

Literary Nationalism and Cultural Recognition in Three Nation States: America, India and Japan

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Abstract

With the rise of nation states in the last two hundred years there has been an increase in the use of literary and nonliterary texts to imagine the nation as fatherland or motherland, find a unique identity, give its people a singular character and create notions of patriotism and sacrifice. Often European imperialism created colonial dominance and forced subjugated peoples to mount a resistance to become free. Both American and Indian literary nationalisms were created against British colonial dominance while Japanese imported selective aspects of European modernity. Since the nation is an imagined space, and literary renderings of the nation is also imagined, the intelligentsia gives national significance to selected literary texts. However, literary imaginings of a nation forcefully levels ethnic, religious and caste differences to quickly create a unified identity of a nation through texts which legitimize social and political representation of dominant groups. Therefore, the first constructions of literary nationalism gives way to a second kind of literary nationalism which is indigenous and

marginalized in nature such as Native Indian, African, Dalit or Tribal literary nationalisms. Indigenous literary nationalism aims at wresting a space for itself within the dominant imaginings of the nation and claims economic and political advantage. So even within the claims of a dominant literary nationalism there are other competing claims from marginalized and downtrodden groups for representation. The conceptions and reworking of literary nationalism within competing claims of representativeness get changed from time to time, just as the idea of the nation gets reimagined.

Literary nationalism found in literary and nonliterary texts often evolves around nationalist ideas, dominant ideologies and resistance movements connected to nation building and contentious claims from the margins. It binds chaos and restores order in human experience through cultural and religious values. It gives significance to collective and individual stories and creates the myth of a nation by imagining it as a fatherland or a motherland. Songs, symbols, icons and images mythologize a glorious past and create an imagined reality bringing together diverse peoples under a common identity. The point of view, narrative voice and structure add suspense, immediacy and lyricism to the act of nation building. The sublimity, strangeness, originality and representativeness of literary texts, as Harold Bloom would like us to believe, add beauty to the appeal of nation building (Bloom, 1994 2-3). Though the literary critic, scholar or savant validates the imagination of the literary text to create a nation, he is just a “eunuch’s shadow;” the real work is created from “*le dur désir de durer*” or the “harsh contrivance of the spirit against death, the hope to overreach time by force of creation” (Steiner, 1967 21). Literary nationalism is often an elitist enterprise where literary texts are used as building blocks to imagine the identity of a nation and locate it within an imagined history.

Since nation building is both a political and emotional process, social participation and emotional involvement are necessary to endorse the literary representation of texts. Literary nationalism through the newspaper and the short story provides sequential and thematic unity to the literary imagination. Often oral languages acquire written form and are then used to create nationalist literature. When an oral tradition is concretized in written form some of the techniques of orality such as repetition of images, linear progression, mythologizing the land, metaphorical progression, reader-listener involvement, polyvocality, tragic isolation and communal victory are set in motion.

Over the centuries literary and written texts have acquired the legitimacy of being the central consciousness of humanity and therefore an ideal tool to imagine the consciousness of a nation. In an essay on “Ulysses”, Ezra Pound lamented the fact that ordinary people always remained under a “literary edict” and are forced to find direction in their lives through such texts. The stories of the lower classes are only worth the greatness that elites give to them. He ironically queries—are their “misfortunes too low, dramas too ill set, catastrophes, horrors too devoid of nobility” (Pound, 1968 408)? The novel has acquired a “great literary form” and has therefore become a fit subject for “research,” and “analysis”. The novelist now possesses the authority to write with “accuracy” and “freedom” of the “savant,” the “historian” and the “physician” (Pound, 1968 408). Undoubtedly, literary criticism has usurped the centrality of literature to shape human consciousness. Generations of literary scholars from Sainte-Beuve and Belinsky to F. R. Leavis and I. A. Richards have sponged on the “authority of private experience” gained through literary texts to create “an eternity of second-hand” literary criticism that would become a “live, humane social order” to be easily exploited in the service of nation building (Steiner, 1967 249-51). With the imaginings of modern nation states through

literary texts by the intelligentsia, literary scholars have gained more authority as interpreters of national consciousness.

Nationalism creates a geographical home, a glorious past, accessible customs, unifying language and a hostile environment of war or exploitation. It invents a reality and then believes in it. Ernest Gellner explains that nationalism “is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner, 1965: 168). Nationalism need not exist against colonizing nations but also within sovereign states like Hindu nationalism, Black nationalism, or Indigenous nationalism. Therefore, nationalism also touches race, ideology, languages and immigration. Nationalism touches issues connected to patriotism such as the French coming under the anthem *Marseillaise* and ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. Literary nationalism also partakes of these issues and their spinoffs. The American literary nationalism of the nineteenth century, the Indian Gandhian nationalism of the early twentieth century and the post-war Japanese patriotic nationalism of the late twentieth century were created around the demands of a new nation. As these demands were met and a forced leveling of differences created, the identity of a nation, a new literary nationalism of the underprivileged, downtrodden and economically disadvantaged emerged, claiming recognition through their politics and literary texts, often termed as minority literary nationalism or indigenous literary nationalism.

American Literary Nationalism

The early ideas of American literary nationalism were created by nineteenth century American poets and novelists who wrote American epics for the common man giving him a sense of pride and connectedness with the geography, history and customs of the new land. Nineteenth century American writers like

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), Herman Melville (1819-1891) and Walt Whitman (1819-1892) used the ideology of European Romanticism, especially ideas connected to feeling, individualism, commerce, and modernity to shape their own ideas of literature. Their overtly anti-European model turned into a self-seeking independence of being pioneers and elicited transcendental love of nature. Scholars like F.O. Matthiessen and Richard Chase chose elitist ideas of majority groups and European exclusion to create American literary nationalism. Their elitist view of American literary nationalism has been challenged today by minority writers from Afro-American, Native American and female backgrounds. In *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges* Kevin Hutchings and Julia Wright argue that Thoreau created “American national literature” by excluding Britain. They write,

Like earlier calls for American literary independence from Britain, Thoreau’s model of transatlantic literary and cultural history helped encourage the subsequent construction of a distinctively American national literature and literary criticism (Hutchings and Wright, 1988 6).

American literary nationalism moved in stages to claim an alien land wrested from Indian nations as its own. Literary texts imagined and wrote their own histories converting alien topographies into familiar land. A new nation wanted to mythologize its recognizable past, tell its story, unite its people and assert its identity.

Thoreau saw Europe as “a space of potential discontinuity and rupture” and an “opportunity” for the New World to forget “the Old World and its institutions” (Hutchings and Wright, 1988 6). F.O. Matthiessen used *American Renaissance*

(1941) to establish the reputation of Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman and Melville as producers of “literature for our democracy” These writers gave “fulfillment to the potentialities freed by the Revolution, to provide a culture commensurate with America’s political opportunity” (Matthiessen, 1941 613-18).

The contested nature of literary nationalism reflects the contestation in other walks of life from economy and politics to schools and civic life. Emerson worked assiduously in his essays such as “Nature” (1836) to create a national literature and a national identity distinct from Europe. In the “American Scholar” (1837) he calls writers to unite and bring in themes of the “common,” “familiar” and “low” (Emerson 1898, 110). “The literature of the poor,” he writes, “the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time” (Emerson, 1898 110). He believes that literature should be able to represent and reveal themes of American life such as democracy, individualism and equality. Emerson rose above tradition to create a new nation eschewing the past and embracing the new in geography, ideas, laws and religion. He endorses an expansionist view of national identity which exhorts the American self to expand itself and engulf the world as part of the American westward Expansionism. This view is based on the concept of manifest destiny of America to lead the world through physical, spiritual and literary conquest into a new enlightened world based on ideas and not European tribalism. Emerson’s literary nationalism echoed American political nationalism undermining the claims of Blacks, Native Indians and women.

Thoreau expanded Emerson’s idea of literary nationalism by incorporating national selfhood influenced by economy and individuality. In “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849) he opposed the poll tax and the institution of slavery. He felt that America’s suffering came from relinquishing the Bible and the

Constitution which are pure sources of verity, Emerson goes on to state,

We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavens and the earthly world. The secret of genius is to suffer no fiction to exist for us...
(Emerson, 2009 397).

Hawthorne is more closely connected with literary nationalism than Emerson as he exhorts his countrymen to understand their history and their relationship to a significant past. The realist novel of Balzac or Dickens was no longer suitable for representing ideas of a new nation. The idea of American self-reliance was understood through symbols and allegory. Richard Chase saw the character of Ishmael as symbolic of freedom against the totalitarianism of Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* (1851). However, Melville was also concerned about national crisis caused by corrupt and proto-imperialist politicians from the North interested in self-gain espousing ideas of slavery even when opposed to it. Melville was quite critical of Bartleby and Pierre who undermined the principles of the founding fathers and did not strive to realize their ideals.

Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle and Sleepy Hollow* (1819) generated pride in the rich pastoral heritage of America. Married to a cantankerous wife, Rip, an "obedient henpecked husband" sleeps through the revolutionary war and wakes up after two decades to find a changed world (Irving, 2013 34). The *Legend* creates a "castle of indolence," a lazy paradise where unknown things happen. It adds a pastoral mystery to an idyllic world and a spooky village by night.

A pleasant land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky (Irving, 2013 1).

The story is interwoven with themes of wealth, greed, love and a terrible history of the past filled with ghosts and goblins.

Whitman embraced both the good and the bad. He carried the ideology of Emerson forward by endorsing man's relationship to nature and nation and to bring the country together which was torn apart by the Civil War. His idea of an ever-expanding individual containing the "multitudes" encouraged people to embrace the idea of a multitudinous nation which welcomed everyone (Whitman, 2009 63). He created a new identity of a nation in his collection of poems *Leaves of Grass* (1855) and celebrated national identity through the poetic form and a confident voice.

Whitman found continuity in tradition—

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days (Whitman, 2009 ix).

Whitman imagined an America which accepted its past, learnt from its mistakes, welcomed change and carried its experience to shape a new nation. It is possible to see a conglomerate "narrative identity" as Paul Ricoeur calls it that imagined and embraced the idea a new nation.

Cette énumération pose la question de l'identité du sujet, mais en un tout autre sens que l'identité narrative d'une personne concrète. Il ne peut s'agir que de l'identité en quelque sorte ponctuelle, anhistorique, du « je » dans la diversité de ses opérations ; cette identité est celle d'un même qui échappe à l'alternative de la permanence et du changement dans le temps, puisque le Cogilo est instantané (Ricouer, 1990 18).

The narrative identity of a person is concrete and ahistorical. It neither accepts permanence nor change, and it is apprehended instantaneously. Whitman's literary identity was perhaps the best example of a national identity finding a voice in literature. Whitman celebrated the "eternal equilibrium of things" and the "eternal overthrow of things" in the "greatest nation" and in the "cluster of equal nations" through a voice that encompassed not only nations but the entire earth itself (Whitman, 2009 126-27).

Over the centuries as America moved from the early stages of nation formation to a more expansive Whitmanesque vision of itself, writers and critics began to conceptualize America as a global nation. Literary critic Randolph S. Bourne in an essay "Trans-National America" written in *The Atlantic* (1916) called America the "first international nation" or a "world-federation in miniature" that can provide a "new vision" to the world. He wrote,

The failure of the melting-pot, far from closing the great American democratic experiment, means that it has only just begun. Whatever American nationalism turns out to be, we see already that it will have a color richer and more exciting than our ideal has hitherto encompassed. In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all

unawares been building up the first international nation. The voices which have cried for a tight and jealous nationalism of the European pattern are failing. From that ideal, however valiantly and disinterestedly it has been set for us, time and tendency have moved us further and further away. What we have achieved has been rather a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun. Nowhere else has such contiguity been anything but the breeder of misery. Here, notwithstanding our tragic failures of adjustment, the outlines are already too clear not to give us a new vision and a new orientation of the American mind in the world (Bourne, 1916 1739).

This expansionist vision of America as a super nation was a new stage that liberal intellectuals and elites wanted to endorse. Works of writers like Melville, Henry James, Langston Hughes, Faulkner, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Junot Diaz moved transnationally and affected American and non-American literary cultures significantly. However, many disagreed. Recently Christopher Nicholas argued that Bourne's transatlantic America was a "visionary new form of pluralism" and "isolationist antiwar idealism" that helped him to "bridge his writings on domestic reform and foreign policy (Nicholas, 2009 217). Literary nationalism in later stages attempted to streamline the contradictions between its domestic reforms and foreign policy to give a sense of progressive enlightenment.

The claims of literary representation and cultural recognition from the Afro-

Americans, Native Indians and twentieth century immigrants began to gather momentum in the 1980s and 1990s claiming a place in the imagining of the American nation. University professors and scholars began to recognize their claim and came up with The Heath Anthology of American Literature in two volumes which represented their imagining of the American nation ranging from 'Native American Oral Literatures' and 'Voices from the Imperial Frontier' to 'Cultures in Contact and Tales of Incorporation,' Resistance, and Reconquest in New Spain.' The Heath Anthology displaced the indubitable monopoly of The Norton Anthology of Literature and brought the literatures of Native, Indians, Africans and other minorities to the forefront (Lauter, 1994 ii-ix).

Indian Literary Nationalism

Indian literary nationalism grew with the revolutionary fervor of freedom from British rule and founding of a new nation. It tried to synthesize a polyglot nation, create a written language, and privilege Hindi as the mother tongue or *matryabhasha*. It created the idea of Mother India or *matryabhumi* creating the idea of love and sacrifice for the land and renunciation of the caste system. It also had to reckon with finding uniqueness of a literary tradition through representative texts that promoted the nationalist ideology of a secular nation. Literary nationalists were keen to generate pride in the uniqueness of a typically Indian literary tradition separate from other traditions.

Many poets and novelists created the idea of literary nationalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, but it was Henry Louis Derozio (1809-1837) who invented the concept of the mother land or *matryabhumi* through his poem "The Harp of India" (1828). *Anandamath* (1882) by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's (1838-1894) came half a century later. Derozio was an Indian poet and assistant headmaster of Hindu College Calcutta, a radical thinker and

one of the first Indian educators to disseminate Western learning and science among the young men of Bengal. In a poem, “The Harp of India,” Derozio talks about the rich literary tradition of India withering on a “bough.” The poet yearns to create some divine music by playing on the harp so that he could free the soul of India. We must remember that in 1827 there was no sign of freedom struggle, no nationalist fervor that he could have tapped. His was an original voice of revolt to free the nation of its shackles even before it could grip the soul of the nation.

Derozio was fully conscious of the fact that for Indian writing to achieve recognition and become profound, Indian writers should become aware of the rich heritage and literary resources hidden in the past. He also realized that the new aesthetics should be a healthy combination of the good elements in both the Indian and European civilizations and must, in the ultimate analysis, provide “harmony” and “sweetness.” Both these qualities would then create a “divine music” that could unite the diverse religions and races of India. On “Education in India published in the *India Gazette* of August 3, 1826 Derozio wrote,

I was born in India and have been bred here, I am proud to acknowledge my country, and to do my best in her service. But even love of country shall not hinder me from expressing what I believe to be right (Derozio, 2001 306).

Though of mixed Portuguese descent he was proud of India and wanted to do his “best in her service”. In “The Harp of India” he writes,

Why hang’st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung forever, must thou there remain;

Thy music once was sweet — who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
Like ruined monument on desert plain:
O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
Those hands are cold — but if thy notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain (Derozio, 2001 11) !

Undoubtedly Derozio had a social purpose in mind when he wrote “The Harp of India” poem in 1828 and endorsed the moral aesthetics he would enunciate two years later in an essay in *India Gazette* on January 22, 1830 called “On the Influence of Poetry.” Derozio strongly felt that poetry was always meant to refine and purify “the springs of life,” and to elevate and improve “man’s moral and intellectual nature” (Derozio 2001 320).

Those who wrote in English such as Din Mohammad (1759-1851), Cavelli Venkata Boriah (1776-1803) and Derozio were difficult to integrate in the corpus of vernacular literary nationalism. By the 1960s the language riots created a deeper schism between Indian writing in English and vernacular literatures. Williams and Wanchoo in *Representing India* claim that,

By the 1960s, as language riots in India spread, the ideology of Indianizing English through the fictional mode became more beleaguered

Hindi chauvinists, regional writers, and postcolonial critics of English could not accept the notion that Indian writers in English could adequately represent the subtle and complex reality of the regional world (Williams & Wanchoo, 2008 104).

Though Derozio had a strong impact on Bengali youth through his life style and writings, and created the Bengal Renaissance of the nineteenth century, he was marginalized in constructing literary nationalism. He developed a unique aesthetics on Indian literature which campaigned for bringing sweetness and light rather than dismay and anguish in life. Today he does not figure in anthologies of Indian writing in English though other lesser known writers do.

The mantle of constructing literary nationalism went to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) who in his novel *Anandamath* (1881) reimaged India as a mother goddess tyrannized by foreign invaders. He revealed a nationalist turn and the revolutionary fervor of young Indians waiting to free their country from British colonial rule. The story articulated the cultural and political aspects of a nation that the writer wanted to present. It originated in the Sannyasi rebellion of the late eighteenth century when the Hindu sanyasis and Muslim fakirs in Bengal revolted against the East India Company on the issue of collecting tax from the zamindars. Their struggle is now seen as the first struggle for independence from foreign invaders. The story began with the famine which had destroyed everything and forced Mahendra Singh to battle with hunger. His family kidnapped by robbers and saved by ascetics created a trust in the ascetic tradition of both the Hindus and the Muslims. (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 24-33). The story suddenly moved to a battle with the British and stealing rice from the British chief of Police (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 33). At this point the idea of the land as mother was introduced:

‘We recognize no other mother,’ Bhavan said with feeling. ‘The Motherland is our only mother. Our Motherland is higher than heaven. Mother India is our mother. We have no other mother. We have no father, no brother, no sister, no wife, no children, no home, no hearth—all we have is the Mother with sweet springs flowing fair fruits bestowing, cool with zephyrs blowing green with corn-crops growing—’ (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 38).

Bankim Chandra informed us that not only the land was a mother but “we are the Children of Mother India” (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 39). Fighting for Mother India, therefore, was dharma, “a path of duty” (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 49). Thus the “hermit nationalists” imagined a freedom struggle for Mother India that was bound in chains reminiscent of Derozio’s *The Harp of India*. (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 51). The valiant fight of the Indian nationalists for “freedom” made them “invincible” before the “soldiers of Captain Thomas” who were “deafened by “shouts of Bande Mataram” (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 102 and 88). After driving the British out of the country they discussed the “problem of identity” which emerged on the battlefield (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 123). Here in death there was unity, in the “ghastliness of the scene” (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 132). He writes,

Men lay with broken arms, broken legs, broken ribs, and broken heads. Some cried for their mothers, and others for their fathers. Some begged for water, but most of them for death. Hindus and Mohammedans, Buddhists and Sikhs were all huddled together, weltering in blood” (B. C. Chatterjee, 2002 132).

This was Bankim Chandra’s message for the future; India must create a secular nation. In the wake of Derozio and Bankim Chandra, the literary nationalism of

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) used a variety of literary and rhetorical styles to create an essentialist and distinctively universal appeal. With the publication of a collection of poems *Geetanjali* (1912), Tagore won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. Soon he turned into a world phenomenon and Indian nationalism acquired a global appeal. His short stories covered many themes connected to individual, family life, national conflict and unity. He was critical of the power nations exerted on humanity. In his essay “Nationalism” (1917) he writes,

And the idea of the Nation is one of the most powerful anesthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic programme of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion, — in fact feeling dangerously resentful if it is pointed out.

This European war of Nations is the war of retribution. Man, the person, must protest for his very life against the heaping up of things where there should be the heart, and systems and policies where there should flow living human relationship. The time has come when, for the sake of the whole outraged world, Europe should fully know in her own person the terrible absurdity of the thing called the Nation. (Tagore, 2007 463).

Tagore saw the “moral perversion” and “virulent self-seeking” goals of the entity called the nation. He was against ideas of capitalist and imperialist nationalism but endorsed the concept of a unified national identity. In his essay “Bengal’s Great Inheritance” (1940) he felt that the culture of Bengal which was a “great inheritance” for India can “only be threatened by our own weakness” and not by any “external power” (Tagore, 2007 1156). In “The Way to Unity” (1923) he explained that religion based on “a fixed code custom” has been the main cause of separating “our races” and creating a degenerate society (Tagore, 2007 619). In

a letter to Gandhi in 1918 Tagore stated that Hindi should be an optional not a mandatory language — “So Hindi will have to remain optional in our national proceedings until a new generation of politicians, fully alive to its importance, pave the way towards its general use by constant practice as a voluntary acceptance of a national obligation” (Tagore, 2007 999). Tagore felt that more discussion was needed to find a lingua franca for India that would be free from “any communal bias” (Tagore 2007 999). Tagore was against the muscular politics and commerce which European nationalism endorsed. For him nationalism was “organized selfishness” of the West that was evident in the conflict of World War I. In a letter to A.M. Bose in 1908 Tagore wrote,

Patriotism can't be our final spiritual shelter. I will not buy glass for the price of diamonds and I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity as long as I live (Ghosal, 2016 1).

He was suspicious of nationalist aspirations and the sacrifice it entailed. Obviously, he did not see patriotism as a “final spiritual shelter.” He was against the dehumanizing tendencies and arrogance of the West. He was against organized power without restraint:

Whenever power removes all checks from its power to make its career easy, it triumphantly rides into ultimate crash to death. Its moral brake becomes slacker every day without its knowing it, and its slippery path of care becomes its path of doom (Tagore, 2007 451-52).

Perhaps he was anticipating the anarchy unleashed by the Russian Revolution (1917) or the tragedies of the First World War (1914-18). However, in his lectures Tagore did not talk much about anti-imperialist resistance. Perhaps he was controlling those who endorsed aggressive nationalism.

He felt that the British were equally involved in giving us “law and order” as they brought progress and national unity but at a price (Tagore, 2007 452). In “Nationalism in the West” he wrote about the conflict between political and cultural West. He wrote,

In India we are suffering from this conflict between the spirit of the West and the Nation of the West. The benefit of the Western civilization is doled out to us in a miserly measure by the Nation trying to regulate the degree of nutrition as near the zero point of vitality as possible. The portion of education allotted to us is so raggedly insufficient that it ought to outrage the sense of decency of a Western humanity. We have seen in these countries how the people are encouraged and trained and given every facility to fit themselves for the great movements of commerce and industry spreading over the world, while in India the only assistance we get is merely to be jeered at by the Nation for lagging behind. While depriving us of our opportunities and reducing our education to a minimum required for conducting a foreign government, this Nation pacifies its conscience by calling us names, by sedulously giving currency to the arrogant cynicism that the East is east and the West is west and never the twain shall meet. If we must believe our schoolmaster in his taunt that after nearly two centuries of his tutelage, India not only remains unfit for self-government but unable to display originality in her intellectual attainments, must we ascribe it to something in the nature of Western culture and our inherent incapacity to receive it or to the judicious niggardliness of the Nation that has taken upon itself the white man's burden of civilizing the East? That Japanese people have some qualities which we lack we may admit, but that our intellect is naturally unproductive compared to theirs we cannot accept even from them whom

it is dangerous for us to contradict (Tagore, 2007 450-51).

Tagore felt that the West gave us “law and order” for which we should be grateful. As a liberal he was against commercialism and wrote against private property but could not see a society without private property. So he was not outright against capitalism. In the play *Rakta Karabi* (Red Oleanders, 1922) he talks about the ravages of capitalism but calls it a fight between agricultural and industrial societies. He creates an imaginary land called Yakshapuri where materialism has enslaved men and reduced them to machines. The revolutionary Nandini in the story brings about a change in the status quo through love and the King opens the doors for her.

I love, I love. 'Tis the cry that breaks out

From the bosom of earth and water (Tagore, 2007 237).

The blood-red crushed oleander represents the enslavement of Nandini and India through greed and power. Tagore saw the “vision” of the story in the “darkest hour of dismay” (Tagore, 1961 241). However, he also saw history as an eternal continuum,

The King says there is no age of history which may be called old. It is always an eternal extension of the present (Tagore, 2007 244).

Tagore saw history as an extension of the present, everything was always present. Whitman conceptualized the essential nature of American history as a continuum in an earlier century. It is rather difficult for literary nationalism to imagine the identity of a nation without some abiding principles and essences.

Japanese Literary Nationalism

Early Japanese writers of the nineteenth century imagined a warrior nation guided by allegiance to the emperor, love for the country, ancestor worship, ethical and broken individuality. The national uniqueness of Japan was embodied in the works of Nitobe Inazo (1868-1933), Mori Ogai (1862-1922), Yukio Mishima (1925-1970), Junichiro Tanizaki (1886-1965), Osamu Dazai (1909-1948), Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), Hiroshi Yosano (1873-1935), Akiko Yosano (1878-1943) and Shusaku Endo (1923-96). Since the early 1890s attempts to define Japanese cultural and human uniqueness with phrases like ‘bushido code’ or ‘soul of Japan’ was quite popular but it was Nitobe who presented a unique poetic masculinity of Japan within a warrior culture in his book *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (1900). Nitobe’s erudite flawlessness in the English language made his conception of a national Japanese identity credible. The book brought the Japanese samurai code of honor to global recognition. However, his popularity was more abroad and less at home. It took more than one hundred and fifty years for Japan to recognize his importance; it was only in 1985 that his portrait was placed on the 5000 yen note. Nitobe equated bushido to a religion of “race emotions” which paid homage to the emperor and country. He wrote,

This religion—or, is it not more correct to say, the race emotions what the religion expressed? —thoroughly imbued Bushido with loyalty to the sovereign and love of country. These acted more as impulses than as doctrines (Nitobe, 2014 19).

Nitobe believed that certain specific emotions like “loyalty to the sovereign” and “love of country” were not just individual emotions applicable to other nationalities but specific to the Japanese race. These unique sentiments were voiced by Yukio Mishima a century and a half later in his novella *Patriotism*

(1961).

The creation of a specific type of individuality with a combination of strength, moral uprightness and courage were part of the bushido code that Nitobe claimed for the Japanese nation.

The wholesome, unsophisticated nature of our warrior ancestors derived ample food for their spirit from a sheaf of commonplace and fragmentary teachings, gleaned as it were on the highways and byways of ancient thought, and stimulated by the demands of the age, formed from these gleanings a new and unique type of manhood (Nitobe, 2014 22-23).

This “new and unique type of manhood” was different from the manhood encountered in other countries in Asia. For example, in India or China men might possess varying levels of “energy or intelligence” but in Japan it was also to do with “originality of character” (Nitobe, 2014 23). The belief in the “originality of character” was to do with the way each individual responded to the emperor, nation and ancestor; it was to do with the ideals of patriotism and self-sacrifice so succinctly expressed by Mishima in the novella by the same name.

In creating a literary Japanese nationalism, Nitobe not only highlighted the uniqueness of Japan’s warrior code but universalized it as a global ideal. His attempt to create a national code and then to universalize it was born out of his need to present an ethical framework of human behavior uniquely indigenous to the muscular spread of colonial imperialism from the West. Nitobe’s book gave a deep sense of pride to the Japanese in their own traditions especially in wake of Japanese victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5).

Ogai's novel *The Wild Geese* (1911) was deeply influenced by the romantic enlightenment from the West and created a story where passionate individualism triumphs over rational society of early Meiji period. During the Meiji Restoration the Japanese intellectuals were enamored by the new western literature and philosophy especially of Shakespeare, Goethe, Ibsen, Kant and Hegel. Japanese society was moving from tradition to modernity where the subordinate role of women began to be highlighted. In the novel Nitobe highlights female repression in a traditional society of the 1880s. The new society is teeming with different kinds of people—university students, geishas and policemen. Ogai himself narrates the story which centers upon a money lender Suezo, his wife, mistress and aging father, but the center of the story is Otama, the “thin, graceful beauty” (Ogai, 2009 43). Otama is willing to “sell herself to anyone” to support her father (Ogai, 2009 43). Though Suezo the usurer, is taken in by her modesty he tricks her into losing her virginity and forcing her to become his mistress. Ogai writes,

Suezo was bewitched by the modesty of the girl's manner and her maidenly way of speaking that he visited her almost every night. He had been capable of complete ruthlessness in this dealing and still was, but now he tried every trick of tenderness to gain Otama's affection. This, I believe, is what historians have often called the touch of weakness in a man of iron will (Ogai, 2009 48).

Her “modesty” and “maidenly way of speaking” is pitted against his trickery and “ruthlessness” which is a reminder of the way Meiji society was constructed. She supports her father and suffers the indignities of living in the household of Suezo. Soon Otama realizes that she will only remain a mistress as Suezo has a wife. She slowly resigns to her fate but also keeps her desire to move out of a “caged

bird” and “fragile flower” syndrome and become a free bird. She watches a student Okada and nearly fall in love with him. One day while sitting at the window she experiences an epiphany, a moment of realization,

But one day she was startled by an awareness of something sprouting in side her. The embryo within her imagination had been conceived under the threshold of consciousness and, suddenly taking definite shape, had sprung out (Ogai, 2009 100).

The image of “embryo” suggesting conception and childbirth reveal the new consciousness Otama is experiencing and implicitly the entire society is experiencing. She begins to fantasize that a hero will come to take her out from this loveless relationship and set her free. However, Ogai does not go so far as to help her realize her fantasy. It is left to Shiro Toyoda’s film *The Mistress* (1953) to take the story further and help Otama realize her dream. Toyoda’s literary adaptation or bungee-eiga of *The Wild Geese* nearly a century and a half later show the perineal attraction of the story.

Mishima lived and died by the samurai code and defined the way of the warrior even in failure. In his novel *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956) he suggests a romantic escape to the freedom of the sea but fails. In the neurotic personality of Mizoguchi, who sees his mother having sex with another man in front of his dying father, Mishima draws out an ostracized stutterer who could represent anyone. *Confessions of a Mask* (1949) enters a world of adolescent homosexuality but soon retreats into guilt and sentimentality which group values give rise to. The unnamed Japanese boy awakens to homosexual feelings and gets an “erection” seeing a muscular and hirsute boy Omi doing gymnastics; but soon retreats into a world of jealousy and guilt (Mishima, 1958 79).

Mishima's novella *Patriotism* (1961) brings out the concept of *shinigurai* or "being crazy to die" (Tsunetomo, 1983 171). Just like Lieutenant Shinji Takeyama and his beautiful wife Reiko, Mishima is so troubled by the Ni Ni Roku mutiny of the Imperial Army in 1936 that he leaves no choice for the young couple but to commit ritual suicide. In just three intense days from February 26th to 28th the violent and elegiac story is over. Shinji chooses loyalty to the Emperor and his comrades over a life of betrayal.

Mishima uses the *shinjumono* or love suicide play technique and creates heart breaking scenes (*shutanka*) to tell his story. The lyrical intensity of committing seppuku by both husband and wife, the methodical arranging of the room, sexual passion and writing final letters are all brilliantly conveyed by Mishima. Mishima writes, "The last moments of this heroic and dedicated couple were such as to make the gods themselves weep" (Mishima, 1966 4). It is not failure or success but the quiet determination without fear that makes the recently married couple "heroic" forcing the gods to 'weep.'

Mishima was troubled by the bewildering changes that were taking place in Japanese society. He was worried by the national despair immediately after Hirohito's Humanity Declaration of 1946 and the desire of the Americans to destroy Japanese *kokutai* or national identity. He was not convinced that any kind of counter-reformation or totalitarianism will succeed but he was not willing to give up his belief in the emperor system. The Ni Ni Roku incident made him despair and feel as if a great god has died. He wondered why the emperor had to step down from his divine status and become an ordinary human being In *Voices from a Heroic Spirit* or *eirei no koe* (1966) he writes,

Those who soared in the sky have broken wings

while termites mock
immortal glory.
In days like that,
why would His Majesty
become an ordinary man?

He founded a private militia called Tate no kai or the Shield Society in 1968 dedicated to the perpetuation of traditional Japanese values and the praise of the Emperor. During initiation ceremonies he forced some of the new recruits to cut their finger and drink the collected blood from a bowl.

The sentiment of love for the emperor was part of patriotism or love for the country. The shadow of the emperor on daily life reflects Mishima's understanding of Japanese society. He writes

All these things had a moral basis, and were in accordance with the Education Rescript's injunction that "husband and wife should be harmonious." Not once did Reiko contradict her husband, nor did the lieutenant ever find reason to scold his wife. On the god shelf below the stairway, alongside the tablet from the Great Ise Shrine, were set photographs of their Imperial Majesties, and regularly every morning, before leaving for duty, the lieutenant would stand with his wife at this hallowed place and together they would bow their heads low. The offering water was renewed each morning, and the sacred sprig of sasaki was always green and fresh. Their lives were lived beneath the solemn protection of the gods and were filled with an intense happiness which set every fiber in their bodies trembling (Mishima 1966, 9).

The twin concepts of patriotism and imperialism were deeply intertwined in the

writing of Mishima. For him imperialism was clearly reflected in daily life and in the divinity of the emperor.

Japanese writers tried to accept western individualism but often failed, creating what has often been termed as failed individualism, Japanese writers like Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), Hiroshi Yosano (1873-1935), Akiko Yosano (1878-1943), Yukio Mishima (1925-1970) and Shusaku Endo (1923-96) found it difficult to integrate western individualism with a “group-oriented mind set” based on “close-knit family networks” (Okada, 2003 2-5). Sumie Okada believes Japanese concept of debts of gratitude (on) where obligation and indebtedness (giri) play a significant role in society has not allowed Christianity to take deep roots in Japan. The anxiety of ‘reciprocation not enough’ is instilled in Japanese from childhood which prevents them later to express spontaneous feelings of love and gratitude. As such it is somewhat difficult for them to respond without fear or guilt to the idea of spontaneous God’s love and grace (Okada, 2003 4).

Though Tanizaki celebrated the modern individual and his erotic obsessions he still rejected the self-actualizing project of the west. Instead he retreated into the shadows of Japanese aesthetics governed by the mystery of shadows. In his essay *In Praise of Shadows* or *In’ei Raisen* (1933) he extols the virtues of Japanese architecture, rooms, jade, food, cosmetics, toilets, *mono no aware*, lacquer work, buildings, candle lights, lanterns and women skin, and then draws his conclusion in the final paragraph,

I am aware of and most grateful for the benefits of the age. No matter what complaints we may have, Japan has chosen to follow the West, and there is nothing for her to do but move bravely ahead and leave us old ones behind. But we must be resigned to the fact that as long as our skin is the color it

is the loss we have suffered cannot be remedied. I have written all this because I have thought that there might still be somewhere, possibly in literature or the arts, where something could be saved. I would call back at least for literature this world of shadows we are losing. In the mansion called literature I would have the eaves deep and the walls dark, I would push back into the shadows the things that come forward too clearly, I would strip away the useless decoration. I do not ask that this be done everywhere, but perhaps we may be allowed at least one mansion where we can turn off the electric lights and see what it is like without them (Tanizaki, 1977 42).

Soseki in his essay “My Individualism” praised the virtues of personal freedom in Britain based on obligation and duty; if “society” respects your individuality, you should respect the individuality of “others” (Soseki, 2004 45). But in his novel *Kokoro* he makes his central character Sensei end his life for the sake of group values and personal shame. His highly independent and individualistic life hides his real motives as he chooses the death of the Meiji Emperor to commit suicide. He confesses that he is “weak and infirm of purpose, and because the future held nothing for him” (Soseki, 2010 217). This is Sensei’s answer to the unexpected suicide of his friend K who had also loved the same woman he had. Soseki was deeply influenced by the Meiji cultural discourse which was suffused in contradiction. Many Japanese intellectuals promoted the power of civilization and enlightenment or *bunmeikaka* welcoming western modernity and scientific temper and simultaneously indulged in a kind of cryptic xenophobia. This ambivalence lay at the heart of most writers including Soseki.

Dazai’s *No Longer Human* (1948) brings out the “shame” of being human. The protagonist Oba Yozo leaves behind notebooks where he confesses that he does

not understand the people and the world around him. To make sense of his surroundings he resorts to frivolity and a façade; he states,

I can't even guess myself what it must be to live the life of a human being”
(Dazai, 1958 21).

Dazai presents an “inscrutable face of a man” who cannot make sense of the world he inhabits (Dazai, 1958 17).

Japanese literary nationalism imagined a proud nation emasculated by western modernist ideas of muscular individuality and romantic enlightenment. Most Japanese writers suffered from a misplaced sense of loyalty to the nation and emperor which was strengthened by the Imperial reconcile Japanese bushido isolationism and group identity with western ideals of self-realization and rationality. The inability to reconcile Japanese and western values in literary nationalism often resulted in a palpable tension in literature but caused havoc in social and political life of the nation.

Indigenous Literary Nationalism

In recent decades literary nationalism has moved into different trajectories and minority, tribal and multicultural political identities play upon different disciplines and claim a space. Indigenous literary nationalism challenges the dominant and assimilative ideology of mainstream literary nationalism which Charles Taylor calls “politics of recognition” and introduces a new independent ideology called “the politics of respect.” In his essay, “The Politics of Recognition” he writes,

A NUMBER of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need,

sometimes the demand, for *recognition*. The need, it can be argued, is one of the driving forces behind nationalist movements in politics. And the demand comes to the fore in a number of ways in today's politics, on behalf of minority or 'subaltern' groups, in some forms of feminism and in what is today called the politics of 'multiculturalism.' (Taylor, 1994 25).

Obviously, minority, subaltern, feminist and other multicultural groups feel economically and socially left out of majority politics, and therefore seek recognition. The demand for a second kind of literary nationalism reveals the contrived construction of literary nationalism in the early stages of the formation of a nation.

In a hurry to create a nation state many groups are invariably left out. Taylor argues for a politics of respect that majority groups "owe" to minorities. He writes,

Within these perspectives, misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need (Taylor, 1994 26).

Taylor endorses the enlightened ideas of "courtesy" and "human need" of self-respect that majority groups owe to others who are less privileged. Therefore, early forms of dominant literary nationalism in the service of the nation must give way to an inclusive literary nationalism that respects the cultures and texts of minorities and give them significance.

More work is being done today in later literary nationalisms which attempts to

showcase indigenous literary nationalism and identity politics. Jeanette C. Armstrong, an Okanagan Indian, in her edited book, *Looking at the Words of Our People* (1993) talks about the challenges of assimilationist literary nationalism. In India the low caste and downtrodden are beginning to assert themselves against the oppressive politics of the Brahmins by creating their own literary nationalism. Works like Joseph Macwan's *Angaliyat* (The Stepchild), Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978), Sujata Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants* (2017), Manoranjan Byapari's *Interrogating My Chandal Life* (2018) and Dhruvo Jyoti's *Eleven Ways to Love* (2018) highlight the plight of the downtrodden and narrate a new history of India. These works create their own narratives of regional Dalits, Scheduled Castes, and psychology of the self, split personalities, memories of Bombay, docks, karkhanas, Maoist rebels, Dalit Christians, nationalism, colonialism and urban modernity. Dalit and minority discourses provide a fresh new perspective on established nationalist literary discourses creating an alternate reality that often belie an assimilationist perspective of history, life and politics.

In his novel *Palli Samaj* or *The Homecoming* (1916) Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (1878-1936) is critical of rural Hindu society in Bengal, its caste-ridden politics and corruption. When engineer Ramesh comes to transform the society he is met with limited success. At one point in the novel Ramesh gets frustrated with the unwillingness of the old-fashioned Hindu society to change and burst out,

Ramesh suddenly became agitated and cried, 'Why? Need I tell you that too? Don't you know that all the ill-will, all the quarrels have arisen out of caste restrictions? It seems to me very natural that those who have been branded by the society as 'low-caste' should be envious of the high-caste

people, and revolt against this custom and try to free themselves from its fetters. Hindus don't know how to acquire, they don't even want to do so—they simply know how to squander! There's a natural law which requires that one should not only protect oneself and one's society and preserve it intact, but one should also try to augment it. We Hindus don't observe that law. That's why our number dwindles every day. There's a law for the periodical enumeration of the population of this country. Had you read the census reports, you'd have been frightened, Aunty. You'd then have known what's the result of insulting and branding a section of the Hindu population as 'low-caste'. You'd then come to know how the number of Hindus is dwindling every year and their number of Muslims is increasing. Yet the Hindus don't come to their senses! (S. C. Chatterjee, 2001 89-90).

Here Sarat Chandra touches at the heart of India's project of nation building—the caste system. Also he talks of the demographic shift of the downtrodden from Hinduism to Islam.

In his novel, the *Stepchild*, Macwan, a Dalit Christian, focuses on rural Gujarat of the 1930s providing an alternate account of the world where the Vankar weavers suffer from an “internal colonization” by the upper caste Patels. The injustice of the upper caste comes out in the humming song of Teecho the weaver at night by the lantern as the novel opens,

The warp of my breath

The weft of my soul

My Ram! How far can this shuttle go?

My Ram! How far can this shuttle go (Macwan, 2004 1)?

The ability to forget the pain in the song makes the situation poignant. Soon Bhavaankaka begins to sing in a husky voice to the accompaniment of the sarangi,

Look, there sits the swan on the edge of the brimming lake,
Over him stretches the pearl-filled sky,
Where should he peck, he knows not Ram
Where should be peck, he knows not Ram (Macwan, 2004 xxiii)

The Dalits understand injustice and oppression and want to overcome it by reforming the caste council, seek higher caste status, change their names, adopt Christianity, change social movements to political movements and assert the identity of Dalits under Ambedkar.

The literary nationalism in India created by majority groups stood the test as a corpus for nearly seventy years. But as scholarship matures and marginal groups find a political and social voice they want to claim their own narrative of history through their own literature. In recent years as social representation becomes more contentious, writers from the margins have expressed their own history and elision with indubitable clarity. In the process they are changing patterns of literary history and the way it is constructed, something that has happened earlier in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s..

Conclusion

Literature may arise from different creative intentions but once created begins to shift into an ideological canonical mode serving the needs of political and social elites. Literary texts close to the birth of a nation state are used as building blocks to create its identity and over time acquire a nationalist fervor either

overtly or covertly. Often writers themselves are fired by a new-found nationalism to create a national identity by employing themes of race, religion, geography and myth to create a conception and iconography of a nation. Literary nationalism creates an emotional and literary space for writers to imagine the identity of a nation by exploring and giving significance to themes of geography, culture, values, resistance and idealism. Literary texts create a national consciousness that unify diverse peoples to realize a common purpose often sacrificing their immediate goals and desires.

American, Japanese and Indian literary nationalisms created their own resistance to a political condition which was exploitative and oppressive. Both American and Indian literary nationalisms arose in opposition to colonial occupation while the Japanese welcomed European ideas and profited by it. American and Indian literary nationalisms was built in opposition to Europe and therefore rejected everything the West stood for. Only recently as literary nationalism matures in the two countries a new understanding of some of the unique unintended benefits of British colonialism are recognized. Japanese literary nationalism still tries to synthesize western enlightenment ideals and bushido pride in civic life but often fails to create a desired modern identity. Obviously mainstream literary nationalism colludes with dominant classes and creates the conditions for indigenous literary nationalism to emerge. Perhaps through this process an inclusive literary nationalism can emerge.

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