationalist movement led by Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour called the Resorgimento [37].

The transitional socio-religious reform movements that developed in the central belt and Maharashtra comprised of the Swami Narayan Sampradaya, the Satnamis, the Manav Dharma Sabha and the Prathana Samaj. The Swami Narayan movement had a Brahman leadership, supported Hindu ideals and emphaisised on a moral code parallel to the Bhakti genre. Satnamis were largely a lower caste group with voices of protest. The Manav Dharma Sabha, Oriyan in its origin, had members from Brahmin communities as well as Hinduised tribals. This movement attempted to create a form of religion that bridged the gap from formal Hinduism and the tribal hill people at the edge of the Hindu world – drawing in history of religious teachings. The acculturative movements in this region were the Paramahansa Mandal and the Prarthana Samaj. The other religious community in this region was that of the Parsis and the acculturative movement Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha that looked into re-shaping the religion to adjust to the colonial milieu [24].

The south comprised of a combination of the Hindu and the Christian communities at the time of the 19th century reform. Christianity in the South was further propelled by the missionaries, even prior to the establishment of the colonial milieu. According to Nadars, Christianity was an ideology that provided them with an arena for social mobility through a rejection of the caste system. Three areas of Christian Hindu strife (where Hindu orthodoxy reacted sharply to Christian challenges) emerged: among the Nadars of Tinnevelly within the British controlled territory, with the members of the same caste in the princely state of Travancore and finally in the later half of the nineteenth century in the Telugu speaking districts north of Madras, where the Protestant missionaries were active. Another prominent socio-religious movement in the South was the Theosophical society which drew on centuries of socio-religious dissent and protest within the western civilization. They borrowed non-western symbols and ideas as part of their ideology and followed them
back to their sources in Egypt and South Asia. They patronised Hindu-Buddhist symbols and deployed them to support their doctrines which led to a legitimisation of indigenous orthodoxies. This was juxtaposed with the movement of Swami Narayan Guru of Kerala that initially resorted to Brahminical Hinduism in the socio-religious endeavour to uplift the status of the Izhavas, but later rejected the same [24].

The twentieth century face of social reform contained aspects of competing nationalisms and heightened religious conflict. The growth was through emigration, conversion and transnational developments of socio-religious reform movements – Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Math and Mission and Ahmadiyah Movement being important ones in question. Further by independence, these movements inhabited a complex ideological world as secular motifs of nationalism, socialism; communism and fascism were available to justify social change. Most of the socio-religious reform movements did not identify with nationalism. The Ramakrishna monks and the Radhasoami Satsang remained outside the political fold, The Arya Samaj found itself increasingly drawn into political action in defense of the Hindu community through its shuddhi campaigns, anti-Muslim satyagrahas and organisational developments such as the Arya Vir Dal which placed the Samaj along the lines of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress. The Ahmadiyas with their struggles against the Ahrars and Ahl-i-Hadith and later with the independent state of Pakistan were drawn into conflict with the Muslim communities. Intertwined with caste, communal, regional and class struggles, the socio-religious reform movements also tackled those arenas and changes facets in accordance with them. Swami Narayan Guru movement was divided between its religious aspects and its concern for untouchables [24].

Scholars have also problematised social reform by initially equating social reformism to ideals of individualism, egalitarianism and humanism as also by a cultural nationalist impulse to restore the pristine values of Indian civilisation. It is especially valorised as the redeeming aspect of several modern religious reform movements, which are otherwise judged to have been compromised by the tendency to divide along communal lines. However the problematics emerge through the largely upper caste and elite class allegiance of the reformers which re-instates newer regimes of patronage and exploitation; the positionalities and views on women as essentialist and from an androcentric viewpoint; the role of Christian missionaries in providing institutional models for reformist emulation (in sharp contrast with the official imperial policy) as being writ with ambiguities and contradictions; and, the tension between social reform as being a process of incremental betterment of society vis-a-vis it being a very limited and specific phenomenon spanning the century prior to the end of the first world war [35].

Particularly in view of the issues of women (incidentally which were a prominent agenda of social reform), several disjunctures emerged. Post the upsurge of interest on women’s issues at the time of the social reform in the early decades of the twentieth century, the concern was re-activated only with the advent of the second wave of international feminism in the 1970s. This decline of interest in the women’s problem paralleled the rise of the nationalist movement on the one hand and of lower caste, peasant and tribal movement on the other: in either case, the women’s question was
co-opted into a larger political project. The image of the oppressed non-Western woman, the willing or unwilling victim of inhumane practices such as sati, foot binding or female circumcision has served a larger political function as an affirmation of European superiority and a justification of the imperial enterprise. In reverse and reaction, the figure of the Indian woman in the nationalist discourse has been invested with positive value as the symbol of a recovered Indian (or Hindu) tradition and her place in the home valorized as the space of uncontaminated purity. Deployed in this way, as victim or as cultural heroine, the woman becomes a site on which larger political claims are made and contested – on behalf of the nation as a whole or in the context of communal, caste or regional politics. Hence there was an iconicisation of women as symbols of nation and community.

Further the grand narrative of social legislations that accompanied social reforms have been problematised as being essentialist, statist, patronising newer hegemonies along with jurisprudential issues of action and implementation. Using the philosophical theorisation of Hegel which visualised the facilitating of the transition from the ‘personalistic’ towards the ‘objective’ by civil society as the mediating institution, an interrogation of the fundamental categorical imperative of the ‘scientific’ domain of the normative-ideational postulate of ‘helping’ has been undertaken. This has been done through a re-visiting of the rhetoric of the 19th century social reform as the Archimedean standpoint for rationalistic praxis. By tracing the personal histories of the three conventional doyens of Bengal social reform – Roy, Keshub Sen and Brajen Seal using a ‘personalytical approach’, the point that is made is that there are contradictions between the personal-mystical (examining the life histories) and the public-objective (in terms of official histories of their work in the arena of social reform). Hence the connection between self-transformation and social transformation (which incidentally is also a Gandhian endeavour) then becomes rhetorical [5].

Gandhi and Gandhian Thought
Gandhian thought can be understood in terms of his political philosophy, spiritual and ethical concerns, moral philosophy and praxis. The core of the thought which is essentially eclectic can be derived from his writings and collections of talks/speeches – a systematic documentation of which is available in multiple forms. Gandhi’s thoughts have been encapsulated in his main writings as well as collection of speeches which include: Hind Swaraj (tract in the form of dialogue); Niti Dharma (a collection of talks); Satyagraha in South Africa (a full account of the movement); The Story of My Experiments with Truth (autobiography); From Yeravada Mandir and Ashram Observances (both collection of letters to the members of the Sabarmati Ashram); Constructive Programme (a pamphlet); Paraphrase into Gujarati of Plato’s apology; Paraphrase of Ruskı́n’s Unto This Last later translated under the title ‘The Story of a Satyagrahi’; Collection of articles on sexual morality titled self restraint versus self indulgence; Guide to Health; Economics of Khadi; Cent per cent Swadeshi; and, The Gita according to Gandhi (an English rendition by Mahadev Desai of Gandhi’s Gujarati translation and commentary with much supplementary material written by
Social Change Philosophies in the Indigenous Context: A Historical Review

Desai).

Whereas the summum bonum of his political philosophy encompasses arguments of non-violence, Satyagraha (quest for truth), civil disobedience and emancipation from colonialism, his spiritual and ethical concerns discuss the ethics of frugality, equality and transcendence. In terms of praxis the lens encompasses aspects of sarvodaya, self-sustenance and reliance and focus on constructive action with ‘rural’ as the locus classicus of understandings. Amalgamating multiple normative and ideational influences the chief among them being Rousseau, Tolstoy, Vedanta (transcendental monism), vaisnavism (God personification), work ethics of Protestantism and theosophy, Gandhi has submitted certain concepts based on metaphysical propositions. These include – satya, ahimsa, moksa, tapas, satyagraha, swaraj and swadeshi; hence catapulting metaphysical propositions to have ethical-political implications as well as bound up with religious beliefs. In that sense, Gandhi was pre-Machiavellian in the intertwining of religion with politics. Posing limitations to reason and western scientism, Gandhi’s focus nevertheless remained developing a moral law and ethics of praxis rather than personal salvation alone through political disengagement. The overarching amalgamated political ideology was socialist, communist, liberal, reactionary and revolutionary [22].

Whereas the etymology of satya, ahimsa, moksa and tapas signifies warrants singular meanings of truth, non-violence, transcendence and penance; Satyagraha, swaraj and swadeshi have complex connotations. Satyagraha signifies an upholding of truth, non-violence, compliance to state laws, sacrifice, obligatory discipline, humility and public good. Swaraj and swadeshi imply self rule and self reliance. Within the concept of self rule, there are complex discourses on self, morality, individuality and individual freedom. Swadeshi contains concepts of self respect and frugality. All the above concepts converge to form a means-ends relationship which along the line of Jacques Maritain is the basic problem in political philosophy. There is a system of technical rationalisation through means external to man and moral rationalisation through means which are man himself his freedom and virtue. Means must be proportioned and appropriate to the end since they are ways to the end and so to speak the end itself in its very process of coming into existence. Gandhi emphasises on the dialectical interdependence of means and ends (aligning to Trotsky) [22].

Gandhian thought can be further discussed in terms of his theistic ideas, moral propositions and ethical legacies, political philosophies and social theorisations. In terms of his theistic ideas, Gandhi aligned to the idea of an apriori existence of Godhead, the ideas of God being assimilated from Vedic, Upanisadic and Vedantic tenets, the indeterminate absolute proposition of Sankara’s Vedanta and subsequently the contrary propositions of Vaisnava teachers (Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Vallabha and Madhva) who propounded that liberation is possible through God propitiated by devotion and self surrender. Further Gandhi also assimilated the ideas of Jaina tenets of anekantavada and syadvada in his understandings of Godhead – which can culminated in a comprehension of God being an all pervasive reality immanent in man and also in the world and like Whitehead, described God from both the primordial and the consequent aspects. Further akin to theistic realism, Godhead is equated to truth and truth claims and in that sense there are elements of absolutism
and universalism in Gandhian thought. The other domains of his theistic ideas are a
pennant for religious unity (seeking commonalities of tenets in all religions),
naturalism (a reverence to nature and equating the same to Godhead) and theistic
existentialism [8]. In theistic existentialism, Gandhian thought proposes that the
ultimate aim of human existence is the realisation of Godhead. This merger of being
with Ultimate being is an endeavour to be one with the creation of God. The
realization of God is an ultimate aim of human life, but this God is not an abstract
entity; he is the truth or reality that lives in being’s own self and in the self of others.

In terms of the moral propositions and ethical legacies, Gandhian thought aligns to
the tenets that morality is the essence of religion – love, knowledge of self and others,
free will, soul force, work by self surrender and dynamic humility and peace as
further dimensions of the same [25]. Within the moral repertoire, discourses on truth
and non-violence predominate - ahimsa, Satyagraha and sarvodaya being the core
moral vernaculars. Gandhian ethics provide a language of non-violent relationality
in the public domain, of moral internationalism based on the notion of compassion for
and connectivity with strangers, the language of soul force based on truth and love.
This ethics of non-violence (ahimsa) is not only rooted in the indigenous context, but
constitutes a transcultural nonviolent ethics of the everyday that is eminently
translatable across a range of political sites [14]. It is an ethics of relationality across
strangeness and difference as against an orientation that valorises propinquity and
sameness to mark human sociality. Gandhi’s anti-imperial, non-violent energy are
refined and filtered through acts of relational embodiment – his experience of
vegetarianism, his quirky experiments with alternative medicine and his renowned
fasts. The three key sites of sociality, professional relationality and discursivity that
were crucial in shaping Gandhi’s ethical orientations included – his friendships in
various ashrams, his practice as a lawyer in colonial South Africa and his English
rendering of the Hind Swaraj and the tensions involved in the translations thereof. In
terms of moral propositions, there are fundamental and absolutist moral beliefs and
along Kantian lines a belief in the universalisability of the categorical imperative of
duty.

The complex etymology of Gandhian ahimsa has been discussed - arguing that
Gandhi’s anti-imperial politics and polemics have transnational sources in his active
involvement with vegetarianism, which itself constituted part of the late Victorian
animal welfare movements [12]. Three strands from the intellectual activist repertoire
of late Victorian animal welfarism that discursively wove themselves into the
elementary grammar of Gandhian ahimsa – radical cosmopolitanism most often
manifested in a culinary form, a critique of imperial masculinity based on meat eating
or kreophagy, and finally a resistance to modern forms of governmentality that erect
all kinds of barriers to all forms of relationality – both human and animal. The non-
vviolent relationality has been examined in the context of illness and nursing by
Gandhi of rank outsiders (an unknown leper and Zulu soldiers) [33]. This is a notion
of intimate bodily contact, albeit palliative, which, even in the context of aggressive
imperialism and racism does not distinguish between friend and stranger. As such it
articulates a complex bioethics of singular proximity that exceeds all notions of self-
boundedness within communities or nations. It is the weakness of excessive propinquity and relationality that threatens the strong ordered, disciplinary norms of human sociality – form of love that empties itself inside out, an affective ascasis. The fasts of Gandhi have been analysed as exercises in self-abnegation entwining with an intense awareness of corporeal vulnerability to generate a vision of dependency, responsibility and relationality [34]. The farms and Ashrams set up at different times by Gandhi across South Africa and India served as sites for his non violent praxis. Further Gandhi’s notion of non-violent protest is predicated on the paradox of disobedience to imperial law.

Political philosophies demonstrated a clear alignment to socialism with concepts of trusteeship as the abiding tenet of political organisation. The concept of trusteeship proposes that the source of capital accumulation is labour which needs to be given more credence. The surplus generated in the process of production is to be treated as a trust by the capitalists that needs to be utilized for the welfare of the people and capitalists then are the trustees of that wealth. The ideal economic organization would then be based on equity and decentralisation. The core term of Gandhian political thought was ‘swaraj’, which meant self-rule and, in a stricter political sense, a sovereign kingdom’s freedom from external control. This philosophy related spiritual and political freedom or swaraj to a perception of unity or oneness of life and an enlightened self restraint. This conceptualisation of freedom bears some similarities with European political philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, G.W.F. Hegel and T.H. Green, who formulated theories of positive freedom in the 18th and the 19th centuries. The Gandhian version of positive freedom argued that self knowledge could lead to discovery of human unity and thus reconcile the antagonism between individual and society so characteristic of the liberal concept of liberty [7]. As expressed in Hind Swaraj, the Gandhian concepts of swaraj and Satyagraha were related to the emphasis placed in employing the right means to attain an end. In terms of analysing Gandhian political philosophies, similarities are proposed between Gandhian political idealism and Plato’s thoughts [7]. Plato views freedom in the same dual sense as liberation of both self and system and he also identifies freedom with both self-restraint and self-realisation. The logical relationship between genuinely free individual and community is evoked (the fact that freedom also has certain constraints in the societal context); which is also visualised in Gandhian thought. Although Plato and Gandhi align in conceptions of power, the ideal state conceptions of Plato and Gandhian notions of democracy differ. The purpose of political leadership was perceived by Gandhi along Platonic lines as that of re-instating moral values. This leadership was further qualified by James Burns as transformational leadership – combining tenets of swaraj and Satyagraha (also labelled by Gandhi as heuristic because it employed the power that encouraged reflection and re-examination of motives, needs and interests) towards the ideal of inclusivity.

Combining several utopian ideals in his sense of polity and politics, Gandhi, has advocated a radical style of politics that fought the many insidious divides found in societies [18]. This divisive politics involves defining the antagonist as the ‘other’ who is seen to stand apart from the community to which the ‘self’ is perceived to belong. The core contention was resistance of such divisive politics, of nationalists
who posited a polarisation with the coloniser through assertion of a warped sense of masculinity through assassinations; instead arguing for feminine principles of non-violent opposition and civility. Gandhi never sought to evolve a grand political theory, but through a dialogic scheme worked out his ‘truth’ as praxis and understood that it had to evolve constantly in relation to his and other people’s experiences. In terms of his contentions on nationalism, it was incorporative (broad and catholic) and recognised simultaneously the vital need to nurture a dynamic political space that was separate from state power and which could act as a check on that power. Private property, held in a spirit of trusteeship provided one such counter position. Gandhi combined liberalism, anarchism, decentralisation, self determination and self rule in his political positions. Incorporative nationalism combined understandings from the subaltern classes and a quest for revolution. Hegemony of a particular class was denied and along Gramscian lines, argued that the elite and subaltern classes structure their discourses in relationship to each other through a ‘series of negations’. Further the Gandhian stance has been the ideational back up or several political assertions manifesting through new social movements operating in a number of discrete spheres A parallel theoretical justification is found in the writings of Foucault in his argument that hegemonic power is dispersed throughout the social formation in various sites, with each site expressing a particular relationship of domination and subordination. The Gandhian position is reflected in the fact that transformation is sought not through direct capture of state power through elections, but through attempts to transform the nature of politics itself. In intertwining politics with religion, Gandhian thought is akin to Emerson and Mazzini [22]. In the vein of Emerson, Gandhi saw the religion-politics linkage as contemplative – reforming of the state along the religious principles of right and love. Mazzini’s stance was more action oriented – viewing religion as a gospel of duty towards society requiring political action. Religion was further understood by Gandhi in the Augustinian sense as a spiritual commitment which is personal. Hence what predominates is a theological worldview within the realms of realpolitik.

In the realm of social theorisations, Gandhi at once demonstrates an alignment to structuralist and postcolonial propositions. Gandhi further was sceptical of the unilinear vision of history and state-centred narratives in favour of ethics and myths (Ashish Nandy has argued that Gandhi valorised myth over history thus adopting a ‘traditional’ Indian stance towards the past) and that were considered to be more deterministic in developing a critique of colonialism [18]. Gandhi’s critique of modernity generally refers to his critique of the doctrines of materialism and instrumental rationality, the belief in scientific and technological progress, practices such as large scale methods of production, rapid transportation, allopathic medicine, adversarial parliamentary systems of democracy and so on, and the accompanying conviction that it was the duty of those who subscribed to such values to impose them on the rest of the world. Against this he counterposed his own definition of what entailed a genuine civilization that had to be rooted in alternative morality. This position is reflected most clearly in the Hind Swaraj – a postcolonial text taking the form of a debate between an editor (Gandhi) and the reader. There is a dialogic rather than antagonistic relationship with modernity reflected in this text [18]. The
postcolonial flavour of Gandhi arises in his transcultural androgynous protest against the excessive aggression of British colonialism holding in trust a peculiar form of ethically potent ‘weakness’ (metaphor for non-violence) to which a violent world may have to return [26]. The structure is evident in Gandhian notions of society and the colonial state. In the Hind Swaraj (Gandhi’s most prominent postcolonial text) the dualism of the coloniser-colonised is discursively unearthed; notions of fair and just governmentality evoked by the anti-colonial nationalism is discussed; and notions of authentic selfhood at the very disjunctures and discontinuities of colonial temperaments are debated.

Problematics to Gandhi’s positions have been by the subaltern groups, particularly Dalits in the Phule-Ambedkarite vein, who visualised Gandhi’s claims to equality as rhetorical, subverting assertions of depressed castes under the garb of nationalism. Hence although equality was accepted within the Gandhian repertoire in theory, in practice, it perceived the other as merely an object of consciousness and not another consciousness [13]. Further patriarchy was rooted in the familial practice of Gandhi and that it remained an abiding sentiment from the feminist and psychoanalytical point of view despite the fact that women were encouraged to take active part in the campaigns for civil resistance [18].

Nationalism: Brief Theoretical Overview and Home Ground Realities
Nationalism as an ideology demonstrates an allegiance to the idea of the nation state – spatially and metaphorically. Literature on nationalism has provided theoretical renditions and political economy discourses at the epistemic level; and, in the indigenous context discursive realms intertwining categorical imperatives of ethnicity, religion, caste and class with the conception of the nation-state.

Theoretical renditions and political economy discourses on nationalism can be discussed as follows: the historical evolution of nationalism has been traced through identifying the forms as humanitarian, Jacobin, traditional, liberal, integral and economic [19]. The proponents of humanitarian nationalism were Bolingbroke, Rousseau and Herder. Bolingbroke proposed a nationalism based on theistic naturalism – that nationality came directly from the God of nature as also aristocratic – depending upon the patriotism of the nobility, church and masses. Rousseau drawing upon his central doctrine of social contract (proposing a principle of popular sovereignty) laid the foundations of a democratic nationalism. Herder proposed a cultural nationalism providing an exposition of what most basically distinguishes one nationality from the other – territorially and culture being two aspects. Jacobin version of nationalism is the French vision developed on the basis of humanitarian democratic nationalism of Rousseau and focused on extending the liberty-equality-fraternity goals of the French Revolution. To some extent Jacobin nationalism was also religious and missionary and deployed militarism to realise visions and goals. Traditional nationalism is based on the ideas of Edmund Burke, Vicomte de Bonald and Friedrich von Schlegel. Burke’s nationalism proposed that the idea of a nation was divinely ordained and providential and abided by the tenets of aristocratic nationalism. Bonald proposed that nationalism constituted threefold ‘marks’ – a
public religion also simultaneously tolerant of minority dissent, permanent social distinctions and an executive authority vested in the monarch. Schlegel on the other hand was a proponent of cultural ethnocentrism and romanticism as aligned to the sentiment of nationalism.

The proponents of liberal nationalism were Bentham, Guizot, Welcker and Mazzini. Bentham’s nationalism was influenced by his abiding ideas of laisser-faire, utilitarianism and liberty championing thus ‘an individualism based on enlightened self interest, ignoring of the social contract, natural rights and other metaphysical conceptions and instead stressing a practical utility and a penchant for systematic, logical and consistent reforms and a passive policeman state with a government which should allow individual wide liberty, political, economic, religious, educational and military [19]. Guizot and Welker corroborated the Benthamite stance in the context of the practical politics of France. Mazzini, within the liberal nationalist genre and in the context of Italy, proposed a ‘law of nationality’ – nationalism being was God had prescribed to each people in the work of humanity and that along with rights, duties are important to realise nationalist goals. Integral nationalism is focused on national integrity and the increase of national power and is concerned with the consolidation aspects of nations that have already attained political independence. The economic face of nationalism is juxtaposed vis-a-vis economic liberalism. Adolf Wagner, a German economist of the historical school and a proponent of the economic version of nationalism discussed that natural rights and natural powers of an individual are conditioned by the national state which in itself is a historical product.

Hobsbawm proposes that nationalism signifies a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent; nations are formulations of nationalisms and not vice versa; the national question is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and transformation; and, nations are thus a dual phenomena constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless analysed from below (hence distinctions sought between official philosophies of the state and individual philosophies and that national identifications as non-deterministic, not solely constitutive of individual identities and temporally non-static) [21].

Based on Gellner’s definition of nationalism as a congruence of power and culture, the sociological treatment of the concept of nationalism has been looked at [1]. Initially within the realms of political theory and history, sociology of nationalism has looked at problematisation of the concepts related to nationalism; and, shift in emphasis from state, ideology and movement to nation as a distinct social category and particularly in the aspect of its becoming i.e. the transition from pre-modern to the new cultural/political totality. As a theory of cultural power, the sociology of nationalism is a study of social change from the perspective of movements of power and power positions within society affecting its structure and culture. This internal approach to the study of nationalism as a specific form of social change is the core contribution of the new sociological approach.

From an anthropological viewpoint the nation-state has been looked at as a cultural phenomenon rather than lineaments on the map [17]. Commencing with a premise that a clear conception of cultural membership can determine space, this
conceptualisation has been extended to include the cultural membership of the nation state and the territorial space that such membership connotes. Hence nation-states are bound by strong sentiments of identity that are best understood as a cultural phenomenon and metaphor.

Elaborating on the Marxist theory of nationalism, it has been discussed that nationalism entails the concept of nation in the Marxist repertoire which signifies a specified territory and a consciousness of itself as a nation, akin to class consciousness [9]. Nations are formed from states, in struggle against foreign oppression and then by first attaining cultural solidarity and then a political expression of that solidarity. Marxian version of nationalism was concretised through the ideas of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. Lenin emphasised on the right to self determination of nations and the role of bourgeoisie in building modern nations. Luxemburg on the other hand viewed the role of bourgeoisie as minimal and emphasised instead on the concepts of federation and autonomy in nation-building. Stalin included culture in his definition of nationalism and the materialist conception of history wherein he viewed nations as historically evolving. Like Lenin, Stalin too focused on the role of the bourgeoisie in nation building and the historically predisposing factors as being primarily economic. He saw the restrictions on suppressed nationalities as being imposed by the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation as a part of the struggle with the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation. Trotsky focused primarily on the economics of nationalism (economic factors as overriding in determining the stability of the nation state) and distinguished between nationalism of the colonial bourgeoisie and proletariat. Hence a Marxist treatment of nationalism is a dialectical journey showing how nationalism arises in history, under what conditions, its relation to democracy, socialism and specifically Asiatic mode of production, class struggle and proletarian internationalism.

Further the bourgeoisie nationalism that was patronised by Lenin and Stalin was critiqued by latter theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. Based on the experiences of the Algerian resistance movement, Fanon discussed the role of several classes in bringing about revolution for two core privileges in the realm of the colonial regime: economic privilege and the national privilege. But unlike the orthodox version of Marxism wherein the proletariat and peasants would have a role in the revolution, Fanon recognises the role of the lumpenproletariat in the process. Cabral (from the erstwhile Portuguese colony, now known as Guinea-Bissau at the Western end of sub-Saharan Africa) has discussed the importance of culture in building the process of national consciousness and the process of national liberation is the process of restoring history. This is contrary to the Marxist proposition that class struggle is the motive force of progress, instead arguing for a position that the level of productive forces is the driving power of history. Class struggle would emerge after the anti-colonial struggle and the petty bourgeoisie would be instrumental in nation formation [9].

From the post-Marxian viewpoint, traditional states and modern states have been compared [15]. The core characteristics of modern nation states are identified as: emergence of administrative orders of high intensity, polyarchy (derived from the administrative concentration achieved via the expansion of surveillance and from the

Social Change Philosophies in the Indigenous Context: A Historical Review 77
altered nature of the dialectic of control which this produces), systemic relations with other nation states, intertwining with capitalism and industrialism, industrialisation of war (creation of a world military order that cross cuts the division between the first, second and third worlds) and transborder operations. According to Giddens, there are four ‘institutional clutterings’ that are associated with modernity and nation-state: heightened surveillance, capitalistic enterprise, industrial production and consolidation of centralised control of means of violence. Hence there is a significant shift from traditional Marxist societies which are class divided and segmental in character.

The colonialism-modernism-nationalism trajectory in the Indian context has been mapped as follows. The development of nationalist sentiment has been against the backdrop of the structure of colonialism, the process of its evolution and deconstruction through anti-colonial propositions [4]. Colonial historiographies and policies and their critique provided the core agenda of anti-imperialists and nationalists. Developing further on this premise, it has been proposed that nationalism as a renaissance sentiment arose through English education and western ideals and led to the eventual indictment of the colonisers [11]. Demystifying imperialist dominations colonial constructions such as the ‘white man’s burden’, nationalism as an ideational entity was based on the unified notion of nativity and sense of territorial and cultural allegiance. In the Indian context such understandings were promoted by Naoroji, Ranade, Joshi, Gokhale, Iyer and Dutt through the locus classicus of the Indian National Congress as a political entity. Revolutionary cultural nationalists such as Tilak, Pal and Lajpat Rai further affirmed the contention that Indian nationalism was linked to Macaulay’s early nineteenth century fetish for impregnating the colony with western, scientific and rational education. In that sense Indian nationalism is perceived by imperial historians as renaissance gift of western enlightenment to the colonies, albeit containing factions of patrons and clients. The other characteristics of nationalism in the Indian context were an anti-establishment stance (as demonstrated through Gandhian Satyagraha), use of religious, cultural and historical iconographies taking sometimes the forms of ‘invented traditions’ (Tilak and Gandhi); inverting the logic of colonialism by indigenising development and notions of modernisation in the post-colonial era (Nehruvian paradigm of development that aligned to Rostow and Mahalanobis that economic growth would lead to social development); and harbouring on the Indic spiritual franchise (Tagore, Vivekananda and the Vedantic missions).

The idea of nationalism is intertwined with the conception of modernity and colonial modernity in particular. Analyses of modernity in the Indian context have presented modernity as an enlightened trajectory of social transformation, an overweening project laboring against creative difference, an authoritative apparatus ever engendering critical alterity and a historical process productive both of exotic exceptions and historical sameness [10]. Colonialism and modernity are comprehended as dominant European projects of power/knowledge. There is the politics of exclusion/inclusion with the impulse of the modern nation and the colonial state towards excluding subaltern subjects and colonised people and the simultaneous drive of including them at the margins of the authoritative grid of civilisation. The
notion of nationalism is entwined with the colonial interplay of power and difference, of convergent divergences, of the fabrication of the colonised as a primitive outsider who had to be forged as the improved insider within the space of the empire and the time of the nation, and the colonial quest of building a residual civil society in the colony.

Other domains of contemporary global discourses on nationalism include aspects of ethnic nationalism challenging the poly ethnic constitution of the liberal democratic idea of the nation state. Utilising the situative-primordial approach to ethnicity (combination of tribalistic and constructivist approach to ethnicity – the tribalistic or primordial approach looks at the existence of ethnicity as a category apriori and the constructivist approach proposes a situative dependency of ethnicity), the idea of ethno-nationalism which is based on an organic and ethnic ideal of the nation has been proposed [38]. This variety of nationalism does not fall back on the state as the integrating factor – rather the state is the consequence of a proceeding process of ethnic and parallel cultural homogenisation of a people as a community. There is also a parallel process of construction and instrumentalisation of ethnic groups that takes place in state formation.

Intertwining of religion with ideational entities of nationalism and nation-state has resulted in the emergence of certain chain of arguments by scholars in the indigenous context, some of which have been highlighted here. In the indigenous context, anti-colonial nationalism has forwarded aspects of democratic pluralism, secularism and reformist egalitarianism [31]. Further the nationalist discourse commencing from the early responses of Indians into European entry into India was dominated by political and cultural consideration rather than solely economic ones. The early generations of Indian elite who came into contact with the colonial power readily acquired the alphabet of western thought that led to a social layering that was mediated through political norms of civil society set by elites (which established its distance from the majority of the people by means of a high literary culture. The discourse on nationalism in India was thus founded on the vision of representative figures thrown up by syncretically minded elite. Gandhi, faced with the two entirely separate worlds of high and low culture, forged a new configuration of nationalism based on a composite culture. Hence in the Indian context, nationalism assumed the following key formations: Gandhian (based on an anti-colonial consciousness), Nehruvian (based on rationalistic ideals of secularism), ethnic (based on communal identifications and belongingness) and radical (based on anti-imperialist sentiments and dealing with questions of poverty and social justice).

The symbiosis between national and communal identities in the nineteenth century resulted partly from the consciousness of belonging to a ‘nation’ on the one hand and to reformed Hindu and Muslim communities on the other. Awareness of being Indian was attended by a new appreciation of what it meant to be Hindu or Muslim, an appreciation that would eventually fuel anti-podal constructions of ‘the nation’ by the intellectuals of the two communities. The tendency to view nationalism, not as an alternative principle of social cohesion but as one that co-existed with and depended upon traditional social cohesive units like the religious communities like religious communities can be ascribed to the fact that colonialism probably fuelled the
traditional social units as opposed to its modernisation venture. The inability to view communal consciousness and nationalism as binary categories had also to do with the pre-modern nature of Indian social formation, since ‘traditional’ philosophies are typical accompaniments of premodern social structures [3].

The genesis of Indian nationalism has been traced to various periods in history. Some claim that there was an existing national unity in pre-colonial times created by the fourth century Hindu Gupta dynasty; nationalist historians trace it to the 1857 revolt which they depict as the national war of independence; and, some trace its genesis to the Orientalists’ attempts to educate the British. The strands of nationalist discourse have also been taken to be religious in their imagery and focus – Gandhian version of the same being an important one in question. Gandhian nationalism was interwoven with religiosity – rejecting the hegemonising discourses of colonialism necessarily entailing the rejection of secularism with its claims to universality. In this context, scholar Nikhil Aziz Hemmady argues that while secularism began by justifying pluralism and the legitimacy of dissent, it ended up disallowing both in the name of its own universalism. However western universalism has always been a discourse of the particular since it has excluded non-secular categories on the grounds of their primitiveness, inferiority or unscientific nature. In rejecting the western modernist project, Gandhi also had to reject western universalism and hence secularism. Gandhi’s attempts to elevate non-violence and class harmony to political virtues (drawing from religion) put an end to agrarian discontent and conceived of a politics wherein peasants are distanced from the nation-state and at the political margins. Further in the Indian context, nationalism has assumed a majoritarian Hindu face (invocation of the community ideology taking the shape of secular nationalism), while the Muslim has been looked at as a ‘communal aberration created by imperialism to fracture the secular national identity’ [3]. Hence inspite of its endorsement of secularism, Indian nationalism was grounded in an appeal to Hindu communal sentiments in their formative phase as well as through the Gandhian worldview. Muslim national thought was grounded in both political and religious ideals. Nationalism matured more quickly among the Hindus partly because their intellectuals did not have to belabor their claims to nationhood or territoriality since the views of Hindus as a nation formed an integral tenet of Orientalism. While both versions of religious nationalisms began by identifying with the colonial state, the Hindu was able to break out of its comprador mode following Gandhi’s ethical, political and epistemological deconstruction of not only colonial rule, but also western frameworks of knowledge.

Further the emergence of Indian nationalism is seen as a political articulation of the anti-colonial consciousness further complicated by the intertwining of culture discourses [28]. The religious politics of both pre-and post independence periods have construed notions of cultural nationalisms. The role of culture in the formation of national consciousness in colonial countries falls under two main paradigms: leaders of anti-colonial movements who recognized the possibility of resistance within the domain of culture were progenitors of one of them. Culture, in their perspective, was an area that colonialism was keen to conquer either through appropriation or hegemonisation. Resistance and regeneration were responses to this colonial
enterprise. Jose Rizal in the Phillipines and Amilcar Cabral in Guinea Bissau who invoked culture as a weapon in the anti-colonial struggle, assigned a prime place to it in the formation of national consciousness. The second paradigm has been discussed by Partha Chatterjee wherein culture has been divided into two domains – material and spiritual. The failure of colonialism to colonise the inner space has been because nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain [28].

The nationalist cultural strategy was based on a dual struggle, simultaneously against the colonial and the traditional; cultural nationalism signifying a resistance against the colonial culture and struggle against the indigenous. Hence cultural nationalism is posited vis-a-vis anti-colonial nationalism (which focused primarily on political mobilisation and did not devote adequate attention to the issues raised by the Renaissance) which marginalised the cultural question. Communalism is said to thrive in this cultural vacuum, by interpreting and appropriating culture in an entirely ahistorical fashion and making it the sole basis of nationalism.

Religious nationalism has been looked at as separatist nationalism and in the Indian context it is not a product entirely of India’s colonial past and that religious identities are not ‘primordial attachments’ inculcated by tradition, but product of changing identities spread by institutionalised devotionalism and shaped over time by pilgrimage, migration and media [36]. Van der Veer (1996) has developed this analysis of religious nationalism based on his fieldwork in Ayodhya. His research focused on social organization, religious orientation and ritual performances of the two most prominent groups of specialists in Ayodhya – the Ramanandi monks and Brahman priests. The events post 1984 and the subsequent mosque demolition and events thereafter, have precipitated his analysis of religious nationalism. The importance of pilgrimage, migration and media in shaping religious nationalism is explained thus: Ayodhya is a site for pilgrimage and the campaign related to it consists of religious processions. Movement and the definition of space and territory are central elements of religious nationalism. The relationship between nationalism and transnational migration is also relevant here since in the campaign for ‘rebuilding’ the temple of Ayodhya, the involvement of Hindus who lived outside India was crucial. Instead of encouraging a sense of world citizenship, the transnational experience has re-inforced nationalist and religious identities. How Hindu and Muslim identities are transformed in the colonial and postcolonial periods is the discursive field within which the arguments are placed. Religious nationalism then becomes distinct concept vis-a-vis western nationalisms based on discourses of modernity. The crux of religious nationalism is that it combines the antihistorical features of religious discourse with an empiricist search for facts influenced by orientalism. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, religious nationalism has built on forms of religious identity and modes of religious communication that are themselves in flux. What Van der Veer (1996) points out is that there is a reformist religion of the bourgeoisie and the religion of the ‘other half’ and a connection between them which is linked with antagonisms and a ‘laicization of organisation and leadership’. Further the sacredness of the languages of the scriptures, in the context of religious nationalism, attributed to national languages – a form of ‘laicization of
sacred communication’ [36].

Discussing Hindu nationalism as a specific form of religious nationalism, Christopher Jaffrelot proposes that it emerged as an ideological reaction to European domination marking a transition from reform to revivalism. Initially based on the ideas of Roy and Sen, this thought trend was further capitalised by Dayanand Saraswati whose revivalism trend inaugurated a specific combination of stigmatisation and emulation of the threatening ‘other’. Latter developments included the Hindu Sabhas and the Hindu Sangathan movements and the Maharashtrian crucible of Hindu nationalism spearheaded by Savarkar [23].

For the subaltern groups, nationalism turned out to be an anti-democratic discourse, a means of neutralising them by defusing their class demands and absorbing them into dominant class parties. The counter arguments to nationalism have been discussed in the following manner: Drawing from the arguments of Benedict Anderson it has been discussed that nations were not determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language or race, but rather ‘imagined communities’ that came into existence through institutional forms [2, 6]. However an aberration from the Andersonian thought is that nations in Asia and Africa have been posited not on an identity but on a difference with the ‘modular’ forms of national society propagated by the west. Secondly, as a colonial import, nationalism was not only a form of the modern state with egalitarian intentions, but rather an agency that retained the premise of inequality through the power of the ‘rule of colonial difference’ – preserving the alien-ness of the ruling group. Thirdly, anti-colonial nationalists in India, dividing their culture into material and spiritual domains, normalised the aspirations of the various marginal groups that typified the spiritual sphere [6]. The discussion is on how anti-colonial nationalists in India produced their own domain of sovereignty within the colonial society well before commencing their battle with the imperial power. These nationalists divided their culture into material and spiritual domains and staked an early claim to the spiritual sphere represented by religion, caste, women, the family and peasants. The middle class elites first imagined the nation into being this spiritual dimension and then readied it for political contest, all the while ‘normalising’ the aspirations of the various marginal groups that typify the spiritual sphere [6].

Fourthly, nationalism has been viewed as a project of mediation through three themes: appropriation of the popular (through which the popular enters the hegemonic national discourse as a gendered category), classicization of tradition (predominantly Hindu with Islam being an alternative vein and this classicization being a prior requirement of sanitised popular traditions) and the hegemonic domain of nationalism itself (wherein the legal-institutional forms of political authority that nationalists subscribed to were entirely in conformity with the modern disciplinary forms of power) [6].

**In Summary**

This paper has dealt with two ideational pursuits that are considered to be the vanguards of social change episteme and praxis – social reform and nationalism. The
Gandhian discourse at the cross junctures of the two, posits related ideological stances. Social reform, primarily understood as a nineteenth century phenomena in the Indian context, has two broad formations: transitional and acculturative. With reform agendas as visualising change universally, the geographical manifestations have unearthed differentials. The stances have been pro-establishment and colonial towards developing an anti-colonial consciousness by celebrating indigenous sentimentalities. The discussion has examined reform endeavours in Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab and the South with variations therein. The problematics associated with social reform in terms of its elite bias, acute emphasis on religion, androcentric bias (dealing with the women’s questions primarily from a patriarchal lens) and ambiguity in terms of the role of missionaries and personal-public polarities have also been highlighted. In terms of Gandhi, the main philosophical tenets of truth and non-violence have been placed in a discursive plane and deliberated. The transcultural and transnational implications of the non-violence relationality along with critique arising from the subaltern groups have been presented. Nationalism as an overarching temporality (as an outcome of modernity and hence parallel to the legacies of reform and Gandhi) has been discussed in terms of its forms and norms in the global scenario, its alignments with modernity and intertwining with domains of power and culture. In the indigenous context, the anti-colonial consciousness precipitated through nationalism and versions of ethnic and religious nationalisms deem deliberation.

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